St. Patrick Parish Wedding Policies

Updated 10-29-2026

Introduction

In choosing to be married in the Catholic faith, you are proclaiming publicly that you desire to live out your marriage commitment in the Church, a community of people dedicated to our Lord Jesus Christ. Your wedding liturgy is an act of worship in praise to God, not only for the love you have found in each other, but also as a point of strength and nourishment as you continue the journey of life together.

The Purpose of these Policies

Since you have asked to be married within the Catholic Church, St. Patrick Parish has policy expectations and norms regarding your marriage preparation and wedding celebration. Both the bride and groom must read this document. By officially setting a wedding date with the pastor, the bride and groom thereby knowingly and willingly affirm the following:

- That you have read, understood, and agree to abide by the rules and policies, as presented herein, and have signed the Marriage Preparation Policies Agreement at the end of this document.

- That you are responsible for sharing the relevant regulations in this document with the appropriate parties (visiting clergy, photographers, videographers, etc.).

- That you recognize that the pastor of this parish (or delegated priest/deacon) has the responsibility and authority to assure both the civil legitimacy and the sacramental validity of Catholic weddings, within his pastoral jurisdiction.

- That you assent to the discretion and judgment of the pastor (or his delegated priest/deacon), in adherence to Catholic doctrine and archdiocesan policy, involving matters or issues (whether liturgical or sacramental) relating to your wedding celebration, here at St. Patrick Parish.

Who Can get Married at St. Patrick Parish?

- A person who wishes to marry at St. Patrick Parish must be a registered and active member of the parish, or an active Catholic who is a child of a registered member. Registering in the parish for the sake of requesting a marriage at St. Patrick Parish does not fulfill this requirement.

- If you are unregistered and living outside of our parish boundaries and wish to marry at St. Patrick Parish, you must register in the parish and wait one year before a marriage date can be set.

- If any priest or deacon other than one from St. Patrick Parish is to be the celebrant at your wedding, he must be approved by the pastor and will be responsible for all marriage preparation for the couple including paperwork, instructions, and the rehearsal. If you work with a visiting priest or deacon, inform him of the wedding policies at St. Patrick Parish and have him contact the pastor to work out any other details.

- Please contact the parish office after your wedding to update your parish registration to reflect your new life as husband and wife.

Contacting the Pastor and Setting a Wedding Date
The Archdiocese of Omaha requires that a couple contact the pastor a minimum of six months before the proposed wedding date. This allows ample time to schedule a wedding date and complete the marriage preparation process.

After reading the St. Patrick Parish Wedding Polices complete the Marriage Request Form on the parish website. Every effort will be made to accommodate the date you request, however keep in mind that both the church and the pastor must be available on the date or dates you are considering. At this time the pastor or associate will schedule an appointment with you to begin the marriage preparation process and answer any questions you may have. Please do not ask parents or others to contact the priest for you. As the couple preparing for marriage, this is solely your responsibility.

St. Patrick Parish allows one wedding on Fridays at 5:00 PM and one wedding on Saturdays at 2:00 PM. No weddings are allowed on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.

The Marriage Preparation Process

Marriage is “the matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1601).

The marriage preparation process is designed to assist engaged couples in the understanding of marriage as a vocation, a covenant, and a sacrament. The process helps couples build a foundation for a lifelong, faithful marriage rooted in Christ. At your first meeting with the pastor,

he will explain the marriage preparation process and complete the initial marriage preparation documents. He will also answer any questions you may have about the preparation process.

Eight Steps in the Marriage Preparation Process

There are eight steps to the marriage preparation process. During your initial meeting with the pastor, he will explain each of these steps and give you information on how to sign-up for the FOCCUS inventory and the natural family planning class.

- Step 1 – Contact the pastor at 402-332-4444 or gpbaxter@archomaha.org to set a date for your wedding.
- Step 2 – Register to take the FOCCUS pre-marriage inventory.
- Step 3 – Complete the FOCCUS facilitation process.
- Step 4 – Schedule and complete an online marriage formation program.
- Step 5 – Schedule and complete an online natural family planning (NFP) class.
- Step 6 – Plan the wedding music with the Director of Sacred Music.
- Step 7 – Plan the liturgy with the pastor.
- Step 8 – Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Church invites all Catholics to prepare themselves spiritually prior to their marriage.

Parish Fees

Parish Fees:

St. Patrick Parish is pleased to have weddings celebrated in the church. As with everything else there are costs associated with keeping our facilities operational and properly maintained. The fees noted below do not cover the entire cost of having a wedding here but do help defray the overhead expenses incurred by the parish.

- $600 Church (marriage preparation process, wedding facilitator, cleaning wedding liturgy:
- $400 Damage Deposit Fee (refunded if everything is left in satisfactory condition)
- $225 Organist Fee
- $175 Soloist Fee
- Please bring **a check for $1,400** to the parish office **at least two months prior** to the date of your wedding. Remember that the $400 damage deposit fee will be refunded if everything is left in satisfactory condition.

Church Requirements

There are several documents that will be required as you complete the marriage preparation process. The following are documents required:

1. A recent baptismal certificate not more than six months old. This is requested, by the bride and groom, from the church of their baptism and given to the priest preparing the couple for marriage.

2. Proof of freedom to marry, as testified by a family member (a form will be provided to both the bride and groom by the pastor).
3. For interfaith marriage or if marrying a non-Christian, permission must be given by the Archbishop of Omaha. In such cases a signed promise by the Catholic party that all children will be baptized and raised in the Catholic faith is required. The pastor will have a form for this and will send the request to the archbishop.
4. Couples must obtain a marriage license from the State of Nebraska. Licenses are obtained from any Nebraska county clerk's office.

The priest or deacon preparing you will further explain these documents.

Planning the Wedding Liturgy

Catholic celebrations of marriage, like all Catholic liturgical actions, belong not only to the couple, but to the community of believers as an expression of faith. It is therefore important to remember that a wedding is not a show for the faithful to watch, but a prayer for the faithful to offer.

Attire and Conduct for the Wedding and the Rehearsal
Brides and bridesmaids are to bear in mind the necessity for modesty and appropriateness of attire for this sacred occasion and place of worship. Please keep this in mind when selecting the wedding dress and bridesmaids' gowns.

Keeping in mind that the church is sacred and holy and the place where we come to meet God in worship and prayer, the following standards of attire and conduct are presumed for the wedding party on the wedding day and during the rehearsal:

- Proper attire should be worn when in Church; this includes those in attendance for the wedding and the rehearsal: no shorts, immodest halter tops, tank tops or midriffs; no baseball caps or other hats, torn jeans, sunglasses, flip flops or other inappropriate attire or accessories.
- No loud talking while in the church.
- No smoking or chewing gum.
- Always use proper language
- Mature and proper conduct for the occasion.
- No alcohol
- No use of cell phones in the church

Liturgy Planning Session with the Priest or Deacon
Couples must schedule a final appointment with the priest or deacon presiding at your wedding at least 8 weeks prior to the day of your wedding to plan the details of the wedding liturgy. He

will review your choices for the readings and vows and the other options for the liturgy. He will also discuss the flow of the liturgy, including the procession and recession and will ask you for the name(s) of your lector(s) as well as the names of your best man and maid of honor. Please see Appendix A and Appendix B to review your liturgical choices.

Please note that the wedding rite for two Catholics takes place within the Mass. The wedding rite for a Catholic and baptized non-Catholic, or for a Catholic and an unbaptized person takes place outside of the Mass in a Liturgy of the Word service.

Sacred Music and the Wedding Liturgy

Sacred music is an essential part of all Catholic liturgy and is not considered an "extra". Within the wedding liturgy, the most important elements of song are those which the assembly sings. Choosing appropriate music for your wedding should therefore be a priority in your planning. As you begin to consider music for your wedding keep in mind that sacred music adds to the prayer of your marriage liturgy and enhances its beauty and solemnity. Music and love songs borrowed from the entertainment industry, however touching, do not express a spirit which fits a Catholic wedding liturgy.

Music Planning Session with the Director of Sacred Music

At least 2 months prior to the day of your wedding, couples must schedule an appointment to meet with Laura Rau, the parish Director of Sacred Music, to plan music for the wedding liturgy She can be reached at 402-332-4444 or lrau@archomaha.org. The director works with the couple to plan appropriate musical selections and schedule an accompanist and cantor for your wedding liturgy.

In all cases, however, final decisions regarding the music and musicians for your wedding ceremony comes from Director of Sacred Music based on parish policies for music at weddings. Every effort will be made to provide music which pleases the bride and groom, and which is in good taste, as well as in conformity to the highest liturgical standard.

Often couples have a friend or a relative who they wish to sing at the wedding. If they are trained as cantors at their parish, the Director of Sacred Music will consider requests that this person act as the cantor at your wedding. They must be familiar with and able to sing the acclamations that are used at St. Patrick parish liturgies.

If you have a friend or relative you would like to sing a solo as a prelude or at an appropriate time during the liturgy, the Director of Sacred Music will consider this request. All solos must keep in mind that music and love songs borrowed from the entertainment industry are not appropriate for Catholic wedding liturgies. Having a musician "perform" all the wedding music is not appropriate under any circumstances because it lessens the role of the assembly who then are not able to be part of the sung prayers within the liturgy.

If you wish to add instruments such as strings or brass to accompany the music at the wedding, all musicians must be approved by the parish Director of Sacred Music before they are booked by the couple.

Formal Seating of Parents and Grandparents
If you plan to have formal seating of parents and grandparents by the groom, keep in mind that this takes place prior to the start of the wedding liturgy. Typically, this occurs 5 minutes before the scheduled start of the wedding liturgy.

The Use of a "Unity Candle"
While not a part of the official marriage rite, couples may choose to light a unity candle at the wedding. If a unity candle is to be used, it must be provided by the couple at the rehearsal along with two taper candles and candle holders.

Flowers in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary
The practice of presenting flowers before the statue of the Blessed Virgin is also optional, not mandatory, in a Catholic wedding ceremony.

Pew Dismissal and Reception Lines in the Church
Often, your wedding is not the only activity taking place in St. Patrick Church on a given day. Because of these time demands, **reception lines are not held in St. Patrick Church, nor should the bride and groom usher the guests from the pews.**

Attendants/Witnesses
No more than ten (10) couples of men and women are allowed as attendants in the procession, including the best man and maid of honor. The best man and maid of honor typically act as official witness to your marriage for the church and as witness for your civil marriage license.

Lectors
You may choose one or two lectors for the wedding liturgy. Lectors must be practicing Catholics who have experience as lector in their parish.

Altar Servers
If you have altar servers in your family, they may serve at your wedding. Altar servers should attend the rehearsal.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers
No children under the age of five (5) are allowed to act as flower girls or ring bearers in the wedding liturgy.

Ushers
The role of usher is to help your guests find an appropriate seat. If you wish to have guests "choose a side," the ushers will take them to the appropriate location. Ushers can also assist in closing the doors from the narthex after the procession has entered the church and assist any late arrivals find a seat in the back of the church.

Wedding Facilitator
St. Patick Parish has a wedding facilitator assist the priest and the wedding party on the day of the rehearsal and on the wedding day. If you have retained a wedding coordinator, their responsibilities cease at the church door and begin again at the reception. The priest or deacon and the wedding facilitator are solely responsible for arranging and directing the wedding rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. All communication regarding your wedding takes place between the couple and the priest or deacon in charge of your wedding. Private wedding coordinators should not contact the priest or deacon or the parish office.

Important Note
The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, etc., **is not permitted** either inside or outside of the church.

Wedding Program
You may wish to prepare a program for your wedding liturgy. All programs must be designed and printed by the bridal party. The church will not provide these. To help you prepare a program see Appendix C for the order of celebrating a wedding within Mass and without Mass.

Flowers and Decorations

When considering flowers and decorations, remember that St. Patrick Church is already a beautiful environment and an appropriate setting for a wedding celebration. Also, any decorating must keep in mind the liturgical season during which the wedding is taking place.

For all weddings both flowers and decorations must conform to the following policies:

- If you plan to add flowers in the sanctuary, they must keep in mind the liturgical season. Seasonal flowers and decorations in the sanctuary are part of the liturgical environment and may not be removed or changed for weddings. Any additional flowers may not be placed on the altar or obstruct movement in the sanctuary. Flower placement should not obstruct the congregation's view of the altar, ambo, or presider's chair.
- Candles, other than the altar candles and a unity candle are not allowed in the sanctuary. If a unity candle is used, the couple must supply it along with the two taper candles and candle holders. No candelabras are allowed.
- Aisle runners are not permitted in St. Patrick Church.

- Flower petals, either fresh or artificial, may not be strewn in the aisle or any other place inside or outside the church.
- Bows or other decorations placed on the pews must use hooks provided by the parish or be loosely attached with string, rubber bands or ribbon. No adhesives or wire of any kind may be used.
- Rice, confetti, birdseed, etc. may not be thrown either inside or outside the church.
- All decorations must be removed before leaving the church after a Friday wedding and by 3:30 PM for a Saturday wedding.
- Please leave the church in the same condition in which you found it.

Photography and Video

St. Patrick Church is a place of worship and a house of God. Therefore, it is important that all photographers and videographers respect with reverence the church sanctuary. The celebration of a wedding is foremost a sacramental moment, therefore, to maintain the high dignity of the ceremony and the quality of the prayer, photographers and videographers need to follow these policies:

- On the day of the wedding all photographers and videographers must check with the presiding priest or deacon.
- All formal photography in the church must be completed one half hour prior to the start of the wedding ceremony.
- Additional formal photographs may be taken in the church for one half hour after the ceremony. Extra care must be taken for Saturday weddings when all photography must be completed by 3:30 PM to allow for quiet prayer time for those who come for the Sacrament of Reconciliation beginning at 4:00 PM.
- Photography and videography are allowed during the wedding liturgy; however, no flash photography is allowed.
- During the wedding ceremony photographers and videographers **must not enter restricted areas** of the church. See the **restricted areas in Appendix D**. Share this diagram with your photographer and videographer.

The Rehearsal

As the day of the wedding approaches, the task of last-minute details can be very stressful, but the wedding rehearsal does not need to be one of those occasions. Wedding rehearsals are held on the day prior to the wedding and should be scheduled soon after a wedding date has been set. Please also note:

- Schedule rehearsal time with the priest and inform all members of wedding party to be punctual in arriving. Only one hour is reserved for the rehearsal.
- Decide the pairing of the groomsmen and bridesmaids before the rehearsal begins.

- All members of wedding party, the parents of the couple, lectors, ushers, and altar servers should attend the rehearsal.
- If a visiting priest or deacon is conducting the rehearsal, please let the pastor know that he has been informed of the rehearsal date and time.
- Bring the marriage license to the rehearsal and give it to the priest or deacon.
- If you plan to use a unity candle, bring the candle and the two taper candles along with the candle holders to the rehearsal.

The Day of the Wedding

Access to the Church on the Wedding Day
For 2:00 PM weddings on Saturday **access to the church begins at 8:00 AM**. For weddings on Friday starting at 5:00 PM or 6:00 PM **access to the church begins at 1:00 PM**.

The Bride's Room
The bride's room is located on the north end of the narthex near the entrance to the parish center. It is a large room with vanity and mirrors, a closet, and a restroom.

The Father Hitch Room
The groom and groomsmen are to be dressed for the ceremony when they arrive. They may use the Fr. Hitch room for final preparations.

Luncheon/Snacks
The wedding party may have a small luncheon or snacks in the bride's room and Fr. Hitch Room while preparing for the wedding ceremony. Remember however that there is a one-hour Eucharistic fast before receiving Holy Communion. This means that during at least the last half-hour before a wedding Mass, those who will be receiving Holy Communion should neither eat, nor drink anything except water.

Alcoholic Beverages
Alcoholic Beverages are not permitted on the parish grounds (including your vehicles) either before or after a wedding or a wedding rehearsal. Wedding party members are to be sober when attending the rehearsal and wedding. If a wedding party member appears inebriated, the priest has the right and obligation to remove that person from the wedding party.

Clean-up
Individuals should be assigned by the bride and groom to remove all wedding items from the church, narthex, bride's room, and Fr. Hitch room immediately after the church is emptied of wedding guests. This includes bows, empty flower boxes, worship aids, etc. Perhaps you can ask the ushers to consider this as part of their duties.

St. Patrick Parish Wedding Agreement

I have read and understand the St. Patrick Parish Wedding Policies and will abide by these polices.

Bride _____ Date _____

Groom _____ Date _____