

Guidelines for the Wedding Liturgies in Our Lady, Queen of the Yough Catholic Community

Parishes of Immaculate Conception — St. Rita
St. Aloysius Gonzaga— St. John the Evangelist



Dear friends in Christ,

Congratulations on your engagement! We are delighted that you have chosen to be married within the Our Lady, Queen of the Yough Catholic Community in the presence of Jesus Christ with the blessing of the Roman Catholic Church. We pledge to you our prayers and support as you prepare to become one in marriage.

Marriage in our Catholic Christian tradition is a solemn celebration that demands instruction and prayerful preparation. In that spirit, we are happy to present to you the official Wedding Policy for our Catholic Community.

While there are many hands that will assist in your wedding at in our Catholic Community, none are perhaps more significant than your hands and how you embrace this holy and sacred ritual. We invite and encourage you to make Christ the center of your lives. At the same time we ask that you keep a proper perspective relative to what you are about to do. As the saying goes, “A wedding is a day. A marriage is a lifetime.”

Jesus said, “At the beginning of creation God made them male and female; for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become as one. They are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore let no man separate what God has joined.” (Mark 10:6-9)

As you prepare to become one in marriage, we priests along with our wedding coordinators, organist and staff pray that you may truly be one and no one will separate what God has joined.

If you have any questions about the enclosed information, please feel free to contact any one of us. Please be assured of a remembrance in our prayers. We hope you will do the same for us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Bob Lubic (pastor)

Fr. Julius Capongpongan *Fr. Daniel Ulishney* (vicars)

Preliminary Arrangements

The wedding ceremony is a public acknowledgement of a couple's willingness to take on the responsibilities of marriage. A priest or deacon is the ordained minister of the church who can officiate at your wedding, and witness your vows of mutual love. **Our ministry begins to you before the actual ceremony, and is offered to you with the love and support of the members of the Catholic Community of Connellsville composed of the Partner Parishes of Immaculate Conception, Saint Rita and Saint John the Evangelist.**

Wedding Workshop

Each year (usually in January) a wedding workshop is held at the parish to meet and welcome engaged couples and to go over some practical matters. At this time parish policies and guidelines are explained. Additionally, practical, pastoral, and liturgical details are filled in and questions answered. Couples planning to get married are invited and expected to attend this workshop. Contact the parish office for exact dates and times.

Wedding Celebrant

Either Fr. Bob Lubic, pastor and administrator of the parishes or Fathers Daniel Ulishney or Julius Capongpongan, Parochial Vicars, are the usual celebrant for weddings. However, a couple is welcome to have a priest relative or friend concelebrate or even serve as celebrant for their wedding. Likewise, a deacon relative or friend is welcome to celebrate the *Marriage Rite Outside of Mass* (used for mixed marriages) or celebrate the *Rite of Marriage within a Mass* (which of course would be celebrated by a priest). A visiting celebrant is required to comply with all policies for both the liturgy and/or ceremony. Requests for ministers of other denominations to participate are also welcome, but all requests should be made early in the process of preparation for your wedding.

Scheduling

1. **Date.** A marriage date is set by first contacting the parish office. The parish secretary will let you know if the date is available. An appointment must then be made to meet with a parish priest to ensure that there is nothing standing in the way of a valid Catholic

stipends ready before the ceremony begins. If you prefer, they may be remitted prior to rehearsal.

Stipends - Fees - Offerings

Fees are requested to be paid in full one week prior to the celebration of the wedding, or otherwise brought to the wedding rehearsal. They are to be paid in cash or otherwise personal check made payable to the recipient (priest, organist, cantor).

Use of the Church ----- \$200 *Waived for members of the Connellsville Catholic Partner Parishes of Immaculate Conception, Saint Rita, St. Aloysius or Saint John Evangelist or close relatives of members of these parishes.*

Stole Fee-----\$250 (As suggested by the Greensburg Diocese)

Wedding Coordinator ---- \$75

Organist----- \$150 (Base fee.)

Cantor/soloist----- \$100 (If a wedding Mass)

Altar Servers----- \$10 each (Two servers are generally used for a Wedding Mass and also for Weddings outside of Mass.)

**A Catholic wedding is a celebration of life and love
in which a man and woman come together
to celebrate a sacrament, and offer thanks and
praise together with their families and friends
and the parish community.**



**The Connellsville Catholic Community
celebrates with you and asks God's blessings
on your new life together!**

Music

As you begin your initial planning and preparation, please contact our principal wedding organist: Chris Mickey—724-317-5688. Actual planning can be scheduled about eight (8) weeks prior to your wedding day. The organist will work with the bridal couple to help make suitable music selections for the wedding liturgy and assist in completing the music selection form.

Since the nature of the ceremony is religious, only liturgically appropriate music may be used. The music should complement the liturgy and not compete with it. The ministry of cantor is a proper liturgical function and is required for all wedding liturgies. If you have a preference for a particular Catholic Community cantor please let Chris know; otherwise one of our regular cantors will be assigned. The liturgy is a living prayer of the church; pre-recorded and/or secular music is NOT appropriate. This general policy applies to both Prelude and the Liturgy proper. When considering music, the most important thing to consider is appropriateness.

The parish's principal wedding organist, Mr. Christopher Mickey, will be the primary musician for your wedding and has the right of first refusal if unavailable. This will include: a pre-service consultation, prelude music preceding the ceremony, and accompaniment for the actual ceremony. If a visiting musician or guest soloist is asked to participate, he or she should be of high quality and have experience with Catholic liturgy. Approval of music rests with the principal organist in consultation with the pastor.

If you request an outside musician or soloist, please inform the parish organist at the time of your initial conversation.

There is no musical accompaniment at the time of rehearsal. If there is a need for rehearsal with guest soloist or musician, prior meeting arrangements are recommended and an additional fee may be required.

Stipends for all musicians will be the exclusive responsibility of the bride and groom. The parish accepts no responsibility for payment. In order to avoid any confusion, you are requested to please have all

marriage. **Only then will the date be considered "set in stone."** Please DO NOT make any other commitments relative to the wedding until the date is officially set. **A six (6) to twelve (12) month advance notice for preparation is required.** A date cannot be set if one of the parties has an annulment case pending.

2. **Location.** The Diocese of Greensburg does not permit weddings to be celebrated outside the church building. **(I.E. NO outdoor, gazebo, beach, forest, skydiving, cave, Graceland, backyard, living room, ski slope, lakeside, treehouse, etc. etc. etc. weddings. NONE. NO EXCEPTIONS. Don't even ask.** A priest or deacon may only celebrate a wedding in the (Catholic) church building. Permission can be given, however, for a couple to be married by the minister of the non-Catholic party in the non-Catholic party's **CHURCH.**
3. **Day of the week and Holidays.** Weddings are usually scheduled for Saturdays, but may be celebrated on another day of the week, with the exception of Sunday. Other specific dates when weddings are not to be scheduled would include: Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. Occasionally other dates may be unavailable due to previously scheduled parish events. Weddings are not scheduled during Lent and are not encouraged during Advent. During the Liturgical Seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Easter the sanctuary is already decorated and additional flowers are not permitted.
4. **Time.** The **normal time** for Saturday weddings is **1:30 PM.** An earlier time can be arranged, if the parish schedule that day permits.

Preparation for Marriage

1. **Meeting with the Priest.** You will have a series of meetings with the parish priest, beginning about six months prior to the wedding date. It will be your responsibility to contact the priest and schedule the first appointment. These meetings are essential to our ministry to you and to your preparation. In these meetings the basic wedding paperwork will be completed.
2. **FOCCUS Inventory.** You will be given the FOCCUS Inventory

(*Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding Study*), which the Diocese of Greenburg requires for couples preparing for marriage. This is a very useful tool to ascertain a perception of yourself and the person you are to marry. The Director of Faith Formation in Our Lady of the Yough Catholic Community, Mary Sampey, will be the administrator in setting up the FOCCUS online, as well as going over your results once they are completed.

3. **Together for Life.** The parish will provide you with a copy of the *TOGETHER FOR LIFE BOOKLET* (or a link to the website) which will aid you in the planning of your ceremony. The Wedding Coordinator will also assist you in planning your ceremony once your wedding date draws closer. Contact the parish office to set up an appointment with the Wedding Coordinator, which should take place about a month before the wedding.
4. **Practice of the Faith.** A couple seeking to be married in the church **should be practicing the faith.** (I.E. celebrating the Sunday Eucharist regularly - WEEKLY - with the community.) The fundamental purpose of the Sunday gathering is to acknowledge God's presence and offer Him worship. It is for this same holy purpose that you have chosen to celebrate your wedding at Immaculate Conception, St. Aloysius, St. Rita or St. John the Evangelist and not at the courthouse or in non-religious venue. **This purpose guides all decisions relating to what happens here on the day of your wedding.**

Pre- Marriage Instruction

Diocesan policy requires that every couple planning to celebrate Marriage have some form of instruction for the sacrament. This requirement is normally fulfilled by participation in **one** of the following ways.

1. **Meeting with a Sponsor Couple**—Each engaged couple meets with one married couple in the home of the married couple over the course of several evenings. These times are scheduled at the convenience of all involved. The Director of Faith Formation will assist each engaged couple in attaining a Sponsor Couple.
2. **An Engaged Encounter Weekend.** An international program that begins on a Friday evening and ends Sunday afternoon. This program

either the Bride or Groom are found to be consuming alcohol prior to the ceremony **NO MARRIAGE WILL TAKE PLACE.** According to the Canon Law of the Church a couple under the influence of alcohol are incapable of freely and validly exchanging consent.

- Smoking is prohibited (in keeping with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) inside the church. Outside the church, if one must smoke, proper disposition of cigarette butts is expected. Much effort has been expended by our parish volunteers to beautify the parish grounds of Immaculate Conception, Saint Rita, St. Aloysius, and St. John the Evangelist. We DO NOT appreciate you or your guests marring what has been accomplished at such loving effort.
- The Church cannot be responsible for any personal property left behind.
- It is within the right of the priest/deacon to delay witnessing a marriage for a just cause. This would include:
 - Lack of minimum faith
 - Severe faith conflicts
 - Lack of readiness for marriage
 - Refusal of the couple or party to adhere to pre-marriage requirements. Professional pre-marriage counseling may be required.

Spiritual Preparation and Participation in Parish Life

Remember that Christ is at the heart of your marriage. It is expected that all Catholic persons entering into the Sacrament of Marriage will properly prepare themselves spiritually by availing themselves of the Sacrament of Penance (aka Confession).

If you will be living outside one of our Connellsville/Dunbar Catholic parishes know that you need to register at the local Catholic Church. (And hopefully be an ACTIVE member of that community.)

If you continue to live in the area, we EXPECT you to continue to remain a member of one of the parishes of our Catholic Community and ACTIVELY share the faith life of our church community. Your parish status is VITAL in allowing you to be a sponsor for Baptism or Confirmation.

6. Processions are not to be slowed or interrupted for taking pictures/video.

Receiving Line and Photographs

A Receiving Line is at the discretion of the couple. Bear in mind, however, that a Receiving Line limits the time available for post-ceremony pictures. When pictures are being taken all are reminded to be conscious of the presence of the Eucharistic Lord reserved in the tabernacle. Respectful behavior at this time is expected.

Wedding Ceremony “Add Ons”

Unity Candle. The history of the unity candle is unclear but it appears that it was invented in the 1970s. The ritual was first popularized when the lighting of a unity candle was performed in the fictional wedding of Luke and Laura on the TV soap opera General Hospital in 1981 and has since enjoyed widespread commercialization by the wedding industry. (I.E. another way to get YOUR money.) The use of the Unity Candle is **strongly discouraged** in our Catholic Churches because of the candle’s secular origins and lack of Christian symbolism. The TRUE symbolism is your exchange of Vows and exchange of Rings. The usual placement of the Lighting of the Unity Candle after these important moments makes it appear that THIS gesture is the culmination of the Rite rather than a totally gratuitous addition.

Flowers. Couples may choose to take flowers to their parents during the Kiss of Peace, but it is not required. Taking flowers to the image of the Blessed Mother is not (despite common perception) part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage. This gesture only makes sense if a true devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary exists. In such cases the couple may take flowers to a representation of the Blessed Mother following the Prayer after Communion.

Other General Policies

- All alcoholic beverages are **STRICTLY prohibited** both inside and outside the church or on church property. If anyone in the wedding party consumes alcohol before the ceremony, they will NOT be permitted to participate in the ceremony. It is your responsibility to be sure that everyone is aware of this policy. If

usually takes place in the Greensburg Area and is led by two or more married couples with up to 20 engaged couples in attendance. It is advisable to schedule and attend the weekend earlier, rather than later. It is acceptable to do so as early as eighteen months prior to your wedding day. <http://www.engagedencounter.org> or <http://www.greensburgcee.com>

3. Attendance at an approved Pre-Cana session or sessions at a parish in or outside the Diocese of Greensburg.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Wedding Party

Your Best Man and Maid or Matron of Honour (the official “witnesses”) need not be Catholic, but all who are asked to participate should believe and live according to Christian traditions regarding marriage.

While children and teenagers are sometimes in the wedding party, it is not advisable to have very young children as part of the wedding party; they very rarely do what they are expected to do. If a flower girl is used she may drop petals as she goes down the aisle BUT it will be the responsibility of the party to clean them up afterwards. Gentlemen are NOT to wear hats of any sort at any time while in the church. This includes the rehearsal and wedding day.

The church does not regulate the size of your wedding party. All that is necessary is a bride, groom, priest (or deacon), and two witnesses. Additional members of the wedding party are at the discretion of the couple. During the Liturgy of the Word the couple and their “best people” are seated in the first pew, with the remainder of the party immediately behind them. (If the wedding party is small all COULD be seated in the first pew.) The Bride and her witness will be seated together, likewise the Groom and his witness, each on their appropriate side.

For the actual Rite of Marriage (immediately after the homily) the couple and their witness move to the front of the altar (their

position for the rest of the Mass or ceremony), whereas the remainder of the party stays in the pew.

Wedding Rehearsal

Rehearsals are generally scheduled the evening prior to the actual wedding day and should not last longer than one hour. We ask you to please stress punctuality with your wedding party and schedule according to when everyone can get together and express a need for proper behavior and cooperation.

Please note that there is no music at the time of rehearsal.

Usage of the Church

The church will be open and available to your wedding party and guests one hour before the wedding and one hour afterward. Be ready to start the wedding and the rehearsal on time. This is important because of other liturgical services in the churches. For example, on Saturdays Mass begins at 4:00PM at St. Rita. Therefore from about 3:00 p.m. on people will be entering this church for prayer. You are asked to be respectful of those who are in prayer. Although Immaculate Conception and Saint John the Evangelist Churches do not usually have early Saturday evening Masses, other events such as confessions or Baptisms may be scheduled.

REMEMBER: The church is a holy place; a house of prayer; a house of worship. A respect for the house of God is expected. This means that the church (and its grounds) are not to be treated as mere social gathering places. While absolute silence is not expected a reverential quiet should be observed at all times in the church proper. Please conduct yourselves as befitting God's House. Kindly alert you wedding party and guests to do so also. It is your responsibility to share this information with your family, wedding party, and photographer.

Decorations for the Ceremony

Only live flowers are permitted for use in the church and those used in the sanctuary are to remain for the weekend liturgies. Nothing is to be placed ON the altar of sacrifice. The sanctuary will not be rearranged to accommodate flowers. If you choose a holiday time for your wedding, for example, the Christmas or Easter season,

please be aware that the church decorations will stay in keeping with the season and not be changed or moved for the wedding. Pew bows, if desired, are to be secured by clip, elastic, or string. No tape or adhesives are permitted on any of the furnishings.

A crash (the white runner covering the main aisle) is NOT permitted as it presents a safety hazard. Additional, covering up a beautiful floor with a cheap piece of paper or plastic just seems silly. (Of course the florist won't give it to you for cheap!)

Please do not use glitter-filled bouquets or have your bridesmaids covered with glitter. This creates quite a mess in the pews.

Rice, birdseed, or confetti may not be used after the ceremony to greet the newly married couple, nor may balloons be released. However bells or bubbles may be used, but not brought into the church.

It will be your responsibility to have the church cleared of all decorations and left as you found it.

Videographers and Photographers

We welcome videographers and photographers to ceremonies in our Connellsville Catholic Churches. It is important that you be made aware of several things.

1. There are specific locations in each church which work best for taking pictures and filming. In general they are the side aisles and at the center aisle rear of the churches.
2. There are NO cameras permitted in the sanctuary (altar) area during the wedding. A stationary camera may be set up in the front, but not manned. Please check with the pastor BEFORE setting up.
3. Extra lighting, flashes, ladders, and other such equipment are not permitted.
4. Flash is permitted only during the processional and recessional.
5. Photographers and videographers are asked to be as discreet as possible and professional. Please be mindful that we are gathered for a prayerful experience and ask that you respect our worship.