



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
AND ST. JOSEPH PARISH

A family of families

ICSJ PARISH WEDDING GUIDELINES

Congratulations!

Congratulations on your engagement and thank you for your interest in getting married at St. Joseph Church! The Immaculate Conception and St. Joseph Parish staff and faith community would be honored to celebrate this joyous day with you.

A wedding is a new beginning, a grace-filled time of celebration of the love, promise, and the hope shared by a man and a woman. The love you have privately shared is now being made public. Your family, friends, and the parish now prepare to support and encourage you in the celebration of your wedding, as well as in your life-long commitment to each other.

Our celebrations of the sacraments, marriage included, are rooted in listening to the scriptures so that we can be nourished and strengthened by God's word. We always celebrate the sacraments as a community. In this spirit, ICSJ Parish presents the following information and guidelines intended to insure a joyful, reverent, and prayerful celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage within the our prayer community and rituals of the Catholic Church.

We will embark on this great journey with you and be here to support you or answer questions for you. The ICSJ Parish staff looks forward to working with you as you prepare to celebrate your wedding day and beyond.

With warm regards,

Father Lawrence Lisowski, Pastor
Jutta Keenan, Events Coordinator
Kate Ryan, Director of Music
Toni Gamble, Sacristan

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR COUPLES

Who can marry in our parish church?

To receive the Sacrament of Marriage, at least one of the persons seeking to marry must be a fully initiated Catholic, having been baptized and received first communion. This person should be a registered parishioner of our parish or another and be active in their faith.

Times available for weddings

- Saturdays, 1, 3, or 5
- Monday through Friday – Weekday weddings are scheduled based on our parish and school calendars and availability of the pastor. Prior parish or school events scheduled may not allow for certain weekday weddings to be scheduled.

Times the church is not available for weddings

- Catholic Schools week
- Palm Sunday through the weekend following Easter Sunday
- Holidays: 4th of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas
- Any other time the church has been scheduled for other events
- Any other time the parish staff deems it necessary that no weddings be scheduled

Reserving a wedding date and time

Couples should secure the church a minimum of six months before the desired wedding date. Once you have a preferred date and time we ask that you:

- Complete the Couple's Information Form found on our website. Our Event Coordinator will then contact you to verify if the date chosen is available and put you in touch with Father Larry for a phone conversation.
- During your phone conversation, Father Larry will confirm your readiness to marry, ability to marry, and date requested can be scheduled.
- Reserve and secure your date with a non-refundable deposit of \$500 (transferable to another date if you reschedule) made online via our Give Central account.

For those previously married

A *Declaration of Nullity* must be provided at the time of your booking in order to demonstrate that you are free to remarry in the Catholic Church. This applies for all forms of previous marriages, even those celebrated civilly.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR MARRIAGE

Baptismal Certificate

A *Baptismal Certificate* dated within six months of the day you wish to be married must be submitted by each Catholic party. In the marriage of a Catholic and a non – Catholic Christian, the non – Catholic is also to present a record of baptism if that is possible. These certificates are easily obtained by writing or phoning the church of baptism. Copies of original certificates are not accepted.

Confirmation Certificate

A *Confirmation Certificate* dated within six months of the day you wish to be married is also required for all Catholics. According to Canon Law (#1065), Confirmation is a prerequisite for the Catholic individual who intends to be married in the Catholic Church. For more information on adult confirmation classes please contact our parish Director of Religious Education, Kim Rak, at krak@icsjparish.org.

Certificate of Completion of the Marriage Preparation Program

A *Certificate of Completion of the Marriage Preparation Program* – commonly known as Pre-Cana – is required and must be completed within three months of the day you wish to be married. A list of programs available in the Archdiocese of Chicago can be found at familyministries.org. These programs are designed to deepen your awareness of the challenges of living together in a Christian marriage. Through discussion, exercises, and presentations, you will have the opportunity to concentrate more intensely on many facets of married life.

Foccus Inventory

A *Foccus Inventory* – the Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study Inventory – is a tool to help couples explore many dimensions of their relationship. This should not be thought of as a test, it is a conversation starter for topics and situations you will be presented with as husband and wife. ICSJ Parish will provide log-in information to couples after meeting with them initially at one of our Wedding Fair meetings. The inventory should be completed online as soon as possible. Results will be emailed to you upon completion and Father will review your results with you in your final paperwork meeting following Pre-Cana.

Pre-nuptial Questionnaire

A *Pre-nuptial Questionnaire* – a statement of intention by both the bride and groom is to be completed with Father before you are married.

Affidavits

Additional *dispensation affidavits* may be needed if your marriage is between a Catholic and a baptized non – Catholic or between a Catholic and an unbaptized non – Catholic in which case dispensation must be granted by the Chancery Office of the Archdiocese. *Witness affidavits* may be requested by the priest marrying you if he does not know you or your family well. The affidavits are completed in the presence of a priest or deacon by adults to know you well and can testify to your freedom to marry.

PARISH POLICIES REGARDING MARRIAGE

I. General Policies

Due to the sacredness of the wedding ritual, and out of respect for God's house of worship a few things need to be understood and accepted without exception:

- St. Joseph Church is not a 'venue' such as a reception hall or restaurant. It is not rented. This is a house of worship and a community of faith to which you belong.
- Respect, decorum, and dignified behavior must be maintained and observed at all times by you, your wedding party and all your guests in regards to the church property and building, the sanctuary, and the entire staff.
- Punctuality for your rehearsal and ceremony is of the utmost importance.
- There is no smoking in the church or outside our doors. We ask that you please go across the street to smoke.
- Alcohol is not permitted before or during your rehearsal night or wedding day. Consumption of alcohol could potentially jeopardize the validity of the marriage. Failure to comply with this policy by you or your guest can result in the forfeiture of your privilege to celebrate the sacrament of marriage with Immaculate Conception and St. Joseph Parish.
- Professional Wedding Consultants or Coordinators are welcome in our parish, but we ask that they remain in the background and do not interfere with the liturgy process. Unless asked they should not take part in the rehearsal or wedding day preparations in regards to the church.
- Visiting Clergy are also welcome in our parish. We ask that they complete a Visiting Clergy agreement in which they agree to observe our parish customs regarding the celebration of weddings. The ICSJ staff does have final say in music selections and set up of the church. We ask that all special requests be run by the ICSJ staff for approval at least 3 weeks prior to your wedding date.
- Aisle runners should be white in color and must be used if your flower girl(s) will be dropping real flower petals.
- No animals, with the exception of service animals, are allowed inside the church.
- Final Wedding Fee payments are due by the Wednesday before your wedding day.

II. Guest Policies

St. Joseph Church can comfortably seat 450 people in its pews. Given the urban location of the church, getting here can be a bit of a challenge depending on where your guests are travelling from. The following information can be shared with your guests to insure all your family and friends can arrive to the church on time for your joyous day:

- **Parking** is located in our ICSJ School lot at 363 W. Hill Street and **limited during certain times of the year**. The parking lot is directly behind the firehouse on the corner

of N. Orleans and Hill Street located across the street from the church. No cars should be left during the day or overnight following the ceremony.

Do not park in the lot for the Atrium Village apartments, which is directly east of St. Joseph Church. You will be towed.

- **Buses, Trolleys, and Limousines** may be used to transport your guests from their hotel(s) to the church. Most transportation companies in the city are familiar with the Old Town area and will drop off in front of the church, then circle back at a designated time to pick up guests.
- **Wheelchair and Disability Access** is available for your guests. From the outside guests may enter through the parish center doors located at sidewalk level and use the ramp from there to enter the church.
- **Washrooms** are located in the Parish Center. These are multi-stall washrooms available for use by guests and the bridal party.

III. Rehearsal Night Policies

Rehearsal times are available on Thursday and Friday evenings starting at 5:30–7:30 PM. A typical rehearsal will last approximately 45 minutes, 60 minutes at the most. Rehearsals going longer than 60 minutes will be cut short if another rehearsal is scheduled to follow. On the rehearsal night the following are important to remember:

- Have all those taking part in your day at the rehearsal: parents, grandparents, ushers, flower girl, ring bearer, readers, gift bearers, Eucharistic minister, and the bridal party.
- Arrive on time! Tell guests the rehearsal time is earlier than it is to ensure everyone arrives on time. Example: 5:30 PM rehearsal time, tell guests it is at 5:15 PM.
- To bring with you, your Cook County marriage license, programs, altar server donations, as well as anything extra you will have on your wedding day: runner, unity candle, flower girl baskets, etc.

IV. Wedding Day Policies

On any given Saturday ICSJ may have three weddings scheduled, therefore it is very important that you along with your bridal party and guests arrive on time. Each couple will have a two hour window in which you have reserved the church. 30 minutes prior to the ceremony start time that allows time for everyone to arrive and get situated; a one hour ceremony; and 30 minutes following the ceremony for pictures to be taken inside the church. Given this timeframe we ask that couples keep in mind the following policies.

- Arrive at the church at least 20 minutes prior to your ceremony start time. Ladies will be able to relax in the bridal room and the gentlemen in the conference room prior to being lined up for the ceremony start.
- ICSJ will provide altar servers and wedding sacristans for your wedding day. The altar servers are there to assist your presider with the ceremony, where the sacristans are there to be the “behind the scenes” help for you, your bridal party, family, and guests.

- Save the receiving line for the reception hall. Given the short window for pictures the Bride and Groom, along with their bridal party will make a U-Turn following the recession and head back up the side aisle where you will begin pictures.
- Inform ahead of time those family members and friends who will be in pictures at the church. Let your ushers know to seat these guests near the front of the church. They can remain in their pews after the recession to make it easier on your photographer to call for them.
- No rice, birdseed, flower petals, sparklers, balloons, bubbles, etc. are permitted inside or outside of the church due to safety, maintenance, and time concerns. Please save all these for your reception hall.

V. Optional Celebrations during the Ceremony

The following are not required to be celebrated as part of your wedding ceremony but are available to couples if they wish to incorporate them. If you are unsure about any, you are welcome to discuss your thoughts with Father during your final planning meeting or at any time with our parish events coordinator.

- **Making your ceremony a mass.** A ceremony is a wedding celebration without communion. A mass is a wedding celebration with communion and the liturgy that goes along with it. For couples of mixed religion this may be a difficult decision. Take into account what is important to you as a couple and who you have invited to your wedding. Are over half of your guests not actively attending church and would people feel uncomfortable during this time?
- **The Unity Candle** has emerged in recent years as an additional symbolic articulation of a bride and groom's vows. Two families uniting to become one new family. It is most typical that the mothers of the bride and groom will come forward at the start of the ceremony to light the side candles. These candles will be used later by the couple to light their center unity candle. We ask you to consider whether this additional rite has meaning for you as a couple.
- **Visiting the Virgin Mary.** Bringing flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary Shrine is a European custom added to the marriage ceremony beginning around the time of your parents' wedding. The bride took a floral offering to the shrine as an expression of surrendering her virginity. In our time and culture, it may also be a prayer of invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary that God bless the wedding couple in their new life together as husband and wife.
- **Peace Roses** to the mothers can be offered during the sign of peace in addition to a hug or kiss. While this seems like a very nice gesture, many couples take time to consider whether this will exclude the fathers or other important members of the family, and whether or not additional flowers are necessary.

VI. Music Policies

Our Director of Music will be in touch two months prior to your wedding to go over your music in greater detail. Please note the following policies that apply to Wedding ceremonies and Masses at ICSJ:

- **Music Selections.** All music chosen for your wedding should reflect the sacred nature of the Sacrament, and must work hand-in-hand with the liturgy (selected readings, etc.). Thus music in the following categories should not be used:
 - Any music that is purely secular in nature.
 - Popular musical selections.
 - Songs that do not have an obvious relation to prayer, faith, and unity.
- **ICSJ will provide a pianist and vocalist** as part of the wedding fee. In addition, the pipe organ can be utilized at no extra cost.
- **If you do not use our Music Director**, there is a \$150 bench fee.
- **Guest Musicians.** Unfortunately, due to the high number of weddings that are performed at ICSJ, it is policy that guest musicians (not on the ICSJ approved musician roster) are not allowed. This is to ensure the quality of music that ICSJ is known for, and to make your wedding day as professional and seamless as possible. Any exceptions would be reviewed by the pastor and Music Director. Thank you, in advance, for your understanding.

VII. Additional Policies and Procedures

- **Floral Guidelines.** We provide a one page document we will ask that you share with your florist as you begin planning your floral arrangements. A few things for you to keep in mind before you decided on flowers:
 - Arrangements should be modest in size and help enhance the beauty of St. Joseph Church, not cover it up.
 - No arrangements can go directly on the altar table.
 - Aisle runners should be white and are required if your flower girl will drop real petals.
- **Photography Guidelines.** We provide a simple document to be shared with your photographer as well as your videographer (if you are using one). We want to be sure you have beautiful pictures to remember your day with but we also want to be sure they are not obstructive to any of your guests or our staff.
- **Visiting Clergy Agreement.** A document to be completed by your presider if he is coming from another parish/diocese. Just as we want to get to know you as a couple, we want to be sure we can connect with your presider to ensure all runs smoothly on your wedding day.