

# St. Margaret Mary Parish



## **Christian Marriage**

Christian marriage and Christian wedding ceremonies belong not only to the couple, but to the community of believers as well. Christian weddings are an expression of faith for the community: we believe that God creates, supports and nourishes all love as His gift to the Church. Since you have asked to be married within the Christian community, St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church has expectations and norms regarding your wedding celebration. These guidelines are intended to help all who gather for the ceremony to celebrate the marriage and participate in the prayer.

## **Setting a Date and Time**

The Archdiocese of Omaha requires that a couple contact the priest a minimum of six months before the proposed wedding date. This allows ample time to complete the marriage preparation program.

The Archdiocese allows weddings, within or outside of Mass, to be conducted Monday through Friday beginning no later than 8 p.m., and Saturdays beginning no later than 2 p.m. Weddings are normally scheduled on Fridays or Saturdays, and are not permitted on Sundays or Holydays. To accommodate our parishioners, St. Margaret Mary Church allows one wedding on Fridays, and two weddings on Saturdays, one at 11:00 a.m. and one at 2 p.m.

## Weddings at St. Margaret Mary Church

*Because we are a large parish and receive many requests for wedding ceremonies in our church, St. Margaret Mary Parish follows these norms:*

\* A person who wishes to marry at St. Margaret Mary Church must be a registered and active member of the parish, or a dependent child of a registered member. Registering in the parish for the sake of requesting a marriage in St. Margaret Mary Church does not fulfill this requirement.

\* All weddings at St. Margaret Mary Church are celebrated and witnessed by one of the parish priests serving St. Margaret Mary Parish. A priest who is a brother or uncle of the bride or groom is welcome to celebrate the Mass and witness the marriage. Priests who are close friends of the bride or groom will be welcome to **concelebrate** with the St. Margaret Mary priest.

## State and Church Requirements

*For our record keeping and to meet the requirements of the State of Nebraska, couples need to be aware of the following:*

### The Catholic Church requires:

- 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 sent to the priest preparing the couple for marriage.
- 2) Proof of freedom to marry, as testified by a family member or close friend.
- 3) Permission from the Archbishop of Omaha for a Catholic to marry a non-Catholic or a non-Christian.
- 4) Pre-marriage counseling and “permission to marry” from the Archdiocese for persons under 19 years of age.
- 5) A signed promise by the Catholic party in an inter-denomination or inter-faith marriage that all children will be baptized and raised in the Catholic faith.
- 6) Couples are to be married in the home church of either the bride or the groom.

### The State of Nebraska requires:

- 1) The couple must be legally free to marry.
- 2) Persons under 17 cannot marry in Nebraska.
- 3) Persons under 19 can marry only with a parent’s consent.
- 4) Couples must obtain a marriage license. A valid identification or birth certificate is necessary for this. Licenses are obtained from County Clerk’s Office. The fee is \$15.



### **Planning the Ceremony**

*Catholic celebrations of marriage, like all Catholic liturgical actions, are celebrations of the assembly. The model, which guides our planning, is the Sunday celebration of Mass, which calls for the “full, conscious and active participation” of the whole congregation. Above all, it is to be remembered that a wedding is not a show for the assembly to watch, but a prayer for the assembly to offer.*

#### **Choosing the prayers and readings:**

- \* The marriage ceremony must follow the Roman Catholic Rite for Marriage.
- \* The wedding rite for two Catholics takes place within the Mass. The wedding rite for a Catholic and another Christian or for a Catholic and a non-Christian (a person not baptized) should take place outside of the Mass, in a Liturgy of the Word. Permission for a Catholic and non-Catholic to be married within Mass can be requested of the Archbishop through the priest.
- \* Couples are to choose the scriptural readings and prayers for the ceremony from the “Marriage: A Journey for Life” booklet.

#### **Music for the ceremony:**

- \* The Parish Music Director must approve all music for the wedding. (See the attached “Music Guide for St. Margaret Mary Parish”.)
- \* The organist for your wedding ceremony must be one from St. Margaret Mary Parish.
- \* St. Margaret Mary Parish has a number of talented, trained song leaders from among whom you can choose to lead the singing at your wedding ceremony.
- \* Congregational hymn singing is essential. Remember this is prayer!
- \* To encourage congregational singing and participation, you may want to prepare a special booklet of music (words and notes). The Music Director will assist you with this.

Ministers and the wedding party:

- \* Only two witnesses (besides the priest) are needed for the ceremony.
- \* Children in the wedding party (Junior bridesmaids, flower girls, ring bearers) are to be no younger than six years old. Smaller children too often do not understand the nature of liturgical gatherings and are often uneasy about being in front of large groups. *(To a small child, a long aisle and many strangers' faces is a scary prospect!)*
- \* Lectors, those who proclaim the scripture readings, must be comfortable and able to proclaim the scripture effectively. At a Wedding Mass, the lector must be a Catholic.
- \* Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must be involved in that ministry in their home parish.

Other items to note:

- \* The use of a “unity candle” is not a part of the Catholic Rite for Marriage. It is optional, and although it is allowed, couples should not feel they need to light one during their ceremony. *It is not to be placed on the altar for the ceremony or for photos.*
- \* The practice of presenting flowers before the statue of the Blessed Virgin is also optional, not mandatory, in a Catholic ceremony.
- \* The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, etc., is not permitted either inside or outside of the Church. These items not only create a cleaning problem for the parish, but also can be hazardous to our elderly parishioners, or guests at your wedding.
- \* Often, your wedding is not the only activity taking place in St. Margaret Mary Church on a given day. In addition to the large number of weddings and our regularly scheduled times for confession, we must schedule wedding rehearsals and music practices, and when necessary, funeral Masses and wake services on the same day as a wedding. *Because of these time demands, reception lines are not held in St. Margaret Mary Church, nor should the bride and groom greet and usher the guests from the pews.*

Fees:

\$300 for the Church  
\$50 Cleaning deposit (Refundable)  
\$100 for the Music Director  
\$100 for the Soloist



### **Before and After the Ceremony**

*To maintain the dignity of the ceremony and out of respect for others using the church, both for weddings and other gatherings, it is necessary to be mindful of the following things:*

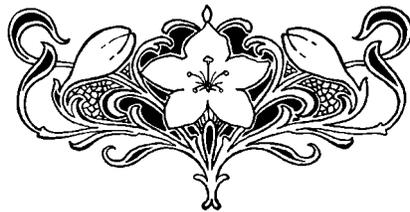
- \* A wedding consultant may be helpful in arranging your wedding preparations and organize the day, but his\her responsibilities cease at the church door and begin again at the reception. The priest and his assisting ministers are solely responsible for arranging and directing the wedding rehearsal and the wedding ceremony.
- \* A dressing room for the bride and her attendants is available in the lower level of the church. Whenever this room is used, it is expected that you appoint someone to see that the room is returned to its original clean and orderly appearance.
- \* The groom and groomsmen are to be dressed for the ceremony when they arrive. There is no suitable room for them to use for this purpose.
- \* Because there is often more than one wedding on a weekend, the bride's room is restricted for use by the wedding party to the two hours preceding the ceremony. No smoking is allowed in the bride's room or in the Suneg Center.
- \* The entire wedding party is to be gathered in the Suneg Center (in the church lower level) one-half hour before the ceremony is to begin. They are to remain there until it is time to begin the procession.
- \* Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the Suneg Center, or 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.
- \* If the wedding party is having a small luncheon or snacks while preparing for the wedding ceremony, remember that there is a one-hour Eucharistic fast before receiving communion. This means that during at least the last half-hour before a wedding Mass, those who will be receiving communion should neither eat, nor drink anything except water.

\* In respect for the parish and for other weddings, the Suneg Center is to be made orderly and clear of trash before the procession begins.

\* All wedding parties are cautioned that valuables should not be left in the dressing room or the Suneg Center during the ceremony. The Church is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

\* A person is to be assigned by the bride and groom to remove all wedding items from the church *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 part of their duties.

\* A \$50 cleaning deposit is required of all couples, to be given to the priest at least one week prior to the wedding. If the Suneg Center, bathrooms and church are not left in the same clean condition which they were before the wedding, this deposit will not be refunded, since we have to pay someone to clean.



### **Decorating the Church**

*When considering decorations, remember that St. Margaret Mary Church is already a beautiful environment and an appropriate setting for a wedding celebration.*

\* Aisle runners are not permitted in St. Margaret Mary Church.

\* The only candles permitted are those already in place in the sanctuary, and all are lit for a wedding ceremony. Additional candelabra and pew, or aisle, candles are not permitted. The candles in the sanctuary are provided by the parish. If a unity candle is used, the couple must supply it.

\* No decorative archways are allowed in the center aisle. If bows are to be used, they must be attached with elastic or string, no tape or Velcro may be used as it may damage the pews.

\* Because of seasonal floral arrangements, additional bouquets may not be needed. If desired, however, two bouquets of flowers may be placed, one on either side of the tabernacle behind the main altar. No flowers are allowed to be placed around or near the altar, or the communion rails. If there are two weddings in the church the day of your ceremony, you may want to share flowers with the other couple and leave them in the Church.

\* Any decorating must keep in mind the liturgical season during which the wedding is taking place. Seasonal decorations are part of the liturgical environment and may not be removed or changed for weddings. Couples planning weddings during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Easter or Lenten seasons need to be mindful of this.

## The Rehearsal

- \* Schedule rehearsal with the priest, and inform all members of wedding party to be punctual in arriving.
- \* Decide the pairing of the groomsmen and bridesmaids before the rehearsal begins.
- \* All members of the wedding party, the parents of the couple, lectors, ushers and servers (if not of St. Margaret Mary Parish) should attend the rehearsal.
- \* Bring marriage license and \$300 fee for the church.

## Photography and Video Taping

*St. Margaret Mary 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. To maintain the high dignity of the ceremony and the quality of the prayer, photographers and videographers need to follow these guidelines:*

- \* Flash photography may be used only for the entrance processional and the recessional. Flash may not be used at any other time during the ceremony.
- \* Photographers are not allowed to stand at the front of the church or in the center aisle during the processional.
- \* Photos during the ceremony may be taken from the back of the church, from the loft or from the side aisles. Photographers are not allowed in the sanctuary area, the center aisle or the front pew during the ceremony.
- \* **One hour** is allowed for photography, and the scheduling of that time may be stipulated by other events in the church that day (other weddings, a funeral, etc.). The time may be split before and after the ceremony if needed.
- \* St. Margaret Mary Church is not a photo studio. Family photos and photos not related to the ceremony should be taken elsewhere.
- \* The behaviors of all involved should be respectful of the sacred nature of the church. Food and drink, or inappropriate clothing (hats, etc.) is not allowed in the church.
- \* All photography must be completed by 3:15 p.m. on Saturday to allow for people who come for the sacrament of reconciliation, beginning at 3:30 p.m.
- \* All videotaping must be done from the choir loft. No exceptions are made.
- \* A signed agreement with the photographer and videographer must be returned to the priest, along with the \$50 cleaning deposit, no less than one week before the marriage ceremony. (The contract sheet is attached at the back of this guide booklet.)



## **Your Wedding Music**

*(Please read this fully before contacting the Music Director.)*

Music is an important part of any Catholic liturgical celebration, and can add to the beauty and solemnity of your marriage celebration. The following information is given to help you understand the Catholic theology of music and its role in liturgy and to assist you in making decisions regarding your wedding ceremony.

### **Music and the Wedding Liturgy:**

Music is part of the prayer of 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 this music should be a priority in your planning. First among these parts to be sung are the Alleluia before the Gospel reading, the responsorial Psalm, the Holy, the Memorial Acclamation, the Great Amen and the Lamb of God. There is a song at communion, the presentation of gifts and the entrance procession.

Since certain parts of the Mass are always sung, you will choose from a list of parish cantors to lead the singing at your wedding. A cantor may have solo parts, but the cantor’s primary goal is to lead the people in singing. If you have a friend or relative sing at the ceremony, that person will assist the parish cantor, and his or her role will be limited.

Catholic liturgy is never a “spectator” experience: all people gathered are invited to participate. ***Having a musician “perform” all the wedding music is not acceptable 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.***

### **Types of Music Suitable to a Wedding Liturgy:**

There are many sources for music which may be used at your wedding. Start with the hymnal the parish uses and the resources of the parish Music Director. There are three basic criteria to follow in selecting music:

- 1) The music must help the assembly pray and participate.
- 2) Anything used must be good, quality liturgical music.
- 3) Anything used must fit the spirit and structure of the Catholic Rite of Marriage.

Music at a wedding liturgy must fit the context of faith and the dignity of the occasion. Songs which speak of joy, gratitude, and hope for the blessings of life fit the spirit of the liturgy.

Music and love songs borrowed from the entertainment industry, however touching, may not express a spirit which fits a Catholic wedding liturgy or Christian marriage.

### Planning the Music:

All couples must meet with the parish Music Director to make arrangements for music. Peg Lacy is the St. Margaret Mary Music Director, and the organist/pianist for weddings here. She can be reached through the parish office, at 402-558-2255. Various recommendations can be given to the Music Director with regards to musicians, cantors and musical selections. In all cases, however, the final decisions regarding the music for your wedding ceremony will remain within the parish guidelines, in consultation with the Music Director and the parish priests. 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 standards.

### Musicians Stipends:

The St. Margaret Mary Music Director will help you plan your music and play at your wedding. The fee for her services is \$100. She will arrange for cantors and additional musicians also if desired. The standard fee for a cantor is \$100. If the couple desires additional musicians, the fee will be the standard professional rate (not set by St. Margaret Mary Parish). ***These fees must be paid to the parish Music Director one week prior to the wedding ceremony.***



**Preparation Checklist**

**Long-term preparation:**

- Attend Pre-session and Complete FOCCUS
- Complete FOCCUS discussion with priest or facilitator
- Plan music with Music Director.
- Complete “When Families Marry”.

**Two months before ceremony:**

- Freedom to Marry forms received.
- All necessary documents completed.
- Baptismal certificates received.
- Marriage License received.
- Plan rehearsal time with parish.
- Plan ceremony with priest.

**A week before the wedding:**

- Cleaning deposit and photo/video agreement to priest
- Fees for musicians and cantors paid to Music Director
- Remind wedding party members to be on time for rehearsal.
- Prepare fee for church, priest and servers.

**The day of the rehearsal:**

- Bring license and fee for church, priest and servers.
- Arrive on time!
- Relax (all the hard work is done!)

St. Margaret Mary Parish  
Photographer and Videographer Agreement

**This copy must be signed and returned to the priest no less than one week before the wedding.**

*St. Margaret Mary 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. To maintain the high dignity of the ceremony and the quality of the prayer, photographers and videographers need to follow these guidelines:*

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- \* St. Margaret Mary Church is not a photo studio. Family photos and photos not related to the ceremony should be taken elsewhere.
- \* All photography must be completed by 3:15 p.m. on Saturday to allow for people who come for the sacrament of reconciliation, beginning at 3:30 p.m.
- \* All videotaping must be done from the choir loft. No exceptions are made.

I have read the above requirements and agree to abide by them. I understand that failure to do so may restrict me from working in St. Margaret Mary Church in the future.

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_ Photographer  
\_\_\_\_\_ Studio Name

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_ Videographer  
\_\_\_\_\_ Business Name

Wedding date and couple names: \_\_\_\_\_

**THIS COPY MUST BE SIGNED AND RETURNED TO THE PARISH**

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**THIS COPY IS FOR PHOTOGRAPHER TO KEEP**

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**THIS COPY IS FOR VIDEOGRAPHER TO KEEP**