

St Mary's Catholic Church
580 I Street, David City, NE 68632
Wedding Policy (updated June 2023)

Introduction: Congratulations! You have discerned the sacrament of marriage as your lifetime vocation, and what an important step you are taking! Marriage is viewed by the Church to be a lifelong, permanent relationship resulting from the irrevocable commitment between a man and a woman. Because of this sacred belief, the Church seeks to help equip each couple for the lifetime commitment which they will make on their wedding day. Further, it is essential that your wedding liturgy reflects the reality that God is the Third Partner in your marriage. This belief must be manifested in the liturgical ceremony you plan and the music you select for your wedding. To facilitate this spiritual formation and liturgical preparation, the following guidelines and requirements have been prepared for couples wishing to be married in St. Mary's Catholic Church.

Diocese of Lincoln Marriage Policy

Make sure to read the blue booklet "Marriage Preparation Policy" for the Diocese of Lincoln. After reading that policy, these are the particular guidelines for the celebration of marriage at St. Mary's. The section on Cohabitation (pages 12-14) will be given special attention if applicable. We strongly discourage couples from living together before marriage.

Setting the Date/Time

Couples should visit with the pastor at least 6 months before the proposed wedding. Weddings are normally scheduled on Saturdays at 2 p.m. Rehearsals are normally at 6:30 p.m. on Friday due to the 5:30 p.m. Mass. Friday evening weddings are also an option at 4 or 7 p.m. Weddings during Advent and Lent are discouraged because of the penitential character of these seasons. If a wedding is to take place during this time, couples should respect the special nature of these liturgical seasons and not make any alterations to the decorations already in the Church during these seasons (such as flowers, pew decorations).

Marriage Preparation

Your counseling sessions will include:

- ☑ Taking the FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study) marriage preparation instrument and reviewing the results of this instrument with the priest
- ☑ Attending an Engaged Encounter Retreat at Our Lady of Good Counsel Retreat House (in Waverly from Friday night thru Sunday)
- ☑ Attending Marriage Prep Classes with the priest to study various aspects of Sacred Scripture related to marriage, spirituality, some Theology of the Body focusing on the gift and purpose of human sexuality and the importance of family life. These sessions will allow you to learn about the various moral, spiritual and practical topics involved in married life. Attend a Natural Family Planning Introductory Session. You are strongly encouraged to do the follow ups.
- ☑ Meeting with the priest to review fundamental Catholic teachings and complete the Prenuptial Questionnaire.

Couples are encouraged to register for the required class(es) on-line for a quick and easy process. The links are provided below:

Engaged Encounter:

<https://www.lincolndiocese.org/engagedencounter>

Marriage 2-0: For couples in a second marriage, older, convalidation... <https://www.lincolndiocese.org/2-0>

It is essential to schedule appointments regularly with the priest, and FOCCUS couples, who are preparing you for marriage. Arrive on time for these appointments and have the courtesy to contact him/them as soon as possible whenever an appointment needs to be rescheduled so that the counseling time may be made available to others. A checklist may be given to you by the priest to help you be organized.

Documents Needed

Before you can enter into the sacrament of marriage, a certain amount of paperwork is required. This paperwork should be done well ahead of the date of the wedding.

- A document verifying your attendance at an Engaged Encounter Weekend sponsored by the Diocese of Lincoln.
- A document verifying your attendance at a Natural Family Planning introductory session. <https://www.lincolndiocese.org/nfp>
- Prenuptial Questionnaire (an interview of the future spouses individually by the Priest).
- Affidavits of freedom to marry given before a priest for each (two for the future bride and two for the future groom) from witnesses (usually parents) who have known you since you were at least sixteen years of age.
- Catholics must furnish a Baptismal certificate issued from the Church of Baptism within the last six months. A copy of the non-Catholic Baptismal certificate is also needed.
- The marriage license from the county clerk's office. This must be presented to the priest or wedding coordinator at or before Rehearsal.

Instruction in the Catholic Faith

Marriage in the Catholic Church is the single most important decision of your life, and it is essential that both of you know the Catholic faith well before entering into this lifelong commitment. Please consider attending together an adult inquiry class (often called RCIA), either at St. Mary's or in another parish if more convenient, to review and increase your knowledge of the Catholic faith and to allow non-Catholics to learn the beliefs of their future spouse. Non-Catholics are welcome and encouraged to be open to the possibility of joining the Catholic Church through participation in the inquiry class, if they feel called to do so. Couples who practice the same faith often find it easier to allow their beliefs to play a greater part in their marriage and family life. In marriages of mixed religion, it is important for the Catholic party to remain faithful in practicing his or her beliefs, and for the non-Catholic spouse to be respectful and supportive of this obligation.

Ministers of the Sacrament

The official ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage are the bride and groom. The priest-celebrant serves as the Church's official witness. The pastor or assistant of the parish will usually preside at the marriage liturgy. If a priest outside St. Mary's Catholic supervises the preparation, he may request and be granted permission to preside at the wedding, provided that he agrees to adhere to our wedding policies. Other priest friends (or family members) are welcome to concelebrate at the marriage liturgy. The parts can be divided in various ways at the Main celebrant's discretion.

Wedding Mass/Ceremony

When the parties to be married are both Catholic, normally the wedding ceremony will take place within Mass. The couple in an interfaith marriage has the option of marriage within or without the Mass. The prescribed ritual of the Church will be used in either case. No marriage ceremony or part of a ceremony will be performed other than in the Church, without the proper dispensation or permission of the Bishop.

Music Coordinator/Organist

We have a music coordinator who is a talented organist/pianist with liturgical experience who will assist couples in their arrangements with weddings at St. Mary's Catholic Church. There are several who play organ/piano at Masses and the fee is \$150.00. Cantors are generally \$75 per person. We can refer you to parish musicians and vocalists. The priest celebrant needs someone with experience to coordinate the music within the celebration.

Music

All music played or sung for a wedding in the Church must be suitable for a Catholic worship service (i.e., reverent and sacred in character). The couples choosing marriage in the Church testify to their faith that this is a religious and sacred event. The songs and music chosen should testify to the Christian faith of the couple and give glory to God. Music is very important in creating a liturgy that is prayerful and spirit filled. In order to celebrate the presence of Jesus at the wedding, only liturgical music proper for the Church's worship should be used. This includes the music before and after the official liturgy. Congregational participation is strongly encouraged. Recorded music is not allowed. The Priest/ Pastor will give final permission regarding all music, musicians and vocalists for weddings at St. Mary's.

The Liturgy (Nuptial Mass or Ceremony outside of Mass)

Your priest/ wedding coordinator will guide you through planning your Liturgy. You will choose the readings: The First Reading (from the Old Testament), Responsorial Psalm (from the book of Psalms, preferably sung), Second Reading (from the New Testament) and the Gospel can all be chosen from a booklet provided by your wedding coordinator. The prayer of the Faithful will be provided, but you are invited to give the names of any deceased family and/or friends or other intentions that you would like to include in the intercessions.

Traditional Wedding Customs at St. Mary's Church:

- ☒ The Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood (Holy Eucharist) is the chief expression of unity of the couple. Therefore, the Unity Candle, a tradition in many non-Catholic Churches, is not encouraged, but may be allowed with permission from the celebrating priest.
- ☒ A Holy Hour or Rosary can be offered on the day of the wedding, if desired.
- ☒ The nuptial kiss may be used as a Sign of Peace. You may also give the Sign of Peace to your parents. At a Nuptial Mass, a flower may be presented as a Sign of Peace to your mothers.
- ☒ Holy Communion may be received by a Catholic Bride and Groom from both species (the Body & Blood of Christ). All Catholics at weddings within Mass are encouraged to receive Holy Communion, if they are spiritually prepared. Catholics preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage should make a general Confession before their wedding day. Confessions can be offered after the rehearsal.
- ☒ Kneeling to say a prayer before the Blessed Virgin Mary is recommended and encouraged.
- ☒ Presenting or placing a flower(s) in honor of the Blessed Virgin
- ☒ A flower, or a floral arrangement, may be situated in the sanctuary, in memory of deceased family members or friends.

Liturgical Ministers

These will be chosen by the couple with the assistance and approval of the Pastor and/or Celebrant.

Lector / Reader A Lector / Reader is chosen from those Catholics in good standing who already have training and experience in proclaiming the Word of

God. The readings should be given to the Lector(s) / Readers(s) prior to rehearsal. They should plan on attending the rehearsal to practice with the microphone and know the correct logistics.

Acolyte An Acolyte is one who assists the priest, serves at the altar and helps distribute Holy Communion during a Mass. Acolytes must be installed by a Bishop/Archbishop. An acolyte will be needed at any wedding within Mass. The wedding coordinator will arrange for a parish acolyte to serve. Or, a family member or friend of the bride and groom, who is a trained acolyte and has been installed by a Bishop/Archbishop, is welcome to serve at a Nuptial Mass.

Servers Altar Servers are young men who are trained to assist the priest during a Nuptial Mass or Wedding Ceremony. **The servers will light ALL candles** in accord with their customary role. **Candle lighters are not allowed.**

The wedding coordinator will arrange for parish altar servers. Parish altar servers regularly serve during Mass at St. Mary's. Family members or friends of the bride and groom, who are young men, are trained altar servers, and who are active servers at their parish (in or outside the Diocese of Lincoln) may serve during a Nuptial Mass or Wedding Ceremony at St. Mary's.

Flower girl(s)/Ring Bearer(s)

Flower girls and ring bearers should be at least four years old. Younger children may find it an unpleasant experience when put in unfamiliar surroundings. Wagons, and the like, are not permitted.

Rehearsal

Wedding rehearsals are normally at 6:30 p.m. on the Friday before the wedding. The Priest and wedding coordinator will meet you in the narthex at the scheduled time. Encourage your wedding party and guests to come 15 minutes early so that rehearsal may start on time. Set the tone for the rehearsal as a time of hospitality and prayerful preparation. Please remember that Catholic tradition requires a spirit of silence and reverence in the Church. Attire and decorum must be suitable to the House of God. Loud visiting/talking is not proper in the Church at any time. Please help your guests respect these traditions. The priest will be available for Confessions immediately after the rehearsal.

Dressing Rooms

The Didier Room is available for the Bridal party on the day of the wedding. The groomsmen can use the music room if needed. Items such as: wedding gown/veil, dresses, shoes, tuxes, pictures or any other personal, sentimental or garment type items **cannot** be stored at the church after rehearsal and should not be "dropped off" and left unattended the day of the wedding.

Food and Drink

- Food, drinks, chewing gum/tobacco are **NOT** allowed inside the church at ANY TIME.
- ALCOHOL IS **NOT** PERMITTED IN THE CHURCH, ANY PART OF THE BUILDING OR ON CHURCH/SCHOOL GROUNDS INCLUDING IN PERSONAL VEHICLES.
- This is a non-smoking building and there is no smoking on the grounds either.

THESE ARE NO TOLERANCE RULES.

- Food is **ONLY** allowed in the gymnasium or Didier Room.
- Water is the **ONLY** drink allowed in the Narthex of Church

Decorations

The extent of floral arrangements for the wedding is up to the couple, but should be within reason. Arrangements should never be placed upon the altar, obscure the congregation's view of the ambo or altar, or block passage around the sanctuary. The use of fresh flowers and greenery is recommended, however silk arrangements may be used. We welcome any floral arrangements you may wish to donate to the church; they will enhance the beauty of the church during the weekend Masses. Wedding decorations during the Church's most important celebrations (Easter and Christmas) should not exceed the church's decorations.

The flower girl may be permitted to drop **artificial** flower petals down the main aisle, as long as someone is assigned to pick up the petals after the wedding. Aisle runners may not be used because they are a potential safety hazard. Pew decorations can **ONLY** be attached with either blue tape or a wireless satin ribbon. No items will be permitted if they could potentially scratch the pews. **Pew clips are NOT allowed.**

Photography/Videography

Wedding photos are allowed inside the Church before and during the wedding provided they are done in the context of respect and reverence due to God's house.

Competition among photographers/videographers to create unusual effects is not to find expression in the Church building. **The photographer, if he/she chooses to use the Church for his/her settings, is responsible for the conduct of all the guests during the photo session.** Any abuse of this regard will result in the denial of individual photographers the privilege of working at St. Mary's Catholic Church.

THE CHURCH IS NOT A PHOTO STUDIO.

- Church furnishings may NOT be moved or climbed on
- Nothing should ever be placed upon the altar or ambo
- Photographers/Videographers are not allowed in the sanctuary at any time
- All photos/video in the Church building should be formal standing poses – no gag shots, garter poses, sitting on steps of sanctuary, etc.
- Voices should be hushed and the noise level should be kept to a minimum - no yelling, excessively loud laughing, use of profanity, etc.
- Arrangements should be made for the supervision and control of children present during the photo session
- Candles will not be lighted prior to the wedding
- The use of flash or auxiliary lights is not permitted during the wedding
- The photographer may not stand in the main aisle at any time beginning with the seating of the parents
- During the ceremony there is to be as little movement and noise as possible by the photographer/Videographer
- Certain video cameras must remain stationary in designated areas
- Photographs/video may not be taken inside the church after the wedding has ended

The photographer may set up equipment in the church no earlier than 3 hours prior to the wedding (e.g. 11 pm for a 2pm wedding). Wedding pictures may be taken 2 hours before the wedding start time (e.g. Noon for a 2pm wedding). Pictures should be completed and equipment removed at least ½ hour before the wedding begins (e.g. 1:30 pm for a 2pm wedding) since guests will be arriving at that time.

The bride and groom are responsible for providing their photographer(s)/videographer(s) with the St. Mary's Photographer and Videographer Policy" and ensuring that a signed copy is returned to their wedding

coordinator. The day of the wedding, all photographers and/or videographers must speak with the wedding coordinator before entering the church, setting up equipment or beginning to photograph.

Guest Book

If needed, a guest book table will be provided by the church and placed in the narthex. There are two tablecloths available for your use through the church, one white and one cream colored, or you may bring your own.

Procession

The procession may take several forms. Ideally, the attendants should process together as couples from the back of the church following the altar servers and the priest(s). Please check with the wedding coordinator about your options and choices.

Dismissal of Guests, Receiving Line, Signing the Marriage License

The bride and groom may **NOT** usher their guests out of the church. This role belongs to the ushers who shall do this row by row.

A receiving line is part of a reception ceremony and if possible should be held at the reception hall, not at the church. If the bride and groom would like to greet their guests immediately after the wedding, they are encouraged to do so in the courtyard. During inclement weather, the couple may be permitted to greet their guests in the narthex. A receiving line need only include the newlyweds or the newlyweds and their parents.

After the wedding, the best man and the maid/matron of honor are to come immediately to the Main Sacristy to sign the marriage license.

Send Off.....Bubbles and Bells Only

The use of rice, confetti, birdseed, noise makers, birds, balloons, etc., is not allowed anywhere in the Church or on the Church grounds. Rice is dangerous. Confetti and flowers are very difficult to clean up, and bird seed attracts unwanted bird messes. Others will use the church soon after your wedding, so please respect their need to have the grounds clean and free of debris. Bubbles and bells are allowed **ONLY** outside.

Clean Up After the Wedding

All food items, hangers, clothing bags, pew bows, water bottles, boxes, debris, trash or any other items brought in by you or your wedding party must be removed immediately following your wedding. You will need to assign at least two responsible adults to lead the clean up duties (e.g. Host Couple). Each area that was used should be left clean and orderly. Your wedding coordinator will provide you with a list of clean up duties. Please forward the list on to whomever you have assigned to clean up.

Janitorial Supplies and Services/Damage/Responsibilities

Janitorial Services are not provided. Please notify your wedding coordinator of any needed supplies, spills or damage. If any drink besides water is spilled, you will be charged for the cleaning services.

You are responsible for the conduct of your guests, the cleanup of all the areas that are used and any damage to the church, school, grounds or any items contained therein.

Church Donation, Fees and Gifts

St Mary's Church and facilities have been paid for and are maintained by the Stewardship of our Parishioners. For this reason, the donation amount is reduced for those who have been consistently practicing stewardship in our parish.

You will receive an email from the Parish Secretary informing you as to which offering amount will apply to you and when the donation amount is due.

- **\$250** is the donation amount for Registered Parishioners who (or family) have been consistently practicing stewardship prior to the wedding date
- **\$500** is the donation amount for Registered Parishioners who have not been consistently practicing stewardship prior to the wedding date
- **\$500** is the donation amount for those who are Not Registered Parishioners
The Church donation helps to offset the following costs: Maintaining the lights, air conditioning/heat, water, and other expenses for the Church and other rooms utilized by you, your wedding party and guests

Fees:

- \$150 is the fee for the services of the Musician (organist/piano) and should be payable directly to her/him
- \$75 (minimum) is requested as an appreciation gift for the cantor

Gifts:

- \$50 (minimum) is requested as an appreciation gift for the priest
- \$10 is requested as an appreciation gift for each parish altar server
- \$10 is requested as an appreciation gift for the acolyte (Wedding Mass only)

If any of these amounts constitute an undue burden, please speak with the Pastor.

Remember, "A wedding lasts a day, but a marriage lasts a lifetime."