

Guidelines for Weddings at the Church of the Nativity

Revised: September 2020

Setting the date

Weddings are usually held on Saturdays (except Holy Saturday) and at times on other weekdays, but never on Sundays. The times available for reservation are 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Please contact the rectory office at least six months prior to the date of your wedding. There are requirements to be met and paperwork to be processed, which need to be completed at least three weeks before the wedding. The six months preparation period is the policy of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

The fee for your wedding at the Church of the Nativity is \$900.00 for registered, contributing parishioners of more than two years; \$1200.00 for registered parishioners of less than two years; and \$1400.00 for all others. Your wedding date is confirmed only after the fee is paid in full. Should the wedding be cancelled for any reason with a notice longer than 6 months, the fee minus \$250 will be returned. If it is cancelled within 180 days preceding the booked date, then the church will retain \$500. The remaining amount will be refunded.

The wedding fee covers, among other things, the "FOCCUS Inventory", completion and review of paperwork, the wedding coordinator fees, and use of the church for the rehearsal and wedding. This fee does not include flowers or music. It is customary to give a donation to the officiant and altar server. This should be done in separate envelopes on the day of the rehearsal or wedding. Altar server provides assistance to the officiant during the wedding ceremony. You are free to invite an experienced altar server of your acquaintance to assist at your wedding. If you are unable to provide your own server, the parish is happy to provide one. It is customary to acknowledge their service with a gift of \$20.

With the renovation of the O'Hare Center, there will be a Bride's room available in 2020. However, this small Parish Center is not rented for wedding receptions.

Choosing a celebrant

The celebrant should be one of your choice, although in some situations our staff will assist you in selecting one. If you attend Masses at our church, the easiest way is to talk to the priests and deacons after Mass and get to know the one that you feel most comfortable with. If you intend to ask a priest or deacon friend from outside the parish to officiate at your wedding, please inform him who your contact is at Nativity. It is the responsibility of that priest or deacon to prepare you for your marriage, and to verify that your paperwork is submitted. We require that the

paperwork and documentation be on file at our church one month prior to the wedding ceremony at the latest.

In the event that the celebrant of your choice is unable to assist you with the preparation and paperwork (if he is from out-of-town, for example), Deacon Dominick Peloso may be able to facilitate the process. If that is the case, please contact him directly at (650) 269-6279.

If either party has been married previously, you must inform the celebrant immediately. No date may be set until this issue is resolved.

Requirements

In order to marry in the Roman Catholic Church at least one of you must be a baptized Catholic, and we must have proof of your freedom to marry. In addition to the following documentation, you need to be available to meet with our Wedding Coordinator, the Music Director, and to discuss the liturgy for your wedding with the celebrant of your choice.

The following paperwork is required:

✦ If both parties are Catholic each must obtain a baptismal certificate dated within the last six months prior to the wedding, from the church where the baptism occurred.

✦ If one party is Catholic he/she must obtain a baptismal certificate dated within the last six months prior to the wedding, from the church where the baptism occurred. The non-Catholic party must provide a copy of their baptismal record, if baptized.

✦ If ours is not your parish, then you need to obtain permission from your parish to be married outside of it. A letter signed by your pastor giving this permission needs to be sent to us.

The following forms will be completed:

✦ Form A - self-testimony "Pre-Nuptial Inquiry for the Bride / Groom"

✦ Form B - witness testimony "Pre-Nuptial Witness Inquiry for the Marriage"

✦ Possibly dispensation/permission to marry if one of the parties is non-Catholic

✦ *FOCCUS Inventory* completion and discussion of results with the celebrant. This inventory is a self-diagnostic tool designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their unique relationship.

✦ Certificate of completion for Marriage Preparation Class or Engaged Encounter. You will need to arrange for this yourself, with our consultation regarding the options.

✦ Certificate of completion of a Natural Family Planning Class.

✦ Marriage License must be obtained by you at the California county of your choice. The license is valid for 3 months from the date of issue. Please bring the marriage license with you to the rehearsal and give it to your Nativity wedding coordinator. On your wedding day, the license must be signed by your witnesses, and the

officiant. After the ceremony it will be sent by the parish secretary to the county where it was obtained.

When your wedding date has been secured on our calendar you will be sent a packet of information detailing all that needs to be completed before your wedding. This will include a checklist of things that need to be completed along with a list of the marriage preparation class options, and our Natural Family Planning class schedule.

Wedding Coordinator

A Catholic wedding offers many options; in the way the ceremony is conducted and also in the content of the ceremony. The Wedding Coordinator will explain the options and provide the material to choose the prayers and readings that will make up the rite. The wedding ceremony is the climax of your preparations and the beginning of your new life together.

We expect that you will take the time to plan the ceremony carefully and thoughtfully. After you have contacted the office and established a wedding date and time, you will be contacted by the parish Wedding Coordinator, who will:

- ✦ Explain the parish guidelines;
- ✦ Set the date and time for the rehearsal;
- ✦ Discuss the planning for the wedding ceremony.

The wedding coordinator will collect the marriage license from you at the time of the rehearsal. *Without that document, your wedding cannot be officiated.* She will give you the Church's Wedding Certificate immediately after the ceremony.

Although we attempt to present on this website most of the information you will need, your Wedding Coordinator will be able to assist you if you have any questions on issues not covered here. She will put a lot of effort and will do her best to make sure your ceremony turns out to be exactly the way you planned.

Church decorations

Please share this section with your florist and anyone else assisting you with the decorations for your wedding. Our church can seat about 350 people. There are 24 rows with 48 pews on the main nave, and 6 rows with 6 pews each of either side of the chapel.

✦ Flowers, as well as pew bows, may be attached to the pews with rubber bands, ribbon, or especially covered wire (i.e. pipe cleaners). **Do not** use staple, tape, or tacks, as they damage the wood.

Please keep in mind that the Church is over 140 years old and on the National Register of Historical Places.

✦ Wreaths under 24 inches on the outside diameter can be placed on the designated brass hardware of the interior church doors.

✦ Selecting a florist is, of course, your choice. We recommend that your floral arrangements be in keeping with the reverence and environment of the church. We have a *Florist Agreement* that we request that your florist and couple sign.

✦ Floral displays must be real flowers or plants.

An additional fee of \$200.00 is charged for altar flowers. The Altar Society will provide 2 arrangements for the main altar. Please inform your wedding coordinator of your color preference. It is very important that you understand that the arrangements put on the back altar become a gift to God and must, therefore, remain in Church. *You should not take the flower arrangement placed there.* Other additional arrangements may be taken or left at your discretion.

✦ Couples are asked to take note of the Church's liturgical seasons during which their marriages will take place. Liturgical decorations and enhancements cannot be moved aside or removed (for example, the red bunting during Christmas, the purple panels during Lent). This knowledge should be helpful to you to take into account when selecting the color of your flowers, as well as when selecting your wedding attire. There are restrictions regarding the display of flowers allowed during Lent. Please discuss this with the parish secretary or Wedding Coordinator in case your wedding date falls during the Lenten season.

During Ordinary Time, flowers can be placed on the following locations:

✦ On either side of the Tabernacle on the back altar
(required \$200.00 for the Altar Society).

✦ By the two side Altars (Blessed Mother and Sacred Heart), on columns/pedestals.

✦ On the table in the vestibule area.

Placement of flowers and decorations are permitted one hour before the beginning of the ceremony.

Florists may return on the Friday following your wedding day to remove vases, pedestals, etc., that they provided (unless they are disposable).

✦ Local and State fire regulations prohibit lighted candles in the aisle of the church. Candles may *only* be used in the sanctuary and their use is limited.

For environmental, safety, and liability reasons, we insist that no rice, confetti, birdseed or balloons be thrown inside or outside of the Church building. Also, no flower petals are permitted to be thrown inside or outside of the Church.

✦ Wedding programs are optional and your responsibility. If you decide to have one, please consult with the Wedding Coordinator about the order of the service and the options available. The Coordinator will give you an outline to assist you with your planning. It is important that the Coordinator and you be in agreement before you print your program.

✦ Many ethnic groups have particular customs as part of their wedding ceremonies. If you wish to have a certain custom be part of your celebration, please inform the Wedding Coordinator during the planning stages.

✦ Unity Candles are not a Catholic tradition and are not used in wedding ceremonies at the Church of the Nativity.

Videos and photos

Like the florist, the videographer or photographer is hired by the couple. Posed photos prior to the ceremony should be completed fifteen minutes before the scheduled start of the wedding. This allows time for last minute details by the presider and Wedding Coordinator, and also time for the wedding party to make final preparations. Candid shots, as long as they are not intrusive, are allowed.

During the ceremony, time exposure photographs (no flash) are permitted. In general, pictures may be taken during the ceremony as long as the photographer does not become a distraction to the celebrant, wedding party, or wedding guests. The church is bright enough and provides adequate lighting. Additional lighting for filming is not permitted.

The videographer and/or photographer are permitted to document your wedding from the choir loft and congregational area. They are not allowed within the sanctuary—on the altar side of the rail.

You should inform all those who wish to be in post-wedding photographs to stay in Church or to return to Church immediately after the ceremony. The bridal party should also return to the altar for pictures.

Church furnishings will not be removed for pictures or videos.

The time allocated for a wedding is one and a half hours from the start. For example, a 2:00 p.m. wedding must be out of the Church by 3:30 p.m. This guideline is to be strictly adhered to and you should inform your photographer and videographer. Other use of the church will follow your wedding.

Wedding music

The music selected for your wedding should reflect and enhance the religious celebration of the service, creating an atmosphere of prayer and joy. Some music is very suitable and other is clearly not. Any composition which is secular, such as popular love songs, ballads, and operatic or Broadway favorites, tends to negate the sacred union of the couple. These songs should be reserved for the wedding reception.

Please consult with Jill Mueller, Music Director, regarding your choices. Jill can be reached at (650) 493-1963. You must contact her even if you intend to bring your own musicians or cantor. Financial arrangements for the music are not covered by the wedding fee.

Music may be provided by voices, soloist, or instruments. If using a vocalist, make sure that the music you select fits his/her range and ability. This is also true for

instrumentalists. If a microphone is needed, please let the Wedding Coordinator know before the rehearsal date.

Wedding rehearsal

Your rehearsal will be scheduled in consultation with the Wedding Coordinator, and discussed during the first meeting. Rehearsals are usually scheduled at 4:00 p.m. or 6:15 p.m. on the Thursday or Friday preceding your wedding. ***It is very important that the rehearsal start on time.*** It lasts approximately forty-five minutes. The complete wedding party including parents, ushers, bridal attendants, readers, and others with special roles in the ceremony should be present for the rehearsal.

✦ A copy of the outline of the ceremony from the back of the "Together for Life" booklet should be given to the priest/deacon and wedding coordinator at least one week before the ceremony. Your wedding coordinator will have the readings ready for your rehearsal and wedding ceremony.

The civil marriage license, and stipends for the officiant and altar server must be brought to the rehearsal and given to your wedding coordinator. She will take care of them and make sure they are distributed.

On your wedding day

Please be on time, as your wedding is one of the many events happening in Church that day. Since we do not have dressing or waiting room facilities at this time, we ask that the wedding party arrive dressed in wedding clothes. Your Wedding Coordinator will be ready and will have everything ready for you to go through the most beautiful day of your life.

Congratulations!