

# **Holy Trinity Parish Wedding Policy**

## **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Weddings are a special time of joy and promise for a bride and groom, their families and friends, and in an indirect way, for the entire parish community. Indeed, our faith tells us that in the sacrament of Marriage, where the bride and groom are themselves ministers, is a privileged and grace-filled event. It is a time which foreshadows the great marriage feast of the Lord Jesus Christ to us, his people, in the Resurrection and eternal life.

In view of this religious significance and lifelong importance, it stands to reason that the celebration of marriage must be entered into with prayerful planning. Therefore, it is in a spirit of joyful anticipation and responsible preparation that this policy has been developed to guide and direct couples in solemnizing their marriages at Holy Trinity Parish. Our goal is to work with you to make your celebration worthy of the House of the Lord, in his presence, while making you feel at home in our parish.

## **WHO MAY MARRY IN OUR PARISH**

At least one member of the wedding couple should be a registered member of the parish for at least six months prior to the date of marriage. The bride, groom or parents of either should maintain a domicile or quasi-domicile within the boundaries of Holy Trinity for the couple to be married here.

## **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

The prospective bride and groom must meet with a priest or deacon at least six months prior to the contemplated date of marriage. This would normally be Fr. Leo if the ceremony will take place in Ashland or Plymouth, and Fr. Zeb if the wedding is planned for Bristol. Deacon Mike may also serve as officiant in any location. The date of the wedding is usually confirmed at this meeting. Please do not make any definite plans with a reception hall until your wedding date and time is confirmed.

Couples will be asked to fill out a Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire. This includes biographical information as well as the intended spouses' testimony, under oath, concerning their intentions to enter into Christian Marriage according to the teaching of the Church. The couple will also participate in a FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication and Understanding Study) instrument. The couple will subsequently meet with the priest or a trained couple to discuss the results of the FOCCUS.

The couple must also attend an approved marriage preparation program with other couples and trained couple facilitators - either an "Engaged Encounter Weekend" or the local deanery "Engaged Couple Seminar." Application brochures will be made available.

If, for convenience sake, you choose to be prepared by a priest or deacon outside Holy Trinity Parish, a letter from the preparing priest or deacon must be sent to our Parish office no later than 6 weeks after the initial contact with the officiant. The letter from the preparing priest or deacon should state that he will gather the necessary documents and conduct the necessary marriage preparation as outlined in this policy.

## **DOCUMENTS**

If the bride and/or groom have not been baptized at Holy Trinity, they must obtain a recent copy (issued within six months of the time presented) of their Certificate of Baptism from their churches of baptism.

In the case of a previous marriage on the part of either party, documents must be presented that assure the freedom of one or both parties to marry in the Catholic Church - i.e. a Decree of Annulment.

A civil marriage license (cost \$45.00) must be obtained from any city or town hall in the State of New Hampshire (good for 90 days from the date of issuance) - blood tests are not required in NH. No marriage may legally take place without a civil marriage license.

With the exception of the civil license, which must be presented no later than the rehearsal, couples must submit all necessary documentation at least 30 days prior to the wedding.

## **DATE, TIME & PLACE**

Weddings are reserved on a first come, first reserved basis. Marriages may take place on any available weekday or on available Saturdays until 1:30 PM. Marriages are not performed on Sunday.

Church teachings on Christian worship discourage weddings during the Lenten Season (Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday) due to the special penitential character of that time in the life of the Church.

Following the initial meeting with a priest or deacon, if several weddings are planned for the same period of time, the wedding couple may meet with the Parish pastoral minister, David Gravel. At this meeting, he will guide the couple in their decisions, insuring that their plans and choices are consistent with the sacredness of the celebration. He may also serve as your Parish contact until the wedding day.

## **WEDDING MUSIC**

Following the initial meeting, all wedding couples are required to meet with the Parish Director of Music Ministries, Christine Melanson. It is usually the responsibility of the Holy Trinity Music Ministry to play and sing at weddings. Although not recommended, should you choose a relative or friend to sing or play for your wedding, all music must still be approved by the Director of Music Ministries or the Parish pastoral minister to assure its liturgical appropriateness.

The Parish Music Ministry can assist you if you wish to have a solo instrument (trumpet, flute, violin, etc.) at your wedding. There will be an additional fee for a soloist.

## **ART & ENVIRONMENT**

Creating an appropriate mood or environment for your wedding will dramatically enhance your marriage ceremony. The priest will provide the name of an Art & Environment Committee contact person at your initial meeting, who will be happy to advise you. There may be seasonal liturgical banners, plants, flowers and objects in the church at the time of your wedding. These parish decorations can be quite substantial in themselves but may be enhanced with wedding flowers.

The A&E contact person will be able to help if stands or containers are needed. Flowers or candles may never be placed on the altar or where they would screen the tabernacle. Tape should not be used to place bows or flowers on the ends of the pews; ribbons, plastic hooks or covered wire are good alternatives. At the directive of our Diocesan Risk Management Department, aisle runners (white carpets) are no longer permitted in our churches.

When planning the arrangement of flowers and other decorations, please call the office to make sure that the church will be open at the time of delivery.

It is the responsibility of the couple to see that their decorations are properly in place for their wedding and taken down after the wedding. If you choose, please feel free to leave your flowers in the church following your wedding. They will be much enjoyed by our parishioners! Any decorations other than a small number of flower arrangements should be removed immediately after the wedding, unless otherwise arranged with the A&E contact person.

## **HANDICAP ACCESSIBILITY**

All of our churches are completely accessible to the handicapped. However, with the exception of St. Agnes Church, access to restrooms may not be easily accessible to the elderly or handicapped.

## **VISITING CLERGY**

Visiting Catholic clergy who are family friends/relatives, in good standing with the Catholic Church, are most welcome to witness marriages in the parish. It is expected that visiting clergy will adhere to the regulations of the Diocese of Manchester, the policies and customs of our parish, and agree to be present for the wedding rehearsal. Clergy who do not reside in New Hampshire must obtain permission from the New Hampshire Secretary of State.

Visiting clergy will need to confirm their intention to witness the marriage with Fr. Leo, no later than 30 days prior to the wedding.

## **REHEARSAL**

The rehearsal is usually scheduled for the day before the wedding. It normally takes 30-60 minutes. Please schedule rehearsal parties after the rehearsal. It is important that everyone be on time.

## **PHOTOGRAPHERS/VIDEOGRAPHERS**

Photographers/Videographers are asked to introduce themselves to the officiant of the marriage prior to the wedding ceremony and are asked to be cooperative with the policies of the parish. At no time is the photographer/videographer permitted in the sanctuary area of the church. We welcome couples to take formal wedding pictures in church after the ceremony, if time allows, particularly in inclement weather.

## **MARRIAGE FEES**

Stipends and fees will be discussed at the first meeting with the priest or pastoral minister. The wedding couple will be asked to sign an agreement specifying the fees and stipends and their due dates.

## **THE CHURCH AS A SACRED SPACE**

While in the church for the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony, all wedding parties and their guests are asked and expected to honor the dignity of the sacred place that is our church building. Eating or drinking (except water if necessary) is not permitted in church.