

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT
DANBURY, CONNECTICUT

WEDDING GUIDELINES

COUPLE'S
BOOKLET
2002

**A COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES
IN
THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT CHURCH

85 Great Plain Road
Danbury, Connecticut 06811
797-0222

Dear Friends,

Congratulations! Your love for one another has brought you to this moment in your lives. It is because of this love that you have come to St. Gregory's to invite us to be a part of your celebration. You have already begun to make preparations for your celebration, a celebration you want to be most beautiful, most expressive of your hopes and dreams for the future. We welcome you to celebrate and solemnize your wedding with us in the context of prayer as a people of faith. All of our celebrations are rooted in listening to the Scriptures so that we can be nourished and strengthened by God's Word.

Although the marriage celebration focuses upon the bride and groom, the ceremony is not a "private" celebration. In one sense, marriage is very personal since you pledge yourselves to each other in an intimate and lasting union. But it is more. Marriage celebrations acknowledge first and foremost the presence of Jesus in those assembled within the church.

This in no way implies that our marriage celebrations aren't personal. They are personal but not private. All of our celebrations are for the building up of the Community of Disciples in faith.

In this spirit, St. Gregory's Parish provides the following guidelines for celebrating weddings in the building which shelters the prayer of our community. We look forward to work with you to make your marriage day special.

If you should need any help, please do not hesitate to call the Rectory (797-0222) or email us (frarrando@AOL.com).

I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS - - CHOICES TO BE MADE

A. SETTING THE WEDDING DATE

WEDDING SEASON, TIME AND DATE

Weddings are ordinarily scheduled at least nine months prior to the celebration. When choosing a date for your wedding, **be aware of the Church's liturgical calendar**. For example, during some seasons the liturgical color is purple (Lent - violet tones; Advent navy tones), others green (Ordinary time), and still others white (Easter and Christmas). The main Altar is adorned with the Liturgical colors of the appropriate season. During the Christmas season, there will be poinsettias in the sanctuary, lilies during Easter and **NO** flowers are used during Advent and Lent. **The seasonal decorations will not be removed for a wedding.**

Weddings are scheduled with respect to the couple's wishes and the availability of the church building and parish ministers. **Weddings are normally celebrated on Saturdays**. If you are planning a morning wedding, you may request a time between 10:30 A.M. and Noon. Afternoon weddings can be arranged between 1:00 P.M. and 2:30 P.M. Evening weddings are held at 6:00 P.M. or if you prefer, Friday evening at 6:00 P.M.

Only the priest/deacon may book the date for the celebration of your wedding. Please call the Priest/Deacon (797-0222) who will be witnessing your marriage with your proposed date.

B. A wedding liturgy is an activity of the church.

Catholic liturgy is always communal. Liturgical services are **not** private functions but are celebrations of the entire Church. **Wedding liturgies are no exception.** While the wedding touches the couple, their family and friends in a particularly intimate way, it nevertheless pertains to the entire parish and to the larger church as well. **You are not simply renting the church building for an hour.** You are expressing your faith and undertaking a grace-filled commitment in the midst of our parish community. Similarly, St. Gregory's is not simply providing external religious trappings at an otherwise secular event. We are celebrating God's covenant with the church as expressed in your marriage.

As a celebration of the Church, the wedding liturgy is shaped *primarily* by the Church's *Rite of Marriage*, which presents the structure, texts, and symbolic actions that are basic to all Catholic weddings. You will have many options to choose from. You will receive this at the Pre-Cana.

C. WEDDING PREPARATION WORKSHOP (Pre-Cana)

A wedding liturgy is not just a celebration of love; it is the establishment of a covenantal relationship.

Love is, we hope, the basis of all marriages, yours included. Christian marriage goes one step further, though. Drawing on rich biblical imagery, the Church sees marriage also as a **covenant** between husband and wife. A marriage in the Church is not just the "religiously correct" thing to do. It is, rather, **a commitment to live out your marriage in such a way that it will be a reflection of Christ's covenantal relationship with the People of God.** Our Church takes your love for each other very seriously. This is why the Church numbers marriage among the sacraments.

In preparation for your celebration you will have to attend a Wedding Preparation Workshop. **Pre-Cana** is such a marriage preparation workshop. **Its primary purpose is to help you in preparing for your sacramental marriage.** The workshop helps you see your strengths and build upon them. The Pre-Cana workshop can assist you in your relationship with one another by openly discussing the adjustments necessary in marriage, effective communication, resolving differences and reaching decisions maturely and amicably. It can also help you to see your wedding day in the context of our Catholic tradition.

All couples choosing to marry in the Church are required to participate in a Pre-Cana workshop. This should be done at least six (6) months prior to the wedding date. St. Gregory's offers an "in-house" Pre-Cana workshop three (3) times a year (January, June and September). We are very proud of our Pre-Cana Workshop and have made every effort to provide a memorable, as well as informative day. If you choose to make one of the in-house Pre-Cana workshops, please call and make a reservation as soon as possible. Only ten (10) couples can sign up for any one workshop.

You may also choose to attend a Pre-Cana sponsored by the Family Life Bureau of the Diocese of Bridgeport (1-372-4301). Encounter Weekends are also available. For information, please call the Family Life Bureau.

D. PRE-MARRIAGE INVESTIGATION (P.M.I.)

The purpose of the P.M.I. is to insure that you are meeting all of the fundamental requirements of the Church. The P.M.I. consists of a questionnaire that you must complete. The priest/deacon arranging your wedding will do the P.M.I. with you. Please call and meet with one of the priests/deacons to begin your paperwork. Please bring with you a recent copy (not older than six (6) months old) of your Baptism Certificates. You can obtain this from the Church in which you were baptized. You will also need copies of your Communion and Confirmation certificates. These are obtained from the Church in which you received these sacraments. Non-Catholic Christians need only to bring their Baptism Certificate.

1) The Pre-Matrimonial Investigation (P.M.I.) is the official and permanent Church record of your intent to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage. The P.M.I. questionnaire is given to each of you as the basis for this record. Please don't let the formal name frighten you. This occasion also gives you an opportunity to meet with the priest/deacon on a one to one level.

2) An Interfaith Marriage is not necessarily a problem. A routine dispensation will be applied for. Non-Catholic clergy are very welcomed to participate in your ceremony.

Additional meetings may be set up at this time. Please make sure that you have the priest/deacon make note of your rehearsal time.

E. CHOOSING YOUR WEDDING PARTY

Your Best Man and Maid of Honor are an important part of your celebration. At least one of them must be Catholic. If they are both members of the Catholic Church, they both should be active and practicing. If only one of them is Catholic, the other should be active in his/her faith. Since your Wedding is being celebrated in the context of a Faith Community, your witnesses should be individuals of faith also. Non-active relatives and/or friends can be honored by having them serve as ushers or bride's maids.

II. THE REHEARSAL

Your rehearsal time is scheduled by the priest/deacon who will be witnessing your marriage. Rehearsals are normally held the night before the wedding but may have to be on another night depending on available scheduling.

Please be on time for your rehearsal. There are many other activities demanding the priest's/deacon's time and other schedules set up for the church. If you are late the rehearsal time may be shortened because of other scheduled activities.

The bride, groom, best man and maid of honor should be at the rehearsal, along with members of the bridal party. Readers and the bride's escort should also be present.

Please bring the following to the Rehearsal:

1) **MARRIAGE LICENSE** - One month prior to your wedding day, you will need to apply for your marriage license. You will need a blood test with the results signed by a physician at the time that you apply for your license. Your Marriage license must be applied for at City Hall in Danbury. This license has to be given to the priest/deacon who will be witnessing your marriage no later than the rehearsal evening.

2) **ORGANIST FEE** - \$150.00

3) **INSTRUMENTAL or VOCALIST FEES** (if applicable)

III. AT THE WEDDING

A. NUPTIAL MASS vs. WEDDING CEREMONY

In the Catholic Church, a wedding can take place by itself (*Liturgy of the Word*) or it can be celebrated in the context of a Mass. A Nuptial Mass is appropriate for those who are Catholic and are active communicants. The duration of this celebration normally would be an hour and a half (including the receiving line).

A Wedding Ceremony is appropriate where one party is not baptized or is a non-Catholic Christian or a Catholic not actively participating in the life of the Church. Ceremonies normally would be about one hour (60) minutes (including a receiving line).

Please be mindful of the time of your celebration. Everyone wants this to be a special day in your life but you must be considerate of others. **It is imperative that the celebration begin as close to the appointed time as possible.** The priest/deacon, the organist and the other individuals connected to the church have other obligations after your wedding. In light of this, weddings that begin more than 10 minutes late will be celebrated within the Liturgy of the Word only. **Weddings that are delayed more than 30 minutes without exceptional reasons will not be celebrated.** With this understanding please make every effort to be at the Church on time.

B. THE MINISTERS FOR THE CELEBRATION

1) THE ASSEMBLY

As at any Liturgy, the fundamental ministry within the wedding Liturgy is that of the Assembly of people who gather to celebrate and witness your marriage. This assembly of people is one of the expressions of Christ's presence in the liturgy.

Everyone in the church for your wedding is, first and foremost, a member of this Assembly - the two of you, the wedding party, the priest/deacon and the musicians included. The Assembly celebrates the Liturgy; individual members of this Assembly fulfill various special ministries within the Liturgy.

Take a look at the list of people who will be at your wedding: your relatives, friends and associates from work and school; people from different parts of the country; Catholics from other parishes, non-Church goers; non-Catholics and non-Christians who may be unfamiliar with the Catholic Liturgy or even uncomfortable in a Catholic church. At the wedding, these various people - many of whom may not know one another - will come together to witness and celebrate your marriage.

No single thing will overcome people's natural inhibition to participate at a wedding; it requires a combination of efforts. These have to begin **before the opening procession**; the basic ingredient is hospitality. As John Buscemi says in his book *Celebrating Marriage*, "you can't make up in glitter and extra flowers what you lack in genuine hospitality and graciousness" (104). People are generally more at ease and open to celebrate when they know the people around them. At weddings, this often does not happen. People come into the church as strangers and leave as strangers. For this reason, the time before the entrance procession is one of the best opportunities **to set a positive tone for your wedding**. Make sure that your guests are warmly greeted as they arrive at church, preferably by the two of you or at least by your parents. **This is probably the single most effective thing you can do to make people feel welcomed**, to thank them for joining in this special celebration, and to encourage their participation in the Liturgy. This also allows you to introduce friends and relatives before the Liturgy, rather than waiting until the reception. Seat everyone close together toward the front of the church. Do not artificially divide the assembly into "bride's side" and "groom's side"; instead, introduce people to others they may not know. Such interaction in church is not irreverent; it serves to shape a worshipping Assembly out of many individuals who will be at your wedding.

2. THE COUPLE

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the bride and the groom minister the sacrament of marriage to one another, a priest/deacon and at least two witnesses are also required to be present; however, you are not married by the presiding priest or deacon, nor does the priest or deacon "pronounce you man and wife." As a couple, you exercise your ministry by preparing the wedding liturgy with the presiding priest or deacon, and Mrs. Linda Wrenn, our parish music director. Within the wedding liturgy, you will exercise your ministry when you exchange vows and rings and respond to the questions posed by the priest or deacon concerning your intentions.

The two of you are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Roman Catholic wedding Liturgy. You give yourselves to one another in marriage. The priest/deacon serves as the Church's official witness, but he does not "pronounce you man and wife."

3. THE PRESIDER

In most cases a priest/deacon from St. Gregory's will preside at the wedding Liturgy. However, any priest/deacon friend of yours is more than welcomed to preside at your wedding. Clergy from other religions or denominations are always welcome at St. Gregory's.

4. READERS

The Word of God is at the heart of all Catholic worship and services. When you look for someone to server as Reader, remember that you look for someone to proclaim the Word of God. Therefore search out men and women whose lives give evidence of their having heard and live the Word they are to proclaim. Search for people whose lives proclaim God's presence among us.

6. MUSIC and ORGANIST

The music at your wedding has the power to encourage or stifle the participation of the Assembly. The norm in the Roman Catholic Liturgy is participatory music; that is, the majority of music during the Liturgy should be sung by the entire Assembly. A little planning and some thoughtful choices can make your wedding a more meaningful and joyous occasion for everyone present.

Music should be carefully chosen and should be suitable to the religious nature of the celebration. The text or lyric of a song is as important as the quality of the music. Just because a song is "sacred" doesn't mean it is liturgically appropriate at a particular point in the Mass or ceremony. Consult the priest/deacon or organist regarding the suitability of music. Final decision of suitability rests with the priest/deacon.

Our parish organist normally plays all weddings. Her basic fee is one hundred fifty (\$150.00) dollars and this should be given to the priest/deacon at the rehearsal. (The organist does not usually attend the rehearsal.) Checks should be made payable to LINDA WRENN. Please contact Mrs.Wrenn by email pianobar88@hotmail.com concerning your wedding. If, for any reason, you choose to use another organist, you must pay our parish organist her fee anyway. This payment must be made prior to your rehearsal. These fee agreements are common to most parishes.

The basic fee includes the following:

- Organ Prelude
- Processional
- Any congregational hymns or songs
- Sung Responsorial Psalm (if desired)
- Any sung parts of the Mass
- Organ music during the distribution of communion
- Recessional

Any additional music or vocal solo work will require an additional fee, negotiated according to the amount of work required.

Vocal soloists and/or instrumentalist (yours or ours) are welcome. They must be chosen at Mrs. Wrenn's discretion, and you should speak with her regarding their fees and any additional fee due her for rehearsal with them. Any and all additional fees are to be paid with the organist's basic fee the night of rehearsal.

6. **ALTAR SERVERS** will be assigned to your Wedding unless you specifically ask for individuals by name. Normally a gift of \$10.00 per server is a kind gesture.

C. The tone of the wedding is usually set before the procession even comes down the aisle.

In a covenantal relationship, as partners, you are equal and complementary. The decision to enter into marriage is made mutually by the two of you. This has implications for the wedding liturgy and its preparations. Just as both partners participate in marriage preparation sessions, so both partners work with the parish staff to prepare the wedding liturgy. This is not just "her special day," but a special day for the couple, your families and friends, and your church. Family members and friends can offer you much assistance, but they cannot pre-empt the primary role of you, the couple working together.

The entrance procession, symbolizes the equality of the bride and groom. Following the priest or deacon and the other members of the wedding party, the bride *and* groom should enter, escorted by their parents. Rather than suggesting that the bride is being "given away" by her father, this approach to the procession also manifests and celebrates the emergence of a new family from two existing families. The father of the bride is not left out; he is simply joined in his happy role by the bride's mother and the groom's parents, all of whom support their son or daughter on the journey to marriage.

D. FLOWERS

Flowers are not required, but welcomed. If you choose to have flowers, please remember the followings regulations:

- 1) Only **real live** flowers can be used in Church.
- 2) Flowers, when used, should be arranged tastefully. The Altar and the Ambo (Reader's Stand) are the two primary focal points. Whatever flowers are placed by the Altar must also be placed by the Ambo. **Flowers should never be solely at the Altar.** Flowers are **NEVER** placed on the Altar.
- 3) **Couples leave the flowers in the Church for the weekend Liturgies.**
- 4) Flowers are expensive. We encourage you to check to see if another wedding is taking place that day so that you can share flower expenses.
- 5) Please inform your florist that they may **not** use tape to place flowers on the pews. The gum of the tape destroys the furniture finish.

E. UNITY CANDLE

The so-called "unity candle" is a commercial product with no liturgical value. This is a trite gimmick. It has no real history or tradition behind it. For this reason, **we strongly suggest that you do not include it in your wedding.**

F. CHURCH CLEANLINESS

It is your responsibility to leave the Church as clean as you find it. Since you will not be able to see to this yourselves, please arrange with others to do the clean up. The parish has a list of persons who may be hired for this. Cleaning must be done immediately after the wedding. Please do not have your guests throw rice. People have been known to slip on rice and injure themselves.

G. PHOTOGRAPHY and VIDEOTAPING

The Liturgy during which you celebrate your marriage is a sacred moment of rejoicing in prayer, song and gesture. Photographs and videotapes serve as an attractive reminder of your wedding, but you don't want the taking of pictures to interfere with the celebration. Through the use of various lenses and film speeds, a professional photographer can achieve excellent results. While we understand your desire to record this moment, we insist that you do observe the following guidelines:

1. Photographers and video tapers are not permitted to roam about the church once the Liturgy has begun. Photographers and video tapers should check with the Presider (priest/deacon) upon their arrival.
2. Only the lighting already in the church may be used. No additional lighting may be brought into the church. Absolutely NO flash lighting will be permitted.
3. Photographers and video tapers are not permitted beyond the last pew during the celebration.
4. After the wedding, provided there is no conflict with other scheduled events, the church will be available for the taking of pictures.

There is a section at the end of this booklet which you should give to your photographer.

H. AISLE RUNNER

Aisle runners are strongly discouraged. Not only are they an additional expense, but they serve no useful function on a carpeted floor. When a runner is placed on top of carpeting, a significant safety hazard is created. As people are leaving the church or going to Communion, they will have to walk on the runner. Some people could easily lose their footing or trip on the runner/carpet combination.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Call the Priest/Deacon who will be witnessing your marriage with your proposed date. When the date is set, contact the organist.
2. All couples choosing to marry in the Church are required to make a Pre-Cana workshop.
3. The purpose of the P.M.I. is to insure that you are meeting all of the requirements of the Church. The P.M.I. consists of a questionnaire that you must complete. Please bring with you a recent copy (not older than six (6) months old) of your Baptism Certificates. You will also need copies of your Communion and Confirmation certificates. Non-Catholic Christians need only to bring their Baptism Certificate.
4. Please be on time for the rehearsal. Please bring the following to the Rehearsal:
MARRIAGE LICENSE and \$150.00 Organist Fee (Linda Wrenn).
5. Soloists and instrumentalists are chosen at Linda Wrenn's discretion. You should check with her concerning their fee(s) for performing (bring their fees to the rehearsal).
6. Music should be carefully chosen and should be suitable for the religious nature of the celebration.
7. Flowers are not required, but welcomed. If you choose to have flowers, please remember the followings regulations:
 - 1) Only real live flowers can be used in Church.
 - 2) Flowers, when used, should be arranged tastefully. The Altar and the Ambo (Reader Stand) are the two primary focal points. Whatever flowers are placed by the Altar should also be placed by the Ambo. Flowers should **never** be solely at the Altar.
 - 3) All flowers that are brought into the Church will be used for the weekend Liturgies..
 - 4) Share flower expenses with other couples getting married the same day you are.
8. Weddings that begin more that 10 minutes late will be celebrated within the Liturgy of the Word only. **Weddings that are delayed more than 30 minutes without exceptional reasons will not be celebrated.**
9. It is your responsibility to leave the Church as clean as you find it.
10. Please do not have your guests throw rice.
11. If you have any questions or need any clarifications, please contact the Rectory (797-0222) or email us (frarrando@AOL.com).

(PLEASE GIVE THIS PAGE TO YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER)

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT CHURCH

85 Great Plain Road
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Guidelines for picture taking during Wedding Liturgy at St. Gregory the Great.

The Guiding Principle

Catholic Liturgies are designed to illuminate and celebrate life's meanings. They invite us to intimacy with God. By their nature, they require reverence and are vulnerable to the type of distractions that can be created by picture snapping.

Photographers are always at risk of being interruptive when they take pictures during a liturgy. Liturgies do not provide natural breaks in which to take snapshots, nor do they easily accommodate the complex needs of professional photographers who wish to balance composition and lighting. It takes knowledge, skill and a sensitivity to the community to take photographs during liturgy.

The following guidelines flow from the guiding principle.

Four Guidelines for Taking Photographs During the Liturgy.

1. *Always obtain permission from the Presider to take photographs or to videotape during a liturgy.*

2. *Recognize that your presence makes you a participant in the liturgy.*

The purposes of the liturgy must always take priority over the taking of photographs. Keeping your role and responsibilities in perspective will help you make good judgments as to when and how to photograph special moments.

3. *Adopt the rule that it is never acceptable to use flash lighting during a liturgy.*

The requirement to use available light can present challenges. However with today's technology, fast films, and fast lenses, an experienced photographer can solve the problem in a satisfactory way.

4. *Efforts and movements related to photography should be discreet, virtually unnoticed.*

You should never intrude on or draw attention away from the experience or mood of the liturgy.

Pre-plan your activity. Become totally familiar with the theme, flow, and experiences of the liturgy. Identify when and how the making of images will have the least potential to interrupt a reverential mood.

Entering, leaving, and times of general movement, such as singing, community prayer, and communion, can help mask your movements and the sound of the shutter.

Arrive early and establish a suitable location. You will need to remain at the periphery of the main participants, reaching into the central moments with a long lens.

If your camera provides it, use the "silent" mode for making exposures.

Accept that some liturgies, because of their character, or the limitations of architecture and lighting, will not be able to be photographed.

Wear clothing that is suitable to the occasion.

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PLEASE FILL OUT ALL OF THE INFORMATION AND RETURN IT TO THE RECTORY AT
LEAST ONE MONTH PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING.

DATE OF WEDDING: _____ TIME OF WEDDING: _____

GROOM

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ **ZIP** _____

PHONE: _____

PARISH: _____

ADDRESS: _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

DATE AND CHURCH OF BAPTISM: _____

FATHER'S NAME: _____

MOTHER'S FULL MAIDEN NAME: _____

BRIDE

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ **ZIP** _____

PHONE: _____

PARISH: _____

ADDRESS: _____

DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

DATE AND CHURCH OF BAPTISM: _____

FATHER'S NAME: _____

MOTHER'S FULL MAIDEN NAME: _____

NAME OF BEST MAN: _____

NAME OF MAID OF HONOR: _____

NAME OF READERS: _____

(PLEASE INFORM THE FOLLOWING OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES)

NAME OF FLORIST: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **CONTACT PERSON** _____

**NAME & ADDRESS OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR RETURNING
CHURCH TO THE CLEANNESS THAT YOU FOUND IT IN:**

PHONE #: _____

NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **CONTACT PERSON** _____

NAME OF VIDEO PERSON: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **CONTACT PERSON** _____