

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH

237 GARDEN HILLS DRIVE
CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND 02920

(401) 942-1854

Wedding Preparation Booklet

INTRODUCTION

Greetings to the prospective Bride and Groom!

We congratulate you on your decision to enter into a Catholic marriage. We at Immaculate Conception Parish will endeavor to help you prepare for your marriage and to make this step a holy and happy one.

Your engagement period will involve much preparation and planning regarding the practical details necessary for a wedding to be celebrated in the Church. In keeping with the seriousness of the occasion and with reverence for the Sacrament of Marriage, the Church follows a certain procedure in preparation for your union in Christ. Some of these procedures and details are listed below as a help for both the priest and the couple in the planning of their wedding and their marriage.

Spiritual preparation for your marriage must be included as well. Frequent participation and celebration of the Sacraments especially during this time is important, particularly weekly attendance at Mass. We strongly suggest that you avail yourselves of the Sacrament of Reconciliation through frequent Confession. The engagement period can be a particularly trying time, and this Sacrament as well as weekly Mass attendance will be a great source of God's strength in addition to offering some good solid spiritual direction for both partners during a period of much growth and maturity.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

PARISH MEMBERSHIP: The bride or groom must be a registered member in good standing of Immaculate Conception Parish. Prior to any wedding arrangements, a bride or groom must be registered in the parish for a minimum of one year and have contributed to the support of the parish. A bride or groom who has moved away and whose parents are registered members of the parish in good standing will receive due consideration.

CONTACT PRIEST: The day and time of the wedding must be arranged with a priest in person by the prospective bride and groom themselves as soon as they decide to marry. No arrangements can be made via the telephone or mail or by parents or other family members. All arrangements should be made at least nine months prior to the expected wedding date.

PRIEST CELEBRANT OF YOUR WEDDING: Occasionally, either the bride or groom will have a relative who is a Catholic priest. If so, your priest relative is most welcome to officiate at your wedding ceremony. More frequently, the bride or groom will have a close friend who is a priest. Likewise, a priest friend is most welcome to officiate at your wedding ceremony. We do ask, however, that the visiting priest be present at the wedding rehearsal to facilitate a well-coordinated wedding ceremony. Either the visiting priest or your parish priest can do the required paperwork involved in the marriage.

DATE AND TIME OF WEDDING: We try to give a time that will be convenient for your reception, but we must keep in mind the time of Saturday and Sunday Masses. Weddings can be

scheduled on Fridays no later than 4:00 p.m., Saturdays no later than 2:00 p.m., and Sundays no earlier than 2:00 p.m. and no later than 3:00 p.m.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE: The Marriage Preparation Course (also called Pre-Cana Classes) is given by well-qualified people and married couples. Its purpose is of great importance for those entering marriage today. It explores fundamental aspects of faith and the Sacrament of Marriage, the practical realities of married life and the civil and ecclesiastical legalities involved in each marriage. Registration for this course must be made at least six (6) months prior to the wedding date. There is a registration fee for this program. Please visit the diocesan website, www.dioceseofprovidence.org, to sign-up. For couples who feel that they may need additional preparation, pre-marriage counseling is available and can be arranged through the parish priest.

SACRAMENTAL RECORDS: Catholics must obtain a recent copy (no older than six months) of their Baptismal certificate as well as their First Communion and Confirmation certificates. These records are obtained from the Church where these Sacraments were celebrated. For non-Catholic Christians, a Baptismal certificate OR 2 Baptismal Affidavits must be provided along with 2 Testimonies of Free Status. For non-Christians, a copy of a birth certificate is required along with 2 Testimonies of Free Status. Additionally, a certificate of completion of the Marriage Preparation Course (Pre-Cana Classes) should be given to the priest.

MARRIAGE FORMS: The priest will fill out the pre-nuptial forms. These forms concern each person's freedom to marry according to civil and church law, as well as seek any of the necessary permissions for the marriage to take place in the case of Catholic/Non-Catholic marriages. These pre-nuptial forms must be completed and signed with the priest handling your marriage after the Marriage Preparation Course is completed and at least six weeks before the marriage. Please contact the priest and make an appointment for this important procedure prior to the wedding.

WITNESSES FOR THE WEDDING: Witnesses to a marriage should be Roman Catholics in good standing. However a non-Catholic may serve as a witness to a marriage for a valid reason.

LITURGICAL PREPARATION

MARRIAGE RITE WITHIN A MASS: This is the norm for two Roman Catholics. For a serious reason, a marriage without a Mass may be permitted. The norm for the marriage of a Catholic and non-Catholic does not include the celebration of Mass. However, a Mass may be celebrated with permission of the Bishop of Providence.

PLANNING THE CEREMONY: The priest handling your marriage will work with you regarding the ceremony. This planning should include readings, readers, involvement of parents, presentation of gifts, etc. and should be done a few weeks prior to the wedding. The groom, the best man and ushers should arrive at least ½ hour before the start of the wedding ceremony. The bride and bridal party should arrive at least 15 minutes before the wedding ceremony is scheduled to begin. If there is a problem, call the Parish Office immediately at 942-1854. Please be on time out of consideration for all those involved in your marriage as well as your guests.

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS: Music is an important part of the wedding ceremony. Our parish is blessed with an excellent and professional music ministry. Our Director of Music is Mr. Terry Lindsay. Please see Mr. Lindsay after any weekend Mass to give him your wedding date and set an appointment to review your music. Visiting musicians are allowed only with the approval of the Director. Any guest musician must be familiar with Catholic liturgy and possess an appropriate repertoire. If additional instruments (trumpet, violin, flute, etc.) are desired, Mr. Lindsay can usually make the necessary arrangements. The fee for the organist, soloist and instrumentalists is separate from the church donation.

Please remember that this is a religious ceremony and appropriate music must be chosen. The text of the sung pieces must come from Sacred Scripture. Secular music does not have a place in a Catholic Marriage ceremony.

READINGS: The bride and groom should select readings and notify the priest of these selections. There are three readings. The first is taken from the Old Testament and the second from the New Testament. Please select an appropriate reading for each of these. Between the readings is a responsorial psalm sung by the organist and/or soloist. Please review the psalm with the organist. The third reading is taken from one of the four Gospels in the New Testament. This reading is chosen by the priest celebrating your wedding.

READERS: The choice of readers is limited to practicing Roman Catholics in good standing. The Word of God should be proclaimed by someone whose lifestyle reflects what is being read. Anyone asked to do a reading must attend the wedding rehearsal.

USHERS: Ushers have an important task to perform before the ceremony begins. First and most importantly, by their own dignified manner and decorum, ushers are to foster an atmosphere of reverence and respect for the sacred space of the church. Secondly, ushers should maintain a quiet atmosphere in the Church as guests enter. Guests should only be escorted into the Church when they are genuinely ready to observe a quiet and prayerful demeanor. Visiting and socializing belongs in the vestibule, not in the church itself. Ushers should ensure that all guests are properly seated so that the ceremony can begin at the appointed time.

RECEPTION LINES: The proper place for the reception line is quite naturally at the wedding reception. Due to regularly scheduled parish Masses and Confessions, a reception line at the Church is not permitted.

DECORATING THE CHURCH

FLORISTS: Floral arrangements for the church are customarily sent by the bride and groom as a symbol of gratitude to God. As such, you are asked to leave them in church after the ceremony. Please instruct your florist that this is your gift to God and therefore should not be taken away. Pew bows are allowed (there are 10 pews on each side of the center aisle), however they must be attached with elastic bands or plastic clips. No kind of tape, staple or metal clip is permitted as these damage the pews. Please designate someone to retrieve the bows after the ceremony. Any pew bows left behind will be discarded.

Additionally, please inform your florist that the use of a “runner” in the center aisle at Immaculate Conception Parish is not permitted. “Runners” present a safety hazard and an insurance liability. Therefore “runners” of any kind cannot be used in the church.

RICE OR ROSE PETALS: The throwing of rice or rose petals is not permitted at Immaculate Conception Parish because it creates an unsafe environment for anyone entering or exiting the church. Please inform your guests about this policy.

UNITY CANDLE: The use of a unity candle during the wedding ceremony is not permitted at Immaculate Conception Parish. In the Roman Catholic Church, light is a symbol of Christ and the life of grace, not a sign of married unity (the rings are the sign). The unity candle has no proper role in the Rite of Marriage of the Roman Catholic Church. More appropriately, you might want to use a unity candle at your reception.

WEDDING PROGRAMS: If you choose to have a printed wedding program, please consult the priest handling your wedding prior to any printing. The program must be approved before it can be distributed in church. Additionally, please appoint someone to collect any programs left in the church following the wedding ceremony.

LIMOUSINE SERVICE: Please instruct your limousine service to have the groom and best man arrive at least one half hour prior to the scheduled time of the wedding ceremony. The bride and bridal party must arrive at least fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled time of the wedding ceremony. Please inform the limousine service that serving champagne or other alcoholic beverages outside the church is strictly prohibited.

PICTURES AND PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER: In order to maintain a solemn and prayerful atmosphere, video recorders with lights and cameras with flash are not permitted during the wedding ceremony. Please advise your photographer and videographer of this strict policy. Additionally, photographers/videographers must remain stationary, off to the side and outside the sanctuary area.

Please inform your photographer/videographer that the ceremony must not be delayed by taking photos/video at the main entrance of the church. If photos/videos are desired prior to the ceremony, please arrive early in order to take them. Photo taking after the ceremony is permissible but must be done in a timely fashion and must respect the sacred space of the church. Please ask your videographer and/or photographer to introduce themselves to the priest celebrating your wedding when they arrive at the church.

GUESTS AND CAMERAS: Please inform your family, friends and invited guests that flash photography is not allowed during the wedding ceremony. Photography during the processional and recessional is permitted. Wedding guests should not move about the church to take photos but must remain in their seats in the pews at all times during the wedding ceremony.

FINAL PREPARATION

WEDDING REHEARSAL: The wedding rehearsal is usually reserved for the night before the wedding. The time and date should be arranged with the priest celebrating the marriage. Everyone who has an active role in the wedding ceremony must attend the rehearsal. Please be on time for the rehearsal and maintain a quiet and prayerful demeanor in the church.

CIVIL MARRIAGE LICENSE: The bride and groom must apply for the civil marriage license on their own at the local town or city hall. The license must be delivered to the priest celebrating the marriage BEFORE the date of the wedding ceremony (a wedding cannot be celebrated without a civil license). The witnesses will be required to sign the license on the night of the rehearsal; therefore it is imperative that they attend the wedding rehearsal. If this is not possible then the priest must be contacted immediately.

CHURCH OFFERING: The church offering for a wedding at Immaculate Conception Parish is \$300.00. All checks should be payable to Immaculate Conception Parish. This offering is paid at the wedding rehearsal or any time before the rehearsal.

MUSIC FEES: The fee for the organist and soloist is \$300.00. Checks should be made to Immaculate Conception Parish. Any other fees for musicians or soloists should be in the form of checks made directly to them. All music fees must be paid in full by the wedding rehearsal.

REMUNERATIONS: It is customary on the day of the wedding for the best man to offer some remuneration to the two altar servers (usually \$20 per server).

In conclusion, please be mindful that all the above policies are intended to serve one purpose: to provide you with a sacred and memorable wedding day. We rejoice with you and will do everything in our power to provide you with a wedding that is joyous and Christ-centered. In the meantime, be certain of our prayers for you. God bless you both as you prepare for this most beautiful Sacrament.