

# WEDDING GUIDELINES

**St. Alphonsus Church  
54 E. Prospect Street  
Hopewell, NJ 08525  
609-466-0332**

These guidelines have been developed to help in the planning of your wedding. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the parish office at 609-466-0332.

Marriage is a sacrament of the Catholic Church that is celebrated in a sacred place. Therefore we remind you that modest attire is not only appropriate, but is also a sign of respect and reverence for God's house. We ask you to reconcile fashion with modest attire so that your celebration will be both joyful and reverent.

## **DATE AND TIME OF YOUR WEDDING**

According to new regulations of the Diocese of Trenton, as of October 1, 2003, couples can no longer set a date and time over the phone for their wedding. Please call the parish office to schedule a meeting with the priest or deacon you wish to be a part of your wedding day.

## **PRE-CANA OR ENGAGED ENCOUNTER**

A Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter Weekend is a required part of the marriage preparation program. The Pre-Cana Conference program is held frequently during the year at various times and at many locations throughout the Diocese of Trenton. Your officiant will supply you with a booklet that contains this information.

The Engaged Encounter Weekend, extending from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, is usually held at a local retreat house. Because it is a full weekend program, it affords greater opportunity for sharing, reflection, and gathering a view of married life that can extend beyond the wedding day. You should plan to attend this special preparation sometime after you have had your first meeting with your officiant, but please reserve your time as early as possible. The conferences and weekends fill up quickly. You may attend a Pre-Cana Conference or Engaged Encounter Weekend sponsored by Catholic agencies outside of the Diocese of Trenton.

## **CHURCH CERTIFICATES NEEDED**

1. Baptismal Certificates:
  - a.) If Catholic, a certificate should be issued from parish of baptism within six months of the wedding.
  - b.) If a baptized Christian, a copy of your baptismal certificate is also needed.
  
2. If Catholic, a copy of your First Communion and Confirmation certificates are needed.

3. If you have not lived in your present parish since your Confirmation, or if you are not Catholic, witnesses are needed to fill out a form testifying to your freedom to marry. These forms must be filled out with a Catholic priest.

### **CIVIL REGULATIONS**

You must obtain a civil marriage license prior to your rehearsal date. The license is good for only 30 days. After you apply for your marriage license, you may not pick it up until 72 hours have elapsed. For more information, please call the town hall in which you live. The marriage license may be brought to the rehearsal.

### **ALTAR FLOWERS AND RUNNERS**

Flowers for the altar are up to you to obtain from whatever florist you choose. Usually there are two bouquets placed on either side of the altar. We encourage couples getting married the same day to purchase their flowers together. Our insurance company has informed us that the white runners are no longer allowed.

### **REHEARSAL TIME AND WEDDING TIME**

Rehearsals are scheduled with the Church and with the priest or deacon celebrating your wedding. Please make sure your entire wedding party is on time for the rehearsal and the wedding itself. A late start for your wedding may cause your liturgy to be shortened.

### **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

To participate fully in your wedding, it is appropriate for all Catholics to go to Confession. Please ask the priest or deacon about the Sacrament of Reconciliation during your preparation meetings.

### **WEDDING PICTURES**

Pictures throughout your wedding liturgy are acceptable. We do ask that you tell your photographer about the following rules:

1. He or she is not to stop the procession entering or leaving the Church.
2. No photographer is allowed on the steps or the sanctuary area.
3. No photographer should block the view of your guests. Nor should a photographer walk in front of the first pew.

Formal pictures may be taken in the sanctuary after the ceremony, time permitting. If you have a Saturday afternoon wedding, we remind you that Confessions begin at 4:00, so you will need to be finished with your pictures by 3:55. We remind you and the photographer that you are still in Church. Please keep your voices low and be as respectful as possible. Your photographer will have about 15 minutes after your ceremony for these formal pictures.

### **FEES**

The fee for the Church has been set at \$300 for active parishioners; \$400 for inactive or non-parishioners. This fee should be brought to the rehearsal with the marriage license.

## **MUSIC**

Gerard Mirandilla is our Director of Music Ministry. His phone number is 732-618-7372. After the wedding date is confirmed with the priest and the church, please contact the Director of Music Ministry regarding organ music, possibly other instruments, and a vocalist for the wedding. The Director of Music Ministry will help you choose appropriate liturgical music for your wedding. The fee for music is set between the bridal couple and Gerard Mirandilla and /or other musicians and vocalists, and is paid directly to them.

If you plan to use musicians and /or vocalists that do not regularly serve at St. Alphonsus, please seek the Pastor's permission before making your own arrangements.

## **RICE, CONFETTI, AND BIRDSEED**

We do not allow the throwing of rice, birdseed, or confetti on Church grounds. People have slipped on it and have been seriously hurt. We also do not allow the scattering of flower petals by any of the attendants.

## **WEDDING CANDLE (UNITY CANDLE)**

Since the wedding candle, sometimes referred to as the unity candle, is not part of the Church's marriage rite, it is regarded by many as an intrusion into the ceremony. Moreover, when its use is accompanied by words of explanation, it overburdens the ceremony (especially the Mass) and overshadows the primary symbols, namely the exchange of consent (vows) and the exchange of rings, which should stand out above all else. These are the Church's symbols of unity.

Because of its overpowering presence, however, some couples think that the wedding candle is an integral part of the marriage rite, when in reality; it is frowned upon by some priests, and even forbidden by others. Nevertheless, it has become a popular visual symbol. You may want to consider using it as part of the "table prayer" at your reception, rather than adding it to the church ceremony.

Here is a "table grace" which may be used before the wedding banquet. It incorporates a ceremony of lighting the wedding candle. Why not consider giving it a try? You and your guests might be surprised at the effect it will have. Used at the wedding banquet, rather than during the liturgy, it can be an effective reminder of what happened in Church. It may help those who attend only the reception to connect with the marriage ceremony.

## **LIGHTING THE WEDDING CANDLE AND THE TABLE PRAYER**

The wedding candle, two side candles, matches and tapers for lighting are set up at the table where the newly-married couple will be seated.

Just before the entrance of the bridal party, the parents (or family representatives) light the two side candles.

The bridal party enters the reception hall according to custom.

Once all are in place a designated person may offer a blessing for the meal using the following or similar words.

**Lord Jesus, be present among us  
as you were present at Cana in Galilee.  
Come with abundant gifts for N. and N.  
May their union in marriage  
truly image your love for your Church.  
Bless all of us, too,  
who have come to join with them  
in joyful celebration.  
We thank you, Lord, for this food  
and for the grace to eat it together.  
May we all feast with you one day  
at the banquet of eternal life.  
We ask this of you, Lord Jesus,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

Immediately following the blessing, one of the attendants (possibly the matron of honor) continues the prayer with the lighting of the wedding candle saying:

**We continue to ask God's blessing upon N. and N. as we celebrate their commitment to each other in the sacrament of matrimony.**

**As a sign of their marriage, they light the wedding candle from the two candles which represent their individual lives.**

Lighting their tapers from the two side candles, the bride and groom join the two flames and light the wedding candle.

**As the two flames become one, symbolizing their union with each other in the Lord, we ask God to bless their marriage, and to keep N. and N. close to him in the years ahead.**

**May they always turn to God in times of joy and in times of need. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The two side candles are extinguished.

The best man may offer the customary toast.

The reception continues.

#### **LIFE AFTER THE WEDDING**

As you begin your life together, it is very important that you become members of a parish. If you intend to live within the boundaries of St. Alphonsus, you must now register as a family. If you move into another parish, it is very important that you register in that parish as soon as possible.