

Christ Our Light
402 Kings Highway, North

Cherry Hill, NJ
(856) 667-2440

Marriage Preparation

2011/2012 WEDDING GUIDELINES

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding at Christ Our Light Parish. We share these guidelines with you in order to assist you with your immediate planning. More importantly, we hope our involvement with you will influence you in the life you will share together. Remember: **a wedding is a day—marriage is a lifetime.**

The Parish Church is where the Christian community gathers to celebrate those important events in life that are sacred and serious. We are very pleased that you have come to the decision that your wedding is a serious and sacred event and that you want to celebrate it at Christ Our Light. Marriage is a sacrament and we hope to be able to celebrate it with you with the dignity and the deep reverence which the occasion demands.

As you prepare for your wedding day, you are urged to participate in the weekly celebration of **Mass**. Learn to see in the nourishment of the Eucharist, the proclamation of the Word, and your joining together with the parish community the means to grow ever closer to God and to one another. Consider availing yourself of the healing strength of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, most preferably, with the priest preparing you for marriage and celebrating your liturgy, sometime before your wedding day. As you exchange your solemn vows before God and the Church community, witnessed by your priest or deacon, your lifelong commitment is best realized if it is prefaced by a serious and sincere resolve to live your marriage as taught by Christ in scripture and His Church.

As a sacrament, matrimony requires that those who enter into this special union be free to do so. In order to avoid any difficulties, no marriage can be officially scheduled at Christ Our Light until you have met personally with a priest or deacon of the parish. The parish secretary can pencil in one or two dates to hold for you until such time that you have met with a clergy member of the staff. The priest or deacon will need to discuss with you any possible impediments to marrying in the Catholic Church. For example, not every prior marriage precludes a Catholic ceremony, however, many do and they would require a Church annulment prior to scheduling a wedding date. Ample time to prepare can be an invaluable ally in your preparation.

The Date and the Time

We prefer that the date and time of a wedding be arranged with a priest at least a year in advance. Because of other services, weddings can not be scheduled before 10:00 a.m. or after 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Friday afternoon and evening weddings are also possible. Sundays, however are usually unavailable for weddings. Photographers are allowed sufficient opportunity after the ceremony for pictures, provided the wedding has started on time.

The Bridal Party

The Church, as well as the State of New Jersey, requires two official witnesses (best man and matron or maid-of-Honor) for your wedding. They may be Catholic or non Catholic. Other friends and relatives can complete the wedding party.

Forms of the Wedding Ceremony

THE NUPTIAL MASS: A couple consisting of two Catholics is encouraged to be married at Mass. Couples will be given the book, *TOGETHER FOR LIFE*, to plan their liturgy and choose their readings. There are many beautiful options. Talk to the person preparing you for marriage for suggestions. We want your sacramental marriage to be truly personal. Choices are recorded on a tear-out *LITURGY PLANNING SHEET* which is given to the priest or deacon at the last meeting prior to the rehearsal. At the Nuptial Mass, the bride and groom may receive Communion under both species.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY: Couples, for their own reasons, may choose a marriage ceremony consisting of a service of prayer, scripture, vows, and a blessing. Options are also available for this type of ceremony.

Visiting Officiating Priests

If you intend to request a priest other than one of the parish priests or deacons to officiate your wedding, you should secure the permission of the Pastor of Christ Our Light. If this is done, the officiating priest is responsible for the necessary marriage instructions and the prenuptial investigation, including any and all dispensations. He should also conduct the rehearsal. Other arrangements can be made if the officiating priest or deacon is from out of state.

Music for the Celebration

The music for your wedding should reflect the sacred character of the Sacrament of Marriage into which you are entering. Those gathered for the celebration should be invited to participate actively in the liturgy, that is to listen, to respond, to pray, to sing, as well as to witness the exchange of your vows. All arrangements for singers and other musicians must be made with the Parish Music Director/Organist. No outside organist can be used for weddings at Christ Our Light Church. A possible exception to this rule could be made if the couple agrees to pay the parish music director his normal wedding stipend. However, all couples are required to contact the Parish Music Director, Mike Bedics at (856) 667-2440 ext. 224, or mbedics@christourlight.org to make music arrangements. We suggest you contact Mike as soon as possible. The Music Director will discuss with you possible music selections and options for singers, cantors, and other instrumentalists. The normal fee for musicians is \$200 per person. An organist and leader of song (soloist) are required.

Photography and Videography

Photographers and Videographers are permitted in the Church before, during and after the wedding. As professionals, they should conduct themselves with due respect and insure that they not distract from or interfere with the ceremony. Once the ceremony begins, photographs are permitted during the entrance procession, the marriage vows, the exchange of rings, the offertory procession, the nuptial blessing, the sign of peace, the final blessing and the recessional procession. Limited photographs are permitted during the Scripture readings (one photo of the reader). No photographs at all (including photos of the bride and groom, bridal party, and members of the assembly are permitted to be taken during the homily and the Liturgy of the Eucharist which extends from the Prayer Over the Gifts to the Lord's Prayer. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make sure that the photographers know and follow these guidelines.

Flowers and Decorations

Christ Our Light has an active Environment and Art Committee. You are asked to contact the church office to discuss the church environment, flowers and decorations. Flowers and decorations, including the aisle runner (aisle is 75 feet) and bows for pews, are not required, however, if you desire to have them they are the responsibility of the couple.

Offerings

The offering to the church for a wedding of a parishioner is \$250. Please give this offering to the priest at the rehearsal (if it is a check, it should be made out to Christ Our Light Church). You should be aware that this offering goes directly to the parish. If you wish to make a personal offering to the priest or deacon who prepared you for the sacrament, you may do so privately. The offering to the church for a wedding of a non-parishioner is \$500.

Marriage Preparation Sessions

In accord with the COMMON POLICY OF MARRIAGE of the Diocese of Camden, every couple planning marriage will be required to complete the Marriage Preparation program of the Catholic Community of Christ Our Light. This program includes three to four formational sessions with the priest or deacon preparing them for marriage, three two-on-two sessions with a mentoring couple identified by the parish, several All-Sacrament events designed by the parish for anyone celebrating a sacrament in the parish and participation in one group rite of enrollment and marriage specific group session. Your priest or deacon will give you all the information you need concerning marriage preparation and it is contained on a separate sheet. If a couple is currently not living in the area of the parish, they will be permitted to complete another program approved by the priest or deacon witnessing your wedding in another diocese or parish.

Required Documents

If you are a Catholic, you must present a baptismal certificate which has been issued within the past six months. Simply call or write the church where you were baptized and they will send it to you.

If you are non-Catholic Christian, then you must present a record of your baptism and two affidavits of freedom to marry.

If you are not baptized, you must present an affidavit of non-baptism.

If either party is under 18 years of age, a parent must come to the rectory and sign a permission form in the presence of the priest or deacon preparing you for the sacrament.

MARRIAGE LICENSE: Couples should be sure to get their marriage license in plenty of time to insure that all civil and church regulations are followed. You cannot be married in the Catholic Church without a valid New Jersey marriage license. To obtain this license, you should go to the City Hall or municipal building of the town where the woman resides. Blood tests, previously required, are no longer a pre-condition for the license. A license in this state is valid for thirty days after the date of issuance. There is a 72 hour waiting period between the time of application and the valid use of the license. Plan to make your application about two weeks prior to your wedding. Please make sure that you give the priest or deacon officiating at the wedding rehearsal.

The Rehearsal

The rehearsals should be scheduled with the priest or deacon performing your wedding well in advance. Please remember to bring the following to rehearsal:

1. **marriage license**
2. **church/priest/musician/offerings**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

All Catholic members of the wedding party, especially the bride and groom, should prepare for this special time by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confession is available at the normal time on Saturday, after the rehearsal, or by special arrangement with the priest.

The Wedding Day

The groom, best man and ushers should be at the church at least 30 minutes before the start of the ceremony. Ushers escort guests to their places before the ceremony. The parents and the bridesmaids should be at the church 10 minutes before the wedding begins. Out of courtesy, the bridal party should make every effort to see that the wedding ceremony starts promptly.

Taking into account the sacredness of the ceremony, people should attend the ceremony and not congregate outside. No alcohol or alcoholic beverages are to be consumed or distributed on church property.

We want your wedding to be a festive occasion, a special time, but this is best accomplished through liturgy, music and the loved ones who share the day with you. We ask you, PLEASE do not have your guests throw rice or birdseed outside the church. In the first place, it's a pagan fertility practice. And the resulting mess, especially in wet weather, wreaks havoc on the church carpets and floors. Balloons are also not permitted for environmental reasons.

At Your Assistance

The priests and staff of Christ Our Light Parish are available to assist you. We want your wedding to be a happy and holy celebration for both of you. Don't hesitate to call us...we'll be happy to answer all your questions. Be assured that you will be in our prayers in the months which lie ahead. We will do all we possibly can to make your wedding day and your wedded life a blessed and memorable occasion.

Rev Thomas A. Newton
Pastor