

Q&A: WHO MARCHES UP THE AISLE?

The recommended procedure that is described in the current *Rite of Marriage* is that the bride, accompanied by her parents, and the groom, accompanied by his parents, join in the entrance procession with the other ministers of the wedding celebration. The problem (at least in the United States) is that, in general, people have been ignoring the rubrics regarding the entrance procession found in the *Rite of Marriage* and continuing a older custom that has pre-Christian roots.

The current rite explains "If there is a procession to the altar, the ministers go first, followed by the priest, and then the bride and bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses. Meanwhile, the entrance song is sung" (#20). The Roman rite is sensitive to local custom, but it provides a model which should be seen as presenting certain values. In my mind, some of the values enshrined here are (1) the equality of the spouses (both bride and groom enter together), (2) the equality of both parents (both mother and father join both spouses) and (3) an integration of the "bridal" procession into the traditional entrance procession of the Mass.

There is little to be said in favor of the "traditional" bridal entrance. It can be rightly criticized for perpetuating the image that the bride is the "property" of her father, who alone has the right to "give her away" to another man (the groom). Using such an image is a poor way to start a marriage and not an ideal practice to incorporate into a contemporary Catholic liturgy, which celebrates the equality of all people before God. From a ritual point of view, such a bridal entrance detracts from the structure and flow of the opening rites. Our tradition is to begin with the entrance procession of the ministers (if not the whole assembly), with all giving voice to a common hymn and thus being united into the body of Christ. To stand and watch a parade is foreign to our sense of liturgy. And since the bride and the groom are the principal ministers of the sacrament of marriage, why not have them enter as ministers of the liturgy usually do?

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CHURCH OFFERING AND STIPENDS

- An offering of \$250.00 is requested to offset the parish's expenses.
- The stipends for the organist, cantor, and any other musicians are not included in the church offering. The stipend for *each musician* is \$150.00. These individuals should be paid via the Director of Liturgical Music at least one week prior to your wedding date.

BECOME AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE PARISH

It is an honor for us to celebrate your wedding with you and we encourage you to become active members of the parish and consider joining one or more of our many ministries. Please contact the parish office for more information.

2:1

2 BECOME ONE

*Marriage Preparation at
the Church of St. Gregory*



THE
CHURCH
OF
SAINT
GREGORY
Forward in Faith

330 North Abington Road
Clarks Green, Pennsylvania
570.587.4808
www.thechurchofstgregory.com

THE WHOLE CHURCH CELEBRATES WITH YOU!

"We're getting married!" With these few, simple words, an engaged couple announces the most important decision of their lives. This decision affects not only the couple, but also their families and friends. No longer is John just "our son," "our nephew" or "my college buddy;" no longer is Mary just "my daughter," "our cousin" or "my friend from work." Now they are also partners who have agreed to pledge their lives to each other and form a new family. As they gather around John and Mary at the wedding, these family members and friends celebrate these changes in relationships.

When a wedding is celebrated in church, there is another level of relationship beyond family and friends, and that involves God and the church. In their exchange of vows, the couple offers a visible sign of God's presence and love. It is an act of worship that takes place in the midst of a Christian community. In living out their vows, husband and wife share in Christ's paschal mystery by dying to their own desires so as to live for each other and their children. Their marriage reflects Christ's relationship with the church and creates a new family within the community of the church.

A church wedding touches the couple, their families and friends in an especially intimate way, but it also pertains to the local parish and to the larger church. This is what the bishops at the Second Vatican Council meant when they said, "Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is 'the sacrament of unity'" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 26).

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In the Roman Catholic Church, the couple is the minister of the sacrament of marriage. The bride and groom exchange vows to each other. The priest or deacon serves as the church's chief witness; he does not "pronounce them husband and wife."

GENERAL MARRIAGE PREPARATIONS/MEETINGS

Couples contemplating marriage must contact the parish office six months to one year prior to the date of the intended marriage. All engaged couples are requested to attend the following series of meetings:

Wedding Music and Musicians

Please contact the Director of Liturgical Music at (570) 587.4808 or saintgregmusic@gmail.com as soon as the date for your wedding has been set.

NO arrangements for music should be made prior to this contact.

Music is an integral part of any liturgy. It is not something extra, but a part of the organic structure of the liturgy. In the words of the United States Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, "Great care should be taken, especially at marriages, that all the people are involved at the important moments of the celebration, that the same general principles of planning worship and judging music are employed as at other liturgies, and, above all, that the liturgy is a prayer for all present, not a theatrical production"
(*Music in Catholic Worship*, 82).

- **When planning the music for your wedding, please refer to the Wedding Music Planning Guide which can be found in this packet. A portion of each song is also available on the enclosed CD.**
- The hiring of a cantor and all musicians for the wedding ceremony at the church is to be handled by the Director Liturgical Music after consultation with the couple.
- The Director of Liturgical Music should also have input on the participation of musicians who are not regular instrumental musicians or soloists at St. Gregory's. **All musicians participating in your wedding ceremony should be accustomed to providing liturgical music at Catholic Wedding Masses.**
- The use of a choir is normally not allowed. Exceptions may be made only through the express permission of the Director of Liturgical Music.
- No secular music is to be performed in the church at any time, either prior to or during the wedding ceremony.
- The use of bagpipes is permitted only OUTSIDE of the church (courtyard, etc.) or during the processional or recessional.
- Musicians for the wedding do not normally attend the wedding rehearsal. Their call time is generally 30 minutes prior to the start of the wedding.

There are no spectators at a Catholic wedding. The bishops at the Second Vatican Council made "full, conscious, and active participation" by all worshippers "the aim to be considered before all else" in liturgy
(*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 14).

Ministers of the Mass

- You may select **lector(s) / reader(s)** from your wedding party, family members, or friends to proclaim a reading at the wedding liturgy. In the Catholic Liturgy, the lector does not just “read the bible.” In this special role, the lector proclaims the Word of God and makes our Lord present to the gathered community of faith. The booklet, “*Together For Life*” (enclosed in this packet) can be very useful when choosing the readings for mass. You may choose two lectors: one to proclaim the first reading (*Together for Life: B 1 – B 9*) and one to proclaim the second reading (*Together for Life: D 1 – D 13*). You may also choose others to read the general intercessions (*Together for Life: J 1 – J 2*). Those chosen to be lectors should be Catholic and it is best if they have some experience proclaiming the readings at Mass.
- **Altar servers** may be selected if you have family/friends who have been trained in this ministry.
- You may choose to have people **bring forward the gifts** of bread and wine during the preparation of the gifts. Two or three people can be chosen to do this.
- Normally, there is no need for an **Extraordinary Minister of Communion** at a wedding. However, if the attendance is sizeable and there are no concelebrants, one or more could be considered.
- All members of the wedding party and any additional participants (lectors, gift bearers, etc.) should be present at the rehearsal. It is not necessary for additional family members, friends, etc. to attend the rehearsal at the church.

Wedding Programs

- You may choose to have a printed wedding program for your ceremony. Advice is available from the parish staff on preparation of the program.
- A draft of the program must be submitted to the parish office for proofing ***before*** it is copied or sent to a printing company.

Some things are essential for a Catholic wedding; others are not. Essential things include the scripture readings, homily, statement of intentions (“Have you come here freely and without reservation...?”), consent or exchange of vows, and nuptial blessing. Things that are not essential include seating guests of the bride and guests of the groom on separate sides of the aisle, keeping the bride and groom apart before the wedding, unrolling a white aisle runner before the entrance procession, lighting a unity or wedding candle, and placing flowers before a statue of Mary.

MEETING I:

Meet with the priest who will witness your vows in order to:

1. Complete the Application for Marriage in the Diocese of Scranton
2. Review any special circumstances involving either of you
3. Receive and review the following polices and/or information:
 - a. ***Marriage in the Diocese of Scranton***
 - b. ***Marriage Preparation Programs*** (Pre-Cana, Engaged Encounter, and/or parish-based program)
 - c. ***2 : 1 Marriage Preparation at the Church of St. Gregory***
4. Discuss and determine the appropriate date for the celebration of your marriage.

MEETING II:

1. Complete *FOCCUS* profile
(**F**acilitating **O**pen **C**ouple **C**ommunication, **U**nderstanding, and **S**tudy)
2. If necessary, supply, from your home parish(es), *recent* copies of your Baptismal Certificates.

MEETING III & IV:

1. Present proof of completion of Marriage Preparation Program (Pre-Cana and/or Engaged Encounter)
2. Undertake preliminary review of plans for wedding music, participants in the wedding liturgy, and plans for wedding flowers and photography
3. Review and discussion of *FOCCUS* results
4. Final review and finalization of all wedding liturgy details

MEETING V:

Wedding Rehearsal (ordinarily scheduled for 5:00 p.m. on the evening prior to your wedding)

- Present Marriage License
- Bring, where appropriate, wedding programs and Unity Candle
- Satisfy all wedding stipends (church, musicians, etc.)

****Under certain circumstances, the number of meetings may vary.****

PLANNING YOUR WEDDING LITURGY

Scheduling

- Weddings are generally scheduled on Friday evenings (no later than 7:00 p.m.) or on Saturday afternoons (no later than 2:00 p.m.)
- Due to the scheduling needs of the Church of St. Gregory, it is imperative that weddings BEGIN ON TIME and, on Saturdays, conclude no later than 3:45 p.m., including the time needed for picture taking in the church following the wedding ceremony.
- Because of Reconciliation (confessions) on Saturday afternoons at 4:00 p.m., there must be time to remove decorations, set-up for the 5:00 p.m. Mass, and allow parishioners the opportunity for meditative prayer during the time of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Weddings during the season of Lent are strongly discouraged and must receive the approval of the pastor.
- Rehearsals are ordinarily scheduled for 5:00 p.m. on the evening before the wedding.

Interior Environment

- Excessive decorations are discouraged as they can place the focus on something other than the sacrament.
- Decorations that are in place for liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Easter, etc.) should not ordinarily be removed. It is possible to coordinate your wedding decorations with existing decorative schemes.
- Decorations may be placed in the church on the day of the wedding ceremony. To gain access to the church, florists should contact the parish office to check the schedule of events at the church on the day of the wedding.
- Flower arrangements may be placed in the narthex or body of the church, in the sanctuary, or on the pews. They may not be placed on the altar. There are numerous flower stands that are available.
- The choice of a florist is yours. However, some florists are more familiar than others with St. Gregory's church and its décor, etc. If desired, some suggestions can be given.
- It is hoped that flowers placed in the sanctuary for weddings will remain available for weekend use at the parish. Additional decorations (pew decorations, etc.) will need to be removed *immediately* after the wedding.

- In the unusual event that a wedding is scheduled during the season of Lent, no additional decorations will be allowed in the church beyond what is already being used by the parish.
- The use of candelabras is strongly discouraged because of the potential for damage to the carpet or wood by way of wax drippings.
- The use of an aisle runner is also discouraged.

Exterior Environment

- The use of exterior decorations is allowed only with the permission of the pastor. If permission is granted for decorations to be placed outdoors (courtyard, entrances, doors, etc.), they must be removed *immediately* following the wedding ceremony.
- The use of rice, birdseed, and flower petals is prohibited at the Church of St. Gregory. Birdseed and rice can cause people to slip on the concrete and can pose a safety hazard for your guests. Flower petals are difficult to clean up and stain the carpet and concrete. Bubbles may be distributed and used outside the church after the ceremony.
- Your wedding day is very special. When you come to the church, you are coming to celebrate a sacrament in the presence of God, your family, and your friends. In keeping with the dignity and sacredness of the sacrament, it is inappropriate to have beer and/or champagne passed around as you leave the church. Food, drinks, and chewing gum are not allowed within the church and smoking is prohibited on church grounds.

Photography and Videography

- Photographers and videographers are allowed to move about within the church, but are not allowed in the sanctuary area. A stationary video camera may, however, be set up on a tripod in the sanctuary and left unattended during the ceremony. Photographers and videographers are asked to clarify these matters with the presiding priest prior to the ceremony.
- For Saturday afternoon weddings, all photos in the church should be concluded by 4:00 p.m. Bear in mind that "late starts" will reduce the amount of time available for photos in church.

LOVE

Love is *patient,*
love is *kind.*
It does not *envy,*
it does not *boast,*
it is not *proud.*

1 Corinthians 13:4