

Incarnation Catholic Church

Marriage Preparation and Wedding Guidelines



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Incarnation Catholic Church

(Corner of West Hillsborough Avenue and Webb Road)

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June 1, 2012

RE: Revised Guidelines for Wedding Gowns & Bridesmaid's Dresses

Dear Engaged Couples,

As of June 1, 2012, Incarnation Parish has revised and implemented new guidelines regarding wedding gowns and bridesmaid's dresses. We are now requiring that wedding gowns and bridesmaid's dresses:

- cover bare shoulders
- have a modest neckline
- cover any visible tattoos

If you do have a dress that does not meet these guidelines, then while in the Church during the ceremony, please provide a cover, such as a shawl, scarf, waist jacket, or removable sleeves.



Congratulations on the announcement of your intention to enter into the sacred and joyous sacrament of matrimony with one another! It is by administering this beautiful sacrament to each other that you, as a couple before the witnesses of your church community, your family and friends, reveal the awesome union Christ has with his bride, the Church. The wedding covenant is a major commitment, life changing and forever. It is a journey of joy and faith. In light of the religious significance, we trust that you will heed to the careful planning and prayerful attention needed as you go forward to attain your goal.

We, in turn, pledge to you our dedication in all matters you will need along the way. We are incorporating in this letter a list of requirements, guidelines and policies in order to help you start the process of marriage preparation. In the weeks ahead, we will be discussing them with you as needed.

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Christian marriage is a serious and sacred commitment that calls a man and a woman to each other in a most profound and permanent way. Christian marriage calls a couple to become a visible sign of Christ's unconditional and faithful love. It demands a living faith on the part of the couple and the awareness that they are entering into a covenant not only with each other, but also with God.

Weddings are special and joyful times for brides and grooms, for their families, friends and for the parish community. Incarnation Parish welcomes its members to celebrate and solemnize the sacrament of marriage reverently and prayerfully. In this spirit, we provide the following information to help you in planning your wedding.

SETTING THE DATE OF THE WEDDING

Couples are expected to contact the parish office six months or more in advance of the date on which they hope to celebrate their wedding. A confirmed date will be set only after the priest or deacon has had sufficient opportunity to meet with the engaged couple to take care of necessary paperwork and to arrange for their participation in a marriage instruction program according to diocesan guidelines and requirements. **It is the responsibility of the engaged couple to secure the confirmed date with the church before making commitments with caterers, reception halls, etc.**

Weddings are scheduled with respect to the couple's wishes and subject to the availability of the church. Most weddings are scheduled on Saturdays; however, they can also be celebrated on other days of the week. There are also certain times when marriages cannot be celebrated such as Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, Holy Week and certain other special days.

CHURCH REQUIREMENTS

The first step in planning your wedding is to meet with a priest or deacon. During this first get-together you will receive an explanation of the Church's guidelines for marriage preparation and an understanding of its purpose. The Diocese of St. Petersburg calls for a six month preparation period to enable the couple with the Church's help to prepare spiritually for their wedding and, more importantly, for their married life together. A formal statement will be prepared concerning your understanding of the sacrament of marriage and your free decision to enter into this commitment. It is usually necessary to obtain the testimony of witnesses (relatives or friends of long standing) who can vouch for your freedom to marry.

At the beginning of your preparation you will be asked to take the P.M.I. (Pre-Marital Inventory), a survey which facilitates open communication about various marital and premarital issues that are important to your relationship.

You will be asked to attend a seminar for engaged couples. The Diocese of St. Petersburg Family Life Office sponsors these seminars throughout the year for couples planning marriage. This is a special time specifically designed to deepen and enrich your relationship with each other.

You will also be asked to attend a special presentation on Natural Family Planning, which offers an explanation of the Church's teaching on fertility appreciation and responsible parenthood.

We are required to include in the marriage file a recent copy of each person's Baptismal certificate. This can be obtained in writing or by phone from the church of baptism.

All the above information and paperwork is to be completed at least **one month** prior to your wedding. **It will be necessary for the couple to obtain a marriage license from anywhere in the State of Florida** (bring with you on the evening of the rehearsal).

NUPTIAL MASS OR WEDDING CEREMONY

The norm for practicing Catholics is a Nuptial Mass. For a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, a Nuptial Mass is permitted though not recommended, as the non-Catholic party would not be able to receive Holy Communion. This decision, though, is left up to the couple. However, a Nuptial Mass is never permitted for a marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person. Whatever the case, please know that both the Nuptial Mass and the Wedding Ceremony are both beautiful and dignified ceremonies. Both include prayers, readings, and all the things that one associates with a wedding. You can be assured that whatever type of wedding you have it will be both beautiful and memorable, highlighting the love you have for each other and the prayers and best wishes of your family and friends. Please note that whatever you choose, we will do our best to make any non-Catholic guests feel welcome and comfortable.

CHURCH WEDDING COORDINATOR

Incarnation's Wedding Coordinator will be available to answer any questions you may have about preparation for your wedding day. The Coordinator will be at the rehearsal to assist the priest or deacon, as well as to direct the wedding party on the day of your marriage. The priest or deacon preparing you for marriage will put you in touch with the Coordinator at the appropriate time.

WEDDING REHEARSAL

Your rehearsal time will be scheduled with the Wedding Coordinator and should take approximately one hour. The importance of the celebration calls for this to be a time of prayer, reflection, and final preparation. The rehearsal allows members of the wedding party to become familiar with the environment and the roles they will assume as part of the liturgy. Since several rehearsals may be scheduled on the same evening, it is expected that all participants will **be prompt**.

MAKING WEDDING DECISIONS

The Church affords the Bride and the Groom the opportunity to make a great amount of choices for the actual wedding ceremony (e.g. readings, prayers, type of service, elements within the ceremony, etc.). The priest or deacon performing the ceremony will speak to you about the various options you have. These decisions should be made by the Bride and the Groom and not other family members or friends no matter how well intentioned.

WEDDING MUSIC

The U. S. Bishops in their document "Music in Catholic Worship" have stressed the importance of music at wedding liturgies. The document states that the music and its text be appropriate for the wedding liturgy and be used in the proper places. It asks that you look at your music in terms of its power to enable the people who will be present to express their faith.

All arrangements for your wedding music must be planned through the Music Director and should be made at least one month before your wedding. It is usually best to contact him prior to communicating with any other musicians (i.e. vocalists, other instrumentalists).

Financial arrangements for the parish musicians can be handled through the Wedding Coordinator. However, fees for other vocalists and instrumentalists should be arranged independently.

BRIDAL PARTY

Attendants - Because of the space available in the sanctuary, we recommend the following guidelines when planning the number of attendants. Although present trends indicate a smaller wedding party, for weddings celebrated in the church, the maximum number of attendants is 16 - 8 bridesmaids, 8 groomsmen, exclusive of the ring bearer and flower girl. **We ask that flower girls not drop petals, either real or silk, during the procession or ceremony.**

Care should be taken in choosing young children for the wedding party, since sometimes a large social gathering such as a wedding may be overwhelming and the child may become upset and not be able to perform his or her duty. It is our experience that children five years and older are best suited for these roles.

Please help us maintain the reverence and dignity of the Lord's house by informing members of the wedding party to refrain from chewing gum and imbibing alcoholic beverages prior to the wedding rehearsal and ceremony, and to come in proper dress. Anyone coming to the church intoxicated will not be allowed to participate in the ceremony, including the bride and/or groom.

FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS AND DECORATIONS

Floral arrangements are to be furnished by the bridal couple and are to be kept simple. Those used in the sanctuary should allow for free movement around the altar. Floral arrangements are not to be placed on the altar. Please note that if you do plan your wedding during a special liturgical season such as Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, the church sanctuary may be enhanced with seasonal arrangements which cannot be altered or removed. Also, floral arrangements placed in front of the altar may not exceed the height of the altar.

Pew decorations are permitted but nothing may be taped or pinned to the pews. Your florist will be able to suggest an alternate method.

Placement of candelabra in the church sanctuary is prohibited.

It is our experience that aisle runners can cause several problems at the wedding ceremony, one of which is falls. Therefore, aisle runners are not permitted.

All decorations must be removed from the church immediately following the ceremony. This is the responsibility of the wedding party, unless arrangements are made with the florist.

WEDDING PROGRAMS/BOOKLETS

Incarnation does not provide wedding programs or booklets. If you wish to have some printed for your wedding guests, it will be your responsibility to put it together and have them printed. Please note that it is not necessary to include the complete texts of the readings and prayers. It is preferable to include the major headings for the order of the ceremony. Please remember that your wedding is a sacred occasion which takes place in the House of God, therefore, secular symbols, trite references, and anything that might take away from the profound dignity of marriage should be avoided at all costs.

UNITY CANDLE

The use of a Unity Candle is permitted; however, the Unity Candle itself is to be furnished by the couple. These can usually be purchased online or at a local religious items store.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

To provide a meaningful remembrance of the liturgy and sacred vows, we do allow photographs to be taken in the church. To make sure your marriage liturgy will be a prayerful experience for you and your guests, we ask the following in regard to taking photographs and videography:

- Except during the procession, absolutely no flash photography is allowed during the ceremony. Only available light photography is allowed.
- **Absolutely no photography is allowed during the Nuptial Mass from the end of the vows or the lighting of the Unity Candle until the end of the Lord's Prayer**
- Photographers are not allowed within the sanctuary during the ceremony. We ask that all movement be discreet so as not to intrude on or draw attention away from the experience or mood of the ceremony.

- Photographers should be careful not to impede the procession.
- It is the responsibility of the photographer to help the wedding party keep a sense of reverence during picture taking that is in keeping with the respectful atmosphere desired at all times within the church.
- No umbrellas or other extraordinary lighting equipment or backdrops may be set up for the photographic session.
- Photographers should keep their equipment in an area of the Church where it will not be in the way of guests.

PHOTOGRAPHY AFTER THE CEREMONY

Other ceremonies or Masses immediately follow our weddings, and in view of this we have initiated the policy of **allowing only 30 minutes in the sanctuary** immediately following the wedding ceremony. Please work with your wedding photographer ahead of time to decide which shots would be most appropriate for this area.

In addition, in order to facilitate the flow of the picture taking after the ceremony, once the newly married couple arrives at the rear of the church in the recessional, the Wedding Coordinator will escort the bride and groom and the bridal party back to the sanctuary to immediately begin taking photos.

RECEIVING LINES

Because of the time sensitive nature of the weekend schedule in the church, we ask that you wait to greet your guests until after the pictures are taken. Receiving lines and signing of the guest book should occur at the reception and not at the church.

RICE AND BIRDSEED

Throwing rice or birdseed, as well as guests blowing bubbles, is strictly prohibited on Church property for insurance reasons.

A FINAL NOTE

The clergy and pastoral staff at Incarnation are here to serve you as you prepare for the celebration of your marriage. Please do not hesitate to call us. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Your cooperation in attending the marriage preparation programs, keeping appointments, obtaining the necessary documents and papers, and being on time is appreciated. Days and weeks go by quickly. Delays in the beginning often cause unnecessary anxiety as the wedding day draws nearer.

Take some quiet time together - a time for sharing. Praying together opens up a new and deeper level of sharing, consciously bringing the Lord into your love, being open to His Word and making yourselves available to His will. Also, worshipping with each other on Sundays is a sign of your priorities. A marriage that lasts for life demands love and loyalty, God's grace and peace. God bless you!

Summary

SUMMARY OF GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- Either the bride- or groom-to-be must be a registered, practicing member of the parish. Non-registered Catholic parties must obtain a letter of permission from their own parish, or must register with Incarnation Catholic Church for a wedding celebration. Newly registered couples must demonstrate their commitment to Incarnation Parish three (3) months prior to initiation into the six (6) month marriage preparation process.
- The engaged couple will meet with the parish priest at least six (6) months prior to the wedding date.
- The couple will complete a pre-nuptial questionnaire, which includes testimony of their intentions to enter into a Catholic union in accordance with Church doctrine.
- The Catholic parties, either bride and/or groom, must regularly attend Mass in a Catholic Church, participate in the Journey to Matrimony retreat, take the Introductory Session for Natural Family Planning, and meet with the priest or deacon to discuss the Pre-Marital Inventory (a marriage preparation tool) as well as to plan the actual marriage ceremony.

NECESSARY DOCUMENTS

1. Baptismal Certificate: You will need to provide a recent copy of your baptismal certificate, obtained upon request at the church of your baptism. This applies to both Catholic and non-Catholic parties. By “recent” is meant that the copy must have been issued from your church of baptism within the last six months.
2. Marriage License: **You will need to provide a valid civil marriage license.** Please discuss freely any situations particular to your own history with the priest preparing you for marriage. The wedding cannot be performed without the civil marriage license. Second marriages, etc. require additional documents.

FEES

- There is a fee of **\$775.00** for individuals who have been registered with the parish for at least one (1) year at the time of scheduling of their wedding date and who have contributed to the parish regularly through the use of offertory envelopes.
- A fee of **\$900.00** will be charged to couples not registered in the parish.
- A minimum deposit of **\$250.00** is due at the time of the second scheduled meeting.
- Payment of the remaining balance must be completed no later than one (1) month prior to the wedding date.

Summary

POLICIES AT INCARNATION CATHOLIC CHURCH

- **Validation:** All arrangements for your wedding at Incarnation must be validated by the priest or deacon.
- **Music:** Couples must confer with the Director of Music Ministry as to appropriateness of song and music selections. If you are considering using an outside cantor or other musicians, please make sure that you discuss this thoroughly with our Director of Music Ministry.
- **Floor Runners:** Floor runners are not allowed in the church.
- **Photography:** Photography, as well as video taping, of your wedding is allowed. However, flash photography is not. We will make your photographer aware of his or her boundaries. When the sacrament of matrimony is celebrated within the holy sacrifice of the Mass, no pictures are permitted during the consecration – that is, from the end of the exchanged of vows until just after the praying of the Our Father.
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - **Book signing** before, and/or a reception line after the wedding is prohibited in the church.
 - **Rice and Birdseed:** It is not permitted to throw rice, birdseed, confetti, or any other good luck item of ritual.
 - **Rose Petals:** It is not permitted to toss rose petals or any other flower petals on the floor of the church or on the church property.
 - **Other signs:** The release of butterflies, doves, bubbles, or balloons is strictly prohibited. Any of these types of activities should be reserved for the place of reception.

WEDDINGS MUST BEGIN ON TIME. Due to the busy schedule of Incarnation Catholic Church as well as out of respect for the professional schedules of the priest and ministers involved, we ask that you make every effort to ensure your bridal party and guests arrive early so that the celebration of your wedding can begin on time.

ALTAR SERVER: Should you desire an altar server, this can be arranged. It is customary to provide a stipend for this service.

There are no exceptions to any of the above stated policies.

Reviewed: _____

Agreement

We know that you may have other questions. Please do not hesitate to call and discuss any questions and concerns with us. We will be here for you in deed as well as in prayer.

We truly look forward to meeting with you soon.

Remain in His love,

Fr. Michael Cormier
Pastor

Contact Information:

Incarnation Catholic Church
5124 Gateway Dr.
Tampa, Florida 33615
813-885-7861

**Ask to speak with the priest or deacon in charge of Marriage Preparation*

Agreement of Bride and Groom:

We have reviewed these policies, and we understand and agree to abide by this agreement.

Bride's Name (Please print)

Groom's Name (Please print)

Bride's Signature

Groom's Signature

Date: _____