

To the engaged couple,

This guide is presented to you to assist you in planning your wedding at the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

You have chosen to celebrate your marriage through the Sacrament of Matrimony in this community. We celebrate with you as you mark the beginning of this sacramental union and stand ready to support you in your life together. Your example of love and fidelity for each other gives us all a living sign of God's love and fidelity for us.

The directions in this guide reflect the laws and policies of the Roman Catholic Church, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and the Immaculate Conception parish community in particular. They are intended to aid you in preparing for your wedding. Please call the Parish Office at 410-427-4700 with any questions or concerns.

Be assured of the prayers and best wishes of the Immaculate Conception community for your happiness in marriage.

May God bless you always!

The Priests and People of Immaculate Conception Parish

Place and Presider of Your Marriage

In choosing to be married at Immaculate Conception, a couple has chosen more than a beautiful setting. They have chosen to celebrate their marriage as a sacrament of the church, a celebration of the entire faith community. Those wishing to be married in the Church should be registered in a parish and actively involved in the life of that parish.

- Although traditionally Roman Catholics are married in the parish of the bride, the wedding may take place in the parish of either Catholic party. In cases where neither the bride nor groom is a parishioner of Immaculate Conception, a Letter of Permission must be obtained from the pastor of the parish where the bride or groom is registered.
- The marriage of a Roman Catholic to a non-Catholic usually takes place in the parish of the Catholic party.
- **Because of the large number of weddings at Immaculate Conception, the clergy staff is able to witness only the weddings of parishioners. Non-parishioners must contact a priest or deacon to be responsible for their wedding. You may ask any priest or deacon at the parish you regularly attend to officiate at your wedding. A friend or relative who is a priest or deacon in the Roman Catholic Church is always welcome to officiate at your marriage. No reservation for a wedding will be considered final until the officiating priest or deacon has confirmed, preferably in writing, that he will officiate at your wedding. If a visiting priest is presiding at your wedding, please supply his name, address and phone number. The wedding rehearsal and all necessary paperwork are the responsibility of the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage, unless other arrangements have been made.**
- When one party is not of the Catholic faith, a minister of his/her faith may certainly be invited to be present in the sanctuary and participate in the ceremony.
- Should there be special reasons to be married in a non-Catholic ceremony, permission to do so may be requested of the Archbishop through the parish priest.

Weddings of Immaculate Conception Parishioners in other Catholic Churches or College Chapels

The priests of Immaculate Conception are happy to write letters of permission for parishioners who wish to be married in another Catholic church or chapel. However, because of the demands of this parish and scheduling commitments, they may not be able to accept invitations to preside at these weddings.

Time of the Wedding:

Weddings are scheduled on Saturdays at 10:00 am, 12:00 noon, and 2:00 pm. Weddings are not scheduled on Friday evenings due to scheduled rehearsals for Saturday weddings. A Nuptial Mass should not be celebrated on Sunday due to the primacy of the Sunday Eucharistic celebration. Weddings are not scheduled on Holy Days or national holidays. We recommend that couples not schedule weddings during the Lenten season (from Ash Wednesday until Easter Sunday) due to the penitential nature of the season and the austerity of the church decorations. These limitations in time are made in order to avoid conflicts with other parish services that have already been scheduled and have first priority.

Parish Membership

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a sacrament. Therefore, we would hope that those who wish to receive this sacrament at Immaculate Conception would be registered, active members of this parish community. Each couple should register in the parish where they plan to live after the wedding and make themselves known to the priests there. **For purposes here, a person is considered to be a parishioner if he/she has been a registered, contributing member of Immaculate Conception Parish for at least six (6) months prior to the initial inquiry about a wedding or marriage preparation.**

Fees/Offerings

Parishioners: \$300.00

Non-parishioners: \$750.00

- For use of the church
- For the sacristan who sets up for the wedding, cleans the church after the ceremony, and is available during the ceremony for whatever needs arise
- Deposit of ½ the fee is due with church reservation form; the remainder is due at least one month prior to the wedding.

Offerings couples may choose to make:

- To the priest and/or deacon who facilitates their marriage preparation and officiates at their wedding.
- To the altar servers who assist during the ceremony
- These offerings can be placed in separate labeled envelopes and given to the respective parties by the best man prior to the wedding.

There is a separate charge for music. Please refer to the section on music at the end of this booklet.

Preparation

The Marriage License

A Baltimore County marriage license, obtained from the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the Baltimore County Courthouse in Towson, is required before the marriage may take place. The license is to be presented to the priest before the wedding. There is a 48-hour waiting period for a marriage license, which is valid for six months from the date of issue. No blood tests or physical examinations are required in the state of Maryland.

Baptismal Certificates

Baptismal certificates are required of all Christians who wish to marry in a Roman Catholic ceremony. For a Catholic, your church of baptism must issue the baptismal certificate within six months of the wedding. A record of the baptism of a non-Catholic Christian may be dated anytime. Certificates may be obtained from the church where his/her baptism took place.

Meeting with Clergy

You should make an appointment with the priest or deacon who will perform your ceremony at least six months prior to your anticipated wedding date. At your first interview, the priest or deacon will discuss the Catholic Christian understanding of marriage and your convictions regarding marriage and family. The date for the wedding will be confirmed following this interview. Materials to assist in planning the ceremony in keeping with the guidelines of the Church will be provided.

Pre-Cana

The general regulations of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the convictions of our priests, and common sense lead us to remind all couples who wish to marry that they should carefully prepare themselves for this major life decision. Some form of marriage preparation is required. Both the bride and groom must participate in one of the following: Pre-Cana Conferences, Engaged Encounter Weekend or Sponsor Couple Program. These programs are serious efforts of the Church to work with couples prior to marriage. The clergy cannot participate in a wedding unless the couple undertakes serious preparation themselves. Information on the three marriage preparation options can be obtained by calling the Parish Office (410-427-4700), or through the priest or deacon with whom you are working.

Banns of Marriage

Prior to the marriage of two Catholics, the announcement of the wedding is published in the parish bulletin on the three Sundays preceding the marriage in the churches of the bride and groom. When only one party is Catholic, banns are only announced at the request of the couple.

Official Witnesses

The Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor serve as witnesses to the marriage as a sacramental union. They do not have to be Catholic, however, it is recommended that they be in good standing in their faith community.

Wedding Rehearsal

The time and date of the wedding rehearsal is scheduled with the priest or deacon who will officiate at your wedding. Punctuality is expected of all who are in the wedding party as the priest/deacon may have other commitments following the rehearsal.

The Wedding Liturgy

Many options exist within the Rite of Marriage, which enable the bride and groom to make their wedding as personal as possible (various entrance rites, choices of prayers, blessings, readings, different formats for the exchange of vows, unity candle ceremony, etc.). If both the bride and groom are practicing Catholics the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony normally takes place in the context of a Nuptial Mass. In some circumstances only the Rite of Matrimony itself is used. The priest or deacon will discuss these options with the couple as part of their preparation.

Readers

Both the Nuptial Mass and the Wedding Ceremony include several readings from scripture. We invite you to ask some of your family members or acquaintances to proclaim God's Word during your wedding liturgy. A layperson may proclaim the first and second readings as well as read the General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful).

Gift Bearers

If the marriage is being celebrated in the context of Mass, family members or friends may be invited to present the gifts of bread and wine as the altar is being prepared for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Altar Servers

An altar server will be scheduled by the parish to assist at the wedding liturgy. If you wish a friend or relative to serve, arrangements must be made through the Parish Office (410-427-4700).

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers

Flower girls and ring bearers ***must*** be at least six years old.

Unity Candle

Lighting the unity candle may be part of the liturgy. Our candleholder is not standard. It uses regular tapered candles. To use candles other than ours, the couple will also need to provide the holder.

Your Wedding Music

The music you choose must be suitable for a worship service. Popular songs or pieces are often not liturgically appropriate and are therefore discouraged. There are many excellent pieces of music from various periods and in many styles that may be used. The organist will work with the couple to plan a liturgy that is both beautiful and liturgically appropriate.

Organist/Director of Music

Nelson Streett, Director of Music and wedding organist, (410-823-1276) should be contacted as soon as possible, no less than six months prior to the wedding, to be entered into his schedule and to arrange an appointment for planning your wedding in detail. Mr. Streett is the only organist/musician contracted to play weddings at Immaculate Conception. Only he may give another person permission to play. Arrangement for soloists or instrumentalists should not be made before speaking with Mr. Streett.

Cantor/Soloist

The organist will arrange for a cantor/soloist to lead the sung parts of the liturgy. The acclamations and responses are the most important music in the liturgy and should not be omitted or spoken. A friend, relative, or other soloist may be invited to sing, but this must be approved in advance by Mr. Streett and will involve meeting with the soloist. Outside soloists are expected to be competent and prepared. If extra rehearsals are necessary, an additional fee will be charged.

Special Instrumentalists

Additional instrumentation such as trumpets, harps, flutes, guitars, etc. can be used to enhance your wedding. Mr. Streett can help you arrange for competent, qualified musicians and can give you the estimated costs involved. Under no circumstances should you make arrangements for singers or instrumentalists before speaking with the organist.

Program or Bulletin

Mr. Nelson Streett will be happy to assist in organizing a program if one is desired. He will also provide titles, names of composers, and musical cuts that should be included.

Use of the Church

Dressing Rooms

We regret that there are no dressing room facilities at Immaculate Conception Church. Members of the wedding party may arrive 30 minutes prior to the wedding.

Floral Decorations

One or two arrangements of reasonable size are considered sufficient and appropriate for use within the sanctuary. We request that the arrangements remain in the church to share the beauty that they give to the church and to remind every parishioner of their connection as members of the community to the Sacrament of Marriage which has been celebrated.

When more than one wedding is scheduled on a given day, we encourage couples to contact each other regarding the possibility of sharing the cost of the altar flowers.

Aisle Runner

Using a runner is a tradition begun to protect a bride's dress, however, it is no longer needed for this purpose. Aisle runners have been known to cause people to slip and fall as they walk into and out of church. Because of this danger, runners may not be used at Immaculate Conception.

Decorations

Decorations are welcome. We ask that care be taken to protect the beauty of the church and not to move any furnishings. Tape is not to be used on the pews for ribbon bows or other decorations as it destroys the wood finish. Bows may be slipped on with a ribbon loop if desired. Candle stands that clamp on the backs of pews may not be used for the same reason.

Rice, Birdseed, Confetti, Rose Petals, Balloons, etc.

Throwing or releasing any of the above is not permitted at any time, either inside or outside the church. The bride and groom are responsible for seeing that this regulation is observed and that your guests are informed.

Receiving Lines

Because of the limited amount of time between weddings and other parish functions, receiving lines are not permitted following the wedding.

Photographs/Video

The photographer should be made aware of the sacred nature of the marriage ceremony and avoid being a distraction during the service. Pictures may be taken during the ceremony, but the photographer may not enter the sanctuary area. Additional lights for videotaping and flash bulbs are not to be used during the service. Video cameras must be on a tripod and remain stationary throughout the service. The photographer/ videographer should consult with the priest or deacon prior to the start of the ceremony. The wedding party is requested not to use the church for photographs after the service for more than 15 minutes out of consideration of those who will be entering the church for another wedding or service. Couples might consider having some photographs taken prior to the ceremony in the interest in saving time. While photographing in the church, no furniture may be moved.

Attendance at Receptions

A printed invitation should be sent if you wish your priest or deacon to attend a reception. If a married deacon is invited to your reception, it is customary that the invitation be extended to his wife as well. Due to the number of commitments in their schedules, our clergy cannot promise attendance at receptions or rehearsal dinners.

Professional Wedding Coordinators

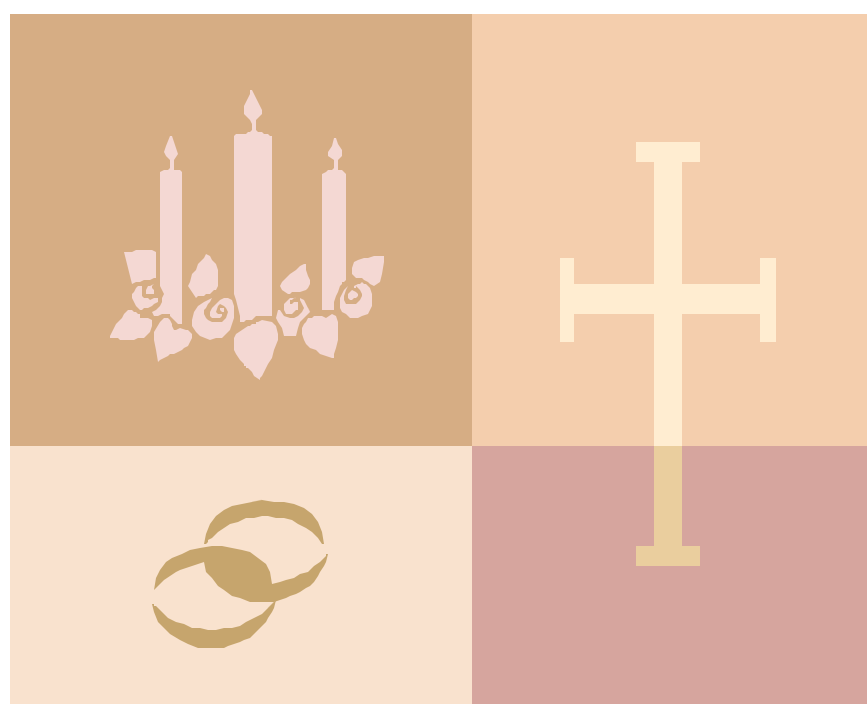
Professional wedding coordinator should contact the Director of Music, Mr. Nelson Streett, and your priest/deacon before any plans are made so that the coordinator fully understands the procedures and guidelines followed by Immaculate Conception Church.

*Again, congratulations on your upcoming marriage.
If there is anything we can do to be of assistance,
please let us know.
May God continue to bless you all the days of your life.*

*Rev. Msgr. F. Dennis Tinder
Rev. Matthew Buening*

*Immaculate Conception Church
200 Ware Avenue
Towson, MD 21204
Parish Office (410) 427-4700*

Wedding Guidelines



*Church of the Immaculate Conception
200 Ware Avenue
Towson, Maryland*

