ST. LEO THE GREAT CATHOLIC CHURCH

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GUIDELINES FOR THE WEDDING LITURGY

Rev. Peter I. Hahn, Pastor

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GUIDELINES

To emphasize the sacred nature of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and in order to preserve proper decorum, guidelines have been established for all marriages of at St. Leo the Great Catholic Church. All couples are required to follow the provisions of the Common Policy for Marriage Preparation of the Diocese of Harrisburg. As you begin this process, please read and review the "Instructions Before Marriage", formerly read by the Priest at every Wedding Mass.

1. Marriages may be scheduled on Saturday at 11:00 A.M or 2:00 P.M. Evening weddings are permitted in exceptional circumstances.

2. The scripture readings, prayers, etc. are to be chosen by the Bride and Groom in consultation with the Priest or Deacon who will witness the ceremony. ("Together For Life" by Rev. Joseph Champlain)

3. The rehearsal must begin promptly at the scheduled time. ***THE MARRIAGE LICENSE IS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE REHEARSAL OR GIVEN TO THE PRIEST OR DEACON PRIOR TO THE REHEARSAL.*** All stipends should be paid at this time or prior to the rehearsal.

4. The following guidelines apply to ***Music***:

    a. Music for weddings must follow the guidelines established by the Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. Couples should not plan or select music for the Wedding Ceremony or Nuptial Mass until they have contacted the Music Coordinator. All music, both before and during the Wedding Ceremony or Nuptial Mass, must be appropriate for the liturgy.

    b. Qualified guest vocalists may be invited to participate in the wedding with the approval of the Music Coordinator.

    c. A Cantor aids the worshipping community with the singing of hymns and psalms. A Cantor should be used in the wedding liturgy. The Cantor, when at all possible, is not necessarily the Soloist. A Soloist performs songs for the congregation. The Cantor helps the congregation pray through singing. A Soloist is not necessary; a Cantor is. (Liturgical Guidelines for the Marriage Ceremony, Diocese of Harrisburg)

    d. The fees for the Organist and Cantor are arranged between the Organist and the Cantor directly. In all circumstances, the couple will arrange with the Organist and Cantor concerning the payment of their services.

5. The following guidelines apply to ***Flowers***:

    a. The Bride and Groom are responsible for making arrangements for the flowers for their wedding. Flowers are expected to remain on the altar for the weekend Masses.

    b. Usually a bridal bouquet is placed in from of the altar and/or in front of the pulpit. No potted plants, trees or extra candelabra may be placed in the church. Additional flower requests must be discussed with the Priest or Deacon.

    c. Bows can be placed on the pews; however, be sure to assign someone to remove the bows after the ceremony. Bows may be attached with the use of masking tape or specially prepared hangars. No cellophane tape or thumbtacks may be used.

6. The following guidelines apply to ***Photography and Videography***:

    a. The couple is to instruct their photographer regarding our guidelines before the ceremony. Anything that will distract the couple or the congregation during the wedding is discouraged.

    b. Flash photographs may be used during the processional and recessional, but may not be used during the wedding liturgy.

    c. Photographs may be taken from the choir loft or from the general area near the back of the church. Photographs may not be taken from the steps of the Sanctuary or in the Sanctuary.

    d. Photographs of the entrance procession may be taken from a pew in the center aisle near the back of the church. Photographers are not to stop the wedding party for pictures during the processional or recessional.

    e. Pictures after the Wedding Ceremony are restricted to formal photographs of the wedding party and/or family. All other novelty pictures, such as, bridesmaids kissing the groom, garter shots, etc., are prohibited. Pictures of this type are more appropriate at the wedding reception.

    f. If the wedding is to be videotaped, the Bride or Groom is responsible for consulting with the Priest, regarding acceptable procedure. Videotaping is permissible from the choir loft or side. Videographers must consult with the Celebrant regarding the exact location of the video camera. No roving camera or spotlights are permitted at any time during the ceremony.

    g. If the church is to be used as a studio by the photographer after the Wedding ceremony, it is to be remembered that the church is a sacred place. Reverence and a minimum of conversation are to prevail. The following is a time frame for pictures after the ceremony:

        11:00 A.M Ceremony-The church must be cleared by 12:40 P.M.
        2:00 P.M. Ceremony-The church must be cleared by 3:40 P.M.

7. The following items apply to ***Offerings***:

    a. If the wedding liturgy is with a Mass, the offering for two Altar Servers is $10.00 each.

    b. The minimum offering for use of the church is $150.00 for couples where one or both are members of this parish. If neither the bride nor the groom is a member of this parish, the minimum offering is $300.00.

    c. A personal gift given to the priest or deacon is given at the discretion of the couple.

8. No balloons, bubbles, rice, birdseed or butterfly releases are permitted inside the church or immediately outside the church.

9. No rose petals are to be dropped in the church and no extra candelabra are to be used.

10. We do not permit the use of a white runner because it presents a danger to the bridal party when walking down the aisle and to the guests as they leave the church.

11. A receiving line is not allowed at the church. The celebrant will notify the congregation that the wedding party will be greeting their guests at the reception and that the wedding party will remain in the church for photographs.

12. Alcohol is not permitted on church property at the time of the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony. Members of the wedding party are asked to refrain from drinking alcohol before the wedding rehearsal or the wedding. Should the bride or groom arrive at the rehearsal or wedding in an inebriated state, the wedding will be postponed. Should a member of the wedding party be inebriated, he or she may not participate.

13. The bridal party is not to arrive earlier than one and one-half hour before the ceremony. If a wedding is scheduled prior to your wedding, please check with the celebrant as to what is the appropriate time of arrival. Our Nursery facility is available if the Bride wishes to dress at church.

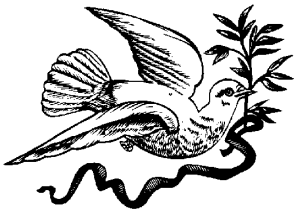
14. If a Wedding Program is desired, it is the responsibility of the bride and groom. The Parish can provide samples and guidance. **If a Wedding Mass is celebrated, the following notice must be placed in the Program immediately after the designation in the Program indicating the Distribution of Holy Communion:**

    > **"Note: The Holy Eucharist may only be received by practicing Catholics who are properly disposed to receive the Sacred Body and Blood of Our Lord (i.e. free from grave sin and having adhered to the one hour Eucharistic Fast). It is with great sadness that we are not able to offer Holy Communion to all who are present with us today and we respectfully ask all those who are not Catholic or not properly disposed to please remain in your seat during the distribution of Holy Communion and to join us in prayer and song so that, one day, there will be unity among all Christians and all peoples, so that all may share this precious gift of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist."**

15. The practice of lighting a "Unity Candle" is not permitted. The Unity Candle is not a part of the Catholic ceremony. If a couple wants to observe this practice, they may choose to use unity candles as part of their grace before meals at their reception. A copy of a Unity Candle Grace Ceremony is attached.

16. Couples who have a special devotion to Mary and who seek her intercession on the day of their marriage, sometimes choose to offer a floral tribute at the Blessed Virgin Mary's Shrine. If this is appropriate and consistent with the couple's spirituality, it is performed at the end of the marriage ceremony.

17. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is a sacred undertaking. Accordingly, it is recommended that Catholics who are getting married should receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the wedding.



INSTRUCTION BEFORE MARRIAGE

Dear Friends in Christ:

As you know, you are about to enter into a union which is most sacred and most serious, a union which was established by God Himself. By it, He gave to man a share in the greatest work of creation, the work of the continuation of the human race. And in this way He sanctified human love and enabled man and woman to help each other live as children of God, by sharing a common bond under His fatherly care.

Because God Himself is thus its author, marriage is of its very nature a holy institution, requiring of those who enter into it a complete and unreserved giving of self. But Christ our Lord added to the holiness of marriage an even deeper meaning and a higher beauty. He referred to the love of marriage to describe his own love for His Church, that is, for the people of God whom He redeemed by His own blood. And so, He gave to Christians a new vision of what married life ought to be, a life of self-sacrificing love like His own. It is for this reason that His Apostle, St. Paul, clearly states that marriage is now and for all time to be considered a great mystery, intimately bound up with the supernatural union of Christ and the Church, which union is also to be its pattern.

This union, then, is most serious, because it will bind you together for life in a relationship so close and so intimate, that it will profoundly influence your whole future. That future, with its hopes and disappointments, its successes and its failures, its pleasure and its pains, its joys and its sorrows, is hidden from your eyes. You know that these elements are mingled in every life, and are expected in your own. And so, not knowing what is before you, you take each other for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death.

Truly, then, these words are most serious. It is a beautiful tribute to your undoubted faith in each other, that, recognizing their full import, you are, nevertheless, so willing and ready to pronounce them. And, because these words involve such solemn obligations, it is most fitting that you rest the security of your wedded life upon the great principle of self-sacrifice. And so you begin your married life by the voluntary and complete surrender of your individual lives in the interest of that deeper and wider life by which you are to have in common. Henceforth, you belong entirely to each other; you will be one in mind, one in heart, and one in affections. And whatever sacrifices you may hereafter be required to make to preserve this common life, always make them generously. Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome. Only love can make it easy; and perfect love can make it a joy. We are willing to give in proportion as we love. And when love is perfect, the sacrifice is complete. God so loved the world that He gave His Only begotten Son; and the Son so loved us that He gave Himself for our salvation. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

No greater blessing can come to your married life than pure conjugal love, loyal and true to the end. May, then, this love with which you join your hands and hearts today never fail but grow deeper and stronger as the years go on. And if true love and the unselfish spirit of perfect sacrifice guide your very action, you can expect the greatest measure of earthly happiness that may be allotted to man in this vale of tears. The rest is in the hands of God. Nor will God be wanting to your needs; he will pledge you the life-long support of His graces in the Holy Sacrament which you are now going to receive.

A GRACE BEFORE MEALS

TO BE USED AT THE WEDDING RECEPTION…

The following prayers may be said as the individual candles are lighted by members of the family or friends of the bride and groom or by the bride and groom themselves.

LET US PRAY…

(As the first candle is lighted)

Loving God, we offer to you thanksgiving and praise for (bride's name) and for the life and joy she brings to us. Today, may your fullest blessings come upon her that she may be a good wife and mother. Give to her the blessings of the women whose praises are sung in the Scriptures. May the light of her love and faith inspire her husband to a life of compassion, caring and love.

(As the second candle is lighted)

Loving God, we offer to you thanksgiving and praise for (groom's name) and for the life and joy he brings to us. Today, bless him with your favor and grace that he may be a good husband and father. Give to him the blessing of wisdom and courage. May the light of his love and faith inspire his wife to a life of gentleness, compassion and love.

(As the Bride and Groom light the unity candle, the following prayer may be said by their parents, Maid of Honor, and/or Best Man or another friend or relative.)

Loving God, today you join two hearts, two lives and two families into one by uniting (bride's name) and (groom's name) in the Sacrament of Marriage. May the light of their love be an inspiration to all who share their lives. May they witness your love and faithfulness in all they say and do as husband and wife, as father and mother. Bless their parents and families and friends who are an encouragement and support to them in their love. Bless all of us who gather with them in joy today. May our celebration reflect the dignity of the sacrament we have witnessed today. And may our words and actions reflect your gentleness, compassion and love. Bless our gathering, the meal we share and the friendship we know today. Give joy and strength, love and happiness to (bride's name) and (groom's name) today and every day. Amen.