



Wedding Information and Guidelines for the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception

“Make [your wedding] a real celebration – because marriage is a celebration – a Christian celebration, not a worldly feast! ... What happened in Cana 2,000 years ago, happens today at every wedding celebration: that which makes your wedding full and profoundly true will be the presence of the Lord who reveals himself and gives his grace. It is his presence that offers the ‘good wine,’ he is the secret to full joy, that which truly warms the heart.

“It is good that your wedding be simple and make what is truly important stand out. Some are more concerned with the exterior details, with the banquet, the photographs, the clothes, the flowers... These are important for a celebration, but only if they point to the real reason for your joy: the Lord’s blessing on your love.”

- Pope Francis, address to engaged couples in Rome, February 14, 2014

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage!

The following are reminders of various topics that may be helpful in planning the day of your wedding here at Immaculate Conception.

INTRODUCTION

“The Liturgy is the source and summit of the Christian life, and from it flows the Church’s power and strength because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, Vatican Council II).

The Wedding liturgy is a sacred rite invoking God’s witness and blessing upon the words and commitment made by the bride and groom. Amid all the obvious joy and excitement, your wedding remains a moment of utmost, profound worship celebrated by you and your families and friends. It is an expression of your personal faith within the context of the community of the Church.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Because of the sacredness of the wedding ritual, and out of respect for God and the house of worship which is the church building, a few things need to be explicitly understood and accepted without exception. You are agreeing to all parish wedding policies as presented in this booklet and on our website by choosing to be married at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception.

Immaculate Conception is not a ‘venue’ as are reception halls or restaurants, it is not rented: it is a house of worship and a community of faith which you are specifically asking to witness your

vows. As a result, there are specific policies and requirements that ensure the appropriate conduct of weddings within our parish.

Respect, decorum and dignified behavior must be maintained and observed at all times by you, your wedding party and all your guests in regard to the church property and building, the sanctuary and the entire staff.

THE REHEARSAL

Punctuality for your rehearsal and ceremony is of the utmost importance.

The wedding rehearsal will be held on Friday afternoon or evening, and it is an important part of the preparation for the ceremony. It allows members of the immediate wedding party to become familiar with the environment of our Church and with the public roles they will assume as part of the liturgy. The parish wedding coordinator will conduct the wedding rehearsal and will give a brief overview of the liturgy to help all concerned understand the prayerful nature of the celebration. Only those directly involved in the ceremony should be invited to the actual rehearsal in church – others should be directed to meet you at the rehearsal dinner site.

Those who should be present at your rehearsal in church include the bride and the groom, both sets of parents, step parents, etc., grandparents (optional), bridesmaids, groomsmen, ushers, lectors, and gift bearers. At the rehearsal a responsible adult must accompany any children who are in the wedding party.

We ask that you require all these members of your wedding party to be present for the rehearsal, and kindly remind them they **must arrive on time**. We suggest that you ask everyone to arrive 20 minutes before the scheduled time. The Friday evening traffic as well as the one-way streets of downtown Jacksonville, which can be difficult to navigate if you are unfamiliar with them, may require some extra travel time. Rehearsals are allotted a total of 60 minutes and we strictly adhere to the schedule. Rehearsals that begin late risk losing adequate rehearsal time.

The rehearsal itself is not the time for discussion and decision-making. All decisions on the form of the procession, the choice of lectors/gift bearers, etc. are to be made beforehand and submitted to the wedding coordinator, **at least 2 months prior to the Wedding**.

NO BRIDE'S ROOM

Please come to the Church dressed for the ceremony. Immaculate Conception does not have a place for the bride or any of the wedding party to get dressed, nor does it have proper lighting for applying makeup. The church has a secluded space where the bride and four others can *comfortably* wait (more than five people are allowed in the area, but you may not be as comfortable); however, it is not equipped for dressing.

The groomsmen are welcome to assemble in the rear of the church to help with the ministry of hospitality. For your protection please be sure to lock your handbags and valuables in the trunk of your car. Do not leave them in the bride's waiting area, the Church Foyer, Sacristy, or parish hall.

VISITORS

Located in the heart of downtown Jacksonville, the Basilica does have visitors come in from the street every once in a while. In order to minimize any wedding disruptions, we recommend that you assign someone to be positioned at the main door of the Church. In addition to acting as hospitality to your guests, these people can point out to the visitors that a wedding is currently taking place. Please be aware that any Mass, even a Wedding Mass, is a public event and no Catholic can be barred from participating in the Mass and reception of Communion.

FURNISHINGS

The altar, ambo (pulpit), presider's chair and other furnishings are fixed and cannot be moved. The seasonal decor and other appointments in the Church (Advent wreath, Nativity scene, Easter candle, and seasonal flowers), likewise, may not be altered or moved. We will provide kneelers, chairs, altar candles, and other elements of the liturgy, as needed. **We do not allow the use of candelabras or Unity Candles.**

RICE

For safety reasons, nothing may be thrown on or around the church's property; this includes bird seed, rice, bubbles, and any other confetti-like object. It is helpful to advise guests of this policy before the wedding date.

MILITARY WEDDINGS

Military swords remain in the vestibule during the liturgy. Sword ceremonies may only take place outside the doors of the church.

CONCERN FOR THE HANDICAPPED

Immaculate Conception is equipped with an entrance for the handicapped on the East side of the Basilica (right side, through the courtyard, if coming from the front parking lot; left side, through the courtyard, if coming from one of the rear parking lots).

PARKING

Immaculate Conception owns three parking lots: one to the front of the church and two to the rear. Metered street parking is also free on the weekend and may be taken advantage of. Please do not allow your guests to park in the lots of neighboring churches or buildings.

Occasionally, Downtown Jacksonville is host to large events (e.g. the Gate River Run every March, the Jazz Fest every May, and the FL-GA game every October). Parking will likely be more difficult to find on these weekends, and certain streets may be closed as well. Please make sure your guests are aware if your wedding falls on a weekend of a big event so that they can plan for extra time to navigate the streets and find parking before your wedding begins.

FLOWERS

- We suggest coordinating your colors with the liturgical seasons. Artificial flowers and artificial greenery are not appropriate. The Florist is allowed to set up no earlier than 45 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the wedding. Additionally, any flowers that are not being donated to the parish must be removed from the church immediately following the wedding. The church is so beautiful that few, if any, additional flowers are needed. We recommend using the money that would be spent on flowers for the church during your reception instead!
- At Immaculate Conception, wedding floral decorations may be a complement to, not a substitute for, decorations already in place for regular parish celebrations. You may not remove or relocate any of the parish's flowers, nor can you move the Advent wreath, Nativity, or Easter candle.
- Bows may be attached to the pews using only elastic bands, string or ribbon (tacks, nails, tape and metal devices are not permitted). Please remove all pew markers from the church immediately following the celebration.
- Pew candle stands are not permitted.
- Unity Candles are not permitted. As the use of candles in the liturgy always symbolizes Christ as the Light of the World.
- Aisle runners are not permitted, as they may bunch up and become a hazard, potentially causing someone to slip. For the same reason the flower girl may not drop petals as she comes up the aisle.
- Flowers must be removed from the church immediately following the ceremony unless you are donating them to the Church. If there is another wedding following yours on the same day, you *must* remove your flowers immediately following the ceremony as a courtesy to the next couple.

PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS

Photographers and videographers are welcome to film the liturgy but may not intrude upon the liturgical action. Flash photography and external lighting are permitted during the processional and recessional, but NOT during the liturgy.

Please advise your photographer and videographer that neither equipment nor personnel may be in the sanctuary (altar area) during the wedding liturgy.

The wedding coordinator will show the photographer/videographer where they are allowed to set up their equipment during the rehearsal or prior to the wedding.

Pictures may be taken inside the church and/or in the courtyard for one half-hour following the wedding. Please respect this time as there may be another wedding, Mass, or the hearing of confessions following your liturgy. Sometimes with all the excitement, the picture taking gets

rather noisy. Please remember that you are still in a house of prayer and there will be people coming into the church.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

- Your reservation for the church begins 45 minutes before the start of your ceremony. Please communicate this to anyone who may be setting up or making a delivery. Access to the church prior to the start of your reservation is not permitted.
- It is imperative that you begin and conclude within the times communicated to you in your reservation confirmation. There are often events scheduled before and after your reservation.
- The parish reserves the right to terminate the rehearsal or wedding ceremony (including pictures) at the end of the allotted time (whether finished or not) if there is another event scheduled.
- The Bride and Groom are responsible for ensuring prompt attendance of the wedding party and that the events do not exceed the allotted times.
- Alcohol is not permitted on the church grounds.
- No food or drinks are allowed in the church.
- We ask that you maintain respect at all times that you are within the Church. Please communicate with your wedding parties that there should be no loud conversations at any point before, during, or after your wedding rehearsal or your wedding itself.
- A stipend for the priest/deacon is customary, though we do not make a formal recommendation as to the amount. We ask that you give the altar servers \$25 each. The fees you have paid include no stipends for your priest/deacon or altar servers.
- To ensure that nothing is left at the church, please assign someone the responsibility of collecting all your belongings after the ceremony, especially in the bride and groom's waiting areas.
- Please email the parish wedding coordinator (weddingplanner@icjax.org) if you have any further questions.