

Congratulations on your desire to enter into Sacramental Marriage!

The faith community of Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel accepts the responsibility of walking with you, praying that your faith is nurtured and that your continual practice of faith will be a celebration of your love for each other and the Lord. This booklet will guide you through the various aspects of our mutual journey. All of us at Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel pledge our support and prayers during this special time in your lives.

The Marriage Preparation Process

For baptized Catholics, the usual form of a wedding is within a Catholic church in the presence of a Catholic priest or deacon. One of the spouses may be non-Catholic. In such a case, it is also possible for the Catholic party to obtain permission to be married in the church of the non-Catholic, and this marriage is, of course, recognized by the Catholic Church. In these situations it is still necessary to go through a marriage preparation program, and certain paperwork must be submitted. At your wedding orientation meeting, we will assist you in contacting one of the members of the parish staff to begin the process of completing the necessary paperwork.

Marriage Dates and Orientation Meeting

The first item of planning a wedding at Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel is to reserve the wedding date in the church calendar. Parishioners can reserve their wedding date by calling the parish office during regular office hours. If you have not yet registered with us (and you are not getting married here based on your parents' membership in the parish), we ask that you become a parishioner before setting the wedding date. If you grew up in the parish and Nativity of Our Lord or Saint Gabriel is still your spiritual home, you should be registered here as an adult. Registration can be done over the phone by calling the parish offices at 773.927.6263. Please note that we only work directly with the engaged couples, and not through parents or others acting on their behalf.

Once the wedding date has been scheduled, a meeting will be scheduled to explain the process of preparation for the wedding.

Previous Marriage

If one of you were married before, even in a simple court ceremony, it is important to talk with Father Hurlbert as soon as possible. Depending on the circumstances of the previous marriage, you may not be free to marry in the Catholic Church, and as a result it may be possible that an annulment first has to be obtained. No date may be reserved for marriage until freedom to marry has been established for both parties.

Wedding Coordinator/Wedding Sacristan

Our parish provides a Wedding Coordinator/Sacristan for each celebration of Marriage that takes place within our church. At the time of your wedding orientation meeting, you will be given information about our Wedding Coordinators/Sacristans, who will assist you with planning the ceremony and coordinate the rehearsal. Our Wedding Coordinator is only responsible for the rehearsal and ceremony. She will be happy to work with a coordinator you may have hired to assist with the other details of your wedding; however please remember that the parish Wedding Coordinator is in charge of all that takes place inside of church. The parish Wedding Coordinator works directly with the couple and does not take direction from others the couple may have hired to help on their wedding day.



Sacrament of Reconciliation

Ordinarily a fitting way to prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage is to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation beforehand. This sacrament is available Saturday afternoons between 3:34 and 4:15 p.m. at Saint Gabriel, at Nativity of Our Lord from 4:15—4:45 p.m., or by appointment.

Preparation Programs

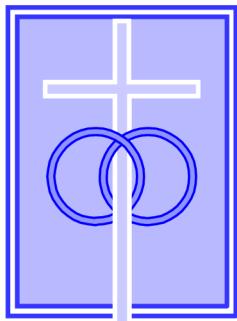
The Catholic Church recognize that sound preparation is essential for a sacramental marriage to thrive. Couples getting married here participate in a program of Marriage Preparation approved by the Archdiocese of Chicago. Couples who live outside the Archdiocese, but are getting married here, may participate in a Marriage Preparation program offered by their local church. Information on these programs may be obtained through their local parishes.

Preparation for your life together includes:

1) Spirituality of Marriage Seminar

“ONE IN CHRIST: The Path to Heaven through the Sacrament of Marriage” is designed to help you prepare for the sacrament of marriage. It will provide you with an all-inclusive, comprehensive appreciation for and knowledge of the Vocation and Sacrament of Marriage. The goal is to present the theology and spirituality of Christian Marriage, as well as some practical “tools” that you will come to a deeper understanding of how marriage is a participation in the life of heaven, and what it means for your life together here on earth. Couples should sign up for this seminar immediately after your orientation meeting at the parish by going online to www.oneinchristmarriage.com. The payment for this workshop is made online during the reservation process.

While we recommend this seminar, the Archdiocese offers alternative marriage preparation programs, which can be found at: <https://pvm.archchicago.org/lifelong-formation/marriage-and-family-ministries/getting-married>



PREPARE/ENRICH COUPLE CHECK-UP:

The Catholic Couple Check-Up is a questionnaire based on scientific research and a Catholic understanding of marriage. These questionnaires are taken online and can be accessed at www.catholiccouplecheckup.com. After you have each done this and have printed your report, you can discuss the results with each other. You might also consider making an appointment to discuss the results with the priest or deacon working with you..

Fees for the Marriage Seminar and Couple Check-Up are paid online when you register.

MEETING with the Priest or Deacon who will celebrate your wedding

After you have completed the process of preparation, and about 6 weeks before your wedding, we ask that you call the parish center to schedule a meeting with the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding. At that time, he will complete the paperwork required for the church records.

The Wedding Day

Both deacons and priests may preside at wedding ceremonies that do not include Mass and Holy Communion. This type of ceremony is the form for a marriage when one of the parties is not a Catholic, however Catholics may also choose to be married in a ceremony that does not include communion. The decision of whether to celebrate the wedding as a ceremony or in the context of a Mass takes into account a variety of factors and may be discussed at the initial interview. Such factors include: the day of the week of the wedding, certain regulations of the Catholic Church, the couples faith and level of commitment, the issue of interfaith marriages and the personal desire of the couple. Family expectations or pressure should not influence this decision.

Visiting priests or deacons (family or friend of the couple) are always welcome to preside at weddings at Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel. Visiting presiders are required to follow our parish's wedding guidelines. A form to be filled out by the visiting priest or deacon is included with the wedding orientation packet.

Time of the Weddings

Friday:	Late afternoon
Saturday:	2:00 pm. (<u>access to church from 1:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.</u>)

Weddings within the context of Mass last approximately one hour. Wedding ceremonies, generally, are about forty-five minutes. A gentle reminder: it is necessary that rehearsals and services start on time! The above schedule allows for an adequate time window for preparation, the ceremony and picture-taking.

- ◆ One-half hour prior to the wedding, the wedding party should arrive at the church. This includes church decorators, musicians, videographers and photographers. Guests are welcome to arrive anytime during this one-half hour.
- ◆ All wedding guests should be seated and everything in readiness at the announced wedding time. The wedding procession begins promptly at the reserved time.
- ◆ After the wedding ceremony, you have exactly whatever time remains in the hour-and-forty-five minute window for pictures and for picking up and removal of all empty boxes, paper, runner (using a runner is discouraged), programs and flowers.

Wedding Rehearsal

Wedding rehearsals are usually held on the evening before the wedding, but can also be scheduled earlier. Once the time is established, please invite all the members of the wedding party, including the parents of the bride and groom and anyone involved in the scripture readings, offertory petitions, or presentation of gifts.

Your Wedding Coordinator will conduct the rehearsal. It is very important that the entire wedding party be in the church and ready to begin at the scheduled time. Please be respectful of the Wedding Coordinator's time and the fact that other rehearsals may be scheduled. The rehearsal will begin on time even if members of the party are late. The ceremony itself is simple, so it will be rehearsed only once. It is the responsibility of the bridal party to inform latecomers of the proper procedures. All wedding accessories (such as programs, if you have them) should be brought to the rehearsal. This will ensure your Wedding Coordinator has the proper amount of time to organize everything on the day of your wedding.



Needed Documents

Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates

Sacramental records for Catholics are maintained at the parish where they are baptized. Catholics need to contact their parish of Baptism and request a newly issued Baptismal certificate, dated within six months of the wedding date as part of the documentation to be submitted and kept in their marriage file. If the date/place of Confirmation is not listed on the back of the newly-obtained certificate, the Catholic party should also present a copy of his or her Confirmation certificate. Non-Catholic Christians may simply make a photocopy of a Baptismal certificate already in their possession (since other Christian denominations generally do not maintain the same kind of records as Catholics).

Marriage License

In order to be married in the church you must obtain a civil license. A marriage license from Cook County, Illinois should be obtained within 60 days of the wedding date (but at least two days before the wedding date), and may be given to the parish to hold onto any time before the wedding (no later than the rehearsal). Information about the marriage license can be found online at: www.cookctyclerk.com There is a branch in Maywood where you may go if you wish to avoid going downtown.

Prenuptial Questionnaire

Within a month or so of your wedding date, at your meeting with the priest or deacon presiding at your wedding, you will be interviewed individually and answer the prenuptial questionnaire.

For marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the Catholic party will be asked to sign a form promising to do all in his/her power to pass on the Catholic Faith to the children and to have them baptized in the Catholic Church. The non-Catholic does not need to sign anything, but needs to be aware of the promise and commitment the Catholic is making.

Witness Affidavits

It is vitally important that the engaged couple possess the freedom to be legally married in the eyes of the Church and state. For that reason we sometimes ask the bride and groom to each choose two people to verify in writing that the engaged person is capable of living a married life. The form is known as a Witness Affidavit (think of this as a letter of recommendation). Two affidavits may be required for each person. The best witnesses are usually members of the immediate family, i.e., a parent, brother, or sister. These forms do not have to be filled out at Ascension. The same Witness Affidavit form is used throughout the archdiocese. They may be filled out at the most convenient Catholic Church and signed by the priest at that church. The parish seal is also embossed into this form.

Planning the Liturgy

Altar Servers

Altar servers are assigned by the parish for ceremonies within the context of a Mass. They assist at the ceremony and also prepare the altar and clean up afterwards. The customary tip for servers is included in the parish offering. If there is a particular request for a server or an experienced family member wishes to serve, please contact the parish office in advance so that proper scheduling may be maintained.



Readings and Prayers of the Faithful

At the orientation meeting, couples are provided with a resource to aid them in choosing appropriate scriptural passages for their wedding. In addition, the couple will find aids to writing customized Prayers of the Faithful. Both the Readings (except the Gospel) and the Prayers of the Faithful are read by individuals chosen by the couple.

Wedding Music Guidelines

Music complements your ceremony and brings an element of dignity, reverence, and joy to the service. As in all liturgical celebrations, the music must meet specific requirements for liturgical relevance, pastoral effectiveness, and artistic integrity. This unfortunately excludes most popular love songs, Broadway show tunes, and some Christian pop music, all of which may be more appropriate to the wedding reception. This policy is intended to protect the sacredness of the wedding liturgy, and is adhered to consistently.

Contact Carl DeSanti, our parish music director (email: chamrox@yahoo.com or (708) 447-5495). He will give you information about planning wedding music and the various instruments that are available if you wish to add musicians. At your wedding orientation meeting you will receive more detailed written information about wedding music.

Remit payment for the wedding musicians by one week before the wedding (the rehearsal night at the latest). Please make the checks payable to the individual musicians and put them together in an envelope to the attention of Carl DeSanti, music director. Checks can be mailed, dropped off or given to the Wedding Coordinator at the rehearsal.

Music Frequently Asked Questions

Do we have to use musicians from Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel?

Carl will ensure that your wedding music is appropriate and professionally executed. If you have specific requests for musicians or vocalists, this needs to be worked out with him.

What if we would like a personal friend or family member to sing at the wedding?

Please ask yourself the following questions when considering a guest singer:

- 1) Is your guest a competent, confident musician that you personally know to be successful as a soloist?
- 2) Is your guest fluent and familiar with the Catholic liturgy and all of its musical parts?
- 3) Is your guest fully aware of music that is or is not appropriate to the liturgy?

Guest soloists are usually comfortable with a brief rehearsal on the day of the wedding. They must supply their own music, as the parish may not reproduce copyrighted music for them. An additional fee is charged if an additional rehearsal is needed. Guests must prepare their music ahead of time, on their own. If the guest would like to sing only one song, a cantor from the parish should still be engaged for the rest of the singing in the liturgy.

What is the cost of hiring various musicians?

The following are the standard wedding fees:

Organist/Cantor.....	\$225
Cantor/soloist.....	Negotiated fee
Instrumentalist (each).....	Usually \$200 or more, depending on the instrument: trumpet, strings, flute, harp, etc)

What time does the music start at a Wedding?

The organist will begin playing 10 minutes or so before your wedding is scheduled to begin.

Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel Church Guidelines

Alcohol

There is absolutely no alcohol including champagne allowed on any part of the church property during the rehearsal or on your wedding day.

Balloons and Rice

No confetti, rice, or birdseed is allowed to be thrown inside or outside the church. Balloons are also not allowed inside the church. Couples who wish may use bubbles.

Unity candle

No one is really sure how and when this element seeped into Catholic weddings. It is not a part of the official rite, and perhaps originated in Protestant or secular wedding ceremonies. Certainly it signifies something meaningful, and the dramatic gesture of uniting a flame to light a candle makes a point about what is taking place when a couple weds. When the Unity Candle is used in the marriage ceremony, its dramatic nature actually can overshadow the vows and exchange of rings, which is when the sacrament takes place. For this reason, at we **discourage the use of a unity candle** as part of the ceremony. Those who wish to make use of a unity candle often light it at their reception, as part of their introduction ritual.

Florists

Floral decorations must be rented or purchased through the florist of your choice. All questions in regards to your florist can be answered by your Wedding Coordinator. Runners covering the main aisle can be dangerous - many people have slipped on them. If a couple insists on using an aisle runner it must be cloth and never paper. Please understand that the parish is not responsible for items left in the church. You may have bows or greenery at either end of the pews, but they must be attached with rubber bands, string or ribbon. Tape is not allowed, as it removes the finish from the pews.

Flowers are not allowed on the altar table itself. They may be placed on the floor near the altar, making sure not to interfere with any important sight lines. Our parish cannot supply pedestals. If you wish to make a presentation to the Blessed Virgin, a single flower or small arrangement is appropriate. The practice of flower girls dropping rose petals or other items is prohibited.

If the area around the altar is decorated for the liturgical season it is not changeable. No items may be removed or added to this area, including banners. Items in front of the altar may be carefully removed to the sacristy by the Wedding Coordinator.

Other items prohibited due to fire regulations are: hurricane lights, candles, candelabras and pedestals in the center aisle.

Photography and Videographer

Since this day of celebration is an important in your lives, we appreciate your desire to record your memories on film. Remembering that Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel are churches and that there are time constraints, we kindly ask that you follow our guidelines.

Your photographer and or videographer should be made aware of and have a full understanding of church guidelines as outlined in the contract which was distributed at your initial orientation meeting. Also if the photographer and videographer are two different companies, a separate contract for each is required.

Before the ceremony, photographers and videographers may take pictures of the wedding party in the church. During the ceremony, photographers and videographers are not allowed in the sanctuary at any time. ***They may use flashbulbs during procession and recession only.*** Respectful of the sacred nature of the our church, blocking of the aisles, laying on the floor or other inappropriate behavior is not allowed.

If photographers wish to enter the organ loft, they may do so only with the permission of the Wedding Coordinator and Music Director.



Seasonal Church Decorations

Catholic churches are decorated with banners, flowers, and other items according to the liturgical seasons. These decorations are part of the facility and are not changeable for weddings. We realize you do not want your wedding colors to clash with the setting. Please confirm with your Wedding Coordinator those colors which will be in place at the time of your wedding.

<u>Season</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Color</u>
Advent	4 weeks before Christmas	purple, violet,
Christmas	Christmas Eve until Epiphany	White, gold red, green
Lent	6 weeks before Easter	purple statuary and paintings may be covered in white cloth
Spring	8 weeks following Easter	white / gold
Pentecost	Last weekend of the Easter Season	red
Fall	October/November	green, and fall colors
Ordinary Time		green

Your Church Offering

There is never a fee associated with the sacraments of the church. The church does incur costs, however, especially during special services such as weddings. Some of these costs include electricity, heat, maintenance, church services, the Wedding Coordinator, servers, and organ and piano maintenance. Therefore, the **requested offering is \$500**. This does not include the musicians' fees.

If this imposes a burden on the couple, it can be negotiated for actively participating and supporting members of the parish. In such cases we suggest that the donation equal a small fraction (perhaps 10%) of the cost of the wedding reception combined with ancillary costs (photography/videography/flowers/transportation). Your support of Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel parish is most appreciated.

The wedding offering be paid on or before your meeting with the priest or deacon to do the paperwork, or any time prior to or on the rehearsal night. In addition to this, checks for the organist/.cantor and any additional musicians should be delivered on or before the rehearsal. In genuine hardship situations where all other wedding costs have been pared down, it may be appropriate to reduce the parish donation for your wedding.

Please note, this offering covers the above costs and not the presider of your ceremony. If you so desire, you may make a gift to the priest or deacon witnessing your marriage.

For those only doing their preparation and paperwork through Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel, but not being married here, the cost is **\$100 for pastoral and paperwork preparation and administrative follow-up**.

Note that the costs of the One in Christ Marriage Preparation Seminar and the Catholic Couple Check-Up are not included in the above costs. You will pay for these directly when registering.

A Checklist of Things To Do

- [] Attend a **marriage orientation** meeting. If you know who your presider will be, please specify this to the parish as soon as you know.
- [] Register for and attend the **Spirituality of Marriage seminar**, “One in Christ” Register at www.oneinchristmarriage.com
- [] Take the online **Catholic Couples Check-Up** (www.catholiccouplecheckup.com), and set up a meeting with the priest or deacon presideing at your wedding to review the report with him.
- [] Contact the **Music Director, Carl DeSilva**, by email: chamrox@yahoo.com or telephone **(708) 447.5495** regarding any questions about music selection.
Remember: all music and musicians are arranged through the music director.
- [] Catholics, obtain newly issued (within last 6 months) **Baptismal certificate**. If you were baptized at Nativity of Our Lord or Saint Gabriel, this will not be necessary. Non-Catholic Christians need only a photocopy and send to parish office. (See the *Needed Documents* section)
- [] Arrange meetings with your deacon or priest presider to complete the necessary **marriage paperwork** 6 weeks before your wedding date. The parish wedding offering (\$500) may be paid at this time.
- [] *If necessary, bride and groom each choose two witnesses to fill out **Witness Affidavit** form. A member of the Pastoral Staff, or a priest from another Catholic parish may sign this form.*
- [] Talk with the parish Wedding Coordinator four to six weeks before the wedding to discuss the details of the ceremony. Reflect on suggested **scriptural passages** within the context of the ceremony; then let her know the choices you have made.
- [] Obtain a **marriage license** from the Cook County Clerk’s Office. The license is valid for 60 days. More information at www.cookctyclerk.com/sub/marriage_licenses.asp
- [] Celebrate the healing **Sacrament of Reconciliation** before your wedding day.
- [] Please be sure that checks are delivered before or on the rehearsal date: 1) \$500 parish wedding offering, 2) \$250 check to organist/cantor and any additional musicians,
- [] Remember to remind your wedding party that the **Rehearsal** is on _____ at _____ p.m. and that it will begin promptly at the designated time.