



DIOCESE OF
Jefferson City

BETTER
TOGETHER

DIOCESAN WEDDING POLICY

“The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.” (*Amoris Laetitia*, no. 1) These words of Pope Francis call the whole Church—sacred ministers and lay faithful— not to stand on the sidelines, but to enter into the joy of couples as they seek to create new families. We are called to a persevering accompaniment so that the joy of the engaged may never lessen, but grow ever deeper with the passing of time.

A significant step in this accompaniment occurs on the wedding day. There are so many preparations that go into this day that it can be overwhelming. It is essential to remember that Matrimony is a Sacrament of the Church, a sacred rite and a public good, not a secular celebration or a private agreement between two parties. As a Sacrament of the Church, willed and instituted by Jesus Christ, the Church has a sacred duty to ensure that the celebrations of Matrimony are loving, joyful, sacred and respectful.

The following Policy for the Diocese of Jefferson City should be read and understood in light of the Church’s desire to be faithful to Christ, faithful to the Church’s Sacrament, and welcoming of the joyous love of engaged couples. This policy serves to foster a deeper communion in the celebration of Marriage throughout the Diocese, to provide clarity for engaged couples on the ritual boundaries to be observed in their wedding ceremony, and to assist priests and deacons in the counsel they give to engaged couples.

The Presbyteral Council discussed the wisdom and possible contents of a policy on 21 June 2019, formally recommending that I issue one. In light of their consultation and that of my chief advisors, I hereby formally promulgate the following Policy for the Diocese of Jefferson City, effective 1 November 2019. It is to be interpreted in conformity to *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* and in accord with *The Code of Canon Law*. May the Holy Spirit inspire and bless all of our efforts for the building up of the family in the Church!

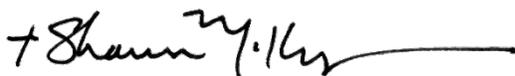
Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight
Bishop of Jefferson City

Policy for the Celebration of Weddings in the Diocese of Jefferson City

1. The engaged couple should contact the priest and parish at least six months prior to their desired wedding date.
2. Weddings during the regularly scheduled Sunday Masses are legitimate. This encourages greater participation in this Sacrament by both the invited guests and the local community when it is possible.
3. Regarding the selection of chants, no. 30 of the Introduction to the Order of Celebrating Matrimony specifies that the music (sung and instrumental) “should be appropriate and should express the faith of the Church, with attention paid to the importance of the Responsorial Psalm within the Liturgy of the Word.”
4. An entrance chant (hymn, song, refrain) is prescribed; this may take place immediately before, during or after the wedding party’s procession.
5. All music in the church building is to be sacred music, including preludes; no ballads, pop, country, etc.
6. The entrance procession should, if possible, include a cross bearer to help set a sacred tone for the ceremony.
7. The entrance procession should not include children being pulled in a wagon; if a child is not old enough to walk unassisted, in an orderly fashion that avoids distraction, they should be carried by another.
8. The following are the options for the order of the procession: after seating of any grandparents/parents, the ministers process in, then the wedding party with bridesmaids and groomsmen; then (without preference of one option over another):
 - a. groom with parents; bride with parents; or,
 - b. groom, then bride (with father); or,
 - c. bride and groom together.
9. The bride and groom are to stand, sit and kneel with the same posture as the assembly, unless otherwise indicated by the rubrics (e.g., at the Nuptial Blessing or placing of the Lazo).
10. The use of cultural symbols in the Catholic wedding ceremony require approval by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Certain secular symbols (e.g., the unity candle, unity sands, etc.) not approved by the U.S. bishops are therefore not permitted in Catholic weddings. Such symbols may be used outside the liturgy, such as at the wedding reception.

11. There is not to be a “song of peace” as part of the Sign of Peace and before the singing/recitation of the Lamb of God.
12. At Mass, if the couple desires to take flowers to Mary, this may be done after the distribution of Holy Communion with a hymn to Mary (understood as the meditation hymn after Communion). At a wedding without Communion, this may be done after the blessing and giving of rings (or after the blessing of arras, if this is done) with the hymn to Mary in the place of the optional “hymn or canticle of praise” (cf. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony, no. 102).
13. Because Matrimony is a Sacrament of the Church, the normal setting for a wedding is where the Church gathers to celebrate the Sacraments, namely inside a Catholic church building. The exception for this would be an outdoor altar that has been blessed and where the Eucharist is celebrated at least occasionally (e.g., at a Shrine such as the National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church in Laurie, or the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Starkenburg).
14. **THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION**
Regarding the necessity of a Catholic to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation prior to Marriage, the Code of Canon Law 1065 §1 states: “Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of confirmation are to receive it before they are admitted to marriage if it can be done without grave inconvenience.”
15. **MIXED MARRIAGES**
With the permission of the Diocesan Bishop, the minister of the non-Catholic party may participate in the Catholic wedding by proclaiming a scripture reading, giving a brief exhortation, and offering a simple blessing, but not the nuptial blessing for the couple.

Enacted: 1 November 2019



Most Rev. W. Shawn McKnight
Bishop of Jefferson City

Appendix I

ON PARTICIPATION IN WEDDINGS AT EASTERN RITE CHURCHES

(From the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*)

- ▶ A Latin Rite Catholic minister may be present and take part in the celebration of a marriage properly celebrated between Eastern Rite Catholics or between a Latin Catholic and an Eastern Rite Catholic, if invited to do so by the Eastern Rite Church authority and if it is in accord with the norms given below concerning mixed marriages where they apply (see no. 127).
- ▶ A member of an Eastern Rite Church may act as bridesmaid or best man at a wedding in any Catholic church; a Latin Rite Catholic also may serve as the bridesmaid or best man at a marriage properly celebrated in an Eastern Rite Church. In all cases this practice must conform to the general discipline of both Churches regarding the requirements for participating in such marriages (see no. 128).

Appendix II

MARRIAGE BETWEEN A CATHOLIC AND NON-CATHOLIC

(From the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*)

- ▶ In liturgical celebrations taking place in other Churches and ecclesial Communities, Catholics are encouraged to take part in the psalms, responses, hymns and common actions of the Church in which they are guests. If invited by their hosts, they may read a lesson or preach (see no. 118).
- ▶ Regarding assistance at liturgical worship of this type, there should be a meticulous regard for the sensibilities of the clergy and people of all the Christian Communities concerned, as well as for local customs which may vary according to time, place, persons and circumstances. In a Catholic liturgical celebration, ministers of other Churches and ecclesial Communities may have the place and liturgical honors proper to their rank and their role, if this is judged desirable. Catholic clergy invited to be present at a celebration of another Church or ecclesial Community may wear the appropriate dress or insignia of their ecclesiastical office, if it is agreeable to their hosts. Roman Catholic clergy are not allowed to concelebrate any type of eucharistic liturgy with Churches or ecclesial communities not in communion with the Holy Father; in these instances, choir vesture or street attire would be acceptable (see no. 119).
- ▶ The reading of Scripture during a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic Church is to be done by members of that Church. On exceptional occasions and for a just cause, the Diocesan Bishop may permit a member of another Church or ecclesial Community to take on the task of reader (see no. 133).

Appendix II (Continued)

- ▶ In the Catholic Eucharistic Liturgy, the homily which forms part of the liturgy itself is reserved to the priest, and on occasion to the deacon, since it is the presentation of the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living in accordance with Catholic teaching and tradition (see no. 134).
- ▶ For the reading of Scripture and preaching during liturgies other than Eucharistic celebrations, the norms given above (especially no. 118) are to be applied (see no. 135).
- ▶ Members of other Churches or ecclesial Communities may be witnesses at the celebration of marriage in a Catholic church. Catholics may also be witnesses at marriages that are celebrated in other Churches or ecclesial Communities, and as long as the Catholic Church recognizes the marriage as valid (see no. 136).
- ▶ With the previous authorization of the local ordinary, and if invited to do so, a Catholic priest or deacon may attend or participate in some way in the celebration of mixed marriages, in situations where the dispensation from canonical form has been granted. In these cases, there may be only one ceremony in which the presiding person receives the marriage vows. At the invitation of this celebrant, the Catholic priest or deacon may offer other appropriate prayers, read from the Scriptures, give a brief exhortation and bless the couple (see no. 157).
- ▶ Upon request of the couple, the local ordinary may permit the Catholic priest to invite the minister of the party of the other Church or ecclesial Community to participate in the celebration of the marriage, to read from the Scriptures, give a brief exhortation and bless the couple, excepting the Nuptial Blessing (see no. 158).