



Marriage Guidelines 2025-2026

402 N Kings Highway, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034

Phone (856) 667-2440, Fax (856) 482-0332

Email: parishoffice@christourlight.net

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding at Christ Our Light Parish. We share these guidelines with you in order to assist you with your immediate planning. More importantly, we hope our involvement with you will influence you in the life you will share together.

Remember: **a wedding is a day—marriage is a lifetime.**

The Parish Church is where the Christian community gathers to celebrate those important events in life that are sacred and serious. We are very pleased that you have come to the decision that your wedding is a serious and sacred event and that you want to celebrate it at Christ Our Light. Marriage is a sacrament, and we hope to be able to celebrate it with you with the dignity and the deep reverence which the occasion demands.

As you prepare for your wedding day, you are urged to participate in the weekly celebration of **Mass**. Learn to see in the nourishment of the Eucharist, the proclamation of the Word, and your joining together with the parish community the means to grow ever closer to God and to one another. Consider availing yourself of the healing strength of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, most preferably, with the priest preparing you for marriage and celebrating your liturgy, sometime before your wedding day. As you exchange your solemn vows before God and the Church community, witnessed by your priest or deacon, your lifelong commitment is best realized if it is prefaced by a serious and sincere resolve to live your marriage as taught by Christ in scripture and His Church.

As a sacrament, matrimony requires that those who enter into this special union be free to do so. To avoid any difficulties, no marriage can be officially scheduled at Christ Our Light until you have met personally with a priest or deacon of the parish. The parish secretary can pencil in one or two dates to hold for you until such time that you have met with a clergy member of the staff. The priest or deacon will need to discuss with you any possible impediments to marrying in the Catholic Church. For example, not every prior marriage precludes a Catholic ceremony, however, many do, and they would require a Church annulment prior to scheduling a wedding date. Ample time to prepare can be an invaluable ally in your preparation.

The Date and the Time

We prefer that the date and time of a wedding be arranged with a priest at least a year in advance. Because of other services, weddings cannot be scheduled before 10:00 a.m. or after 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays. **Friday afternoon and evening weddings are also possible. Please remember that during the school year, (September to mid-June, Friday weddings must take place either at noon or at 4pm. Sundays are typically unavailable for weddings.** Photographers are allowed sufficient opportunity after the ceremony for pictures, provided the wedding has started on time.

The Bridal Party

The Church, as well as the State of New Jersey, requires two official witnesses (best man and matron or maid-of-Honor) for your wedding. They may be Catholic or non-Catholic. Other friends and relatives can complete the wedding party.

Forms of the Wedding Ceremony

THE NUPTIAL MASS: A couple consisting of two Catholics is encouraged to be married at Mass. Couples will be given the book, *TOGETHER FOR LIFE*, to plan their liturgy and choose their readings. There are many beautiful options. Talk to the person preparing you for marriage for suggestions. We want your sacramental marriage to be truly personal. Choices are recorded on a tear-out *LITURGY PLANNING SHEET* which is given to the priest or deacon at the last meeting prior to the rehearsal. At the Nuptial Mass, the bride and groom may receive Communion under both species.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY: Couples, in instances where one person is not Catholic, may choose a marriage ceremony consisting of a service of prayer, scripture, vows, and a blessing. Options are also available for this type of ceremony.

Visiting Officiating Priests

If you intend to request a priest other than one of the parish priests or deacons to officiate your wedding, you should secure the permission of the Pastor of Christ Our Light. If this is done, the officiating priest is responsible for the necessary marriage instructions and the prenuptial investigation, including any and all dispensations. He should also conduct the rehearsal. Other arrangements can be made if the officiating priest or deacon is from out of state.

If the priest \ deacon is not from the Diocese of Camden, they must obtain a letter of suitability from their Diocese, and it is to be sent to the pastor and to our Diocesan Chancery office. The letter must be specific, i.e. include the date of the ceremony and the couple's names. Please note, there are no exceptions, as this is mandated by the USCCB for the protection of children.

Music for the Celebration

The music for your wedding should reflect the sacred character of the Sacrament of Marriage into which you are entering. Those gathered for the celebration should be invited to participate actively in the liturgy, that is to listen, to respond, to pray, to sing, as well as to witness the exchange of your vows. All arrangements for singers and other musicians must be made with the Parish Music Director/Organist. No outside organist can be used for weddings at Christ Our Light Church without the permission of the Music Director. **All couples are required to contact the Parish Interim Music Director, David Doan, at ddoan@christourlight.net to make music arrangements.** We suggest you contact David as soon as possible. The Music Director will discuss with you possible music selections and options for singers, cantors, and other instrumentalists. The normal fee for musicians is \$200 per person. An organist and leader of songs (soloist) are required. **These fees are paid directly to the organist and cantor.**

Photography and Videography

Photographers and Videographers are permitted in the Church before, during and after the wedding. As professionals, they should conduct themselves with due respect and insure that they do not distract from or interfere with the ceremony. Once the ceremony begins, photographs are permitted during the entrance procession, the marriage vows, the exchange of rings, the offertory procession, the nuptial blessing, the sign of peace, the final blessing and the recessional procession. Limited photographs are permitted during the Scripture readings (one photo of the reader). No photographs at all (including photos of the bride and groom, bridal party, and members of the assembly) are permitted to be taken during the homily and the Liturgy of the Eucharist which extends from the Prayer Over the Gifts to the Lord's Prayer. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make sure that the photographers know and follow these guidelines.

Flowers and Decorations

Christ Our Light has an active Environment and Art Committee. Please contact the Parish Office to discuss the church environment, flowers and decorations. Flowers and decorations, and bows for pews, are not required, however, if you desire to have them they are the responsibility of the couple. Aisle runners are not permitted nor is the throwing of rose petals or rice.

Offerings

The offering to the church for a wedding of a parishioner is \$500. Please give this offering to the priest at the rehearsal (if it is a check, it should be made out to Christ Our Light Church). ***If your marriage is a convalidation (blessing of a marriage) the fee is \$200.00.*** You should be aware that this offering goes directly to the parish. ***If you wish to make a personal offering to the priest or deacon who prepared you for the sacrament and officiated at the mass \ ceremony you may do so privately. The offering to the church for a wedding of a non-parishioner is \$1,000.***

If you are only being prepared at Christ Our Light but marrying elsewhere the fee is \$250.00 made payable to Christ Our Light.

Marriage Preparation Sessions

In accord with the COMMON POLICY OF MARRIAGE of the Diocese of Camden, every couple planning marriage will be required to complete the Marriage Preparation program of the Catholic Community of Christ Our Light. This program includes three to four formational sessions with the priest or deacon preparing them for marriage, three two-on-two sessions with a mentoring couple identified by the parish and completing an online inventory session (FOCCUS). Your priest or deacon will give you all the information you need concerning marriage preparation.

The Couple is Registered at Another Parish or from Another Diocese

At least one of you, either the groom or the bride must be registered at Christ Our Light in order to be prepared and have their wedding at our parish. If you reside outside of the parish, i.e. registered at another parish you must obtain a letter from your Pastor granting you permission to marry at Christ Our Light. If you reside outside of the Diocese of Camden, you must be prepared in your own Diocese by either a Priest or Deacon from your Diocese, i.e., your Parish. You will also need a permission letter from your Pastor to marry at Christ Our Light. We will explain the procedure at our first meeting.

Required Documents

If you are a Catholic, you must present ***a baptismal certificate which has been issued within the past six months to your wedding date.*** Simply call or write the church where you were baptized and they will send it to you.

If you are a non-Catholic Christian, then you must present a record of your baptism and two affidavits of freedom to marry.

If you are not baptized, you must present an affidavit of non-baptism.

If either party is under 18 years of age, a parent must come to the rectory and sign a permission form in the presence of the priest or deacon preparing you for the sacrament.

MARRIAGE LICENSE: Couples should be sure to get their marriage license in plenty of time to ensure that all civil and church regulations are followed. You cannot be married in the Catholic Church without a valid New Jersey marriage license. To obtain this license, you should go to the City Hall or municipal building of the town where the woman resides. A license in this state is valid for thirty days after the date of issuance. There is a 72 hour waiting period between the time of application and the valid use of the license. Plan to make your application about two weeks prior to your wedding. Please make sure that you bring your wedding license to the wedding rehearsal.

After your wedding, the license will be mailed from the parish to Cherry Hill Township. After receiving the license, the township has the official record in approx. 5 business days. If you need a copy of your license, call the township at 856-488-7892. Each copy is \$20. They are not sent out automatically.

The Rehearsal

The rehearsals should be scheduled with the priest or deacon performing your wedding well in advance. Please remember to bring the following to rehearsal:

1. marriage license
2. church/priest/musician/offerings

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

All Catholic members of the wedding party, especially the bride and groom, should prepare for this special time by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confession is available at the normal time on Saturday, after the rehearsal, or by special arrangement with the priest.

The Wedding Day

The groom, best man and ushers should be at the church at least 45 minutes before the start of the ceremony. Ushers escort guests to their places before the ceremony. The parents and the bridesmaids should be at the church 10 minutes before the wedding begins. Out of courtesy, the bridal party should make every effort to see that the wedding ceremony starts promptly.

Considering the sacredness of the ceremony, people should attend the ceremony and not congregate outside. No alcohol or alcoholic beverages are to be consumed or distributed on church property.

We want your wedding to be a festive occasion, a special time, but this is best accomplished through liturgy, music and the loved ones who share the day with you. We ask you, PLEASE do not have your guests throw rice or birdseed outside the church. It is a safety concern and the resulting mess, especially in wet weather, wreaks havoc on the church carpets and floors. Balloons are also not permitted for environmental reasons. No rose pedals are allowed to be dropped in the aisle.

At Your Assistance

The priests and staff of Christ Our Light Parish are available to assist you. We want your wedding to be a happy and holy celebration for both of you. Don't hesitate to call us...we'll be happy to answer all your questions. Be assured that you will be in our prayers in the months which lie ahead. We will do all we possibly can to make your wedding day and your wedded life a blessed and memorable occasion.

Reverend John P. Picinic
Pastor

Revised 01/08/2025



**Wedding Photography
Guidelines
2024-2025**

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The Priests and Staff of Christ Our Light ask that brides and grooms share the following guidelines for photography for your wedding with your still photographers:

1. Photographs may be taken at the following times:
 - a. Prior to the beginning of the ceremony or Mass
 - b. During the entrance procession
 - c. During the candle lighting ceremony (if there is one)
 - d. During the exchange of Vows
 - e. During the blessing and exchange of rings
 - f. At the offertory procession
 - g. During the Nuptial Blessing
 - h. During the Sign of Peace
 - i. At the time of the Flowers to the Blessed Mother (if there is one)
 - j. During the Recessional Procession
2. Limited photographs may be taken at the following times:
 - a. During the First Scripture reading one photo may be taken of the Reader
 - b. During the Second Scripture reading one photo may be taken of the Reader
 - c. During the General Intercessions one photo may be taken of the ReaderNo other photos are permitted to be taken at these times
3. Absolutely NO photographs may be taken at the following times:
(This means no photos at all in the Church. Cameras may not be used.)
 - a. When the priest or deacon is reading the Gospel
 - b. When the priest or deacon is doing the homily
 - c. When the priest is standing at the Altar from after the Offertory procession until after the Lord's Prayer
 - d. During the Distribution of Communion

Thank you in advance for your adherence to these guidelines.

Reverend John P. Picinic
Pastor