

# Reverence and Modesty at Weddings

## **Congratulations on your engagement!**

We share your happiness and pray that God will bless you abundantly during your marriage preparation and throughout your married life. Your faith in the Lord and His Church has led you to invite the community to share your joy through the public sacramental exchange of your vows of love.

The celebration of Christian marriage is an opportunity for the whole community to experience the Lord through powerful symbols: spoken and sung Word, bread and wine, music and light, vows and rings, bride and groom. In this celebration of the love of husband and wife, we see a reflection of God's love for us, the people of God.

Careful planning should take place with the main consideration being: "How will this help us, our families, and our friends enter into a prayerful celebration of God's love in our marriage?" We hope you will find these guidelines useful.

In the church, we stand on sacred ground. The church, especially when the Most Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle, is the temple of God. Jesus is truly present with us. Understanding this, each of us is responsible for creating an atmosphere of reverence and prayer inside the church. We must be aware of our behavior and demeanor in this sacred space. We ask all who enter the church to respect it as a place of prayer and encounter with God.

In consideration for those praying and the sacred setting of the church, a respectful quiet should be observed by all when in the church. For this reason, we ask that there be as little conversation as possible in the church during rehearsal and before and after your wedding. Guests may converse quietly in the narthex (vestibule) or, in cooler weather, in the courtyard. Cell phones should be turned off and must not be used in church. We ask all to refrain from eating, drinking, or chewing gum in church.

If you take formal pictures in the church, we ask that it be done quietly, quickly, and with respect for the House of God. During the liturgy, the photographer must be discreet, willing to honor the church's guidelines, and dress appropriately. Videotaping is permitted with the same reservations.

Special care must be taken in our way of dress when we enter the church. It is not simply a question of modesty but of reverence for our Lord's presence. In our daily lives, we all accept that in order for us to visit certain places or people, we must go appropriately dressed. In our workplaces, we are expected to conform to professional forms of dress. We have all the more reason to be sensitive to this issue in church where God resides.

Through the way we dress, we express our consideration for the people encountering us. We owe it to the rest of our community, to our brothers and sisters, who may feel understandably uncomfortable at seeing extremely short, tight, or revealing clothing.

We owe it to ourselves because when we dress with decency, more than just covering ourselves, we are in reality manifesting our dignity through our way of dressing and giving witness to the sacredness of where we are and what we have come to do. For us as Christians, the body is sacred, so sacred that God himself took one. Having modesty does not mean we despise our bodies. On the contrary, it is a sign of a superior dignity, a physical echo of a spiritual soul that elevates us above every other creature and which demands discretion and respect.

The wedding attire of the bride and groom, the entire wedding party, and guests should reflect the nature of what is being celebrated: namely, the union of husband and wife before God, His Church, and His people. As it is a sacred space and a sacred event, clothing should be modest and in good taste. When selecting dresses, please avoid the following: low-cut bodices showing cleavage, sleeveless, strapless or backless dresses, above-the-knee hemlines or hemlines with slits above the knee, open or sheer midsections, and very tight-fitting designs. We ask that brides and bridesmaids wear some type of wrap, shawl, shrug, or jacket that covers the shoulders, back, and cleavage for your time here in the church. Suits or tuxedos worn by the groom and groomsmen should also be chosen carefully. Guests attending your wedding should be aware of these guidelines as well.

It is our sincerest desire that your wedding be holy and joyful, and that your marriage will be a witness of divine love in this world and a blessing to all who know you!