



BASILICA OF SAINT ADALBERT

654 Davis Ave NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

CELEBRATING MARRIAGE:

Steps and Guidelines for the Celebration of the
Sacrament of Holy Matrimony

Guidelines—Updated 2026
Congratulations on your Engagement!

We are pleased that you have chosen to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony at the Basilica of Saint Adalbert. Please know that we are praying for you and your fiancé as you prepare to enter this covenantal relationship with one another.

This document is intended to provide you with preliminary information to begin the process of getting married at the Basilica.

It is imperative to read this document thoroughly to ensure that you are aware of all requirements to be able to enter the Sacrament of Matrimony in the Catholic Church. These guidelines are to help you, educate you, and prepare you for a lifelong marriage.

*“By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”
-John 15: 8*



The requirements for Marriage are governed by the Roman Catholic Church through her *Code of Canon Law*, the Roman Catholic Providence of Michigan, and the Diocese of Grand Rapids—the local governing authority of the Church. The State of Michigan also has rules and laws concerning marriage and make up some of the requirements you will encounter through this process.

Please note that entering the Sacrament of Marriage is a serious commitment and is not to be taken lightly.

Steps to prepare for Marriage at the Basilica of Saint Adalbert

Step One: Contacting the Basilica Parish Office-

Since you are a parishioner of the Basilica of Saint Adalbert, our parish administrative *assistant* will assist you with scheduling your introductory meeting with one of the clergy. In this meeting, it will be ascertained whether you and your fiancé are free to enter the Covenant of Marriage. This means making sure you both are of the legal age to marry and canonically free to marry.

If one of you have ever been married before and have NOT been granted an annulment, then you must contact the parish office ASAP for a consultation regarding what is needed to ensure freedom to marry. In some cases, it will involve seeking a Declaration of Nullity, otherwise known as an Annulment.

This first step is essential to determine and complete before any other preparations for Marriage continue, including booking your reception venue and the Basilica church for your wedding.

After you have met with the clergy and they have confirmed your freedom to marry, they will also confirm details regarding your marriage preparation as well as how to move forward with preparations. At this point, you can move to step two.

Step Two: Scheduling your Wedding date-

1. To reserve a date at the Basilica of Saint Adalbert, please contact the parish office **after meeting with the priest.**
 - a. There is a minimum of six (6) months preparation time for all marriages.
 - b. Your wedding date is not booked until we have confirmation that you are both free to marry in the Catholic Church. **Dates cannot be held for couples waiting for a declaration of nullity from the Tribunal confirming their freedom to marry. This process may take 12 months or more.**
2. **Type of Liturgy:** In your consultation meeting with the clergy, they will discuss what type of Liturgy the Sacrament of Matrimony will be celebrated in for you.
 - a. If both parties are practicing Roman Catholics, the Rite of Marriage may/will take place within Mass.
 - b. If one party is Roman Catholic and the other is a baptized non-Catholic, the Church instructs that it is preferable that the Rite of Marriage take place during a Liturgy of the Word without Mass.
 - c. If one party is Roman Catholic and the other is an unbaptized person, the Rite of Marriage always takes place during a Liturgy of the Word without Mass.
3. When **selecting a date**, you will not only choose a **time** for your Wedding Liturgy, but also the **time of year** it will be celebrated, which will coincide with the date chosen.
 - a. It should be noted, when considering a wedding date, the Church's Liturgical Calendar may impact your wedding liturgy. This specifically happens when weddings occur during the Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter seasons. The Seasons of Advent and Lent have restrictions placed on the liturgy because of their preparatory/penitential nature. With this in mind, *weddings during these seasons are highly discouraged.* **At the Basilica of Saint Adalbert, we do not celebrate Weddings during the Season of Lent.**
 - b. There are special days throughout the year such as Solemnities and feast days that will impact and limit your personal choices of readings, music, or prayers, as these days by their nature contain proper components that are essential to that day and take precedence over Wedding Masses.

- c. Wedding Liturgies at the Basilica of Saint Adalbert are celebrated at the following times:
 - i. Fridays at 1:00pm or 7:00pm
 - ii. Saturdays at 1:00pm
 - iii. *At one of the Sunday Masses. **

*Wedding Liturgies that will be celebrated during a Mass can be celebrated during a Sunday Mass with the Parish Community. This is a beautiful option in that you are choosing to celebrate this Sacrament of unity with the Parish Community there to pray with you. If you choose to do this option, please note there will be limitations as to what personal choices of the Readings and music you have.

Step Three: Meeting your Wedding Coordinator-

You will be assigned a Basilica Wedding Coordinator. Your Wedding Coordinator will contact you several months before your Wedding date to guide you through the Wedding Liturgy planning process, as well as helping you keep on track with deadlines and payments. They will be the one to run your Wedding Rehearsal the evening before your Wedding Day and will be present on the day of your Wedding to organize and keep things moving. They essentially fulfill the roles of “masters/mistresses of ceremonies.”

Please note that a Basilica Wedding Coordinator is a requirement to be married at the Basilica of Saint Adalbert and an irreplaceable asset to ensuring this process of preparation and the actual Wedding Liturgy run smoothly. If there has been a hired “Wedding Planner,” please note that they will have no authority while on the Basilica premises, especially regarding the Wedding Liturgy.

Wedding Fees-

As an *active parishioner* of the Basilica of Saint Adalbert, you have a right to be married here because this is your parish and we are privileged to have you as one of our flock. For active parishioners, most costs associated with weddings are absorbed by the Parish, but to help defray some costs, the Basilica Parish has established the following fees:

Wedding Coordinator	\$300
Organist	\$375
Cantor	\$150
Additional Musicians	TBD
<i>Donation to the Parish</i>	<i>Free will Offering is customary</i>
<i>Gift to Celebrant</i>	<i>Ask Wedding Coordinator</i>
Total	\$925

Fees for the Organist, Wedding Coordinator, Cantor, and any other musicians are paid/given to the Wedding Coordinator at the Wedding Rehearsal. Please do not mail them.

Marriage License-

Apply online:

For Kent County, please visit https://www.accesskent.com/Departments/CountyClerk/marriage_app.htm

The fee to apply online is \$3.

Apply in person:

Kent County Clerk County Administration Building, 1st floor

300 Monroe Avenue NW

Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2288

Tel.: 616-336-3550

- Before applying, secure wedding date.
- Proof of age is required for both applicants. Bring in a birth certificate, along with driver's license, state ID, or passport at time of application. (Documents must be in English.)
- One applicant must be a resident of Kent County or both be non-Michigan residents marrying in Kent County. (Proof of address required such as current, valid driver's license.)
Otherwise, apply within the county in which you are a resident.
- \$20.00 fee for county residents, \$30.00 for Out-of-State applicants.
- 16 & 17- year-olds need parental or guardian consent.
(One parent or guardian must be present with their ID to sign consent form.)
- If ceremony is to be in English, then both parties must understand English.
- Social security numbers are required of both parties (or legal reason why none).

Picking up the License

- The license may be picked up at the County Clerk's office no sooner than three (3) days after applying by the applicant.
- The license is good for 33 days from and including the date of application.
- The license may be used in any of Michigan's counties.
- The bottom portion of the marriage license document is the marriage certificate. It is filled out by the parish staff, signed by the celebrant, the two witnesses, and the bride and groom. Witnesses must be 18 years of age or older.
- There are two or three copies of the license/certificate. The celebrant or wedding coordinator will present one copy to the couple after the marriage ceremony. The Basilica staff will mail the other one, or two, to the office of the County Clerk.
- **The License needs to be dropped off at the parish office no later than one (1) week before the wedding.**

Rehearsal for the Wedding Liturgy-

The Wedding Coordinator will assist with scheduling the Wedding Rehearsal, which customarily takes place the evening before the Wedding Day. This is an opportunity to run through your Wedding Liturgy and get familiar with the facilities and the Liturgical movements of all involved in the Wedding Liturgy. Therefore, ***it is imperative, and your responsibility, to ensure that all members of the Wedding Party, Liturgical Ministers, and anyone else serving in a role during your Wedding Liturgy are present at this rehearsal.***

The Basilica Facilities-

Utilizing the facilities at the Basilica of Saint Adalbert is a privilege that should be taken seriously. ***The Basilica is not a venue that you are "renting," but rather a parish church and Minor Basilica where the people of God gather for worship of Almighty God.*** Because of this, it is essential that care, reverence, and decorum is maintained when at the Basilica.

This decorum applies to what one wears, how one speaks, and how one acts in a sacred place.

The Basilica church is not air conditioned and tends to be quite warm during the Summer months. Regardless, it is expected that all people are dressed modestly, which respects not only the sacredness of the Basilica, but also the human person. So, please keep this in mind as you engage with your planning. Dresses should cover the shoulders.

No Food or Drink is permitted inside the Basilica Church Proper. The Lower level of the Basilica Church is available for dressing and preparation prior to the Wedding Liturgy and should be clean and returned to the condition it was in before the arrival of the people using the space.

The Basilica church (church proper and lower level) will be available **2.5 hours before the Wedding Liturgy** for necessary preparations (photos, florists, musical rehearsals, wedding party prep). **Please be aware that the Basilica Campus is a smoke-free campus and there is zero-tolerance for Alcohol consumption in the Basilica church or on our campus. If there is evidence of consumption of alcohol by the bride, groom or any member of the wedding party, the Wedding Liturgy may be canceled.**

Planning the Wedding Liturgy-

There are many elements that go into planning your Wedding Liturgy that will be covered in the following section. There are parts that you will be able to choose and the options available are in the *Together for Life* Booklet given to you at your meeting with your wedding coordinator. It is important to remember that even though this is your Wedding Celebration, this Liturgy is a **public, communal act of worship of the entire Church.**

The Wedding Party and Processional-

There are many customs involved with wedding processions. These customs are not necessarily religious, and they often do not reflect the practice or Tradition of the Church and Her celebration of Matrimony. The Church does not require such social customs, and not all of them are appropriate for a Catholic-Christian Wedding.

The Entrance Procession is a Liturgical Procession, the entrance of not only the Ministers of the Liturgy, but also the couple, the Ministers of this Sacrament. **There is no separate procession for the bride in the ritual. The Bride and Groom, as the Ministers of this Sacrament, should both enter together in a unified procession, as the "Order for Celebrating Matrimony" implies.** You both enter from the same door, avoiding any visual suggestion that one is more important than the other. We encourage you to enter together as this best symbolizes what you will be doing together in and through this Sacramental celebration. If you decide not to enter together, we highly encourage you both to consider each walking with both of your parents in the procession instead. *In lieu of "hiding" the Bride, we would suggest using the Basilica Courtyard as a staging for a "first-look" for the couple, so that both can have a special moment together before the Liturgy. This moment can also serve as a time to pray before entering this Sacrament.*

While the tradition of the father walking his daughter down the aisle is a nice tradition, it does not embrace the full reality of this Sacrament. Long gone are the days when people believed "the father gave away his daughter, as if she was a possession of his." Entering the Covenant of Marriage involves freedom of will and intention to do so on the part of the bride and groom, not the consent or approval of family, so therefore the Church desires us to embody this reality of freedom through this liturgical symbolism.

Witnesses such as those in your Wedding Party may enter together as is custom and is appropriate for this celebration. Moderation should be exercised as to how many individuals are included in your wedding party.

The inclusion of **Ring bearers or flower girls** is permitted, but caution should be exercised if you are considering including this element. Children who are participating in any way during the Wedding Liturgy must be old enough to understand and follow directions. Typically, Children under 5 years old should not be included in the Entrance Procession unless walking or sitting with an adult who can manage them.

Liturgical Ministers-

As with all Liturgies of the Church, the People of God play a special role in the Liturgy. All gathered at the Wedding Liturgy are there to worship God through the Liturgical Action of the Church. They are also there to support and pray with and for you both as you enter this Sacramental Union. Everything that is chosen and done in the Wedding Liturgy is to work toward the Full, Conscious, and Active Participation of all present, in that all can enter the mystery celebrated with fullness of heart, mind, body, and soul.

Some individuals, called **Liturgical Ministers**, serve in special roles during the Liturgy. These ministers assist at the Liturgy in the following ways:

Ushers/Greeters: These individuals help to create an inviting atmosphere, as most people who attend weddings are guests and visitors to the Basilica Parish. Having people to hand out worship aids and seat people is a sign of hospitality and something that is encouraged.

Lectors (Readers): These are the people who proclaim the Word of God by reading the selections from Sacred Scripture that you have chosen for your Wedding Liturgy. *Lectors should be baptized, practicing Catholics who are either a Lector at their home parish and/or are good at public speaking.*

Altar Servers: Altar Servers assist the clergy in the sanctuary during the Celebration of the Wedding Liturgy. If you desire to have Altar Servers assist at your Wedding Liturgy, it will be your responsibility to obtain them. The best candidates are individuals who have served before or are currently servers at their home parish.

Gift Bearers: If your Wedding Liturgy is celebrated within Mass, there will need to be individuals who are chosen to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine during the Offertory for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs): If absolutely needed, EMHCs assist the Ordinary Ministers (the clergy) in the Distribution of Holy Communion during Mass. EMHCs who are mandated for this ministry in a parish within the Diocese of Grand Rapids are the ideal people who should serve as EMHCs. *Most of our Wedding Coordinators are commissioned EMHCs who can assist the clergy if an EMHC is needed due to the size of the congregation receiving Holy Communion.*

Readings from Sacred Scripture—For both types of Wedding Liturgies, you will be able to choose the three readings from Sacred Scripture that will be proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word. These readings should be chosen for their manifestation of the Love of God and befitting of this occasion for the celebration of Holy Matrimony. They should be readings that speak to you both as a couple, illustrating the glory of God in and through this Sacrament that you are both entering. The *Together for Life* booklet will assist you in choosing your Readings.

Step Four: Sacred Music—Consultation with Director of Music

CHOOSING YOUR WEDDING MUSIC: The selection of music for your wedding liturgy is a very important process, but many couples don't know where to begin. The Director of Music will lead you step- by-step through the music planning process. Please review the guidelines in this document and contact **Mr. Wassim Sarweh** (music@basilicagr.org) for a wedding music consultation.

MUSIC GUIDELINES: The Sacrament of Marriage is a liturgical celebration. Therefore, only sacred music is permitted. Popular/secular music that is meaningful to the couple should be saved for the wedding reception. In addition to the music being sacred, the music is to be stylistically fitting for the church space, consistent with the values of the Basilica music program, and appropriate for a room with over six seconds of reverberation. This means that there are pieces that may be sacred in nature but may not be permitted. In order to prevent any misunderstanding, please review this document carefully and schedule a wedding music consultation with the Director of Music before making any arrangements for music.

ORGANIST/PIANIST - PRINCIPAL MUSICIAN: The services of the Basilica music staff, a cantor and an organist, are required at all weddings. As principal musician for the wedding, the Director of Music is entrusted with the responsibility of determining the suitability of musical selections within the context of the Roman Catholic Wedding Liturgy and must approve all music and musicians chosen for the ceremony. The principal musician also bears the essential responsibility of ensuring the proper performance and timing of the various musical portions of the wedding liturgy. The principal musician fee is \$375.

CANTOR: A Basilica staff cantor is required for every wedding. Cantors who are not affiliated with the Basilica are not permitted. The cantor leads the liturgical music at your wedding as well as other sacred solo repertoire. The role of the cantor is an important role with historical significance in the life of the Church. You have made the important decision to celebrate your wedding within the context of the Catholic liturgy, where singing is normative. The cantor will help lead the singing and facilitate participation. Cantors selected by the Director of Music are thoroughly familiar with the musical requirements of the wedding liturgy, and comfortable working with the acoustics of the Basilica. They are well trained and come with the highest possible recommendation. The Cantor fee is \$150. If you choose to have the organist as cantor, the fee is lowered to \$50.

GUEST SINGERS: At the discretion of the Director of Music, you may have a guest singer who is not affiliated with the Basilica sing a solo. Guest singers do not replace the Basilica Cantor and will likely require an additional fee. A solo during the prelude and/or the "Ave Maria" during the Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary may be sung by a guest soloist who is approved in advance by the Director of Music. To avoid misunderstanding and hurt feelings, do not make any arrangements with guest singers prior to your wedding music consultation with the Director of Music. We have a schola available as well. There is capacity for a small, medium and large choir.
Small - 4 singers \$450 (clean angelic sound)
Medium - 8 singers \$850 (more full sound yet balanced)
Large - 12 singers \$1250 (Full dynamic choral sound with more available music to choose from)

INSTRUMENTALISTS: If you desire any additional instrumentalists, the Director of Music will schedule and contract them for you. Instrumentalists can add another level of elegance and beauty to your celebration. Grand Rapids has a plethora of professional musicians, and the Basilica has a longstanding professional relationship with members of the Grand Rapids Symphony. String quartets, harp, trumpet, and solo violin & piano are the most commonly employed. The fees for other instrumentalists vary. The Director of Music can provide a price list at your consultation.

All musician fees are due at the wedding rehearsal held the day prior to your wedding. Checks should be written out to the specific musicians individually and will be collected by the Basilica Wedding Coordinator.

The Wedding Liturgy Components-

Prelude:

Prior to the beginning of the wedding liturgy, there is a prelude consisting of about 30 minutes of music as guests arrive and are seated. Music during this time is selected at the discretion of the musicians and encompass a combination of pieces that mirror the festive nature of the occasion as well as the quiet dignity of prayerful reflection. Often the prelude is comprised entirely of solo organ repertoire but the utilization of other musicians (cantor, trumpet, strings, harp, choir etc.) is possible as well.

Processional:

The processional is usually an instrumental piece played by the organ. The procession could also be accompanied by an opening hymn that would be sung by the entire congregation. There is only one piece of music for the entire processional.

Title for Program: _____

Gloria

The "Glory to God" is an ancient hymn of praise sung in honor of the Holy Trinity. It is sung at all Weddings that take place within the context of the Eucharist ("within Mass")

Responsorial Psalm

The Psalm is, by its very nature, a song. It is always sung, not recited. Title for Program: _____

Gospel Acclamation

The "Alleluia" is sung before the reading of the Gospel. During Lent, "Alleluia" is not sung. Therefore, "Praise and honor be to you, O Lord Jesus Christ" is sung in its place. The Gospel Acclamation is taken from the standard liturgical repertoire.

Offertory (within Mass only)

If you are planning a full Mass, the liturgy continues with music during the offertory and preparation of the altar. Since a collection is not taken as is the custom for a Sunday mass, the offertory is quite short. Therefore, the action is once again accompanied by quiet instrumental music at the discretion of the principal musician.

Eucharistic Acclamations (within Mass only)

The cantor will lead the assembly in the "Holy, Holy," "Memorial Acclamation," "Great Amen, and "Lamb of God." The acclamations are taken from the standard liturgical repertoire.

Communion Song (within Mass only)

A Communion Song in which all can participate appropriately signifies the unity of those who gathered and are sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. A vocal solo or meditative instrumental piece may also be used. As a rule, one song during communion is sufficient.

Title for Program: _____

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary (optional—not essential to the Wedding Rite)

The tradition of the newly married couple bringing flowers in devotion to the Blessed Mother is not a part of the rite but is an optional addition. If couples wish to have this devotion as a part of their celebration, it takes place at the end of the Communion Rite.

Recessional

The recessional can be a hymn or a festive instrumental selection that is played as the wedding party exits the church.

Flowers and Décor—

This section should be shared with your florist to ensure they understand completely what is permitted at the Basilica of Saint Adalbert.

Considering the beauty and regal nature of the Basilica Church, it is suggested that **moderation** be used when adding any additional décor to the Basilica Sanctuary. Liturgical laws dictate appropriate décor for Catholic worship, and these norms are to be respected.

- The majority of décor should be natural rather than artificial, signifying the life-giving aspect of the Sacramental life of the Church.
- **Nothing is to obstruct view of or movement around any areas involved in Liturgical actions (ie: the Altar, the Ambo, the Celebrant Chair, the Tabernacle, the aisles), nor is any item placed on any of the above-mentioned items.**
- The Church is governed by the Liturgical Calendar which dictates the norms for specific liturgical seasons. Please note that the Seasons of Advent and Lent have their own character to them and have limitations put on them as to what is allowed. Therefore, any liturgical décor that is present at any time in the Basilica Sanctuary, by its nature, takes priority over any other décor and will remain where it is.

- No Liturgical Furniture may be moved for any reason or used for purposes other than worship.
- The use of the "Unity Candle" is not an element of the Catholic Wedding Liturgy, and therefore, prohibited.

Floral deliveries need to be arranged with our Wedding Coordinator and are permitted only up to **two and half hours before** the Wedding Liturgy.

Due to their potential to create a hazard: **Aisle Runners, Floral Arches, Flower petals, Rice, balloons, and confetti are NOT permitted inside or outside of the Basilica Church.**

We discourage placing any added décor on the wooden pews in the aisles, as it would take a great deal to ensure all pews are decorated sufficiently. It is excessive and unnecessary.

All décor must be removed from the Basilica Church after photos are finished.

Photography/Videography—

This section should be shared with your photographer(s)/Videographer(s) to ensure they understand completely what is permitted at the Basilica of Saint Adalbert.

It is a privilege to be able to take wedding photos in the Basilica of Saint Adalbert; one that can be revoked at any time. Please remember that the Basilica **is not a studio**, thus photographers need to utilize the utmost discretion when photographing/filming here.

Staging photos during the Wedding Liturgy is strictly prohibited. No processions will be halted for the "perfect photo," nor will photographers be allowed into the Sanctuary or in the front pews to capture any closeup moments.

It is important for photographers/videographers to remember to minimize movements during the Liturgy that may distract those attending the Liturgy from the full, active participation we are called to have in the Liturgy. Use of Flash-photography during the Wedding Liturgy is prohibited.

Photographers/Videographers are allowed to utilize the Basilica Choir Loft as it gives a great vantage point of the entire Basilica Church. However, they should maintain a clear walkway between the Organ Console and the piano for the Director of Music to move about freely.

Videographers are not permitted to patch into the Basilica sound system, nor adjust any of our pre-determined settings. A YouTube livestream from the Basilica Parish is available upon request.

The Basilica retains the right to restrict photographers/videographers who are found to be uncooperative or who disregard Basilica policies at previous weddings. This is at the sole discretion of the Basilica personnel.

The Basilica grounds are maintained well and available for photos too, with the understanding that anything moved or brought with will be cleaned up and returned to its original state.

Because of the Basilica Parish schedule, the time for photographs after the Wedding Liturgy is limited. The times established here are fixed and nonnegotiable because of other prescheduled Parish events.

For Saturday Afternoon Weddings: Photographs must conclude by 2:30pm.*

Prayerful silence should be maintained while in the Basilica Church, but most especially after the times listed, as members of the Christian Faithful are arriving for evening Confessions and Mass.



BASILICA OF SAINT ADALBERT

We acknowledge that we have ***received and thoroughly read*** the Basilica of Saint Adalbert's CELEBRATING MARRIAGE: Steps and Guidelines to the Celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

We agree to abide by the rules and norms that have been established here for Wedding Liturgies without exception and have informed the necessary parties involved in the planning of this Wedding Liturgy of the norms pertaining to their area.

Signature of the Bride

Signature of the Groom

Wedding Date and Time

Date Signed

Please detach this page and return it to the Parish Office