Marriage Preparation & Wedding Liturgy

Guidelines

St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Revised 9/21/2018

St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish
5720 Hamilton-Mason Road
Liberty Township, Ohio 45011
513.777.4322
http://www.saint-max.org

Dear Engaged Couple,

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding! We at St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish want to do all we can to assure that your wedding will be a prayerful, memorable, sacred, and enjoyable occasion.

This booklet provides necessary information about:

- Marriage & Wedding Liturgy Preparation
- Sacramental Requirements
- Necessary fees
- Contact Persons
- Guidelines for photographers and videographers
- Guidelines for florists

If you have any questions, please contact the parish office.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Jim Riehle, Pastor

BEFORE WE BEGIN…

These guidelines are meant to be complementary to the book *And the Two Shall Become One*, the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. You will be provided a copy of this publication at the "Before We Say I Do" Orientation Session. It contains valuable information about the sacramentality of marriage, as well as the many details of the wedding liturgy. It also includes all of the many options for Scripture readings, spoken prayers, and musical choices. This document and the various wedding preparation sessions will make reference to it, so it would be important as a couple to spend some time reading both these guidelines and that publication.

WHY A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY?

You have chosen to marry each other in the presence of God, family and the community of faith. The role of the priest or deacon is that of the official representative of the Christian community, as well as the State of Ohio. When celebrated sacramentally, marriage is an action of the Church in and with Christ, and a sign of the love Christ has for you and the Church. You choose to celebrate with a community that has helped to form your values built on the Gospel that Jesus gave us. It is a union in which we believe Christ to be totally present. The exchange of your vows is the external sign of the commitment you have to one another and to the Church.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Before the sacrament can be celebrated, the Church requires us to make an assessment of your readiness for marriage. For this reason, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati requires at least 6 months of preparation after the initial interview with the pastor. The ordinary way of approaching this is:

1. Request an initial meeting with the pastor and at that meeting tentatively set a date and time for the wedding liturgy. That date will remain tentative until all marriage preparation has been completed and necessary documentation is supplied.

2. Weddings on Friday evenings may be scheduled no earlier than 6:30p.m. Weddings on Saturday may be scheduled no later than 1:00 pm or earlier than 6:30 p.m. This is because the Sacrament of Penance is celebrated at 3:00 pm each Saturday, followed by 4:30 p.m. Mass.

3. At this first meeting, you will also discuss the marriage preparation process. This will include:

> A. A "Before We Say I Do" marriage preparation session at the parish, during which you will begin the process of formation and of preparing the wedding liturgy. YOU MUST ATTEND ONE OF THESE SESSIONS, AT LEAST 6 MONTHS, PREFERABLY 9 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING DATE.
>
> B. FOCCUS, a pre-marriage compatibility inventory which demonstrates readiness for marriage

C. Sponsor Couple Program, a meeting with one of the sponsor couples from the parish marriage preparation team that takes place after the FOCCUS inventory to assist in preparation according to your mutual schedules

D. Engaged Encounter Weekend or Pre-Cana Day. (Please refer to additional flyers for information.)

The availability of these programs indicates the importance of preparing not only an authentic and prayerful wedding liturgy, but also preparing for a life together, helping you in living out the implications and consequences of being ministers of marriage to each other for the rest of your lives.

SACRAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Ideally, Catholics should be fully initiated before they receive the sacrament of Marriage, having received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. (If you wish to be confirmed, confirmation preparation can be arranged.) A current Baptismal certificate (with notations) must be issued from the church where the sacrament was celebrated. **This certificate must be dated no earlier than six months prior to the actual wedding date. Older records are not acceptable.**

Baptized Christians of other denominations need to provide us with a record of their Baptism as well, but these may be older records.

MEMBERSHIP REQUIRMENTS

Either the bride, groom, or one of their families must be members of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish. Exceptions are made in rare cases at the discretion of the pastor.

RITE OF MARRIAGE WITHIN OR OUTSIDE OF MASS?

Either the bride or groom must be Roman Catholic to be married in a Roman Catholic church. Ordinarily, if both the bride and the groom are practicing Catholics the sacrament of marriage would be celebrated within Mass. If either the bride or the groom (or a significant number of their family members) are not active members of the Church (and therefore unable to receive Communion together), the Eucharist then becomes a sign of division, not unity as it is intended. The marriage ceremony is about the union the couple celebrates in the sacrament, and the Eucharist is fundamentally about the union of Christ with the Church.

Normally, if only the bride OR the groom is Catholic, the marriage rite will be celebrated outside the context of a Mass.

If either the bride or groom is a member of another faith community we invite the ministers of that faith community to join us if the celebration of the marriage outside of Mass.

If both the bride and groom are Catholic but most of the people who will be attending the wedding will not be Catholic, it is important to talk about the choice between the rite celebrated within or outside of Mass.

It is important to prepare a wedding liturgy which will provide a prayerful environment for the two of you as well as for everyone who will be present. The active participation of all present in spoken and sung prayer is one of the most important ways people can show their support for the two of you as your marriage begins.

PREPARING THE WEDDING LITURGY

The planning for the wedding liturgy usually begins early in the preparation process and is completed with the pastoral staff. Preparing a joyful and prayerful wedding liturgy will provide a solid foundation for preparing the other details of your wedding day.

Several times a year, a "Before We Say 'I Do'" marriage preparation session is offered by the parish. (See more details about this below.) **All couples must attend ONE of these sessions, during which they will begin the process of planning the wedding liturgy. Plan to attend AT LEAST SIX MONTHS, and PREFERABLY NINE MONTHS before your wedding date.**

Because marriage is a partnership of life and love, planning is best done together if it is to adequately reflect the faith of both parties. While it is important to listen to the ideas of parents and friends, we encourage you to accept their suggestions graciously while you reserve the decision-making for the two of you in consultation with the parish staff. Like other meetings for preparation, the meetings to prepare the liturgy should include both bride and groom.

REHEARSAL

During your initial conversation with the pastor your wedding rehearsal will be scheduled. Ordinarily the rehearsal is held on the day before the wedding at 6:00 pm. In rare cases, rehearsals may be scheduled at different times in conversation with the pastor.

It is helpful if those chosen as lectors, gift-bearers, servers, and Communion Ministers are present for this rehearsal. (See details below about these ministers.) Musicians are not present for the rehearsal.

Your attention to being on time will be greatly appreciated by all involved. Due to the fact that we often have more than one function scheduled in the church on a given evening, we are unable to wait no more than 15 minutes for latecomers before beginning the rehearsal.

Wedding rehearsals are conducted by one of our wedding assistants and will last no more than one hour.

WEDDING ASSISTANTS

The parish provides a wedding assistant who will facilitate the wedding rehearsal, be available to answer your questions, and assist in the wedding liturgy itself. Her/his stipend is included in the parish fees. (See below for details.)

There is no need for any other "wedding coordinator" for the liturgy itself besides the parish personnel. If you have hired a "wedding coordinator" to work on other aspects of your wedding day, they are asked to leave the details related to the liturgy to the parish staff and wedding assistant.

VISITING CLERGY

Any Roman Catholic priest or deacon in good standing is welcome at St. Maximilian Kolbe parish with approval of the pastor. In cases of mixed religion, the minister of the non-Catholic person is welcome to participate along with parish clergy, pending approval from the pastor. A visiting priest or deacon will verify that he will officially witness the wedding by either calling or writing the parish. At this time, the priest or deacon is to also inform the pastor of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish whether he is doing the marriage preparation or whether the preparation will happen at the parish.

Rehearsal date and time need to be confirmed with the visiting priest or deacon AND the parish to use the building. If the couple does their preparation with a visiting priest or deacon, they are still required to prepare the liturgy in consultation with the parish's pastoral associate for worship.

LITURGICAL MINISTERS

Hospitality

It is very important that your guests feel welcome. More and more frequently the bride and groom and their families are acting as ministers of hospitality, greeting guests as they arrive for the wedding. This gesture goes a long way toward making the guests feel welcome.

If not the couple themselves, it would be helpful to ask a few friends or family to greet people and distribute worship aids.

It is important that greeters be friendly, smiling, welcoming. This initial hospitality will go a long way to encourage and maximize the assembly's active participation.

Lectors

One reader each is needed for the First Reading, the Second Reading, and the Universal Prayer (General Intercessions.) You may choose three different people, or ask one person to read all three texts. Note that only one person may read the intercessions.

Lectors should be comfortable and experienced with public speaking, if not liturgical proclamation.

If the liturgy is a Mass, the lectors need to be Catholic. If the sacrament is celebrated outside of Mass, the readers may be from any Christian tradition. Please provide the text of the readings (found in *And the Two Shall Become One* and on the parish website) BEFORE the night of the Rehearsal so that your lectors may be well prepared! During the liturgy, the readings will be proclaimed from the Lectionary on the ambo. Please invite the chosen lectors to the rehearsal.

Servers

The wedding liturgy (especially one outside of Mass) will go quite smoothly without altar servers. However, if there is someone among your family and friends who is experienced as an altar server and wants to do this ministry, a server can always be used.

Communion Ministers (Mass)

It is our practice at St. Maximilian Kolbe that the Eucharist be ministered under both species – consecrated bread AND wine. Normally, this will call for two ministers besides the priest to minister the Precious Blood. Depending on the number of invited guests, it is sometimes necessary to add another plate minister, and possibly two additional ministers. Ministers of Communion must be trained and commissioned for this ministry here at St. Max or in their own parish. If you are unable to secure Communion Ministers, the parish staff can help by asking some of our parish ministers.

Gift Bearers (Mass)

In the usual way, gifts of bread and wine are brought forward in procession to the altar at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Two people are needed to carry bread and wine. No other gifts may be brought forward.

WORSHIP AID/PROGRAM

The primary reason for printing a worship aid (aka "program" or "order of service") is as an aid to the participation of the gathered assembly in the wedding liturgy. Secondarily, a program provides a place to list the members of the wedding party, etc and for the inclusion of other texts, and often becomes a wonderful keepsake.

The parish provides a worship aid which will include the parts necessary for the people's active participation in the liturgy, the order of the rite and any other music and other texts for the assembly. You are able to choose the color of paper, and include some words of greeting/thanks.

If you need to provide some program in addition to this, it is your responsibility to design and print. **The parish's worship aid must be distributed to all guests as a measure of hospitality and to enable their participation in the liturgy.**

MUSIC

A parish staff musician will normally be the organist/pianist and serve as leader of song. If you wish, the parish may contract additional musicians (cantor, flute, trumpet, violin, etc.) whose stipends would be paid by the couple on top of normal parish fees. Other musicians may be used in consultation with the parish staff musician, but they should be pastoral musicians serving in music ministry. While friends and family members may have musical talents, those gifts might best be shared at the rehearsal dinner or the reception.

Please be attentive to the Church's guidelines for sacred music within the wedding liturgy as found in the booklet *And the Two Shall Become One*. **As it is a liturgical service of the Church, secular/popular music is not appropriate for the wedding liturgy within OR outside of Mass.** The website for engaged couples includes a variety of choices for each element of the wedding liturgy.

FACILITIES

The Catholic Church requires that the celebration of the sacrament of marriage take place in the church building. This has a profound effect on all aspects of the rehearsal as well as the celebration of the sacrament itself. The church building is a consecrated place. Therefore, appropriate attire, proper behavior and reverence for this sacred space is expected. Unnecessary noise and loudness at rehearsals is to be avoided.

GYM/KITCHEN & CONFERENCE ROOM – Our parish has 2 facilities for receptions or rehearsal dinner that are available for a reasonable fee, separate from the wedding fee. The facility policy is available on request or on our website. Please call the parish office with questions.

FURNISHINGS – The furnishings in our parish church have been both artistically and theologically placed. Therefore, the furnishings must remain in the same positions in which they are found. In short, the altar, ambo, chairs for couple and clergy, and congregational seats may not be moved.

SEASONAL WEDDINGS – Lent is a penitential season and weddings are not typically scheduled during this time. If your wedding is scheduled during the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Easter or Pentecost or near dates like Thanksgiving, etc, please be aware that the worship environment will reflect the particular colors and character of these liturgical seasons and will not be altered for individual celebrations like weddings. (The Christmas and Easter Seasons, for example, will find the church well adorned with flowers – keep this in mind as you choose floral arrangements. You may find that you do not need to purchase any additional flowers during these times of the year.)

FLOWERS, CANDLES & PEW BOWS – We suggest simplicity in the use of flowers. Flowers may be placed on the floor in front of the altar table and/or ambo. Flowers are never placed on or above the height of the altar table. If there is more than one wedding on a given date, couples may consider sharing the expense of having arrangements made. Flower arrangements may be left at the church for the parish to enjoy during weekend masses or taken after the ceremony.

Pew Bows are optional. Pew Bows should be affixed AFTER 4:30 pm mass is finished for evening weddings and must be removed after pictures are finished. NOTE: No tape of any kind may be used on the pews to affix aisle decorations, as it is harmful to the wood. It is suggested that large rubber bands be used instead. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make arrangements for someone other than a wedding party member to place bows.

Aisle candles and candelabras are not permitted as they pose a danger for guests.

We will provide your florist a copy of the parish guidelines.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO – We permit professional photographers to take pictures without flash during the ceremony, **but only from the back of church (out of sight)**. During the entrance procession and the procession out of the church at the end, a flash may be used. Videotaping during the ceremony must be done with a stationary tripod and is permitted only from the back of church. **At no time may a photographer enter the altar platform or disrupt the ceremony.** Please enjoy taking posed photographs in the church after the wedding, however all photography after the wedding must be completed by 2:45 pm (afternoon wedding) or 8:15 pm (evening wedding.)

We do ask that you remember during the photo session that you are in a place of prayer, and that no one stand on any of our chairs or pews. We will provide your photographer and videographer a copy of the parish guidelines.

UNITY CANDLE – The use of a "unity candle" is a popular practice in many churches, **but is not, however, an official part of the Catholic wedding liturgy.** The principal symbol of Christ's presence in the sacrament of marriage is the bride and groom, and the rings they exchange. Other symbols detract from the power of these primary signs. Even more important is that in the case of a wedding celebrated within Mass, the use of a "unity candle" could diminish the significance of the Eucharist, which is the ultimate symbol of unity. Thus, we strongly discourage its use during the liturgy, especially in the case of two Catholics marrying. Talk with the pastoral associate or priest or deacon about possibilities for use of a "unity candle" during the rehearsal dinner, reception, or other time.

DEVOTION TO MARY – Similar to the "unity candle", expressing devotion to the Blessed Virgin during the liturgy is not a part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage. However, if a couple has a genuine and sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin, talk with the pastoral staff about the possibilities for including such a devotion in the wedding rehearsal, before the wedding liturgy, or at another time.

AISLE RUNNER – Aisle runners are not permitted. They are a serious trip hazard.

WAITING ROOMS – The Hospitality Room may be used as a gathering room before the ceremony for the bride and her attendants. The Conference Room may be used as a gathering room before the ceremony for the groom and his attendants. It is the wedding party's responsibility to tidy the space before leaving. 6:30p weddings should plan to arrive at 5:15p; 1p weddings should plan to arrive at 11:45a.

RECEIVING LINE – There is to be no receiving line at church following the ceremony. The "receiving" line appropriately takes place at the "reception".

RICE, BIRD SEED, CONFETTI, SPARKLERS, GLITTER, BUBBLES, FLOWER PETALS, AND HELIUM BALLOONS – Originally, the throwing of rice and seed was a pagan fertility rite. In addition to being a maintenance problem, it is offensive to those who have a growing concern over the throwing of food when a large portion of the world is starving, and so the throwing of rice, birdseed, etc, is not permitted. Flower petals of any kind (silk or live), confetti, or glitter cannot be thrown, strewn or dropped on the church. Helium balloons are not used since they pose a threat to the environment. No fireworks of any kind (including sparklers) are allowed. Bubbles make a mess all over the floor, causing slippery surfaces.

ALCOHOL - Bringing alcoholic beverages onto parish grounds for a pre-nuptial celebration is completely inconsistent with the sacred character of the Marriage sacrament. Even champagne in the bride's room, as traditional as it may be for some families, is not permitted. **There is to be no consumption of any type of alcoholic beverage on church premises before or after the wedding ceremony or during the rehearsal. Additionally, the Church is forbidden to witness the marriage of anyone who is under the influence of alcohol and one cannot enter into a legal contract (including marriage) if under the influence of alcohol. DO NOT DRINK BEFORE YOUR WEDDING.**

No food of any kind may be brought into the church. It is recommended that you provide bottled water for your wedding party.

SMOKING – Smoking is prohibited. Our campus is smoke-free.

*****IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BRIDAL PARTY, THEIR FAMILIES AND GUESTS TO OBEY THESE RULES AND ALL LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS.*****

SEATING - The bride and groom will normally be seated to the left of the altar in the sanctuary area. Normally, the groomsmen sit on one side of the church (right as you are facing the altar) and bridesmaids on the other (left as you are facing the altar). Additional seating requirements beyond the bridal party and immediate family (parents and grandparents) are the responsibility of the bride and groom to discuss with their ushers in advance. Traditional, escorted seating by ushers is permitted but will normally require 3-4 ushers and must not delay the start of the liturgy.

PROCESSION

The purpose of the procession which begins the wedding (or any other liturgy) is twofold. The need for the wedding party, ministers and couple to get to their places in church is obvious. Less obvious perhaps is the liturgical reason for processing. The ministers, couple and witnesses move through the gathered assembly as a reminder of our journey of faith. Your faith brings you to this point in life where you stand before this gathering of God's people to officially profess your love for each other.

The *Rite of Marriage* describes the procession in this way: "If there is a procession to the altar, the ministers go first, followed by the priest, and then the bride and the bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses."

The possibilities for processions will be discussed in detail at the wedding liturgy preparation workshop (see a fine explanation in *And the Two Shall Become One*) but for now, we encourage couples to seriously consider having both parents accompany them (bride AND groom) down the aisle.

Three options for taking this approach would be:

1)Wedding party enters as couples, followed by the groom with his parents and bride with her parents;

2)Priest or Deacon enters with the groom, wedding party enters as couples, with the bride being escorted by her parents.

3)Groomsmen are in place and meet bridesmaids at cross aisle, with the bride escorted by her parents last.

RING BEARER, FLOWER GIRL, AND JUNIOR BRIDESMAID/USHERS - It is important to consider the age of children involved in these roles and determine whether their presence will add or distract from the celebration. It seems to work best if very young children in the wedding party walk in the opening procession then sit with a family member rather than with the wedding party. When you decide whether or not they are to come forward at the exchange of vows and rings, you will want to consider their age and how they may be in front of a crowd.

NOTE FOR RING-BEARERS: The rings may be carried on a pillow, but may NOT be fastened to that pillow. They need to be easily accessed during the Rite of Marriage, without an awkward delay to detach them from a pillow or other device. You can tie the rings to something with a simple overhand or slip knot, use a Velcro loop, or other easy method. It is also permissible for the ring-bearer to simply carry the rings in his hand, or to walk empty-handed. The rings need to be accessible during the Rite of Marriage (after the homily) so one of the witnesses (usually the best man) can hand them to the bride and groom.

FEES

The fee for weddings celebrated for parishioners at St. Maximilian Kolbe Church is $250.00. Make checks payable to St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish. This fee includes:

- Use of the parish facilities
- The services of the parish wedding assistant at the rehearsal and the wedding liturgy itself.
- Materials and events of the formation process
- The necessary paperwork required by the Archdiocese. (FOCCUS instrument, Sponsor Couple programs, etc.)
- The stipend for the principal musician.

Should you choose to employ the services of additional musicians in consultation with the pastoral associate (cantors or instrumentalists) their fees are not included in this total and should be paid directly to those musicians. **Again, the use of any musicians other than parish musicians is at the discretion of the pastoral associate.**

*****FEES MUST BE RECEIVED IN THE PARISH OFFICE AT LEAST 14 DAYS PRIOR TO THE WEDDING DAY OR YOUR WEDDING MAY BE POSTPONED.*****

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

The celebration of the sacrament of marriage is a celebration for the whole Church, and in particular the whole parish community. We all rejoice with you in your new life together and we pledge our prayers and support for you in your new ministry to one another.

If you will be living within the St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish community, please register as a new family even though you are already registered as an individual. Registering in the parish is important for our records and your continued involvement in the parish. We invite you to participate in parish life and regularly worship with us. Please complete the Stewardship Renewal card in the parish registration packet and become an active member of our parish. If you will be living elsewhere, please register at a parish and become actively involved in the life of your new community.

DON'T FORGET…

Bring the following items with you to the parish office at least 2 weeks prior to the wedding liturgy:

Check for Wedding Fee ($250)
Check for the other musicians (if used)

Bring to the wedding rehearsal or to the parish office earlier:

Marriage License and Certificate

PHOTOGRAPHER'S/VIDEOGRAPHER'S GUIDELINES

St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish
5720 Hamilton Mason Road
Liberty Township, OH 45011
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http://www.saint-max.org

The church building and the liturgies that take place within it are sacred to the worshipping community. Therefore, photographers and videographers must be sensitive to our parish in respecting the ceremony as a sacred event. The following are required directives for all professional photographers and videographers to follow.

1. Excessive movement during the ceremony is a distraction to those gathered in prayer and detracts from the ceremony as it is being celebrated. **During the liturgy, photographers may make use only of the back of church, not moving around in the side aisles or in the front. You may not move down the aisles during the ceremony or enter the sanctuary platform.** (You may station yourself in the center aisle, as necessary, only during the procession.) Please consult with the parish office in the days prior if you have any questions.

2. Flash pictures may be taken before and after the liturgy, and during the processional and recessional ONLY! Beyond this, no flash pictures are permitted during the liturgy.

3. Church furnishings, i.e., the altar, ambo and congregational seats may not be moved or stood upon under any circumstances. Seasonal and/or liturgical decorations may not be moved.

4. Immediately following the ceremony, photographs of the wedding party may be taken in the sanctuary. The furniture in the sanctuary is not to be moved in any way, nor should anything ever be put on the altar table. No one is permitted to stand on pews, tables, or chairs.

5. All picture taking must be completed by 2:45p (for afternoon weddings) or 8:15p (for evening weddings) making it possible for the couples to join their invited guests at the reception and allow the wedding assistant to clean and close the facility.

6. It is strongly encouraged that as many pictures of the wedding party be taken prior to the ceremony as possible. Weather permitting, the church garden areas may be used for outdoor photos. Please note – No photography may take place in church or gathering space between 2:45 pm and 6:15 pm on Saturday. Picture taking must be completed at least 30 minutes before the ceremony begins, so as not to distract the atmosphere of the gathering of the assembly. Set-up and picture taking outside may begin no sooner than 2 hours prior to the wedding.

7. NO photography equipment is to be left up during the celebration.

8. No additional lighting may be brought into the church for the ceremony.

FLORIST'S GUIDELINES

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1. Flowers are considered adornments for the place of worship. No parish plants or flowers already in place may be moved for a wedding, and no flowers may ever be placed on the altar table itself. They may be placed in front of the altar and/or in front of the ambo. The altar stands 39 inches. All floral arrangements must be shorter than 39 inches.

2. The altar cloth may not be removed or replaced with another for the wedding.

3. Sanctuary furniture, decorations or flowers may not be moved for the wedding by the florist or anyone else. Seasonal decorations provided by the parish are integral to the parish liturgical celebrations and may not be moved or removed.

4. Pew bows or decorations are optional. Pew bows should be affixed AFTER 4:30 pm Mass is finished for evening weddings and must be removed after pictures are finished. Please make arrangements for someone other than a wedding party member to place bows. No tape of any kind may be used on the pews to affix aisle decorations, as it is harmful to the wood. It is suggested that large rubber bands be used instead.

6. It is the responsibility of the florist to deliver altar flowers at a time which is convenient for the parish. Please call the parish office in the week prior to make arrangements for delivery time.