

Basics for a Hassle-Free Wedding Rehearsal

I. PRESUMPTIONS

- † In attendance: Bride, Groom, Head Usher, Music Person, Wedding Party
- † Time of rehearsal: Time is set on the church calendar for ONE HOUR. Start ON TIME. Late-comers learn what they need to know from those present.
- † License at the rehearsal: At the very latest, it is preferred that the license be dropped of at the parish offices 60 days prior to the wedding.
- † Rehearsal Planning: Everything is planned with the bride, groom and presider in a session previous to the rehearsal. Surprises, additions, changes, etc. damage the rehearsal and therefore the wedding. This is not the time nor place to discuss anything 'new'. Rule of Reality: if you make last minute changes, you take what you get. The wedding becomes a surprise!
- † Worship Aid: If one is used for the wedding, bring it to the rehearsal. Collect it afterwards and give it to the head usher. (The presider must proof-read the worship aid before it is printed.)

II. CONTENT OF THE REHEARSAL

- † Welcome all to a Catholic Wedding rite.
 - forget all other wedding experiences and focus on this wedding
 - forget Hollywood, grandstanding, etc. This is the Church at prayer.
 - The wedding is 100% planned. Talk through once. Walk through once.
 - Go to the rehearsal dinner. (If the presider is invited to the dinner, he should be invited weeks before, not at this time.)
- † Liturgy rehearsal is NOT theater rehearsal; liturgy is about life – mistakes happen. Theater dictates perfection and everything contrary is a disaster. Liturgy happens.
- † Introduce and Empower the HEAD USHER: He has the last word on everything and a discussion is never appropriate. On the day of the wedding, he makes everything move smoothly.
- † Music Ministry: musicians are only present to learn their time of music and its placement during the liturgy. (Music rehearsal is done only on their own time and schedule.)

- † Closing recommendations:
 - eat a substantial breakfast, even if not hungry
 - get a good night's sleep
 - don't lock your knees or legs; it can induce fainting
 - exercise regulars do well to work out on the wedding day, because much tension is released

- † A Non-Negotiable: any sign of alcohol or drugs on anyone cancels the wedding on the spot. By church law this is because of the need of total freedom in taking the vows for the validity of the sacrament. Alcohol and drugs are substances that alter consent. By civil law and restricted substance needs either license or permit. The church has neither and therefore those who abuse it are violating the statute of public assembly.

- † Confessions: often folks corner the priest after rehearsal for confession. Post-rehearsal is not the time for a 'quickie confession'. The sacrament for reconciliation is part of our single life, engaged life, and married life. The sacraments need to be in the context of the faith journey and given a proper amount of time.

- † Photos and Wedding Rite: The wedding rite is sacrament about prayer, vows, God and people of God. Do not turn the wedding into a 'Kodak moment'. Professional photographers may discreetly shoot during the ceremony. Candid shots by the assembly during the processional and recessional is acceptable. The sanctuary is off-limits to any photography during the rite. (If this is violated, the wedding will stop while the head usher addresses the problem.) Special moments can be simulated later for the photo album. The balcony is ONLY for photographer hired for the wedding.

- † ENJOY TONIGHT AND THE WEDDING: Go 'brain dead.' The presider will get you through everything. No one knows what we rehearsed – only us. The ceremony will be prayerful if you let it be. NO WORRIES.