

Frequently Asked Questions About Wedding Music

May I invite someone other than a St. Paul Organist to play at my wedding?

The weddings at St. Paul are primarily the responsibility of our Assistant Organist. The salary of the Assistant Organist was set with the understanding that the Assistant Organist would receive additional remuneration by way of wedding stipends (in the same manner an employer considers wait staff "tips" when setting wait staff salaries). If you wish to invite an organist who does not already play at St. Paul, you will still be expected to pay the Assistant Organist stipend. Additionally, the outside organist will only be given 90 minutes prior to your wedding to practice on the instrument and set pistons. However, the Assistant Organist will be "on hand" to assist.

May I invite someone other than a St. Paul Cantor to sing at my wedding?

Yes. However, if your soloist needs to rehearse with the organist prior to the wedding day, a \$75 rehearsal fee will be charged. If the rehearsal takes place on the day of the wedding (1 hour prior), no rehearsal fee is charged.

What are the musicians' stipends?

The Organist receives \$175. The Cantor (vocalist) receives \$125. These stipends are given to the St. Paul Wedding Liturgist at your wedding rehearsal.

For Prelude Music, the WEDDING MUSIC SELECTION FORM directs me to select only one vocal solo (accompanying the Entrance of the Mothers prior to the Processional). May I select additional vocal solos to be performed during the Prelude? May I hire a string quartet or some other instrumental ensemble to provide Prelude Music?

Yes and Yes. But before you do, consider this. Your wedding will bring together family and friends who in many cases haven't seen one another for some time. They will not be inclined to sit quietly as a vocalist sings a series of songs. To the contrary, experience dictates that they will be conversing with one another.

Personally speaking, I have witnessed wedding couples spending extravagantly to hire String Quartets, Brass Quintets, and Vocal Ensembles perhaps to add a bit of refinement to their ceremony. As these musicians performed beautifully, the assembly talked over their music. The louder the instrumentalists played, the louder the assembly talked. In most cases, your guests will relegate whatever you choose for Prelude Music to "background music." This is why we suggest you defer to the organist to select music that will be played quietly in the background. This creates the appropriate environment for the Sacrament. And since those conversing aren't competing with a mic'd soloist or an instrumental ensemble; they may be more likely to converse softly.

May I have the LORD'S PRAYER sung as a solo?

The Church requires that the "Our Father" be sung or recited by the entire assembly during the ceremony. However, you could have it sung as a solo piece during your prelude.

May I use prerecorded music?

Prerecorded music is not appropriate since the liturgy is a living prayer.

Secular music was performed at my parents' wedding. Why can't it be performed at mine?

As stated in our Wedding Guidelines, "In the ceremony for the Sacrament of Matrimony, the emphasis is not on the couple's romantic life, but a communal prayer service emphasizing the Sacred Union of man and woman to the Divine. For this reason, we do not include secular music during the Rite of Marriage or its prelude."

Please consider this - there are many venues you could have chosen to exchange your vows. You could have chosen a rustic, candle-lit lodge or a beautiful park. These spaces evoke the "romantic" where secular music would be appropriate. However, you have requested to exchange your vows within the context of the Sacrament of Matrimony that may only take place in a Catholic church. Therefore, the music should as well be appropriate to this Sacred Space and that Sacrament.

After the Second Vatican Council, many church musicians were confused about what was acceptable music for the Liturgy. This may have been the reason your parents were permitted to use secular music at their wedding. However, over 50 years have passed since the close of Vatican II. During that time, the Church has made it abundantly clear to her music ministers what she expects with regards to music for the Sacraments. Just as secular music is inappropriate for the Sacraments of Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, and Ordination, it is equally inappropriate for the Sacrament of Matrimony. Favorite secular songs are more appropriately included at rehearsal dinners and wedding receptions.

Why has the practice of lighting the Unity Candle been prohibited?

As of July 2010, the Columbus Catholic Diocese prohibited the practice of lighting a Unity Candle since it had never been part of the Rite of Marriage.

Just as secular music "crept" into the Sacrament of Matrimony after Vatican II (see above), so too did other practices now referred to as "insertions into the rite." Although there seems to be little knowledge about where this "insertion" came from, it is readily apparent that it was not from Catholic Tradition unlike the Marian Devotion (also, an insertion into the rite). In the Catholic Tradition, a lit candle has always represented "the Light of Christ." It is highly unlikely that the Church would have permitted that symbolic meaning to be altered to mean "two individuals becoming one" or "two families becoming one." And although the Sacrament of Matrimony insists that the married couple give themselves wholly and sacrificially to one another, it has never implied that the bride and groom are not still, individuals. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Symbol of Unity is seen in the exchange of rings; symbols that remain ever present to the couple.