

Liturgical Considerations for
Marriages
During Seasonal Time
(Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter)

According to Church teachings, weddings which take place during seasonal time (Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter) must respect the specific natures of these seasons.

Depending on the season, different guidelines will apply. If you are planning a wedding during any of these seasons, please read the following carefully.

Nuptial Masses:

The liturgical law of the Church (GIRM #330) says that Nuptial Masses are not permitted on certain days. Nuptial masses are not permitted on the Sundays of Advent, Lent and the Easter Season, on Holydays of Obligation, on days within the Octave of Easter, on All Souls' Day, on Ash Wednesday, and during Holy Week. You MAY marry during mass on those days, but the Mass must be the Mass of the day rather than the Nuptial Mass. For example, if you were to be married at Mass on the First Sunday of Advent, the priest would wear purple vestments, and all the readings and prayers would be those of the First Sunday of Advent. You could use one of the wedding Mass readings in place of one of the Advent readings, but that would be a little awkward and confusing. If you were to choose a wedding ceremony rather than a Mass, these problems would be avoided. For that reason, we encourage you to choose a ceremony rather than a Mass on those days when a Nuptial Mass is not permitted. You should be aware, however, that the ceremony does not satisfy the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday or the Holy Day.

Advent: Weddings during Advent present a cultural clash that we must try to avoid. While liturgically we are celebrating the Advent season, the world at large is already into “Christmastime.” *Your wedding must respect the liturgical season of Advent.* The most common mistake in this area is in the choice of flowers. Couples frequently order poinsettias for Advent weddings. Poinsettias carry liturgical significance and are flowers associated with the Christmas season. *Do not order poinsettias for weddings during Advent.* You may use pine and any other winter-like flowers, but please make sure your choice of flowers and other items are not obviously Christmas-like in theme. While it may suit your reception theme, in church it causes a problem, and the integrity of the liturgy must take priority over the theme of your reception. Of course, Christmas carols, while appropriate at a wedding during the Christmas season, may not be used during Advent.

Christmas: The Christmas season lasts well into January, up to and including the feast of the Baptism of the Lord (usually the Sunday following the Epiphany.) It is both permissible and appropriate to use Christmas carols during weddings in the Christmas season. During Christmas, the sanctuary is fully decorated and is literally covered with poinsettias throughout the Christmas season. It would be a waste of money to buy any flowers for the sanctuary. Not only would there be no place to put them, they would most likely clash with the decorations. You may use pew bows and/or flowers as you wish, in accordance with our church regulations (Please refer to the section on church flowers.)

Lent: Lent is a penitential season, and by its nature it is barren and stark. It is very difficult to create harmony between the joy of a marriage and the penitential nature of Lent. We therefore strongly recommend you avoid getting married during Lent. Not only does the church ceremony present a problem, but also might your reception. Many people give up cake and other sweets for Lent and so may either feel guilty about eating wedding cake or risk insulting you by refusing you. Also, if you were to choose a Friday in Lent, you would not be able to serve meat at your reception! In the church, flowers must be kept at a minimum and must be removed immediately after the wedding ceremony. In addition, hymns containing *Alleluia* may not be sung. As you can see, it’s not a good season for a wedding. If you must get married during Lent, remember that, like poinsettias, Easter lilies are a flower of the Easter season, not of Lent. *Do not bring Easter lilies to church during Lent.*

Easter: If Lent is a bad time for weddings, The Easter season is a wonderful time for them! There are only two considerations to observe: one is the regulation regarding Nuptial Masses on Sundays (see above), the other concerns flowers. During Easter time the sanctuary is covered with lilies and other spring flowers. Since the Easter season is a long one (50 days), the lilies and other flowers wilt before the Easter season ends. If your wedding is in the first two weeks of Easter, we recommend not purchasing any other flowers for the sanctuary, since the Easter flowers would still be alive. After the first two weeks, you should consider purchasing whatever wedding flowers you choose. From Easter Sunday through Pentecost Sunday, it is both

appropriate and permissible to use Easter hymns at your wedding.