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To stop wedding planners' extras, Catholic Church in Cebu lays guidelines for weddings

BY NANCY R. CUDIS, *Sun.Star Correspondent*

WITH the Cebu Archdiocese's new guidelines for church weddings, wedding planners may find their job easier and ceremonies may cost less for couples.

"Unnecessary parts" of the wedding ceremony prompted archdiocese officials to come up with new guidelines for the sacrament of marriage.

The new guidelines took effect last Easter Sunday.

Msgr. Achilles Dakay, archdiocesan media liaison officer, said the new rules will be implemented to do away with "the numerous extras, especially created by wedding planners, that are not supposed to be included in the liturgy."

"The liturgy is a prayer for all present, not a theatrical production," the guidelines state.

Monsignor Dakay said it is significant that the guidelines take effect right after Easter Sunday because the day signifies the renewal of baptismal vows, which encourages the Catholics to behave according to the teachings of the church.

Moderation

The new guidelines emphasize the role of the celebrant or the priest.

"He will celebrate the wedding according to rite of marriage of the church, and not according to the tactics of the wedding planner," said Dakay.

Liturgical coordinator Roland Cabiluna said the new guidelines encourage simplicity by "doing away with all the unnecessary expenses and preserving the sacredness of the sacrament of matrimony."

The ceremony will stretch from 45 minutes to an hour only, Cabiluna said.

The new guidelines will apply only to weddings that will be held in the parishes and other institutions under the Archdiocese of Cebu.

He urged couples who are planning to get married to inquire from their parishes regarding the required documents for marriage, which must be submitted at least two months before the ceremony.

Transfer

Under the new guidelines, couples can get married only in parish churches, parish community chapels for mountain barangays, and the Archbishop's Palace chapel.

To signify the union of two adults who freely submit themselves to the sacrament of matrimony, the archdiocese encourages couples to consider other ways of doing the procession.

A procession does not necessarily have to be limited to having the bride escorted by her father, who hands over his daughter to the husband to signify “a transfer of ownership,” the archdiocese said.

Only those who have been baptized and have received their first communion can participate in a church wedding. This includes ring bearers and flower girls. They should also understand that they are part of the Christian community.

While Catholic weddings are not allowed during Holy Week, the church allows it during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Couples are allowed to select scripture readings with careful reflection and discussions with the officiating priests but only official lectors and psalmists coming from the parish are allowed to read the readings.

No rewriting

Couples are also not allowed to compose their own vows or reword the vows provided for the Rite of Marriage, as approved by the archdiocese.

Secular and popular music are also not allowed to be played during the liturgy and within the church building.

“Popular love songs often stress only the couple and exclude God’s role in a marriage. These songs would be more appropriately performed at the wedding reception,” the guidelines state.

The archdiocese requires photographers and videographers to be dressed appropriately and to refrain from disrupting the ceremony.

Restrictions on the bride’s and her entourage’s gowns and dresses were also imposed.

According to the guidelines, the gowns and dresses should be designed in a way that these cover the shoulders and the back of the bride and her maids. The dresses should fall below the knees and should not have slits.

The design will also be screened by the officiating priest.

Clean

To avoid unnecessary expenses, no booklets will be used during the mass since only official liturgical books will be used.

The archdiocese also encouraged couples to plan the wedding in moderation by not putting up arcs and canopies in the sanctuary and entrance of the church.

The use of rice, birdseed, confetti, flowers, and petals will not be allowed within the church and the church grounds to prevent any accident and to keep the church premises clean.