



# DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

P.O. Box 1399 \* Great Falls, Montana 59403 \* (406) 727-6683  
[www.diocesegfb.org](http://www.diocesegfb.org)

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## Provisional Policy for Outdoor Weddings

According to diocesan policy, the normative location for the celebration of a wedding involving a Catholic is in their proper parish church. Exceptions to this policy have been allowed due to unique circumstances. Given the nature of the coronavirus and given that an individual is far less likely to contract the virus out-of-doors rather than in an enclosed space such as a church, this provisional policy was established in 2020. The policy that does not allow for weddings to be out-of-doors is **temporarily** suspended but only if certain conditions can be satisfactorily met. If such a request is granted, it is essential that the wedding retain the Catholic nature of matrimony as understood by the Church through its teaching and belief.

- Until further notice, a Catholic wedding may be celebrated at an appropriate outdoor location. A description for the location must be provided;
- Given the real possibility of inclement weather, some kind of over-head covering is to be available as an alternative if not used for the wedding itself, e.g., a large commercial canopy tent or an outdoor pavilion. A facility such as a bar or restaurant is not allowed.
- Final determination of the appropriateness of a location rests with the Bishop. Permission to proceed is reserved to him.
- No priest/deacon is required to officiate a wedding in a location outside of his assigned parish church.
- The ritual to be used is the Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass.

### Procedure to obtain Permission:

- The priest/deacon who will officiate or the parish priest/administrator must request permission in writing to the Bishop. The request must include:
  - A letter from the couple making the request and providing the reasons for the request;
  - A letter from the pastor, outlining the reasons for the request or, in the case the pastor is not the officiant, a letter from the priest/deacon who will officiate, outlining the pastoral reasons for the request;



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- An assurance from the priest/deacon who will officiate at the wedding that quality marriage preparation is being provided and attesting that the couple understands and embraces the religious dimension of matrimony and is actively practicing their faith;
- If the wedding is to take place in a parish other than the one to which the priest/deacon is assigned, a letter of concurrence must be obtained from the pastor of the parish in which the proposed wedding is to take place and his delegation which is required for validity of the marriage.
- Permission will be granted or denied in writing.

Michael W. Warfel  
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings  
April 14, 2021