

The Diocese of Helena **Suitable Place for Outdoor Wedding**

Approved by Bishop George Leo Thomas Interim Revision effective June 1, 2015

The understanding of the Church is that the parish Church is the appropriate place for the celebration of marriage involving a Catholic party (whether this celebration is a wedding or a convalidation). However, there may be circumstances for which permission may be requested to utilize another “suitable place.” This document guides requests for such permission – which must always be requested in writing on a particular case basis.

Fundamental: The nature of the place needs to be consistent with a religious celebration.

- ◆ The following are considered suitable places for which permission may be sought. This is not an exhaustive list – there may be other places for which a request for “suitability” may be made. The “Rite for celebrating marriage outside of Mass” or the “Rite for celebrating marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person” (from the *Rite of Marriage*) is used in these circumstances. The guidelines of *Sing to the Lord* are to be followed.
- ◆ Certain non-denominational chapels (such as Soldier’s Chapel at Big Sky – which also requires permission and delegation from St. Joseph Mission, Big Sky; and St. Timothy Chapel at Georgetown Lake – which also requires permission and delegation from the Anaconda Catholic Community).
- ◆ A non-Catholic Church building (when this is a Catholic wedding ceremony: the priest/deacon presides, uses the Catholic Rite for marriage outside of Mass or for a Catholic and an unbaptized person, receives vows, etc.)
- ◆ Appropriate outdoor sites, providing there is an approved indoor location available, in light of the temperamental weather in Montana.
- ◆ The following are examples of places which are not suitable for the celebration of a wedding. This is not an exhaustive list.
- ◆ The Our Lady of the Rockies statute near Butte; a former Catholic Church that no longer belongs to the Diocese; or the premises of Legendary Lodge.
- ◆ Any place where alcohol is served as a matter of course (such as night clubs, bars, casinos, dining establishments, and the like).

Procedure to Obtain Permission: *The priest/deacon who will officiate or the parish priest/administrator requests the permission in writing (usually directed to the Vicar for Canonical Services). The request includes: a letter from the couple making the request and giving reasons for it; a letter from the priest or deacon who will officiate outlining th pastoral reasons for the request, assuring that quality marriage preparation is being given, and making a recommendation regarding whether to grant the request; and a letter from the parish priest/administrator indication concurrence with the request and giving permission/delegation for the wedding to take place in that parish. The suitable place permission will be granted or denied in writing and this letter along with a copy of the request should be included in the pre-nuptial file.*