

Dashed wedding plans force couples to focus on what's truly important

Like many brides-to-be, Kristina Roxas often dreamed about a perfect fairytale wedding.

However, when she does marry her fiancé Rodale Mendoza on May 23, a celebration full of flowers, music, and lots of friends and family will be far from the reality.

Roxas and Mendoza will still marry at St. Joachim's – Edmonton's oldest Catholic Church – but their 230-person guest list has been shelved due to COVID-19 restrictions. Only their parents, three siblings and the priest will be present, and that's all that matters.



Kristina Roxas

"The most important thing is for us to come together, participate in the sacrament and begin our new adventure as husband and wife," said Roxas. "It's so easy to get caught up in the details and wanting everything to be perfect. But ultimately it's not about the decorations, the food or all the partying afterwards.

"Seeing other couples still going through with their weddings really gave us the hope to pursue this. Even in the midst of a pandemic and all of this uncertainty, God shows His love through these situations."

Roxas and Mendoza are one of only a handful of couples in the Edmonton

Archdiocese who will still get married this summer in spite of the restrictions. St. Joseph's Basilica hosts most weddings in the archdiocese, and more than 20 have been postponed.

"Take advantage of this gift of extra time to ponder the important questions," Archbishop Richard Smith said in a video addressed to couples postponing their marriages. "It is an occasion to deepen your self-knowledge and your appreciation for one another before you enter the state of holy matrimony. This is where the gift of time becomes especially precious."

Under current government guidelines, mass gatherings are limited to 15 people, guests must maintain a distance of at least six feet, and no one over the age of 60 can attend.

It was a different story at the beginning of the year. Roxas and Mendoza had everything in place for a big wedding with a reception to follow at the Foundry Room in Fort Saskatchewan. The locations were booked. Invitations were sent. The florists, caterers and DJ were about to be hired. Many of their friends had already bought tuxedos, dresses and plane tickets for the big day.

By late March, as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down businesses, schools and religious services across Canada, Roxas and Mendoza realized their plans had to change.

"Once Mass was suspended, we we're starting to feel really uncertain," said Roxas. "We waited a few more weeks, but as the restrictions only got worse we soon realized that 200-person wedding we had planned was not going ahead."

The couple is set on May 23 as the wedding date, since it's the anniversary of their engagement.

Along with their immediate families, a videographer will also attend and livestream the wedding for the couple's grandparents. Mendoza and Roxas hope to still host a reception at a later date.



Rev. Marc Cramer

“Our friends and family have been really supportive and told us they’re praying for us and wishing us the best. Everyone recognizes the situation cannot be helped,” said Mendoza.

“We’re sad because of the all of the effort and planning going into this, but there’s blessings in disguise too. We’re saving a lot of money and have one less thing to worry about. We were expecting to pay close to \$30,000 for everything, and our estimated cost has now been cut in half.”

Rev. Marc Cramer, pastor of St. Charles, will officiate at their wedding. He was scheduled to celebrate four weddings in May and June. Three of those weddings have been postponed.

Despite the circumstances, Father Cramer believes smaller weddings symbolize the true meaning of marriage.

“They’re a sign of how important this sacrament is,” he said. “So many people today are already sleeping together, living together, and marriage never crosses their mind. This couple, wanting to do it right, shows that celebrating their relationship before God is the most important thing.”

The couple’s wedding planner, Ann-Maria Au, agrees.

“It’s very beautiful to see that. Despite this pandemic and the craziness and negativity going on, they’re still deciding to fulfill their vocation,” said Au, who started the year preparing seven weddings.



Ann-Maria Au

Mendoza and Roxas are one of her only clients sticking to their original date.

“They’re still pursuing what God’s calling them to,” Au said. “It’s not about the big celebration, the fancy flowers, who you invited and didn’t invite; it’s literally just between them and God.”

It has been a long journey for the couple since they met at a CFC Youth for Christ retreat in 2015.

Their wedding wasn’t the only challenge the couple has faced together due to COVID-19. Roxas is temporarily laid off from her job as a dental hygienist, and they’ve had to rely on online virtual tours as they look for a home in Edmonton.

Nevertheless, the couple says the experience has only brought them closer together.

“We’ve learned to make light and joke about the whole situation. It’s a way to remind each other of what’s most important,” said Mendoza. “God led us to serve together and to know each other, so I know this was all a part of God’s plan.”

“And it’ll definitely be a great story to tell the kids.”