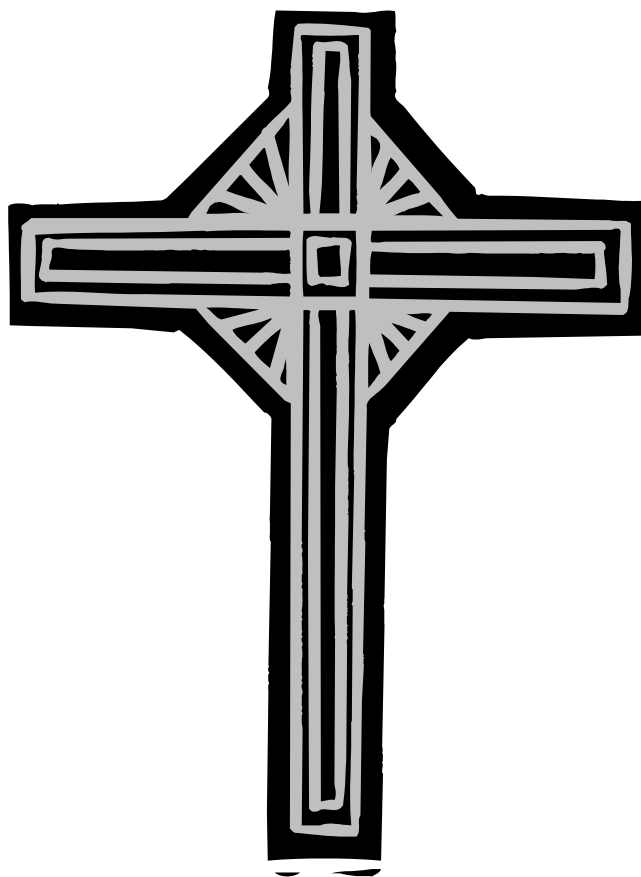


PARISH WEDDING GUIDELINES

Preparing To Celebrate the
Sacrament of Holy Matrimony at
St. Mark's Catholic Church



Congratulations on your engagement

Planning your wedding can be one of the most exciting times of your life. We are happy that you have chosen St. Mark's Parish to be part of your special day. We want to help you plan a wedding ceremony that is spiritual and sacramental in accordance with the Catholic belief that marriage is a lifelong commitment and that it is a sacrament when it occurs between two baptized Christians.

Since planning a wedding can also be one of the most stressful times of your life, we have prepared this booklet to help guide you through the process. By answering common questions about getting married at our parish, this booklet sets forth guidelines that we trust you will follow.

We are here to help you

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SECTION I – PRELIMINARY PLANNING

Parish registration – The exchange of wedding vows in the Catholic Church (Holy Matrimony) is a sacrament when it occurs between two baptized Christians. All sacraments, including marriage, are celebrated in the presence of a faith community. Also, registration as a member of our faith community signifies your commitment to practicing the Catholic faith which includes regular attendance at Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis, and living other basics of the Catholic faith. For these reasons, we require that at least one member of the engaged couple (or one of their parents) be a registered parishioner for one year or longer before preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony may begin. Children of St. Mark's parishioners who are members of another parish must provide us with a letter showing that we have that parish's permission to perform their marriage.

Days and times for weddings – Wedding ceremonies may take place at St. Mark's Parish on Friday or on Saturday. To accommodate our housekeeping and liturgy schedules, Saturday weddings may be held at 2 p.m. in the afternoon or in the evenings at 7:30 p.m. Friday weddings may be held late afternoon or in the evening. Although weddings may be celebrated at St. Mark's during Advent and Lent, we prefer other times of the year for this celebration because of the prayerful and penitential nature of these seasons.

Alcohol policy – At no time before the wedding ceremony is drinking allowed for the bride, groom or any member of the wedding party. The priest presiding at your wedding will refuse to allow the ceremony to occur if the bride, groom or any member of the wedding party has consumed or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance at that time. No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the church grounds.

Steps in sacramental preparation – The wedding preparation process is designed to help you assess your readiness for sacramental marriage. During this time an issue may arise that deserves more time and attention. It is better to address these issues during the preparation period when steps can be taken to resolve differences before the marriage commitment is made. Please refer to the following page for an overview of the process which can serve as a convenient checklist.

Steps in the Marriage Preparation Process

It is assumed throughout this process that the couple (or Catholic party) is attending Mass on Sunday. It would be senseless to seek marriage in the Catholic Church unless one intends to continue practicing this faith.

12 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Contact Betsy Bain to record your information and receive details on the marriage preparation process

11-12 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Schedule a mandatory Marriage Preparation Introductory meeting with Lee Ward, Director of Marriage Preparation
- ___ Tentatively schedule your wedding date
- ___ **\$250 wedding date and security deposit due at this meeting**

10-11 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Call Betsy Bain to confirm reservation of the date and time for your wedding
- ___ Our counselor will schedule the taking and review of the PREPARE test

6-9 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Attend 3 sessions of “When Families Marry.” Sessions are held in a group setting or one-on-one with a Lead Couple
- ___ Attend a diocesan seminar called “God’s Plan for a Joy Filled Marriage.” Call Betsy Bain for times and dates
- ___ Schedule a meeting with Cynthia Althausser to discuss plans for your liturgy and music
- ___ **\$335 payment (marriage prep) due to Gayle LaPlante, Director of Administration**

3 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Schedule a meeting with Fr. Jim Taranto to discuss marriage, commitment and complete paperwork
- ___ Turn in your copies of your baptismal records to Betsy Bain in the parish office
- ___ **Parish fees (total will vary) due to Gayle LaPlante**

1 MONTH PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Prepare your wedding program if you choose to have one

2 WEEKS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Turn in your marriage license to Betsy Bain in the parish office for processing

WEDDING REHEARSAL

- ___ **Presider, musician, server and candle fees (total will vary) are due to the Wedding Coordinator**

SECTION II – PLANNING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Guidelines – Your wedding ceremony will be primarily planned by you with assistance from the Wedding Liturgy Planner / Wedding Coordinator. Your information packet contains a booklet titled “Together for Life,” which contains guidelines for planning Catholic wedding ceremonies that are liturgically appropriate, and walks you through the process. When you meet with the priest who will preside at your wedding, he will review your plans for the wedding ceremony and make any modifications that may be needed. We strongly encourage you to follow the guidelines we have provided for you and to work closely with our Wedding Coordinator in order to minimize the possibility of any last minute changes deemed necessary by the priest due to lack of liturgical appropriateness. This will help everyone involved to avoid disappointment and keep stress levels to a minimum.

Deciding whether to have Mass – If you choose to celebrate Mass as part of your wedding ceremony, the order of liturgical rites would be Liturgy of the Word (scripture readings), Marriage Rite, Liturgy of the Eucharist (consecration and Communion). If you choose to plan a wedding ceremony outside of a Mass, the order of liturgical rites would be Liturgy of the Word (scripture readings), Marriage Rite, Blessing.

It is appropriate and encouraged that a Mass be celebrated when both members of the engaged couple are Catholic, and the other type of ceremony be celebrated when one of the members is a baptized Christian of another denomination, or is a non-Christian, or is not baptized. The sacrament of Holy Matrimony is not lessened when Mass is not chosen. There are many reasons why you may or may not choose to celebrate your wedding with Mass. Your priest can help you make that decision when you meet with him.

The Catholic wedding – While allowing for certain personal preferences and choices, the wedding liturgy follows certain prescribed norms.

- The congregation actively participates in both spoken and sung parts of the liturgy
- Readers may be family members or close friends with a good reading voice
- Servers are provided by the Church but may be Catholic family members or close friends
- Gift presenters may be family members or close friends
- Eucharistic ministers may be family members, close friends, or provided by the Church; they must be trained Eucharistic Ministers in good church standing
- Musicians and cantors are usually provided by the Church; any non-Parish musicians, cantors or soloists must be approved
- Music selections are sacred or classical pieces performed well and live
- Church decorations remain in place

Entrance procession – The order of the entrance procession is usually servers (if a Mass is chosen), priest with groom, attendants together, bride accompanied by father. The groom may choose to seat his parents in which case he will remain with them until the priest enters. In the Catholic Church the bride's father does not give her away. She is giving herself in marriage to the man she loves and he is giving himself to her.

Choosing scripture readings – Liturgy of the Word generally consists of a first reading from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a second reading from the New Testament, and a Gospel from the New Testament. There are several appropriate scripture selections you may choose from in the booklet “Together for Life” in your information packet. Usually the readings are proclaimed by a trained lector(s) of your choosing, and the psalm is sung by the cantor. The Gospel is read by the priest.

Vows – The exchange of wedding vows in the Catholic Church is a liturgical celebration and, therefore, certain formulas must be used according to the Church. Several beautiful ways of exchanging vows can be found in the “Together for Life” booklet in your information packet.

Rings – One or two rings are blessed and given to each other as a sign of your love and fidelity. You will repeat the words of exchange after the priest.

Unity candle – This is a popular, optional custom. While it is not an official part of the marriage rite, it may be included in your ceremony. This custom symbolizes how the two of you have become and hope always to be one.

Intercessions – Suggestions for prayers can be found in the “Together for Life” booklet in your information packet. If parents, grandparents, other family members or close friends of the bride or groom are deceased, it is appropriate to remember them in these prayers. You might also like to offer prayers for a blessed and happy marriage, for your families, the parish community, and any other needs that are important to you. You may choose to write your own intercessory prayers if you wish.

Presentation of the bread and wine – If you choose to have a Mass, parents, members of the wedding party, family or friends may bring the bread and wine to the altar. It makes sense to ask Catholics to do this; they understand the significance and will be more comfortable with the action.

Eucharistic prayer – If you choose to have a Mass, you and the congregation will remember Christ's gift of Himself to us at the Last Supper and His sacrifice on the cross during this prayer.

Lord's Prayer – This prayer is recited to be inclusive of all faiths present for your ceremony and speaks to the active participation of the congregation.

Nuptial blessing – This is a special prayer for the couple following the Lord's Prayer. You have several choices of blessing in the "Together for Life" booklet.

Sign of peace – The priest will ask the congregation to share a sign of Christ's peace with one another. You may exchange a sign of affection with each other, your families and wedding party.

Communion – If you choose to have a Mass, those who are Catholic will receive communion at this time.

Visiting the Blessed Virgin Mary – Some couples choose to ask Mary and all the saints to pray for them in their commitment to each other. This is optional.

Final blessing – Before blessing the people at the conclusion of your ceremony, the priest blesses you using your selection from the "Together for Life" booklet.

Introduction and recessional – The priest will introduce you to your family and friends as a married couple for the first time. You will leave the church followed by the wedding party, families and guests.

Choosing music – Because marriage in the Catholic Church is a liturgical celebration, songs played right before or during the wedding ceremony should focus on the religious nature of love – the love that exists between God and the couple being married – and the sacred character of Holy Matrimony. This means that any music which would be appropriate at Mass or other liturgical rites is also appropriate for your wedding. You have literally hundreds of songs to choose from in our Gather hymnal and from many other sources as well. If one member of the couple is a Christian of another denomination, it may be appropriate to include music from their Church's hymnal. A list of often-used wedding music is included in your information packet. The place to focus on the romantic aspects of love is at the reception which is a social and cultural celebration. Again, we encourage you to work closely with the Wedding Liturgy Planner at this stage of your planning.

The wedding marches written by Wagner and Mendelssohn are considered popular music because they originated in operas and were played either during bedroom scenes or in scenes which mocked the religious nature of marriage. Therefore, the Church does not consider them appropriate for a Catholic wedding.

A cantor leads the congregational singing which includes the responsorial Psalm, Gospel acclamation and, if a Mass is chosen, the Eucharistic acclamations. A list of Parish cantors who sing for weddings and their fees is provided in your information packet.

The accompanist – organ or piano – plays prelude music before the ceremony, processional and recessional marches in addition to accompanying the cantor and congregation. A list of Parish musicians who play for weddings and their fees is provided in your information packet.

If you have a friend or family member who is a musician or who is trained as a cantor, they are welcome to play or sing at your wedding with approval. Other types of instruments may be brought in by your musician with approval. Many couples choose a family member or friend as a guest soloist or musician for one particular piece of music, such as a prelude, but hire a cantor and an organist or pianist from our parish to perform the music for the rest of the ceremony. Because we are a large parish with many activities in our church, any time needed in the church for music rehearsal should be scheduled through the Wedding Coordinator. This will ensure that the church is not occupied by others when your musicians and singers arrive to rehearse.

Preparing a liturgy guide (program) – We do recommend that you have a liturgy guide or program booklet to help your family and friends actively participate in your wedding ceremony. However, this service is not provided by our parish. You must make arrangements with someone to have these designed and printed. To assist you an outline is provided in your information packet. We strongly advise you to have the Wedding Coordinator review it before taking it to the printer. You will want your program to be liturgically correct and to reflect what is occurring during your ceremony.

SECTION III – AT THE WEDDING REHEARSAL AND CEREMONY

Respect for God's house – Please respect the church as the sacred place that it is. We ask everyone to behave in a manner appropriate to being in church. Please refrain from chewing gum, using profane or inappropriate language, letting children run around in the church, etc. In order to keep the church clean for your wedding and the services following your ceremony, food, drink and chewing gum are prohibited in the worship space. Food and non-alcoholic drink are allowed in the Cry Room and in the Fr. Coleman Room. Of course, smoking inside the church building is prohibited by City ordinance.

The wedding rehearsal – Each step of your wedding ceremony will be practiced at the wedding rehearsal which is held at 6 p.m. the Friday evening before your wedding, or on Thursday at 6 p.m. if your wedding is on Friday evening. Rehearsal typically lasts one hour. All those who have a part in your wedding ceremony should attend the rehearsal to become familiar with their roles. This includes guest musicians, cantor/soloists (music is not played/sung at this rehearsal), lectors and members of the wedding party including flower girl(s) and the ring bearer if applicable. Parents and grandparents attend as well. We ask everyone to arrive promptly. A smooth, well-ordered rehearsal makes for a less stressful wedding ceremony. We ask everyone involved to carefully listen to and follow the instructions of the Wedding Coordinator. Any questions or problems that arise will be answered/resolved before the rehearsal is completed.

Dressing rooms – The bride and her attendants will use the Cry Room which has a restroom, full-length mirror, hall tree and sufficient space to dress. However, we strongly recommend doing hair and makeup at home or at a salon. Our facility does not provide adequate space for these activities. The groom and groomsmen usually come attired and will use the Fr. Coleman Room to prepare.

Ushers and book attendant – Ushers seat guests as soon after they have signed the guest book as possible in order to avoid a rush at the last minute. A line often forms at the guest book, so it is closed 10 minutes before the wedding begins in order to see that guests are seated comfortably and the wedding starts on time.

Flowers and decorations – We ask couples to keep their flowers and decorations tasteful and simple to keep the focus on the sacrament. When planning for flowers and decorations, please keep in mind the nature of the liturgical season in which your wedding ceremony will be held. For instance, during the weeks after Christmas and Easter the church may already be decorated with Christmas trees and poinsettias or Easter lilies and you will not need to do much more.

During other seasons you may choose to decorate with floral arrangements at the ambo (the stand from which the scriptures are proclaimed) and/or on either side of the altar at the edge of the top stone step. There is no room for flowers in front of the altar. Flowers may be attached to the candelabra (if they are used) with non-abrasive material. Florists are asked to work with the Wedding Coordinator when placing flower arrangements.

Your florist is welcome to visit our church prior to your wedding if they are not familiar with its layout and color scheme. Please have them contact the Wedding Coordinator to schedule a date and time for this. Flowers may be delivered on your wedding day one hour before the ceremony begins.

We can loan you pew bow holders or you may use similar non-abrasive items provided by your florist. Tape is not acceptable. Hurricane lamps and other types of candles are not permitted in the aisles for the sake of safety and the ease of movement during the ceremony.

For reasons of safety and maintenance we ask you to adhere to our policy regarding rice, birdseed, sparklers, poppers, real flower petals and the use of aisle runners. These represent safety hazards or maintenance problems and cannot be used on church grounds. Flower girl(s) may strew silk petals if desired. Bubbles are allowed inside or outside when the couple is leaving the church.

Candles – The only candle you will need to supply is the large unity candle with tapers if you choose to light one during your wedding ceremony. Most come with candle holders or we have a holder you can borrow. We provide the candles for the candelabras for a fee if you choose to use them (see the Overview of Fees and Expenses, page 10).

Photographs and videotaping – Please remember that a Catholic wedding is a liturgical ceremony. Photographers and videographers must be mindful of this sacredness. To assist them and you, a separate sheet of information is provided on the next page which you can give to them when they are hired.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO TAPING

A Catholic wedding is a liturgical ceremony. Care must be taken to see that the Mass and marriage rite are not disrupted by the taking of pictures or video. Care must be taken to see that the focus of the congregation is on the altar and not on you. The parish Wedding Coordinator will assist you the day of the wedding. You may contact her earlier if you have questions. We ask for and appreciate your cooperation with our requests. Thank you!

- Flash photos may be taken as the bridal party is processing into and out of the church. They should be kept to a minimum during the Mass or ceremony.
- Photographers and videographers may not enter the sanctuary area – the elevated stone area around the altar, ambo and baptismal font.
- Please do not roam about the church once the Mass or ceremony has begun.
- Videotaping may be done from a stationary camera behind the baptismal font, preferably unmanned, and/or from the back of the church.
- Please do not re-create moments that have already taken place such as the vows or ring exchange.
- Posed pictures may be taken in the church before and/or after the wedding. Pictures taken in the church following Saturday afternoon weddings must conclude by 4 p.m. to accommodate other regular weekend church services.

Contact information for the parish Wedding Coordinator

Cynthia Althaus

816.224.5815

bbbmusic@att.net

Fees for Marriage Preparation Process & Ceremony

GROOM: _____

BRIDE: _____

Marriage Introductory Meeting / Wedding Date Scheduled	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
Wedding Date & Security Deposit (non-refundable in the event of cancellation)	\$250		
<p>This Deposit is due when you schedule your wedding date. This deposit holds your date and serves as a damage & payment deposit. This check is deposited. The Deposit will be returned two weeks after the wedding, if: 1) there are no damages, 2) keys/access cards are returned, 3) parish policies have been adhered to, and 4) all stipends have been paid.</p>			

Marriage Preparation Process	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
PREPARE Testing and Consultation (this fee must be paid prior to taking the test)	\$175		
“When Families Marry” Workbook	\$25		
Liturgy Planning Session and Materials	\$5		
<p>Most fees are due 6 months prior to the Wedding Date. PREPARE is due before taking the test.</p>			

Marriage Ceremony /Parish Fees	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
Parish Wedding Ceremony & Rehearsal Coordinators	\$150		
Parish Expenses (<i>heating or air conditioning, cleaning, etc.</i>)	\$75		
Use of the Worship Space (<i>inactive wedding couples</i>)	\$500		
Priest Replacement Fee (<i>off-site weddings</i>)	\$130		
Other:			
<p>These fees are due 3 months prior to the Wedding Date.</p>			

Marriage Ceremony Candles/ Stipends	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
*Candelabra Candles (payable to St. Mark's)	\$30	Reserve the candelabra with the Wedding Coordinator. Arrange other services and stipends through those individuals directly.	These fees are due at the Rehearsal. Please give them to the Wedding Rehearsal Coordinator.
*Presider	\$150-200		
*Organist/Pianist	\$100-150		
*Cantor	\$100-175		
*Additional Musicians	\$100 each		
*Servers (provide stipend in cash, if possible)	\$10 each		
<p>These fees are due at the Rehearsal. Candle fees are paid to St. Mark's. Stipends/honorariums are payable to the individual service providers</p>			

Acknowledgement of Understanding – Engaged Couple: We have discussed the fee schedule above and understand the payment schedule. We will contact the Marriage Prep Leader with changes or concerns, and understand that we will be contacted if payments are past due.

Signature(s): _____ Date: _____

Staff Member Completing Form/Meeting: _____