



Guidelines for the Sacrament of Matrimony

St. Mary's Church, Glens Falls, NY 12801

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage! Best wishes to you at this happy time. The following guidelines will give an overview of what lies ahead of you as you prepare to celebrate your marriage in our parish church. The Catholic Church requires that a **preparation program** be undertaken by an engaged couple before marriage. Your first step, then, is to speak to the pastor of St. Mary's to schedule meeting dates for this preparation. ***You should not book a date for your reception until you have had this initial conversation with the pastor. (You cannot book the date for your marriage by speaking to the parish secretary over the phone.) Only the prospective bride or groom, not a family member, should speak to the pastor to begin this process.***

We expect that you are seeking a Catholic marriage because your faith is important to you. You should also have a long-standing connection to our parish. Ordinarily, we do not book weddings for those who are not parishioners. To be formally registered in our parish you should have been worshipping with us for at least two years. We do not book weddings for Catholics who have little or no connection to us or for those who are primarily looking for a venue because of our locality in the North Country.

STEPS TO TAKE:

- Begin the process at least 6 months prior to your intended date of marriage.
- There are certain times of the year when weddings cannot take place in our parish: Sundays, the seasons of Advent and Lent, as well as certain Holy Days.
- You need to collect the following documents and bring them to the pastor:
 1. A recently-issued Baptismal Certificate, which is obtained from the church where you were baptized. (If one party is Protestant, a baptismal certificate is also needed from his/her church of baptism.)
 2. A copy of your Confirmation certificate, which can also be obtained from the church where you were confirmed.
 3. If you were married previously, you need a copy of the annulment decree of your previous marriage or a copy of the death certificate of your late spouse.
 4. You will also need a New York State marriage license.
 5. The certificate that was issued at the conclusion of your Pre-Cana Class.
- If you or your fiancé(e) is not Catholic, there are a few additional documents required which the priest tells you about at your initial meeting.
- Catholic weddings are only performed inside a church building. No Catholic priest or deacon will perform an outdoor Catholic wedding.



- If you are a Catholic, you are expected to partake of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) before your wedding. Since the Sacrament of Matrimony is a channel for great grace, you will want to be in the state of grace at the time you receive it.
- You must attend a diocesan Pre-Cana Conference, as a couple. This is a day-long workshop, sponsored by our diocese, for those seeking the Sacrament of Marriage in any parish throughout the diocese of Albany. Usually, these workshops take place on Saturday at various locations. Speakers and discussion with other couples are part of the day. The cost is \$100, payable when you register for the conference. You must register yourself, ahead-of-time, through the Diocesan office. Book your date for pre-Cana directly through the Diocese at www.rcda.org/pre-cana

Preparation programs for marriage differ from parish to parish, so don't be surprised if your friend's pastor, in another parish, has handled marriage preparation differently. All parishes, however, will require attendance at the Pre-Cana Conference and private conferences with the priest or marriage-preparation team.

You can ask a priest, or deacon, who is a friend or relative, to perform your wedding in our parish if you wish. However, your formal preparation for marriage usually takes place with the pastor in your home parish. Your deacon or priest friend or relative must contact your pastor to receive formal permission to conduct your wedding here.

During your private conferences with the priest, you will discuss several issues relating to Catholic marriage: why the Church considers marriage a Sacrament, what the Church believes are the responsibilities of husband and wife, the need for consistent practice of our faith in order to make for a happy and successful marriage, raising happy and faith-filled children, natural family planning, cohabitation, obstacles in today's culture that make it difficult for permanency in marriage, the duty of husband and wife to keep marriage alive and mutually-nourishing. You should not feel defensive about discussing these topics openly and honestly. They are intended to benefit you and your future family.

At the end of your preparation sessions, you will discuss plans for your marriage ceremony. You will need to choose the Scripture Readings for your ceremony and the people who will read them at the ceremony. You will also have an opportunity to choose the liturgical music. You'll be given a Planning Book by your pastor which should make this easy for you.

TWO OPTIONS

You have TWO options about how weddings are celebrated in the Catholic Church:

- The Marriage Ceremony within Mass
- The Marriage Ceremony outside of Mass



We encourage couples to choose the Sacrament of Matrimony within Mass since the reception of the Holy Eucharist on the day of marriage is a great blessing. However, if one party is non-Catholic, then the second option may be a better choice. A priest is always the celebrant of a wedding within Mass. However, a deacon may be the sole celebrant of a wedding if it is conducted outside of Mass, within the Liturgy of the Word. Both ceremonies, however, take about the same length of time, usually about an hour.

SPECIFICS

- Weddings may be scheduled on Friday evenings or on Saturdays. On Saturdays, weddings may be scheduled at noon, 1:00 PM or 1:30 PM.
- Floral arrangements are up to the discretion of the couple. Runners may NOT be used. Nor floral arrangements may be placed on the altar itself. Two large arrangements, on stands, on either side of the altar, are usually the best way to decorate the Sanctuary. You may place flowers or arrangements at the end of the pews nearest the Sanctuary.
- The tossing of rice, rose petals, confetti or bird seed is not permitted.
- Keep in mind that the church is a sacred space and any activity which compromises proper decorum should be avoided.

MUSIC

- Please contact **Sue Wright** at the parish office, (518) 792-0989 Ext. 113 or 518-338-8464 regarding music for your ceremony. Her email is: swright@stmarysglensfalls.org
- Only religious music is allowed -- before, during and after the service.
- If you want a soloist, please discuss with the organist. If you have your own musicians, they will be expected to comply with the religious tradition of the church and use only music suited for Catholic worship and approved by the organist.
- Do you want special music for the entrance of the mothers?

Very often, a pamphlet or program is put together by the couple for the congregation to use during your wedding ceremony. These are usually passed out by the groomsmen as your guests arrive at the church for the ceremony. The pastor will give you some examples of ones used in the past. Review them and decide if you want to use a similar one for your wedding. Before final printing of the pamphlet, review it with Father. He will check for misspellings of specific words related to our Liturgy, eg., "Homily" or "Responsorial Psalm".

- About photographs and videos: You should inform your photographer that he/she must use discretion when filming your wedding, exerting care not to become a distraction. Group pictures may be taken after the ceremony in the church. Keep in mind that other services may be scheduled after your wedding so these sessions should not be over-extended.
- Limousines should not block the handicapped parking spaces around the church. These



cars are not to be parked near the handicapped spaces. If your wedding is on Saturday, all vehicles from your wedding must be out of the way by 3:00 PM on Saturday.

- A **REHEARSAL** must be scheduled before the wedding, usually on the day/night before the wedding. Please **ask your bridal party to be on time**. Also ask the Readers in the wedding ceremony to be present. The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) will be available after the rehearsal for Catholics in your bridal party.
- **You must bring your marriage license to the rehearsal!** Your two witnesses will sign the license at that time. Get your license from the local municipality about 4 weeks before the wedding. (To get information about how to get a license, call the City Hall or Town Clerk.)
- Though priests would like to attend your reception to deliver the “Prayer before Meals” (before the toast), given the busy schedule of today’s priests, it is better for you to plan to have a member of the family or bridal party deliver this prayer.

■ **Fees:**

FOR REGISTERED PARISHIONERS OR THEIR CHILDREN: The offering for a wedding in our parish is \$300 plus an additional \$200 fee for the organist. The cantor fee is \$75.00, payable at the rehearsal. (Note that no one is ever refused any liturgical service in our parish because of an inability to cover the cost of fees.)

FOR NON-PARISHIONERS: The offering for a wedding in our parish is \$750.00 plus an additional \$200 fee for the organist. The cantor fee is \$75.00, payable at the rehearsal. You will need a letter from your home pastor giving permission for your wedding to take place in St. Mary’s.

In order for us to book the day and time of your wedding on our parish calendar, you will have to forward the full fee (parish and organist fee) to the office. The date cannot be confirmed until after we receive the payment. The check should be made payable to St, Mary’s Church. Please write “wedding” in the memo section of the check.

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