



Saint Mary's Church

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GUIDELINES FOR THE RITE OF MARRIAGE

"The sacrament of marriage signifies a union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994)

Congratulations on your Christian engagement! As you prepare for this celebration and lifetime commitment, the parish will assist you in your preparation. To enhance and preserve the sacredness of the sacrament of marriage, these requirements and important notes are listed.

We maintain high standards in our sacramental preparation and worship life at Saint Marys. A sincere respect and reverence for the traditions and rites of the Roman Catholic Church is expected of all involved. Please study these guidelines, and feel free to bring any questions or comments you have to the parish staff.



REQUIREMENTS:

(The wedding date always remains contingent on the fulfillment of these requirements, up to the wedding date itself.)

1. The couple takes an active part in their preparation for marriage. Normally this preparation will take at least six months. The pastor, parish pastoral staff and supporting married couples will assist those preparing for the sacrament of marriage. It is the responsibility of the couple getting married to arrange an initial meeting with the pastor and follow-up meetings with him and others as needed. Throughout the marriage preparation, the couple will learn about the sacrament of marriage and the commitment that each is making to God, each other, and the Church. There will be time to pray and reflect on the sacred Scriptures for the marriage liturgy; discuss the couple's relationships and experiences of God, family, friends and, of course, each other; fill out church documents; prepare and rehearse the wedding liturgy; discuss the Catholic faith and process annulments if necessary.
2. To place your wedding on the parish calendar, please schedule a meeting with Fr. Mike at least six months prior to the wedding date; twelve months or more is better. At the initial meeting you will fill out the necessary paperwork for the diocese and discuss the details of the wedding liturgy and dates and times for rehearsal and wedding.

3. When you have completed your initial meeting with the pastor, you should then make an appointment with the Liturgical Minister, Gary Karr. You will meet with Gary a minimum of 2 times to participate in a FOCCUS Pre-Marital Inventory. To schedule this appointment, call the Parish Office at 616.677.3934. Upon Completion of these meetings, you will then be assigned a Mentor Couple with whom you will meet with to discuss relevant Marriage Topics.
4. The Diocese and Parish also require that there be a mandatory preparation at either a Pre-Cana workshop or other approved preparation program. (A certificate of completion of the workshop is required.) The Parish Office can provide you with a list of workshops being offered, or you can visit <http://www.dioceseofgrandrapids.org>
5. Either the bride or groom must be a practicing, registered member of Saint Mary. If one has been a previous member and has moved away and wishes to be married here, a letter from the pastor of the parish in which he or she is now worshipping is needed.
6. The civil marriage license (obtained from the county) must be brought to the parish office at least 2 weeks before the wedding date. No wedding can legally occur without the marriage license.

SCHEDULING:

1. Must be scheduled through the parish office at least six (6) months in advance.
2. Wedding time options on Saturday: Between 10:00 am and 1:00 pm.
3. Wedding time options on Friday: Between 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm.
4. Wedding must start on time – no exceptions!
5. Visiting priests are welcome with permission and delegation of the pastor.

REHEARSAL:

1. Held one or two nights before the wedding. Lasting roughly 1 hour.
2. Please make sure your wedding party and anyone participating in the ceremony is on time.
3. All fees are due prior to the rehearsal.

SERVICE COMPENSATION: The parish relies on such donations to defray some of the expenses such as utilities, insurance and maintenance.

1. Church Facility -\$150.00
2. Priest/Pastor: Donation at family's discretion- Please make check to Fr. Michael Hodges or visiting priest.
3. Volunteer Liturgical Ministers (includes Sacristan and Altar Servers) Donation at family's discretion
4. Musicians Fees – Contact Musicians for fees.

MUSIC

1. When you have completed your initial meetings with the pastor, you should then make an appointment with the Director of Music to make arrangements for the music for your wedding.
2. You may use a guest musician if you prefer.

PICTURE AND VIDEO:

1. During the wedding please ask the photographer to not block the view of the congregation and to stay at a respectable distance. They are NOT allowed on the Altar area.
2. The altar and lectern are not to be moved for pictures or for the ceremony.
3. Flash pictures are permitted of the bride and groom and wedding party only coming up or going down the main aisle. No Flash photography during the ceremony.
4. Video cameras are allowed but please use discretion.

FLOWERS AND DECORATION:

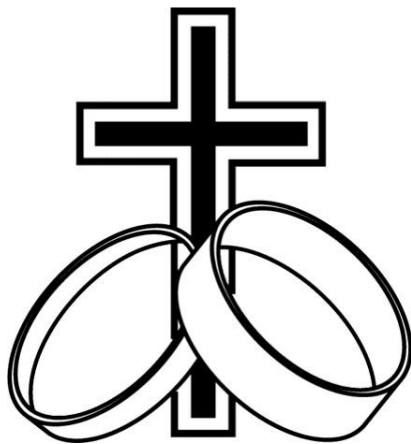
1. Weddings scheduled near special times such as Easter or Christmas seasons have floral arrangements pertaining to these feasts. If you would like to add or detract from them, contact the parish office.
2. Please remove your flowers and decorations after the ceremony and replace the plants and/or flowers the church was decorated with.
3. Please do not place any decorations or plants on the altar and please do not entirely block the view of the altar.
4. Do not use tape on the pews. Rubber bands or wire, etc are appreciated.
5. Runners are discouraged as they create a tripping hazard.
6. The parish has portable kneelers for the couple.
7. Rice, Confetti, Balloons and Bird Seed are not allowed on church premises because of environmental harm and these items are hard to clean after the ceremony. There are also liability concerns with these items making surfaces slippery. The use of bubbles outdoors seems to be a good alternative.

GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING COMMUNION:

1. **For Catholics:** Catholics fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when they pray, attentively listen and respond to the word of God, and receive Holy Communion. Participants in the Eucharist first should be reconciled with God and with the community through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (penance) if any serious sin has fractured those relationships. Secondly, a person receiving Holy Communion is to fast for one hour prior to reception of the Eucharist.
2. **For other Christians:** We welcome to this celebration of the Eucharist those Christians who are not fully united with us. It is a consequence of the sad divisions in Christianity that we cannot extend to them a general invitation to receive Communion. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we must all pray and work.
3. **For those not receiving communion:** Those not receiving sacramental communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.
4. **For non-Christians:** We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot extend to them an invitation to receive communion, we do invite them to be united with us in prayer.
5. **Out of reverence for the Eucharist** which is reserved in the tabernacle at all times, **the following must be observed by everyone:**
 - a. Proper attire is required by all at all times in the building, before, during and after both the rehearsal and the wedding, including all musicians, photographers and others involved.
 - b. Proper etiquette is expected at all times on the premises of the church. Please refrain from loud talking in the worship space and the adjacent areas of the building. Small children are to be supervised at all times.
 - c. It is the responsibility of the wedding couple to see that the above rules are conveyed to the wedding party and guests, and that these rules are respected.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

2. The details of the wedding liturgy, liturgical ministers, dates and times for rehearsal and wedding, etc., are to be arranged with the pastor. This is also required when a visiting priest, musician or vocalist has been asked to participate in the wedding.
3. In a marriage between a Catholic and a person not of the Catholic faith, the marriage is ordinarily celebrated outside the Eucharistic Liturgy.
4. The main building will be opened and available **two hours** before the time of the wedding. There is the possibility that the church will be needed prior to or after the scheduled time of the wedding for a funeral or other activity. Therefore, plan on fitting your decorating, photography and the wedding liturgy inside a four-hour window.
5. The community room is where the women of the wedding party may dress and where items and clothing may be stored. Men may use the Parish Hall (across the street from the church). Please make sure to take all belongings (boxes, paper, hangers, etc.) with you after the ceremony.
6. Since the church is a place of prayer, no food, beverages or gum are allowed at any time in the church or the narthex.
7. Smoking is not allowed in any part of the building.
8. No alcoholic beverages are to be consumed before the rehearsal or the wedding liturgy. Further, there is no drinking of alcoholic beverages anywhere on the church property. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in a postponement of the liturgy.
9. After the wedding:
 - a. There is no maintenance personnel on duty on the weekends. Please remove all flower boxes, plastic bags, hangers, etc. from all areas of the building.
 - b. For Saturday weddings, all clean up must be completed no later than 3:00 PM.



***Please make sure your Master and Mistress of Ceremony receives these guidelines.**