

MARRIAGE PREPARATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

GENERAL INFORMATION

Membership:

Either the bride or groom or both must be participating members of St. Mary Parish. This means that either the bride, groom, or both are registered as adult members of the parish, they attend Mass regularly, and they financially support the mission of the parish.

Special consideration will be given to couples who live out of town and whose parents are members of St. Mary. In the latter case, the first parts of marriage preparation will be completed at the couple's home parish. A letter must be obtained from the pastor of the parish where the bride or groom resides. This letter must be received within thirty days of scheduling your wedding and must state:

- The bride and groom are in good standing as members of the parish.
- The home parish agrees to facilitate the couple's marriage preparation according to the norms of the diocese in which the parish is located.
- The pastor gives permission for his parishioners to be married at St. Mary.

The Sacrament of Matrimony cannot be celebrated without membership or receipt of the above-mentioned letter.

Scheduling your Wedding:

Weddings must be scheduled a minimum of nine months before they are to take place and are scheduled by contacting the pastor. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays, during the Seasons of Advent and Lent, or during the annual parish festival weekend. Weddings may be scheduled on Saturdays at 10 AM, 12 Noon, or 2 PM. On Fridays, weddings can be scheduled at 1:30 or 3:30 PM. No more than two weddings will be scheduled on any given date. Rehearsals will normally take place the evening before at either 5 or 6 PM. Please know, we will make every effort to accommodate you on your preferred date.

If either of you has been married previously in either a church or civil ceremony, you must inform the pastor before your wedding is scheduled. This applies to non-Catholics as well as Catholics. In this case, the pastor will assist you in determining what the Catholic Church requires in order for you to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Initial Meeting:

The priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding will set up an initial meeting with you. The purpose of this meeting is to explain the two major phases of the preparation process, to fill out the initial set of papers required by the Church, and to answer any questions which the bride or groom may have.

Baptismal Certificates

Every baptized Catholic and non-Catholic Christian intending to marry in the Catholic Church must present evidence of his or her baptism.

FOR CATHOLICS: A *newly issued* copy of your baptismal certificate, which is no more than six months old, is required. A new certificate can be obtained by contacting the parish of your baptism and asking them to send a copy to you.

FOR NON-CATHOLICS: A copy of your baptismal certificate, no matter how old, or a letter from the church of your baptism is sufficient.

Marriage License

Your marriage license must be obtained through the County Clerk's office in the county where one of you is in residence in the state of Wisconsin. If you live in Milwaukee County, you apply for your license at the Milwaukee County Courthouse. The application for a marriage license must be made no less than 6 days or more than 36 days prior to the ceremony. Both applicants must appear in person, bringing with them a certified copy of their state birth certificate and a social security card. For those living in Milwaukee County, additional information can be obtained by calling the County Clerk's office at (414) 278-4067. **You must present your marriage license to the parish when you arrive for your rehearsal.**

THE ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTION PHASE

Marriage Preparation Conference

The couple will participate in a Marriage Preparation Conference sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. These are offered at various locations in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. **Couples are encouraged to register early since space is limited for each conference.** A brochure listing dates and locations is enclosed with this packet. Upon completion of the preparation conference, the couple receives a certificate, which they in turn give to the Wedding Coordinator.

FOCCUS Inventory or Prepare/Enrich

Every couple preparing to be married in the Catholic Church will complete either the FOCCUS inventory (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study) or the Prepare/Enrich inventory. Both inventories assist the couple to assess areas of life where both are in agreement with each other and where they disagree with one another. This is not a test but rather an opportunity to see how well couples are communicating about important marriage issues. After both of you complete the inventory, you will be paired with a married couple from the parish who will walk you

through the results and help you have a conversation about areas of life with which you differ or that you may not have already discussed together.

Decision to Delay a Marriage

In consultation with the couple, the priest may decide to delay a marriage. This decision is always made in accordance with the **Common Policy of Pastoral Marriage Preparation for the Dioceses of Wisconsin**. The Policy states:

“If in the course of assessment the decision is to delay the marriage, every effort is to be made to help the couple overcome the specific circumstances that made the delay advisable. When a delay is indicated, consultation with the parents is recommended and referral to other designated personnel may be necessary to resolve the cause of the delay.”

The decision to delay a marriage is not made lightly. Reasons for delay include the following:

Non-practice of the Catholic faith by both parties with no intention to return to the practice of the faith;

Substantial lack of appreciation for the spiritual and sacramental aspects of marriage;

Lack of readiness for marriage, such as immaturity, undue social pressure, addiction issues, or the presence of abuse within the relationship, etc.;

Separation of the couple for an extended period of time to occur shortly after marriage, such as military service, job transfer, etc.;

Refusal to participate in any of the steps of the marriage preparation that applies to them.

If the priest decides that there is sufficient reason to delay a marriage the couple has the right to present their case to the Archdiocesan Board of Appeals.

THE LITURGY PLANNING PHASE

Once the Assessment and Instruction Phase has been completed, the couple meets with the parish Wedding Coordinator to prepare the wedding liturgy. An explanation of the various liturgical options is included with this packet and will be discussed in detail.

All decisions regarding the liturgy are subject to the approval of the pastor. All choices of wedding music are subject to approval by the Parish Director of Liturgical Music. Once you have met to plan the wedding liturgy, you will be instructed to contact the

Director of Liturgical Music to arrange a meeting to plan the music used in your ceremony. The Music Director is most willing to help you select music for your wedding.

The Director of Liturgical Music serves as the musician for all celebrations of the Sacrament of Matrimony. A parish cantor leads the sung prayer of the ceremony and is required at all weddings.

OTHER POLICIES REGARDING THE CELEBRATION OF WEDDINGS

On the day of your wedding, you will have a 2-hour time block for arriving, your ceremony and photos after the ceremony: 11:30 – 1:30 PM; or 1:30 – 3:30 PM. Because of time constraints, St. Mary does not permit a receiving line at church.

Please have everyone ready to begin ON TIME for both the rehearsal and the actual wedding liturgy. All members of your wedding party must abide by the following:

- **No smoking is allowed in the church building;**
- **No consumption of alcohol or other behavior-influencing chemicals is allowed anywhere on the parish grounds.**
- **Anyone under the influence of such substances will be asked to leave.**
- **If the bride, groom or other attendants are involved in drinking or using drugs prior to the rehearsal or ceremony, the priest or deacon has the obligation to postpone the marriage.**
- **The marriage, if witnessed while the bride or groom has been drinking, may be considered invalid because of the lessening of one's ability to freely offer their marriage consent due to the influence of alcohol/drugs.**

The Bride's Room, church entry area, and the pews are to be in good order after your wedding. All furniture should be replaced in its original position.

For safety reasons, the parish does not allow the use of aisles runners. The floors are kept clean and aisle runners have proven to be hazardous to wedding guests.

Your church decorations may not conflict with those of the parish and parish decorations may not be moved or disturbed. Decorations must be approved by the Parish Director of Worship in advance of your wedding date. No flowers/decorations may be placed on top of the altar or in such a way to obscure it. The parish assumes no responsibility for the situating of your approved decorations; you must attend to this.

If you desire to light the Unity Candle during the wedding liturgy, you must provide the larger candle and the two smaller candles. These items will be placed on an appropriate stand, provided by the parish, and not on the altar.

Be sure to read the insert entitled, "Guidelines Regarding Videotaping and Still Photography at Weddings." Anyone involved in this process should receive these guidelines and confer with the presider beforehand to resolve any related questions.

A Parish Wedding Host will conduct your rehearsal and be present for your ceremony. It is the Wedding Host's responsibility to make sure all the necessary preparations for the celebration of your wedding are in place.

The pastor of St. Mary Parish is the ordinary presider at all celebrations of the Sacrament of Marriage. Couples may also invite a permanent deacon of the parish to preside at their wedding. When a deacon presides at a wedding, it is always celebrated outside of Mass.

If you have a relative who is a priest or deacon, you may ask the pastor for permission to have them preside, concelebrate or assist with your ceremony. A priest who is a family friend is welcome to concelebrate the wedding liturgy. The couple should inform the Wedding Coordinator at the liturgy planning meeting if a priest concelebrant has been invited.

- ❖ If the priest or deacon is from outside of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, they must present a *Testimonial of Suitability for Ministry* from their bishop or religious superior. This letter is sent to the Chancery Office of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and a copy is sent to St. Mary Parish. **Please note: if the priest or deacon fails to present this document, he may not function in any capacity at your wedding.**