



Saint Ann

CATHOLIC CHURCH

2900 W. Galbraith Rd.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45239
513-521-8840
Fax: 513-521-7221
www.saintannparish.org

The Sacrament of Marriage Guidelines and Policies

Effective March 31, 2014

“By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligations, they are penetrated with the Spirit of Christ, who fills their whole lives with faith, hope, and charity.”

- Familiaris Consortio, # 56

Congratulations on your engagement!

I hope you find these wedding guidelines helpful as you prepare for a life-long marriage together. Remember, **the wedding is one day, marriage is for a life time**. May the Lord bless you as you prepare for marriage in the Catholic Church!

Marriage is a wonderful Sacrament and creates the foundation of the Church and society. This sacred union is the most important decision a person will make, and was instituted by God to nurture each one's spiritual relationship with God, to deepen their own union, and to foster life so that the next generation can enter into union with God. Therefore it is essential that there is a period of reflection and preparation before entering into the Sacrament. The Archdiocese of Cincinnati requires all couples seeking the Sacrament of Matrimony to undergo Marriage Preparation Classes.

The marriage preparation is designed to help the couple prepare for a life-long, fruitful, faithful, and loving relationship. The key to the marriage preparation process is open and honest dialogue, and we are here to help provide you with the tools to have a joy-filled marriage. The intentional omitting of problems, issues, or important background information can potentially jeopardize the wedding. It is incumbent on the couple, not the priest or parish, to be forthright with all pertinent information.

The following are required to be married in the Catholic Church

- 1) Must be between a Man and a Woman
- 2) One of the parties must be Catholic
- 3) Must be free of a prior bond (see below)

The newly engaged couple must make arrangements to meet with the priest or deacon at least six months prior to the anticipated wedding date.

The couple needs to read and sign these marriage guidelines before the parish will schedule a wedding date. After the guidelines are returned to the parish office, the pastor will review information submitted and you will be contacted regarding the date of your wedding. Due to the ongoing shortage of priests it may not always be possible to have a wedding Mass on the date you desire. If the pastor is unavailable on that date, you have the option of asking another priest to celebrate the wedding, but he must be pre-approved by the pastor. If no priest is available, the wedding will be performed by a deacon in a ceremony outside of the Mass.

We hope the experience of getting married in the Church will bring about a new conversion. So we want to do our best to help and encourage couples to live out their faith. God wants us to be the best we can be, so don't be afraid to talk with the priest/deacon during the marriage preparation classes about how to become faithfully, practicing Catholics. We truly hope and pray that your marriage will be a blessed union and we are happy that you have chosen St. Ann for this Sacrament.

Prior Marriage

Only couples who are “free to marry” are able to get married in the Catholic Church, meaning that neither party has been married before, including civil marriages. If one or both of the parties has been married before, a wedding cannot take place unless: the former spouse is deceased or a Declaration of Nullity (annulment) has been granted. If one or both of the parties have been married before either civilly or in a religious ceremony and have gotten a divorce, but not a Declaration of Nullity, then the couple is not free to marry. Please contact the pastor to discuss how to begin the annulment process.

If one or both parties are not “free to marry,” the marriage would be invalid. For this reason, if the couple does not promptly disclose any previous marriages, civil or religious, the wedding will be postponed until the Declaration of Nullity is obtained. If there are any questions or concerns regarding the Church’s requirements, please speak to the pastor as soon as possible.

Refusing a Marriage

Marriage is a public event and has certain requirements both in Church and civil law. The priest or deacon can refuse to marry a couple if he believes there are very serious reasons why a couple should not be getting married. If an Ohio marriage license has not been obtained, a marriage cannot take place. The parish or clergy is not liable for reimbursing the couple or their family for expenses for a cancellation for any reason.

The Rite of Marriage

The Mass is the greatest of all the Liturgies; it is the prayer of Jesus to the Father, which we participate in because of our baptism. The Mass is a sign of our faithfulness to our Lord. It is the most sacred of all events. It is for this reason that the Mass must always be respected and cherished. Those who desire to have their wedding in the context of the Mass, should do so only if they truly cherish and respect the meaning and goal of the Mass.

The Rite of Marriage may be celebrated during Mass or outside of Mass (Liturgy of the Word with no Holy Communion).

- Rite of Marriage during Mass is the norm when both the bride and groom are faithfully, practicing Catholics. (Both actively living out their faith and adhering to the commandments of the Church)
- Rite of Marriage outside of Mass (Liturgy of the Word with no Holy Communion) must be used when a Catholic marries a **baptized non-Catholic** or a **non-baptized person**.
- If the marriage takes place between a Catholic and non-Catholic, the Catholic party will have to sign a statement promising to continue in the practice of his/her faith and to raise his/her children Catholic. This will be discussed in greater detail during the marriage preparation classes.

Wedding Times and Liturgical Seasons

Wedding Liturgy times: **Fridays at 5:00pm or 6:30pm, Saturdays at 10:30am, 11:00am, or 6:30 pm.** Only one wedding will take place each day.

If the Catholic couple decides to have the Wedding on Sunday, it will take place at the **11:30am Parish Mass**. As this is a regularly scheduled Mass, the liturgy will be handled differently. (Discuss these differences with the priest/deacon if you choose this option.)

The rehearsal is on **Thursday or Friday evening at 5:00 or 6:00pm.**

- No weddings during the Lenten season, because it is a penitential time, except con-validations. Weddings during Advent are permissible, but will have **minimal** decorations and music.
- Weddings during Christmas and Easter are welcome, however depending on where the date of the Wedding falls the selection of readings may be limited.
- The day of the Wedding: take time to pray and thank the Lord for the gift of your future spouse. Relax and do not get too stressed out. Enter the marriage with a peaceful spirit.
- Consider receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to your wedding in order to fully receive the grace available through the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The Wedding Liturgy

The celebration of Christian Marriage within the context of a liturgy has a long tradition in the Catholic Church. The Wedding Liturgy is sacred, belongs to the entire Church, and will follow the rubrics the Church has established. Therefore it is important that it reflects the beauty of marriage and its' relationship to Jesus Christ and His Church. The focus of the Wedding Liturgy is not the couple, but Christ.

Lectors: Lectors are those who proclaim the Old Testament and New Testament readings and if desired the petitions. The Gospel is reserved to the Priest/Deacon. For Wedding Liturgies at Mass the lectors must be Catholic. For Wedding Liturgies outside of Mass the lectors do not have to be Catholic, but should be baptized Christians. Lectors should practice the readings and petitions several times before the ceremony.

Gift Bearers: For weddings taking place during Mass the couple should select two people to bring forth the bread and the wine that will be used for the celebration of the Eucharist.

Altar Servers: Servers from outside the parish are permitted, provided that they are practicing Catholics who regularly serve at their own parish church. The parish has servers available to assist at the Altar during a Wedding Mass, but this must be communicated to the priest prior to the wedding. Servers should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the beginning of Mass in order to receive instructions from the priest/deacon.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: The priest will distribute Holy Communion. If a couple decides to offer the cup as well, then two pre-approved individuals may be asked to be Extraordinary Ministers. If the couple anticipates a large number of Catholics receiving Communion, a third extraordinary minister may be necessary.

Please add the following statement about Holy Communion in your wedding program:

A special note regarding communion: As Catholics we believe that the bread and wine become the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are not admitted to Holy Communion. All those not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayer for the peace and unity of the human family. (The priest will also announce this at Mass before the distribution of Holy Communion.)

The priest/deacon and music director will help you with the planning of the liturgy. The priest, deacon or music director will not plan the Wedding Liturgy with other members of your family. The couple will work directly with the parish staff. Please share this information with your family to prevent any confusion or problems.

Music

Couples are **required** to meet with the parish music director, who will guide you through the process; please contact her a few months before the wedding to schedule a meeting. If you wish to use another musician, he/she must be approved by the director. The Director of Music & Worship may be reached at 513-521-8440. Music is an integral component of any liturgical ceremony, perhaps even more so for weddings. Couples are encouraged to select pieces that are reflective of their love and their faith; however, it must also be sacred and appropriate. Recorded music (i.e. CDs) are not permitted to be used during a liturgy. It is suggested that couples save that music for the reception.

The Wedding Party

The members of the Wedding Party are determined by the couple. Please keep in mind that two people must serve as official witnesses. They must be of sound mind, sufficient maturity and at least the age of fourteen.

When selecting a ring bearer and/or flower girl please consider the age and attentiveness of the child.

No special requests will be granted to have a pet be part of the service.

NO ALCOHOL is permitted anywhere on the church property. Any member of the wedding party showing signs of alcohol use before the rehearsal or at the wedding will be asked to leave the church and its grounds. Alcohol and/or drugs impair one's ability to reason and to freely enter into a covenant or a contract. If the bride, groom, or any member of the wedding party is impaired, this could cause the wedding to be cancelled or delayed!

The Wedding Procession

The Church envisions that the procession will begin with the servers, the priest or deacon, the wedding party, the parents, and finally the Bride and Groom. The Bride and Groom coming in together expresses fully that the husband and wife are equal partners in the marriage. Due to the long tradition of the Bride being escorted by her father, and the Groom greeting the Bride and father, this remains an option.

The Wedding Coordinator

The parish will assign you a wedding coordinator for the service and the wedding rehearsal. The wedding coordinator will be available to answer your questions about decorations, the order of the ceremony, and will help keep everything on schedule. The wedding coordinator will show you where the dressing area is in the school. Please make sure that people using this room are respectful of the property and remain in the dressing room until it is time for the procession to begin.

Decorations

Flowers have always been a traditional decoration for a wedding ceremony. Keep in mind that during certain liturgical seasons the church is already appropriately decorated with flowers. This is especially true during the Christmas and Easter seasons. No one may move any plants or flowers that are already in place. A fresh flower arrangement is permitted on the floor in front of the Altar. Flowers are to be placed and removed from the Church at times that will not interfere with other parish services.

- **Flowers must be real -- no artificial flowers are allowed.**
- **No plastic clips, metal hooks, pipe-cleaners or tape may be used.**
- **Aisle runners are not permitted because they create a safety issue.**
- **Please refrain from the throwing of birdseed, rice, confetti, or flower petals, or the blowing of bubbles. It creates a hazard to those attending the wedding and later liturgies.**
- **Clean-up is the responsibility of the wedding party; please leave the Church and dressing room as clean as you found it.** (Be sure to appoint someone to stay behind to collect any items that may have been left behind in the church after the wedding.)
- **No candles or small vigil lights are permitted to be attached to the pews.**
- **A unity candle may not be used during either a Mass or ceremony,** but would be appropriate during the rehearsal dinner or the reception, if so desired.

Only the candles normally used in the Liturgy will be used. While the unity candle has enjoyed widespread acceptance in some circles, it is not a Catholic liturgical symbol, and therefore is not part of the Roman Catholic Marriage Rite.

The presenting of flowers to Mary is not part of the Catholic Wedding Liturgy. However, if a couple has a special devotion to Mary, it may be permitted.

Pictures

Pictures and video cameras are permitted during the procession and the recession of the bridal party. Wedding guests are instructed to refrain from using flashes during the ceremony. Some photographers wish to take pictures before the ceremony. This is permitted if arrangements are made ahead of time and the Church is available. Photographers may not move any sacred furnishings nor are they permitted to stand on any pews or chairs. If the wedding takes place in the context of a Mass, no flash photography is allowed once the Mass begins. Please discuss these guidelines with your photographer beforehand to avoid misunderstandings.

Marriage Preparation Classes - MPC:

Couples seeking to be married in the Catholic Church are required to take MPC. Just as one must prepare for any profession by attending college or some type of technical school, so too the Church asks for marriage preparation to assist couples to live out marriage as a faithful, loving, and indissoluble union open to children.

The initial three classes will be done in a group setting with other couples preparing for marriage. If a class is missed it must be made-up in the following cycle (For example- missing class #3 in September will need to be made up at class #3 in February). Two independent classes with the priest/deacon are also required.

Marriage Preparation Group Classes – Call the office to confirm times and locations

Spring Session – Friday Evenings: 2nd & 4th weeks of May & 1st week of June

Winter Session – Friday Evenings: 2nd & 4th weeks of January & 1st week of February

Typically these meetings will take place at 7:00pm in the St. Francis Center.

First Class

Introduction to the marriage preparation process: a brief talk on National Family Planning and a list of appropriate musical guidelines and selections will be provided.

Couples will complete the FOCCUS test (Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding & Study). FOCCUS is an inventory tool to help the church and the engaged couples to identify areas in the couple's relationship that may need further development, understanding, or resolution.

Second Class

Basics of marriage: Love, the four goods of marriage, marriage as a Sacrament, and marriage as a covenantal relationship.

Third Class

Marriage in the Bible: Learning God's plan for a successful marriage.

Individual Classes (one-on-one with the priest/deacon)

Fourth Class

The basics of living out a good marriage: The Marriage Inventory questions and the FOCCUS Test results will serve as a tool to discuss communication, finances, sexual relationship, Christian values, "good practices," trust and intimacy, and most importantly – forgiveness.

Fifth Class

Review discussions from class four, and address and plan for the wedding Mass/ceremony. You will review the vows and complete the marriage paperwork.

If the couple is cohabiting, meaning living together while engaged in sexual activity, the wedding will take place outside of Mass. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this policy, please discuss it with the priest/deacon during your marriage preparation classes.

It is at the final meeting that all outside requirements are to be completed and all necessary documents received, including the marriage license (if the last meeting is within 60 days of the wedding) and the fees for the wedding.

Additional Requirements for Marriage Preparation

It is the couples' responsibility to schedule and complete these additional sessions. After completing the course(s) please obtain a letter confirming your completion for your marriage file and submit it to the parish office.

- **Option 1** - Couples can participate in a Natural Family Planning (NFP) program. Please check the surrounding area to find who or what places offer NFP classes. The Archdiocese lists several options as to where to learn different methods of Natural Family Planning on the website below. <http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/ministries-offices/family-life/family/fertility/nfp-official/>
- **Option 2** - Attend a multi-day program on Theology of the Body or God's Plan for a Joy Filled Marriage. These programs are offered at Ruah Woods on the Westside of Cincinnati. Please contact them directly for current dates/times - 513-407-8672 or at www.ruahwoods.org.
- **Option 3** – Attend a weekend retreat called Catholic Engaged Encounter. For more information and dates of upcoming retreats, please visit cincinnatiengagedencounter.org. In order to register, please contact Cincinnati Engaged Encounter at registration@cincinnatiengagedencounter.org.

Necessary Documents

- Baptized Catholics need to provide a copy of Baptismal Certificate or Profession of Faith Certificate – issued within 6 months of the wedding by the Catholic Church of your baptism or where you became a Catholic.
- Baptized non-Catholics need to provide a copy of Baptismal Certificate (certificate or letter from minister/witness is acceptable).
- Completing the Marriage-Inventory (M-I) questions prior to the Fourth Class.
- Certificate or Letter confirming completion of Natural Family Planning program.
- Marriage License by the State of Ohio- a license can be obtained within 60 days of the wedding. No wedding can occur without a marriage license.
- All fees and forms should be submitted to the St. Ann Parish Office by the final class.

FEES

Parishioner/Non-Parishioner Status

- Active-Parishioner
 - One who is currently registered- separately from their parents
 - Attends Sunday Mass regularly and contributes
 - The couple intends to continue to attend St. Ann's after the wedding
- Past-Parishioner
 - One who grew-up at St. Ann's (parents are registered Active-Parishioners)
 - The bride and/or groom attend Mass regularly at a different Catholic parish
- Non-Parishioner
 - One who is not registered at St. Ann's, but is an active Catholic in good standing

Church Usage Fee – All Checks made payable to St. Ann

- **Active-Parishioner - \$100.00**
- **Past-Parishioner - \$300.00**
- **Non-Parishioner - \$750.00**

Music Fee

- \$200.00
- Additional \$100, if using an outside musician

All Fees are to be paid directly to St. Ann Parish by the final marriage preparation class

Please make checks payable to St. Ann.

Your signature indicates that you have read and accepted the terms of the guidelines required for marriage at St. Ann and agree to pay all applicable fees. St. Ann Parish will not be held financially liable if a wedding is cancelled/delayed due to a failure to adhere to the procedures and policies set forth in these guidelines.

Engaged couples should submit this form at least six months in advance of desired wedding date.

Name of the Bride: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Religion: _____ Baptized: Yes or No Location of Baptism: _____

Have you been married before? Yes or No

If yes, has that marriage been annulled? Yes or No Diocese? _____

Name of the Groom: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Religion: _____ Baptized: Yes or No Location of Baptism: _____

Have you been married before? Yes or No

If yes, has that marriage been annulled? Yes or No Diocese? _____

Before a wedding date can be scheduled, a couple must complete and turn in the marriage guidelines. Guidelines can be found on the Parish website under Sacraments. Please list some available dates/times and the office will confirm the scheduling of the date once this form has been reviewed by the pastor.

Anticipated dates for Wedding: _____

Signature of Bride to be

Signature of Groom to be

Date

Date