



Saint Ann

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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The Sacrament of Marriage Guidelines and Policies

Effective May 15, 2018
Revised October 2020

“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!

Congratulations on your engagement; this is certainly an exciting time for you both. Marriage is a wonderful Sacrament, and we at St. Ann are happy that you have chosen to come to the Church so to have your relationship blessed by God and to receive His Sacrament. Marriage is the most important decision a person will make and will be the basis of all decisions moving forward. From the very beginning God established the institution of marriage, first with Adam and Eve and then with His chosen people. It is Christ at the Wedding Feast of Cana that elevates a natural marriage to sacramental status, revealing that a marriage with Christ included is uniquely special. As with all Sacraments, God's graces are there to strengthen the person(s) to live out the vocation to which God has called them. We are here to help with your preparation for this Sacrament.

I hope you find these Marriage Guidelines helpful as you begin preparing for your life together. I also hope that you realize our duty is not to help only with a single day, the wedding, but a life-long unity of love and service. May the Lord's blessing be with you both as you prepare for your marriage.

Getting married in the Church is a sign that you have committed, or are now planning to commit, your life to Christ, to live out your baptismal calling. The goal of marriage preparation is to assist in your further growth as a Christian. It is by living-out The Faith and God's commandments that ensures a successful marriage. This is why the Church requires couples getting married to receive instruction. Recently, we have adjusted our marriage preparation process in order to better meet the ongoing challenges of living this Sacrament in a world that today does not value the sanctity of marriage or family. Please read carefully the requirements necessary to get married here at St. Ann.

The following are required to be married in the Catholic Church

- 1) Marriage is only between one Man and one Woman
- 2) One of the persons must be Catholic
- 3) Each person must be free of a prior bond and any known impediments. (see below) *

The newly engaged couple must call the parish office to arrange a meeting with Fr. McCarthy before the marriage process begins. No wedding date will be scheduled prior to this meeting. This initial meeting must take place within nine (9) months of the anticipated wedding date.

Please read, complete and sign the last page of the Marriage Guidelines and bring it with you to the first meeting with Fr. McCarthy.

If the wedding date is already booked, then the couple needs to come up with another date. If Fr. McCarthy is unavailable on that date, you have two options: another priest may come in, granted that he is approved by the Archdiocese/Fr. McCarthy, or have the parish deacon officiate a ceremony. This can be discussed at the initial meeting.

Prior Marriage

*** Only couples who are “free to marry” can get married in the Catholic Church.** What does “free to marry” mean? It means that neither party (groom or bride-to-be) has ever been married previously, including a civil marriage- i.e. justice of the peace or a marriage in another Christian faith unless that “marriage” has been determined null and void by the Church. If the previous marriage has been granted an annulment, a copy of that annulment letter must be given to Fr. McCarthy. A divorce is not the same as a Declaration of Nullity. Before a marriage can take place, the couple or individual must go through the process to obtain an annulment; Fr. McCarthy can help you with the process. Note: Depending on the situation, an annulment may take about 12 months. Simply applying for an annulment does not automatically mean it will be granted. Again, speak to Fr. McCarthy if this situation applies to you.

If one or both parties are not “free to marry,” the marriage cannot take place at St. Ann or any other Catholic parish. 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 this occurs, the responsibility for the cancellation rests strictly the couple, not the priest or parish.

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. In addition, marriage is a civil matter and a marriage license must be obtained prior to the wedding ceremony. St. Ann resides in Ohio; thus, one getting married must obtain an Ohio marriage license. If this is a convalidation of a civil marriage, a copy of that license must be given to the priest at the first meeting. The parish or the individual clergyman is not liable for reimbursing the couple or their family for expenses incurred if the priest cancels the wedding.

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 in the context of a Mass or in a ceremony (Liturgy of the Word with no Holy Communion).

- Rite of Marriage during Mass is the norm when both the bride and groom are faithful, 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 Times:

- **Friday evenings between 5:00pm- 6:30pm**
- **Saturdays at 11:00am, 12:00pm, or 6:00 pm. ***

* Note that if you choose a Saturday evening, the Sunday readings will replace the standard wedding readings, because the Mass is occurring on “Sunday.” This does not apply for wedding ceremonies celebrated outside of the Mass.

Rehearsal Times:

Thursdays at 7:00pm – due to Exposition

Fridays at 5:00pm or 6:00pm

- Weddings during the Lenten season are allowed, but given the penitential nature of Lent, it would be a simple ceremony with no Mass.
- Weddings during Christmas and Easter are welcome; they are actually beautiful times, since the church is so beautifully decorated. There would be limitations on flowers and other decorations, given the nature of these Holy Seasons.
- Consider receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to your wedding in order to fully receive the graces 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 the ceremony 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, Who gives the couple this amazing Sacrament.

Lectors: Lectors are those who proclaim the Old Testament and New Testament readings and, if desired, the petitions. Because the wedding is being celebrated within the context of a Catholic Liturgy, it requires that the reader be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church. An exception can be granted, but only if the wedding is celebrated outside the Mass. No exception can be made if the wedding occurs within the Mass. The Gospel is reserved strictly to a Deacon or Priest.

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 they are practicing Catholics who regularly serve at their own parish. The parish can obtain servers if requested prior to the wedding. Servers should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to Mass in order to receive instructions from the priest/deacon.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: The priest will distribute Holy Communion, since only one species (The Body) will be offered. If you have a concelebrating priest or a deacon, he can also distribute The Body.

The Holy Eucharist is only to be received by those who are practicing Catholics in good standing; in other words, those who attend Mass weekly on Sundays. Often times, many of the guests at weddings are not Catholic. We welcome all faiths to attend and give witness and support of your marriage. But Holy Communion is not a sign of welcoming, but of unity with the Church. Thus, only Catholics are to come forward to receive Holy Communion. A statement will be made by the priest to restate that fact. However, we ask that if you are creating a program for your wedding that you include the following statement:

A special note regarding the receiving of Holy 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 other faiths are not to receive Holy Communion. All those not receiving Holy Communion are to remain in their seats and are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayer for the peace and unity of the human family.

Music

Couples are required to meet with the parish music director, who will guide them through the process; please contact us a few months prior to the wedding to schedule an appointment. If you wish to use another musician, he/she must be approved by the parish music director. The Director of Music & Liturgy may be reached at 513-521-8440, ext. 116. Music is an integral component of any liturgical ceremony. Couples are encouraged to select music that reflects the nature of the Sacrament. Questions on appropriate music can be directed to the music director. Recorded music (i.e. CDs) are never permitted to be used during a Liturgy. The wedding planning booklet contains a list of suggested options.

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 ever 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 wedding party, the parents, and the bride and groom, and finally, the priest. The bride and groom walk together to express fully that the husband and wife are equal partners in the marriage. The reason the Church does not envision the father giving his daughter away is because the very act of marriage is the woman choosing this man to be her husband. Yet, there has been a long tradition in America where the bride is escorted by her father, and the groom greeting the bride and father. Therefore, while the preferred way is man and woman walking together, the other can still be an option. Please ask about this when planning the wedding ceremony.

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 in the church after the wedding.)
- **No candles or small vigil lights are permitted to be attached to the pews.**
- **No Unity Candle.** This has never been part of the marriage rite, but if a couple desires a unity candle it can be done at the rehearsal dinner or the wedding reception.

Marian Devotion

The presenting of flowers to Mary is not part of the standard Catholic Wedding Liturgy. However, due to the devotional nature and the importance of the Blessed Mother for the success of marriages, the couple can choose to do this. This should be discussed when planning the wedding ceremony.

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.

Step 1: Initial Meeting with Fr. McCarthy (or priest)

Before a wedding date is scheduled, the couple must set up an appointment to meet Fr. McCarthy. It will be at this meeting that Father will take general information about the couple, discuss the marriage preparation requirements, set a date for the wedding and answer any questions the couple may have. It is also at this meeting the couple is to turn in the signed agreement, which is located on the last page of this document.

Step 2: Fully Engaged Personality Assessment

One of the beginning steps of the marriage preparation process is to take an on-line assessment of the individuals seeking to get married. The priest will ask for your email address and you will receive an email with the test attached. When both individuals have completed the assessment, a scored copy will be sent to the priest. Once the priest receives the results, he will contact a member of the preparation team who will set-up an appointment with the couple to cover of the results.

Step 3: Witness to Love – Mentoring Component

An important part of the marriage preparation is knowledge-based. Learning what marriage is, what love is, what are necessary components to a good and healthy marriage. But, not all learning comes from books. One of the best ways to learn is through experience, especially the wisdom and guidance of couples who have a healthy marriage. With this in mind, a large part of the marriage preparation will be meeting with a mentoring couple. You choose the couple to guide you, yet, there are some requirements. First, they have to be practicing Catholics who attend Mass regularly and, secondly, they have to meet with Fr. McCarthy to go over what is expected and be approved by him. When choosing a couple pick one that you admire, one that you believe will be of great value to help you on your path.

It is expected that you meet with the mentoring couple six times. It is expected that you attend Mass with this couple and meet with them afterwards to go over specific topics and time for discussion. After you have completed the mentor part of the marriage preparation, call St. Ann to have a meeting with the mentoring couple and Fr. McCarthy to discuss how the process went and to address any issues or questions about the mentoring program.

Step 4: Complete Archdiocese Requirements

In addition to the requirements of the parish, the Archdiocese also has additional requirements. During the engagement period, a couple is to complete one or more of the following requirements:

- **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/natural-family-planning-nfp/>
- **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 one day retreat called GENESIS (2019 Pre-Cana). For more information, please visit <https://genesismarriage.org>

Step 5: Final Meeting with the Priest or Deacon

At this final meeting we will complete the marriage paperwork, discuss details of the wedding ceremony, collect certificates for NFP, Engagement Retreat, or the Joy Filled Marriage seminar. All other requirements such as Baptism Certificates, Ohio wedding license, payment, etc. should be turned in at or before this final meeting.

Necessary Documents

- The Baptized Catholic(s) need to provide a copy of their Baptismal Certificate issued within 6 months of the wedding. Contact the parish where you were baptized to receive a copy.
- Completing the Marriage-Inventory (M-I) questions – a copy of these questions will be given to you when you first meet the priest to begin marriage preparation.
- Certificate or letter confirming completion of Archdiocese requirements
- 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 meeting with the priest. Failure to have all items submitted can result in delay or cancellation of the wedding.

WEDDING FEES

Parishioner/Non-Parishioner Status

- Active Parishioner
 - One who is currently registered at St. Ann, separately from their parents
 - Attends Sunday Mass regularly at St. Ann and actively contributes
- 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/ New Parishioner - \$300.00**
- **Past Parishioner - \$500.00**
- **Non-Parishioner - \$1,000.00**

All checks are made 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 and Fr. McCarthy 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 are to turn in this form, signed and completed, at the first session with Fr. McCarthy.

Name of the Bride: _____ Date of Birth: _____

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

Phone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

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

Have you been married before? Yes or No

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

Please list some available dates/times and the office will confirm the scheduling of the date once this form has been reviewed by Fr. McCarthy.

Desired Wedding Dates: _____

Signature of Bride to be

Signature of Groom to be

Date

Date