



GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

St. Mary Catholic Church, German Village
684 South Third Street, Columbus, 43206
614.445.9668

Congratulations on your engagement and your decision to make a lifelong commitment to each other in the vocation of marriage! You are about to embark on one of life's most wonderful experiences created by God – the marriage of man and woman.

Thank you for considering St. Mary's Church to celebrate your wedding day. This historic church has been important to the faith life of Catholics in South Columbus for over 160 years.

These wedding guidelines will serve to inform you of our wedding policies and expectations. They have been prepared so that your marriage in our parish will be in conformity with the Church's understanding of Christian Marriage and Columbus Diocesan Guidelines.

The path you have chosen is a high calling. The self-giving love of husband and wife for each other has for its model the highest of all loves: the love of Christ, who lays down his life for his Bride, the Church. As husband and wife, your paths will be joined together as fellow pilgrims on the way to God all the days of your life.

We will do whatever we can to help you celebrate your wedding joyfully and with the dignity it deserves. As you express your love for one another, it is our hope and prayer that your wedding is one in which you, your families, and guests, come to know the love of God in a more profound way. More than just preparing for a wedding, we hope to get you started in your preparation for a fulfilling and lifelong marriage. We look forward to walking with you on this aspect of your journey of life and faith.

If questions arise, or if these guidelines need further clarification, feel free to contact Chelsea Crosby, St. Mary's Wedding Preparation Coordinator, at ccrosby@stmarychurchgv.org

GENERAL POLICIES AT ST. MARY'S

Eligibility: Our church will be available for weddings of members of our parish, and for couples who are not members, provided that either the bride or groom is a *practicing* Catholic.

Previous Marriage: If either the bride or groom has been previously married, either in a church or civilly (courthouse, Justice of the Peace), a Church annulment of the previous marriage is necessary before re-marriage in the Church. This applies to both Catholics and non-Catholics. If you are divorced and have not yet received an annulment, you cannot schedule a wedding until a Church annulment has been granted. Please speak to our Pastor or Deacon. A Church annulment is different than a court annulment granted through the state when a couple seeks divorce and must be procured through a process set forth by the Church Tribunal.

Non-Practicing Catholics: The request to be married in the Catholic Church implies that the bride and/or groom is a practicing member of a Catholic faith community. Being married in the Catholic Church at least implies that one agrees with the Church and wants God involved in their relationship – not practicing the faith runs contrary to this. As such, all Catholics are reminded of their obligation to weekly Sunday Mass attendance, and their responsibility to support the Church with their time, talent, and treasure.

Non-parishioners are asked to request a letter from their Pastor giving them permission to marry outside their home parish.

Setting the Date: Please contact us before you make any other wedding plans (e.g., receptions) as some couples in the past have made the mistake of booking reception venues before St. Mary's, only to find that other marriages were already scheduled here for the same desired date and/or time.

Couples must make arrangements for their wedding by contacting the wedding preparation coordinator as early as possible. A minimum of nine months prior to the date desired is required. Due to the number of weddings at our parish, early planning is necessary to try to accommodate your preferences of a wedding date and time. In addition, our marriage formation program, *Fully Engaged*, is designed to be completed over a six to nine-month period.

Clergy availability, as well as other liturgies and events scheduled in the parish, may restrict the time of your wedding on a certain day. Weddings are not celebrated on Sundays, Holy Days (Jan. 1, Aug. 15, Nov. 1, and Dec. 8), some holiday weekends, or on the eve of major holidays (e.g., New Year, Christmas). We do not schedule weddings during the second weekend of August due to our parish festival. Weddings are discouraged during Lent and Advent. (If a marriage is to take place during Lent or Advent, plans should respect the special nature of the liturgical season.) In addition, weddings (nuptial Masses) are prohibited during the Octave of Christmas and the Octave of Easter.

A date can only be confirmed after an initial meeting with the wedding preparation coordinator.

Presider: The Pastor or Deacon from St. Mary's will usually preside at all St. Mary's wedding liturgies. However, with the Pastor's approval, a Catholic priest or deacon licensed in Ohio, and in good standing, will be welcome.

If your presider is not currently working in the Diocese of Columbus, he is asked to provide a testimonial letter of suitability ("Letter in Good Standing"), from his Diocese or Religious Order well in advance of the wedding. This is standard procedure throughout the Church. The Priest or Deacon presiding at your wedding must also be registered in the State of Ohio as an authorized minister of marriages. If he is not, he must follow the instructions for officiant registration, which can be found at: <https://www.sos.state.oh.us/records/minister-licenses/>

Wedding Liturgies: In accord with diocesan policy, if the bride and groom are both practicing Catholics, celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony Within Mass is the norm, and St. Mary's pastor will preside over the ceremony. Celebrating the Sacrament Outside of Mass is the norm for the marriage between a Catholic and non-Catholic to ensure full participation in the liturgy by the non-Catholic party and his/her family. St. Mary's deacon will preside at weddings outside of Mass. A Mass is not an option if the non-Catholic party has not been baptized.

Liturgy Times: Saturday wedding liturgies **within** Mass can be scheduled for 1:00pm 1:30pm. Saturday wedding liturgies **outside** of Mass can be scheduled for 1:00pm, 1:30pm, or in the evening at 6:00pm. Weddings may be scheduled on other days if there is no conflict with school or parish activities – please discuss this with St. Mary's Wedding Preparation Coordinator. *Because we have an elementary school, Friday weddings can only be scheduled for 4:00pm or later during the school year.*

Wedding Fees: Although the sacraments are gifts of the Church provided to the faithful at no cost, the cost to our parish is real and significant. It takes significant time and resources, as well as the efforts of many talented people, to help you prepare for, arrange, and celebrate your wedding. Please see the fee schedule attached to this document.

Music: Music contributes greatly to the celebration of any liturgy and creates a wonderful atmosphere of celebration for your wedding. Since a Christian wedding is a sacrament of the Church, as well as a personal event, the religious nature of the ceremony and music must be carefully preserved. St. Mary's Church offers organ, piano, and vocal accompaniments for weddings. Additional accompaniments, including violin, trumpet, cello, etc., can also be arranged. The Director of Music will contact you approximately six to eight weeks prior to your scheduled wedding to discuss selections as well as any additional fees. If you have special requests, please feel free to contact St. Mary's Director of Music, Orlay Alonso, at orlayalonso@mac.com.

Cohabiting Couples: While it is not unusual at the present time for engaged couples to decide to live together before marriage for various reasons, the gift of sexual love is understood by Christ and the Church to belong exclusively to the context of married love. Part of your preparation for marriage is to understand the goodness and importance of sexual love as the consummation of your marriage vows and its openness to giving new life. If you are already living together, the priest preparing you will encourage you to consider a time of separation and abstinence before your marriage as a way of saving the gift of sexual love for the day you can give this gift to each other as husband and wife.

MARRIAGE FORMATION

“*Your wedding day is one day, but your marriage lasts a lifetime.*”

At St. Mary’s, we use the *Fully Engaged* program for marriage formation. *Fully Engaged* is designed to help engaged couples grow together and understand the Church’s teachings on Sacramental Marriage. The engaged couple works with a mentor couple who accompany them on this journey, which includes 5-6 monthly meetings with the mentor couple in the time leading up to the wedding day. The mentor couple review the results of the engaged couple’s pre-marital inventory with them and discuss life-skills such as communication, how to deal with conflict, and how to grow in important virtues to build a strong foundation for their married life together.

The Wedding Preparation Coordinator will provide a more thorough timeline/checklist for the marriage preparation process. This is an outline of what to expect in your marriage preparation at St. Mary’s:

- Meeting with the presider to complete the Pre-Nuptial Investigation
- Attending a Diocesan Pre-Cana Marriage Retreat
- Completing the Fully Engaged premarital inventory
- Meeting with a mentor couple 5-6 times to go over the results of your Inventory
- Completing a *Natural Family Planning (NFP)* training (Intro class plus follow-ups)
- Liturgy planning with Wedding Preparation Coordinator

Non-Parishioner couples:

It is most appropriate for couples to complete marriage preparation in their home Church to stay connected to their community and life of that parish. For this reason, St. Mary’s asks that non-parishioner couples complete their preparation in their home parish.

If you are doing all of your marriage preparation in another diocese, the priest, deacon or pastoral minister preparing you for marriage will require the same documentation that we do in creating your “marriage file.” It is important that your complete file be sent to the chancery office of the diocese where your preparation took place for their careful review and approval. That diocese, in turn, will forward the approved marriage file to the Chancery Office of the Diocese of Columbus, who then will forward your file to St. Mary’s. Given the added time for chancery reviews, please make sure that you take this time factor into consideration, and that the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister preparing you for marriage follows this procedure as part of Church law. **We must receive your complete marriage file at least one month prior to your wedding.**

If you are doing your marriage preparation in another Church in the Columbus Diocese, that file may be sent directly to St. Mary’s. A letter from your priest, deacon, or pastoral minister confirming that this will be completed is required. St. Mary’s wedding coordinator can provide more information.

LITURGY CONSIDERATIONS

From our experience with weddings at St. Mary's, we know what works and what does not – what is proper to the liturgy and what is not. Some things may work in another Church and some Churches may permit things that we do not. Please keep the following in mind.

Bridal Party:

You are only asked to have a minimum of two witnesses (a best man, and a maid/matron of honor) who observe the exchange of marital consent by the bride and groom so that, if needed, those witnesses can testify to the manner, place, and persons of that very exchange of marital consent. Having a small bridal party can simplify the wedding and procession and allow for more time at the end of the liturgy for taking pictures. It is natural that some engaged couples may want to include many of their close family members and friends as bridesmaids and groomsmen. However, if the bridal party is too large, the processional becomes a “parade” and takes away from the sacred nature of the marriage ceremony. Available space in the sanctuary and pews can also be a problem in this situation. **For these reasons, St. Mary's limits the number of attendants to sixteen – eight bridesmaids and eight groomsmen.** (Junior bridal party members count towards total bridal party number.) During the marriage vows, eight bridesmaids and eight groomsmen may stand at the altar rail. Some couples choose to have only their two witnesses (or several attendants) stand during the exchange of vows while the remaining bridal party are seated in the front pew.

Attire: All bridal attire must be modest and appropriate to the sacredness of a wedding liturgy. Strapless gowns are permitted. No low-cut necklines or deep side cuts in the dresses.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers: Any children participating in the entrance procession as flower girls or ring bearers should be at least 5-years-old. Children under 5 must be accompanied by an older child or adult. It is our experience that children under five typically become stressed, frightened, or over-excited and can disrupt or delay the beginning of the ceremony. This becomes a distraction from the solemnity of the occasion. We suggest younger children can be part of the bridal party for pictures, etc. . . . but not for the procession. Ring bearers are not to carry the actual wedding rings, these rings will usually be carried by the best man.

Ushers: Ushers have an important task to perform before the ceremony begins. To be an usher at a wedding is a ministry of hospitality. Their primary role is to welcome the guests and to seat them or direct them to seating so that they may feel welcome at the celebration. It is important that by their own dignified manner and decorum, ushers foster an atmosphere of reverence and respect for the sacred space of the church. Ushers should maintain a quiet atmosphere in St. Mary's as guests enter. Guests should only be escorted into the church when they are genuinely ready to observe quiet and prayerfulness appropriate to the sacred space. Seating should start 20 minutes before the ceremony is scheduled to begin.

Liturgical Ministers: Relatives and friends are invited to participate as readers and gift bearers. They may also serve as altar servers if they currently serve in this ministry at their own parish.

Entrance Procession and Dismissal: The Celebration of Matrimony emphasizes the equality of husband and wife, created in the image of God, and called to be co-creators with Him. Couples are asked to respect this equality by incorporating the parents of both the bride and groom in the prelude or procession. The Rite of Marriage allows the cultural norm for the bride to be escorted down the aisle by her father or father-figure (or both parents). An alternative and older tradition is for the bride and groom to enter the church together. Couples are invited to consider what would be most meaningful and symbolic.

Since the Entrance Procession is a part of the Rite of Reception in a sacred liturgy, wagons, signs, pets, or anything else that takes away from the holiness of the sacrament are not permitted. The Dismissal is done in keeping with proper liturgical form. The priest or deacon dismisses the congregation as part of the Conclusion of the Celebration. The couple cannot dismiss the congregation by pews.

Receiving Line: Receiving lines are not permitted in the back of the church after the wedding has concluded. The receiving line is more appropriately set at the reception. When a receiving line is formed at the church following the wedding, it can cause undue delays.

German Village Welcome: The German Village Welcome is a tradition at St. Mary's which takes the place of a receiving line. After the wedding liturgy has concluded, all of the wedding guests follow the bridal party out of the church into the courtyard. The bride and groom are introduced by their maid/matron of honor and best man at the top of the steps while the church bells ring.

Guest Books: A guest book in the back of the church is not permitted – this is more appropriate for the reception.

Unity Candle: The Diocese of Columbus does not permit use of a unity candle. The common symbolism of the unity candle is that the side candles represent the family, and the center candle represents the couple. Candles used in a liturgy properly represent only Christ, so to use the candles otherwise creates a conflict of symbolism. Appropriate places for use of the unity candle are at the rehearsal dinner or reception.

The Arras and the Lazo: These cultural traditions—important for Hispanic and Filipino cultures—are permitted during the wedding liturgy, if desired. The *arras* consists of a small cask containing thirteen gilded or plated coins symbolizing prosperity. The formula which both bride and groom say to each other during the exchange of the arras highlights their commitment to sharing together all the goods which they will receive during their married life. The *lazo* is a type of lasso or yoke to symbolize the marriage union. Its most usual form is a double-looped rosary; one loop goes over the groom's shoulders and the other over the bride's with the cross hanging between them during the Nuptial blessing.

Programs: Many couples choose to have a program. More information will be discussed at the ceremony planning meeting. You will be asked to send a draft copy of your program to the wedding coordinator prior to the ceremony. Programs can help incorporate non-Catholic family and friends into the liturgy. Instead of feeling like spectators, they can enter into the liturgy and follow along more comfortably with a program. (Examples can be shared.)

Wedding Planners: A hired wedding planner may not be involved in the liturgy. Preparation of the liturgy demands an understanding of liturgical practice, knowledge that a wedding planner would not be expected to have. This would include arranging the Entrance Procession, positioning the bride and groom on the altar during the Celebration of Matrimony, and the dismissal. St. Mary's has an appointed wedding coordinator who works closely with the officiating clergy and assists with liturgies. A St. Mary's wedding coordinator will lead your wedding rehearsal and assist on the wedding day.

Church Etiquette: We ask that you and your guests honor the sacredness of our church, where the St. Mary's community gathers for worship. Please remember that the rehearsal and wedding are not taking place in a public hall, event space, or restaurant, and thus proper behavior and dress is necessary. No beverages of any kind are to be in the church. The use of any tobacco products, chewing gum, food, and the like is prohibited in the church. Bottled water is permissible in the bridal dressing area and sacristy only for use by the bridal party prior to the wedding.

Alcohol policy: At no time before the wedding rehearsal or ceremony is drinking alcohol allowed for the bride, groom, or any member of the wedding party. Anyone who has consumed or appears to be under the influence of alcohol, or any controlled substance, will not be allowed to participate in the rehearsal or ceremony, including the bride and/or groom. No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the church grounds.

REHEARSALS

Rehearsal times are typically scheduled for 5:00, 5:30, or 6:00pm the night before the wedding. If there are two weddings on one day, the wedding coordinator will negotiate times with the couples.

We ask that you inform your wedding party to be on time for the rehearsal. The rehearsal will take approximately one hour, depending on the size of the wedding party and the number of participants. Due to church schedules, the wedding rehearsal must begin at the designated time, whether or not all the participants have arrived.

All those participating in any capacity in the wedding should be in attendance. Copies of the scriptures and petitions will be sent to the couple to give to their readers ahead of time. If a reader cannot attend the rehearsal, they must arrive one hour before the wedding to receive instructions from St. Mary's wedding coordinator.

NOTE: If the civil Marriage License has not been submitted prior to the rehearsal day, it must be presented to the wedding coordinator at the wedding rehearsal in order for the rehearsal to begin.

WEDDING DAY PREPARATION & ACCESS

Church Access: Saturday afternoon access to the church is from 11:00am or 11:30am (2 hours before the wedding starts) until 3:00pm. All wedding-related participants and their equipment and/or belongings must be out of the church by 3:00pm. St. Mary's holds Confessions at 3:15pm every Saturday. This is a matter of importance to us, and we ask for your full cooperation. Be sure your photographer notes this deadline, which is also specified in his/her guidelines.

For a Saturday evening service, access to the church is from 5:00 to 8:00pm.

Access to the church for weddings on other days is dependent on events taking place at the church, as well as the school schedule. This should be discussed with the wedding coordinator.

Dressing Room: A dressing area for the bride and bridesmaids is available approximately two hours before the start of the ceremony. The wedding party is permitted to bring in bottled water, if needed, prior to the wedding. No other food or drinks are permissible.

This area should be left in the condition in which it was found – cleaned and all trash discarded. For security reasons, a friend or family member should be designated to be responsible for valuables. Personal belongings should be organized before the wedding begins so they are ready to be taken out immediately after the wedding.

All groomsmen and the groom should arrive dressed and ready to go as there is no changing area available for them.

Valuables and Other Personal Belongings: St. Mary's will not be responsible for personal belongings before, during, or after the wedding, anywhere on church property.

Handicap Accessibility: Those who have difficulty with stairs can use the door immediately to the left of the church, and take the elevator to the first floor. From the elevator, there is a ramp giving them access to the church.

Parking: Your wedding party and guests should be alerted that since St. Mary's Church is an historic church in a downtown urban area, only limited parking is available. There is a lot behind the church and school which is accessed from South Third Street – via the driveway between the former rectory and church. On Saturday afternoons, parking in the middle school parking lot is available: 630 S 3rd St. On-street parking is also usually available on surrounding streets.

WEDDING FEES SCHEDULE

Fees listed cover the cost of celebrating your marriage at St. Mary's, including administrative expenses, facility usage, stipends for St. Mary's clergy and coordinator, and marriage preparation. Music fees for cantor and organ are included. (Fees for additional musicians are to be negotiated with the Director of Music.)

Registered/Active/Contributing Parishioner \$1,500

A person who has been an active, contributing participant in parish life and registered at St. Mary's for at least 6 months prior to booking a wedding date at St. Mary's parish. Children of long-time active and registered parishioners are also considered for parishioner fees.

A \$150 non-refundable deposit is needed to confirm the wedding date.

**To be eligible for the parishioner fee rate, couples will need to demonstrate an identifiable pattern of participation. A contribution record will indicate attendance and accountable financial support (i.e., use of envelopes or electronic contribution.) St. Mary's reserves the right to adjust fees if this cannot be demonstrated.

Non-registered/Non-participating/New parishioner \$2,500

A person belonging to a parish other than St. Mary's and who has no intention of becoming a member of St. Mary's parish, or someone who has not been an active participating member for at least 6 months prior to booking a wedding date at St. Mary's.

A \$250 non-refundable deposit is needed to confirm the wedding date.

Note: If wedding fees create a hardship and a barrier for a couple entering into the Sacrament of Matrimony, a discussion with the Pastor or Wedding Coordinator is encouraged.

All fees must be fully paid 30 days prior to the wedding. The deposit you pay to reserve your wedding date is applied toward the overall total cost of your wedding. If a wedding is cancelled after all fees are paid, a partial refund of the balance may be possible.

Checks for the above are to be made payable to **St. Mary Church**. Please note the bride/groom name and wedding date in the memo field.

Mail to: **St. Mary Church, 684 S. 3rd Street, Columbus, OH 43206**
Attn: Wedding Coordinator

Damage to Church Property: You will be assessed the cost of repairs and/or replacement for damage to the church or surrounding property that occurs before, during, or after your rehearsal or wedding.

GUIDELINES FOR WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

We welcome photographers at weddings, both for still photographs and video recordings. However, the following rules must be observed.

- Our basic guidelines respect the principle that a wedding is the celebration of a Sacrament and therefore is public worship and a sacred ceremony. For this reason, photography and videography should not in any way be a distraction during the ceremony. Especially, no flash photography is permitted during the ceremony, but is allowed during the processional and recessional.
- Once the liturgy has begun, the photographer/videographer is not to be in the sanctuary area (the area elevated by the steps behind the rail) or visible in the front of the church. Photographs/videos may be taken throughout the ceremony from the back of the church (behind the last guests), from the sides of the church (not too close to the sanctuary), and from the choir loft. It is important that the photographer/videographer be as unobtrusive as possible during the wedding ceremony and Mass.
- The photographer/videographer is not allowed to stop or slow the processional or any other part of the liturgy. He/she is not to stand in the center aisle or in the way of the bridal party as they come down the aisle for the Entrance Procession.
- Since the church is a sacred space, nothing done in the building should detract from that reality. This includes hanging dresses, veils or shoes from doors, walls, or windows for photos, and setting up frivolous or silly poses of the bridal party on church property.
- Photographers/videographers who use the choir loft are instructed not to move anything on the organ, around the organ, or the organ bench.
- Photographs may be taken in the church and in the sanctuary prior to and following the service according to the following schedule: St. Mary's Saturday afternoon weddings have access to the church at 11:30am. All persons and equipment must be out of the church no later than 3:00pm. Confessions begin at 3:15pm. For a Saturday evening service, access to the church is from 5:00 to 8:00pm. Access for weddings on other days should be discussed with the wedding coordinator.
- Additional photos may be taken on the church grounds. Check with the wedding coordinator concerning other events that may be going on simultaneously.
- Photographers and videographers are asked to see the wedding coordinator prior to the wedding for instructions.

(It is the responsibility of each couple to make these rules available to their photographer.)

GUIDELINES FOR FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

- Flower arrangements may be placed in front of or next to the altar, but not on top of the altar. Flower arrangements may also be placed on St. Joseph's and St. Mary's side altars. Two arrangements of considerable size and of like kind are appropriate. Two arrangements can also be placed to each side of the altar table and/or on the high altar on each side of the tabernacle. (St. Mary's has two sets of dark-brown painted columns for arrangements if desired.)
- Flower arrangements in front of the altar cannot exceed the height of the altar table. The altar table is 40 inches tall.
- Florists are not to move the altar furnishings or existing sanctuary arrangements to accommodate floral arrangements.
- At St. Mary's, the backdrop to the sanctuary is oak and dark in color, white or light-colored flowers make the best appearance. Dark colored flowers tend to blend into the background when you are seated in the church.
- Aisle runners are not permitted. Aisle cloths slide on our wooden floors and pose a hazard.
- Flower petals are not permitted to be thrown down the aisle or near the altar during the procession. They necessitate clean-up and stain the wooden floors. They are also a hazard that can cause slipping by bridal party, presider, and guests leaving the wedding.
- Pew decorations such as bows, sprays, or floral cones are permitted when attached to the pews appropriately. They may be attached with ribbon, tulle, or pew hangers found at most craft stores. Tape or anything sticky may not be used, and tacks are not permitted. Pew floral cones should be filled with a minimal amount of water to avoid spillage. Glass jars and candelabras on the pews are not permitted. (If decorating pews, there are 21 pews on each side.)
- Celebratory items that may be used outside the church when the bride and groom exit are bubbles, ribbons, and bells. Birdseed, rice, and flower petals can create a tripping hazard and are prohibited. No items requiring cleanup may be used outside - this includes spraying champagne.
- Access to St. Mary's for Saturday delivery and set up is as follows: two hours before the scheduled wedding time for an afternoon wedding or 5:00pm for an evening wedding. Delivery times for weddings on other days should be discussed with the wedding coordinator.
- Flowers for the bride and bridesmaids can be delivered to the bridal dressing area. The corsages for the men, lectors, parents, etc. can be placed in the back of the church.
- Please arrange for removal of floral sprays or arrangements attached to the pews after the ceremony.
- Florists must pick up any vases, stands, or materials they want to keep, immediately after the wedding. These items and rented items are the sole responsibility of the couple. If the florist is unable to come back, assign someone to remove them for you. St. Mary's is not responsible for the cost or care of these items.

(It is the responsibility of each couple to make these rules available to their florist.)