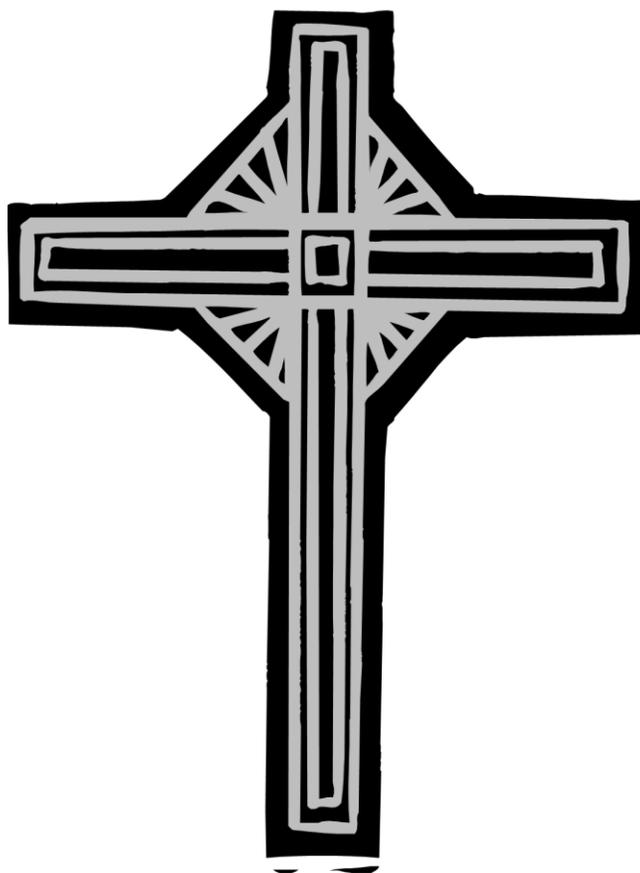


PARISH WEDDING GUIDELINES

Preparing To Celebrate the
Sacrament of Holy Matrimony at
St. Mark Catholic Church



Congratulations on your engagement!

Planning your wedding can be one of the most exciting times of your life. We are happy that you have chosen St. Mark Parish to be part of your special day. We want to help you plan a wedding ceremony that is spiritual and sacramental in accordance with the Catholic belief that marriage is a lifelong commitment and that it is a sacrament when it occurs between two baptized Christians.

Since planning a wedding can also be stressful, we have prepared this booklet to help guide you through the process. By answering common questions about getting married at our parish, this booklet sets forth guidelines that we trust you will follow.

We are here to help you

Reverend Joe Powers, Pastor

jpowers@stmarksparish.com or 816.373.2600 x353

Betsy Ward, Director of Marriage Preparation

bward@stmarksparish.com or 816.373.2600 x356

Eric Thompson, Director of Liturgy and Music

ethompson@stmarksparish.com or 816.373.2600 x352

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SECTION I – PRELIMINARY PLANNING

Parish Registration – The exchange of wedding vows in the Catholic Church (Matrimony) is a sacrament when it occurs between two baptized Christians. All sacraments, including Matrimony, are celebrated in the presence of a faith community. Also, registration as a member of our faith community signifies your commitment to practicing the Catholic faith which includes regular attendance at Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis, and living other basics of the Catholic faith. For these reasons, we require that at least one member of the engaged couple be a registered parishioner for one year or longer before preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony may begin. *Children of St. Mark parishioners who are members of another parish must provide us with a letter showing that we have that parish's permission to perform their marriage.*

Days and Times for Weddings – Wedding ceremonies may take place at St. Mark Parish on Friday or on Saturday. To accommodate our housekeeping and liturgy schedules, Saturday weddings may be held at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Friday weddings may be held in the late afternoon or in the evening. Although weddings may be celebrated at St. Mark's during Advent and Lent, we prefer other times of the year for this celebration because of the prayerful and penitential nature of these seasons. **(Please refer to the last page for days that have restrictions.)**

Alcohol Policy – At no time before the wedding ceremony is drinking allowed for the bride, groom or any member of the wedding party. The priest presiding at your wedding will refuse to allow the ceremony to occur if the bride, groom or any member of the wedding party has consumed or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance at that time. No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the church grounds. **Security deposit will be forfeited if policy is violated.**

Steps in Sacramental Preparation – The wedding preparation process is designed to help you assess your readiness for sacramental marriage. During this time, an issue may arise that deserves more time and attention. It is better to address these issues during the preparation period when steps can be taken to resolve differences before the marriage commitment is made. We require an advanced notice of one (1) year. Please refer to the following page for an overview of the process which can serve as a convenient checklist.

Steps in the Marriage Preparation Process

It is assumed throughout this process that the couple (or Catholic party) is attending Mass on Sunday. It would be senseless to seek marriage in the Catholic Church unless one intends to continue practicing this faith.

12 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ **First:** Schedule a meeting with priest/deacon to discuss marriage and commitment.
- ___ Schedule a mandatory Marriage Preparation Introductory meeting with Betsy Ward, Director of Marriage Preparation *one (1) year in advance of your date.*
- ___ Schedule your wedding date. **There is a \$250 wedding date & security deposit due at this meeting. The wedding date depends on the preparation being completed in a timely manner and to the satisfaction of the Presider (priest or deacon).**

10-11 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Our counselor will schedule the taking and review of the PREPARE test.

6-9 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Attend 3 sessions of “Together in God’s Love” and “God’s Plan for a Joy Filled Marriage”. Sessions are held in a group setting
- ___ Attend an information session on Natural Family Planning (NFP). Call Tom & Mary Kathleen Morgan 816-795-9790.
 - ___ this is included if you choose to attend a THRIVE! Weekend.
- ___ Schedule a meeting with St. Mark liturgist to discuss plans for your liturgy and music.

3 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Turn in your copies of your baptismal records to Betsy Ward in the parish office
- ___ Schedule a meeting with our priest to complete paperwork.

1 MONTH PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Prepare your wedding program if you choose to have one.

2 WEEKS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING

- ___ Turn in your marriage license to Betsy Ward in the parish office for processing.

WEDDING REHEARSAL

- ___ **Musician, server and candle fees (total will vary) are due to the Wedding Coordinator.**

SECTION II – PLANNING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Guidelines – Your wedding ceremony will be primarily planned by you with assistance from *Eric Thompson, Director of Liturgy & Music* and your St. Mark Wedding Coordinator. Your information packet contains a booklet titled “Together for Life,” which contains guidelines for preparing Catholic wedding ceremonies that are liturgically appropriate, and walks you through the process. When you meet with Eric, he will review your plans for the wedding ceremony and make any modifications that may be needed. You and any guest priest/deacon must follow the guidelines we have provided for you and work closely with our Wedding Coordinator to avoid unforeseen or last-minute changes. This will help everyone involved to avoid disappointment and keep stress levels to a minimum.

Deciding Whether to Have Mass –

- Two Catholics should choose to celebrate Mass as part of their wedding ceremony (Form 1). The order of liturgical rites would be Liturgy of the Word (scripture readings), Rite of Marriage, Liturgy of the Eucharist (consecration and Communion).
- A Catholic and a baptized Christian would choose Form 2 - a wedding ceremony without a Mass. The wedding ceremony should be as inclusive as possible so remember that only Catholics receive communion. The sacrament of Matrimony is not lessened when Mass is not chosen. The order of liturgical rites would be the Liturgy of the Word (scripture readings), the Rite of Marriage, final blessing.
- There are many reasons why you may or may not choose to celebrate your wedding with Mass. Your priest can help you make that decision when you meet with him.
- When Marriage is contracted by a Catholic and someone not baptized (a catechumen or a non-Christian), the celebration takes place in a church or in another suitable place, according to the following rite (No. 118-143), *outside of a Mass*.

The Catholic Wedding – While allowing for certain personal preferences and choices, the wedding liturgy follows certain prescribed norms:

- The congregation actively participates in both spoken and sung parts of the liturgy.
- Readers must be *Catholic* family members or *Catholic* friends with a skilled reading voice.
- Servers are provided by the Church but may be Catholic family members or close friends.
- Gift presenters must be *Catholic* family members or close friends *who are Catholic*.
- Eucharistic ministers may be family members, close friends, or provided by the Church; *they must be trained Eucharistic Ministers in good church standing*.
- Musicians and cantors are usually provided by the Church; any non-Parish musicians, cantors or soloists must be approved.
- Music selections are sacred or classical pieces performed well and live.
- Church decorations remain in place.

Entrance Procession –

First Form: Procession of servers & priest, wedding party. Entrance chant takes place.

(Chant = Song or hymn.)

Second Form: Servers and priest go to the place prepared for the couple or the presider's chair.

- *Entrance chant after couple reaches their place.*

In the Catholic Church, the bride's father does not give her away.

Choosing Scripture Readings – The Liturgy of the Word generally consists of a first reading from the Old Testament, a Responsorial Psalm that is typically sung, a second reading from the New Testament, and a Gospel passage from the New Testament. *(Some changes may occur during the Easter Season).* There are several appropriate scripture selections from which you may choose in the booklet “Together for Life” in your information packet. The readings are proclaimed by a *Catholic* of your choosing. The Responsorial Psalm is sung by the cantor. The Gospel is read by the priest *or deacon*.

Consent (vows) – The exchange of *consent* in the Catholic Church is a liturgical celebration and, therefore, certain formulas must be used according to the Church. Several beautiful ways of exchanging vows can be found in the “Together for Life” booklet in your information packet. *Repeating after the priest is no longer an option. He will discuss other choices with you.*

Rings – One or two rings are blessed and given to each other as a sign of your love and fidelity. *The priest will discuss choices other than ‘repeat after me’.*

Unity Candle – *The use of the Unity Candle is no longer permitted, as it is not a part of the Celebration of Holy Matrimony ritual. The rings you exchange are the chief symbol of your love.*

Intercessions (Universal Prayer/Prayer of the Faithful) – Suggestions for prayers can be found in the “Together for Life” booklet in your information packet. If parents, grandparents, other family members or close friends of the bride or groom are deceased, it is appropriate to remember them in these prayers. You might also like to offer prayers for a blessed and happy marriage, for your families, the parish community, and any other needs that are important to you. You're welcomed to write some (or all) of the intercessory prayers you're welcomed to do so in collaboration with and under the guidance of the Director of Liturgy and Music.

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts of Bread and Wine – If you choose to have a Mass, parents, members of the wedding party, family or friends may bring the bread and wine to the altar. You will need to indicate who will participate in these roles on your wedding planning worksheet.

Eucharistic Prayer – If you choose to have a Mass, you and the congregation will remember Christ’s gift of Himself to us at the Last Supper and His sacrifice on the cross during this prayer.

Lord’s Prayer – X

Nuptial Blessing – This is a special prayer for the couple following the Lord’s Prayer. You have several choices of blessing in the “Together for Life” booklet.

Sign of Peace – If you have a Mass, the priest will ask the congregation to share a sign of Christ’s peace with one another. You exchange a sign of with each other.

Holy Communion – If you choose to have a Mass, those who are Catholic in good-standing may receive Holy Communion at this time.

Visiting the Blessed Virgin Mary – Some couples may desire to present flowers to the statue of Our Lady (or the Holy Family) as a sign of devotion or a request for prayer as they begin their new life together. While admirable, this gesture is not permitted during the Celebration of Holy Matrimony. We encourage you to consider making this form of devotion a part of your Wedding Rehearsal or Reception.

Final Blessing – Before blessing the people, at the conclusion of your ceremony, the priest blesses you using your selection from the “Together for Life” booklet.

Introduction and Recessional – The priest will introduce you to your family and friends as a married couple for the first time. As the recessional song begins you will leave the church followed by the wedding party, families and guests.

Selecting Music – Because marriage in the Catholic Church is a liturgical celebration, songs played *before, during, and after* the wedding ceremony *must* focus on the religious nature of love – the love that exists between God and the couple being married – and the sacred character of Holy Matrimony. Should you desire secular music, or music of a more romantic character, the place to focus on the romantic aspects of love is at the reception. So, there is no misunderstanding in this, please understand that secular music is not permitted before, during, or after the liturgy.

Consequently, the wedding marches written by Wagner and Mendelssohn, while praiseworthy, are still considered popular music by the Church because they originated in secular operas. Therefore, the Church does not consider them appropriate for a Catholic wedding.

Musical Assets and Personnel - A cantor leads the congregational singing which includes the responsorial Psalm, Gospel acclamation and, if a Mass is chosen, the Eucharistic acclamations. A list of Parish cantors who sing for weddings and their fees is provided in your information packet.

The accompanist – organ or piano – plays prelude music before the ceremony, processional and recessional marches in addition to accompanying the cantor and congregation. A list of Parish musicians who play for weddings and their fees is provided in your information packet.

The liturgist for St. Mark usually plays for weddings. If you have a friend or family member who is a musician or who is trained as a cantor, they are welcome to assist with the approval of St. Mark’s Director of Liturgy. Any instrumentation may be used and coordinated through him/her. Many couples choose a family member or friend as a guest soloist or musician for one particular piece of music. If you desire an outside group (a string quartet, for example) to play music for your liturgy, you must request so at the time you meet with the Director of Liturgy. Such outside groups will typically be limited to playing before the liturgy, for the entrance song and recessional songs only. With advance warning and coordination, they may also play on pieces within the liturgy.

Preparing a Worship Aid (Program) – We recommend that you have a worship aid or program booklet to help your family and friends actively participate in your wedding ceremony. A worship aid may contain, but is not limited to, music for songs, readings, responses of the people, and a listing of the people involved in the liturgy. Examples of worship aids will be provided to you when you meet with the Director of Liturgy, and an example can also be found as an attachment to this document. If you would like your worship aid printed “out of house” by a company like Kinko’s or another printing house you are required to submit it to the Director of Liturgy for approval before you have it printed.

SECTION III – AT THE WEDDING REHEARSAL AND CEREMONY

Respect for God’s House – Please respect the church as the sacred place that it is. We ask everyone to behave in a manner appropriate to being in church. Please refrain from chewing gum, using profane or inappropriate language, letting children run around in the church, etc. In order to keep the church clean for your wedding and the services following your ceremony, food, drink and chewing gum are prohibited in the worship space. Food and non-alcoholic drink are allowed in the Cry Room and in Room 5. Of course, smoking inside the church building is prohibited by City ordinance.

The Wedding Rehearsal – FIRST AND FORMOST everyone needs to arrive before the appointed rehearsal time. We ask everyone involved to carefully listen to and follow the instructions of the Wedding Coordinator. Any questions or problems that arise will be answered/resolved before the rehearsal is completed. Each step of your wedding ceremony will be practiced at the wedding rehearsal which is held at 6 p.m. the Friday evening before your wedding, or on Thursday at 6 p.m. if your wedding is on Friday evening. Rehearsal typically lasts one hour. All those who have a part in your wedding ceremony should attend the rehearsal to become familiar with their roles. This includes guest musicians, cantor/soloists (music is not played/sung at this rehearsal), lectors and members of the wedding party including flower girl(s) and the ring bearer if applicable. Parents and grandparents attend as well. We ask everyone to arrive promptly. A smooth, well-ordered rehearsal makes for a less stressful wedding ceremony.

Dressing Rooms – The bride and her attendants will use Room 5 which has a full-length mirror. However, we strongly recommend doing hair and makeup at home or at a salon. Our facility does not provide adequate space for these activities. The groom and groomsmen usually come attired and will use the Cry Room to prepare.

Ushers and Book Attendant – Ushers seat guests as soon after they have signed the guest book as possible in order to avoid a rush at the last minute. A line often forms at the guest book, so it is closed 10 minutes before the wedding begins in order to see that guests are seated comfortably and the wedding starts on time. *Consider seating your guests evenly across both aisles rather than asking ‘groom’ or ‘bride’.*

Flowers and Decorations – We ask couples to keep their flowers and decorations tasteful and simple to keep the focus on the sacrament. When planning for flowers and decorations, please keep in mind the nature of the liturgical season in which your wedding ceremony will be held. For instance, during the weeks after Christmas and Easter the church may already be decorated with Christmas trees and poinsettias or Easter lilies and you will not need to do much more.

During other seasons, you may choose to decorate with floral arrangements at the ambo (the stand from which the scriptures are proclaimed) and/or on either side of the altar at the edge of the top stone step. There is no room for flowers in front of the altar. Flowers may be attached to the candelabra (if they are used) with non-abrasive material. Florists are asked to work with the Wedding Coordinator when placing flower arrangements.

Your florist is welcome to visit our church prior to your wedding if they are not familiar with its layout and color scheme. Please have them contact the Wedding Coordinator to schedule a date and time for this. Flowers may be delivered on your wedding day one hour before the ceremony begins.

We can loan you pew bow holders or you may use similar non-abrasive items provided by your florist. Tape is not acceptable. Hurricane lamps and other types of candles are not permitted in the aisles for the sake of safety and the ease of movement during the ceremony.

For reasons of safety and maintenance we ask you to adhere to our policy regarding rice, birdseed, sparklers, poppers, real flower petals, bubbles and the use of aisle runners. These represent safety hazards or maintenance problems and cannot be used on church grounds.

Ringbearer and Flower Girl. *The minimum age is 5 and they must be able to walk down the aisle without coaxing. No pets, wagons or other fads. Silk flower petals only.*

Candelabras –We provide the candles for the candelabras for a fee if you choose to use them (see the Overview of Fees and Expenses, page 10).

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO TAPING

A Catholic wedding is a liturgical ceremony. Care must be taken to see that the Mass and marriage rite are not disrupted by the taking of pictures or video. Care must be taken to see that the focus of the congregation is on the altar and not on you. The parish Wedding Coordinator will assist you the day of the wedding. You may contact her earlier if you have questions. We ask for and appreciate your cooperation with our requests. Thank you!

- Flash photos may only be taken as the bridal party is processing into and out of the church.
- Photographers and videographers may not enter the sanctuary area (the elevated stone area around the altar, ambo and baptismal font).
- Photographers and videographers may not roam about the church once the Mass or ceremony has begun. Please plan to remain as stationary as possible during the liturgy.
- Videotaping may be done from a stationary camera behind the baptismal font, preferably unmanned, and/or from the back of the church.
- Please do not re-create moments that have already taken place such as the vows or ring exchange.
- Posed pictures may be taken in the church before and/or after the wedding. Pictures taken in the church following Saturday afternoon weddings must conclude by 4 p.m. to accommodate other regular weekend church services.

Fees for Marriage Preparation Process & Church Ceremony

GROOM: _____

BRIDE: _____

Marriage Introductory Meeting / Wedding Date Scheduled	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
Wedding Date & Security Deposit (refundable only up to 6 months prior to wedding)	\$250		
<p>This Deposit is due when you schedule your wedding date. This deposit holds your date and serves as a damage & payment deposit. This check is deposited. The Deposit will be returned two weeks after the wedding, if: 1) there are no damages, 2) keys/access cards are returned, 3) parish policies have been adhered to, and 4) all stipends have been paid.</p>			

Marriage Preparation Process	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
PREPARE Testing and Consultation (this fee must be paid prior to taking the test)	\$180		
“Together in God’s Love” Workbook or “To Trust Again”	\$25		
Liturgy Planning Session and Materials	\$10		
<p>Most fees are due 6 months prior to the Wedding Date. PREPARE is due before taking the test.</p>			

Marriage Ceremony /Parish Fees	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
Parish Wedding Ceremony & Rehearsal Coordinators	\$150		
Use of the Worship Space for registered & active members <i>(inactive wedding couples & non-members)</i>	\$250 \$500		
Priest Replacement Fee <i>(off-site weddings)</i>	\$130		
Worship Aid <i>(If requested.)</i>	\$100		
<p>These fees are due 3 months prior to the Wedding Date.</p>			

Marriage Ceremony Candles/ Stipends	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
*Candelabra Candles (payable to St. Mark)	\$30	Reserve the candelabra with the Wedding Coordinator. Arrange other services and stipends through those individuals directly.	These fees are due at the Rehearsal. Please give them to the Wedding Rehearsal Coordinator.
*Presider (parish priests do not take a stipend)	Ask for details		
*Organist/Pianist	Varies		
*Cantor	Varies		
*Additional Musicians	Varies		
*Servers (provide stipend in cash, if possible)	\$20 each		
<p>These fees are due at the Rehearsal. Candle fees are paid to St. Mark. Stipends/honorariums are payable to the individual service providers</p>			

Acknowledgement of Understanding – Engaged Couple: We have discussed the fee schedule above and understand the payment schedule. We will contact the Marriage Prep Leader with changes or concerns, and understand that we will be contacted if payments are past due.

Signature(s): _____ Date: _____

Staff Member Completing Form/Meeting: _____

Fees for Marriage Preparation Process & Chapel Ceremony

GROOM: _____

BRIDE: _____

Marriage Introductory Meeting / Wedding Date Scheduled	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
Wedding Date & Security Deposit (non-refundable in the event of cancellation)	\$100		
<p>This Deposit is due when you schedule your wedding date. This deposit holds your date and serves as a damage & payment deposit. This check is deposited. The Deposit will be returned two weeks after the wedding, if: 1) there are no damages, 2) keys/access cards are returned, 3) parish policies have been adhered to, and 4) all stipends have been paid.</p>			

Marriage Preparation Process	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
PREPARE Testing and Consultation (this fee must be paid prior to taking the test)	\$180		
“Together in God’s Love” Workbook or “To Trust Again”	\$25		
Liturgy Planning Session and Materials	\$10		
<p>Most fees are due 6 months prior to the Wedding Date. PREPARE is due before taking the test.</p>			

Marriage Ceremony /Parish Fees	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
Parish Wedding Ceremony & Rehearsal Coordinators	\$150		
Use of the Worship Space for registered and active members (inactive or non-member wedding couples)	\$150 \$250		
Other:			
<p>These fees are due 3 months prior to the Wedding Date.</p>			

Marriage Ceremony Candles/ Stipends	Amount	Check if fee applies & Total	Date Due
*Presider (parish priests do not take a stipend)	Ask for details	Arrange other services and stipends through those individuals directly.	These fees are due at the Rehearsal. Please give them to the Wedding Rehearsal Coordinator.
*Organist/Pianist	Varies		
*Cantor	Varies		
*Servers (provide stipend in cash, if possible)	Varies		
<p>These fees are due at the Rehearsal. Stipends/honorariums are payable to the individual service providers</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum occupancy 40-50 guests • No Candelabras, minimal flowers due to space • No furniture moving; chapel must stay preset • Decor must remain in place • Piano only for music; there is no organ 	Space available 4 hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ½ hours- rehearsal • 2 ½ hours- ceremony day 		

Acknowledgement of Understanding – Engaged Couple: We have discussed the fee schedule above and understand the payment schedule. We will contact the Marriage Prep Leader with changes or concerns, and understand that we will be contacted if payments are past due.

Signature(s): _____ Date: _____

Staff Member Completing Form/Meeting: _____

DAYS WHEN A NUPTIAL MASS MAY NOT BE CELEBRATED

A Nuptial Mass uses the prayers and readings from the Rite of Matrimony. Please note that there are certain days in the Church's liturgical calendar when you must use the readings and prayers of that specific day. *

- At a parish's Sunday Mass during Ordinary Time and during Christmas
 - Includes the 5:30 Mass on Saturday afternoon or later in the evening
- Weekdays of Holy Week
- The Paschal Triduum (Thursday, Friday, Saturday of Holy Week)
- Easter Sunday
- The Octave of Easter (Monday through Saturday of the week after Easter)
- Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter
- Ash Wednesday
- Solemnities of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin or Saints, including
 - March 7 Dedication of St. Mark church
 - April 25 St. Mark, our parish patron
 - Nov. 2 Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed

* *One reading may be taken from the texts for the Celebration of Marriage*