

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN WESTON



wedding ♥ brochure

Section I: Initial Contact

Engaged couples desiring to be married in the Catholic Church should contact their parish priest at least six months prior to the anticipated wedding date. For a priest to witness a marriage in the Catholic Church, at least one of the parties must be an active, practicing Roman Catholic. Couples are encouraged to marry in the parish community to which they belong; therefore, one of the parties should be a member of St. Francis of Assisi Church, or the son or daughter of a parishioner, making regular contributions to the Church for at least one year. In any of these circumstances, the fee for use of the Church is \$250.

In special circumstances, with the pastor's permission, non-parishioners may request to have their wedding celebrated at St. Francis of Assisi. The fee for usage of the Church by non-parishioners will be \$350.

Arrangements for marriage begin with a pre-marital interview of the couple by a priest of the parish. This is a time for gathering information about your unique relationship, discussing the Christian understanding of marriage, and what it means to be married in the Catholic Church. During this meeting, the priest will also explain the process that we will follow for your wedding. This session usually takes about 1 hour.

Based on the information gathered during this interview, a decision will be made to proceed with the wedding. The wedding date will be finalized only at this time. Wedding dates cannot be confirmed over the phone or by email in advance of this initial meeting with the priest. The engaged couple will receive a copy of the wedding booklet, "Together for Life," which includes options for prayers, vows, and scripture readings, to personalize your wedding ceremony. The date for a rehearsal will also be scheduled at this meeting.

The pastor's permission is required for a priest from outside the parish to officiate at your wedding. If you wish to have that priest involved in the second meeting, be sure to discuss this with the pastor at St. Francis of Assisi when making your appointment. (See "Special Circumstances".)

Section II: Required Documents

For Catholics, a new Baptismal certificate, issued from the church of baptism is required. The original Baptismal certificate, copies or faxes cannot be accepted. Photocopies of First Communion and Confirmation certificates are also required. These can be obtained by contacting the parishes where the sacraments took place and requesting that the records be mailed to the attention of the priest who is assisting you with your marriage plans.

For non-Catholic baptized Christians, a copy of the original baptismal certificate or a letter from the church in which they were baptized is required. The priest will complete the Pre-Marital Questionnaire, which determines the couple's freedom to marry and appropriate intentions in preparation for marriage.

If neither the bride nor the groom is from St. Francis of Assisi Parish, permission letters to marry at our church must be obtained from their pastors.

If one or both parties are under 18 years of age, written parental permission to marry is required.

All of the above forms are to be given to the priest no later than at the second scheduled meeting with the priest.

Some couples may also need to obtain a dispensation in order to marry in the church. The most common dispensation is that required for a mixed marriage. This dispensation will be granted through the officiating priest or the parish priest.

A valid marriage license from the State of Connecticut should be given to the priest shortly after it is issued, and in any event prior to the date of the wedding rehearsal. This can be obtained at the Town Clerk's Office at Weston Town Hall; it is valid for 65 days from date of issuance. After the wedding, the priest will complete his section of the license and forward it to the city/town hall where it was obtained so that the wedding can be recorded. If the license is not in the possession of the celebrant prior to the wedding, the ceremony cannot legally take place.

Each couple must present the Pre-Cana workshop certificate, issued upon completion of the required marriage preparation programs. (See Section III.)

Section III: Required Marriage Preparation Programs

Prospective brides and grooms are required to complete a diocesan-approved marriage preparation program no later than two months before the wedding date.

Option 1 is a two-day program conducted at various locations around the diocese. The two days need not be back to back, but they must be attended in consecutive order. The fee is \$150 per couple.

Option 2 is attendance at the Engaged Encounter Weekend, a two-day retreat held at several locations in Connecticut. The Diocese of Bridgeport website has links to the sponsoring organization.

Both of these programs provide an opportunity to gather together with other engaged and married couples to consider important issues concerning married life, reflect, and discuss your concerns and ideas.

Go to the Diocese of Bridgeport website (bridgeportdiocese.com, “Marriage Preparation” tab) for a list of dates, times and locations of available programs. **It is strongly recommended that you enroll through their website as soon as possible to assure that you get the date that is convenient for you.** Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis, and programs often book up well in advance.

After completion of the Marriage Preparation Program, you should contact the priest again to arrange a meeting. Bring any of the required paperwork you’ve already obtained, including the certificate you’ll receive upon completion of the pre-nuptial program.

Section IV: Special Circumstances

The bride and groom are to share with the priest information about any of the following circumstances:

- Previous marriages, whether religious or civil
- Death of a former spouse
- An annulment previously granted; a copy of the annulment must be given to the priest
- A civil divorce
- Relationship of the bride and groom through blood or marriage
- Whether one or both of the parties is under age 18
- Whether the bride is pregnant
- If either party is not Catholic
- If the couple is presently living together
- If the couple is now civilly married and wish to have their marriage validated in the Catholic Church
- Plans for a ecumenical ceremony, i.e. with a Catholic priest and a minister or rabbi

Priests or deacons who are relatives or friends of the bride and groom are welcome to officiate, with permission of the pastor of St. Francis of Assisi church.

Dispensations are needed for those marrying a non-Catholic. Your recent baptismal certificate will be required, along with the request for a dispensation. The priest will provide you with the necessary paperwork to request this dispensation.

Catholics who have been previously married in the Catholic Church must first obtain an annulment through the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal before beginning preparations for marriage. The priest will help you with this process.

A Catholic who has been previously married civilly will have to provide an official divorce decree.

If you should decide to postpone or cancel your wedding, it is necessary that you inform the priest who assisted you with the arrangements in writing as soon as possible.

Section V: Wedding Rehearsal

The rehearsal is an important gathering of all the principal participants in the wedding to go over the details of your personalized wedding ceremony with the priest and the wedding party. The rehearsal should include the priest, all of the wedding party, the parents of the bride and groom, and anyone who will take an active role in your ceremony, such as Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, and altar servers.

It is helpful if you have already identified the people who will be responsible for removing any pew decorations you may be using, as well as someone to check the church benches, the sacristy, rear of the church and the rest rooms for any articles left behind.

Rehearsals are scheduled for the week of the wedding, usually on the Thursday or Friday before the ceremony.

Confession is encouraged within a week or two prior to your rehearsal and wedding ceremony. St. Francis offers Confession every Saturday from 3:30 to 4:30 PM or at another time by appointment. You may find it more convenient to receive the sacrament of Confession at another church near your place of work or another parish of your choice.

The Parish Hall at St. Francis of Assisi is available for a rehearsal dinner or party or for a wedding reception. For events of this type, eating and drinking on church grounds is permitted. Please contact the pastor if you would like more information regarding use of the parish hall for these events.

Section VI: The Ceremony

The wedding ceremony may be conducted within the Mass or outside of Mass. If both the bride and groom are practicing Catholics, the wedding must take place within a Mass and in a Catholic church. In the case of marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the wedding may be a ceremony only, outside of Mass, or the full nuptial Mass. In either case, the form of the wedding itself must be liturgically correct within the Roman Catholic Rite.

The two main parts of a wedding Mass are the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. If you decide to be married outside of the Mass, then your ceremony would still include a Liturgy of the Word, which would be proclaimed according to liturgical guidelines. You are encouraged to include adult family and friends who are comfortable reading in public to proclaim these readings.

The priest will give you a copy of a booklet “Together for Life,” which contains suggestions for various readings and musical selections. We encourage you to read the booklet carefully and take your time planning the ceremony and choosing the readings. Readings and liturgical music other than what appear in “Together for Life” may be selected with the priest’s approval. When selecting readings, you should keep in mind the people you wish to invite to proclaim the Word – people who read well and are going to be comfortable reading in front of your gathered family and friends.

If you wish to invite family or friends who are Eucharistic Ministers to assist in distributing Communion, they would be most welcome.

One altar server is required to assist the Priest at Mass. The priest will arrange for the participation of an altar server. The bridal party should pay that altar server \$25 in cash immediately before or after the ceremony. A child who is related to or friendly with the bridal couple and who is an experienced altar server is also welcome to participate in the ceremony. Please inform the priest of the names of family or friends who will participate in your wedding in any of these roles.

If you decide to print a wedding program for your guests, be sure to review this with the priest for help in providing an appropriate worship aid with necessary copyright permission.

Section VI: The Ceremony - continued

Catholic brides and grooms should receive the sacraments of Confession and Holy Eucharist shortly before their wedding. Encourage your attendants to go to confession and communion too, so that they may share with you the graces of this special occasion. Confessions here at St. Francis of Assisi are every Saturday from 3:30 to 4:30 pm, or by appointment.

Weddings may take place on the following days and time frames:

- Fridays between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m.
- Saturdays between 10:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.
- Sundays between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m.
- Due to the 5:00 p.m. Saturday evening Mass, wedding ceremonies must conclude by 3:30 p.m., however, the bridal party may remain in the church or on the grounds for photos until 4:30 p.m., when preparations for evening Mass begin.

As a courtesy to the priest and to others scheduled to use the church later in the day, it is important that the wedding start on time as scheduled. It is customary, though not required, that the celebrant receive a stipend for his services. A gift of any size is appreciated.

Section VII: Wedding Music

A “church wedding” is more than a ceremony in a specially dedicated building. It is also an act of worship and the celebration of a sacrament of the Church, therefore, the music selected for a wedding is of utmost importance, and must be chosen carefully.

The Church keeps no official list of “approved” wedding music, but it does offer some helpful guidelines that can be applied to your choice of wedding music. The music selected must be religious in nature, so that the faith and prayer of the community be expressed. Popular songs are unacceptable before, during, or after the wedding liturgy. Secular music, such as love songs, popular ballads, and Broadway tunes are best left to the reception.

Our Music Director, Don Rickenback, is not a full-time employee of the parish, therefore, is not always available to play for weddings. If you would like to secure his services, it would be best to contact him as soon as your wedding date is firmly established with the parish. The pastor can provide contact information for Don.

There are many websites that allow you to listen to the music or hymns you are considering. We encourage you to spend some time researching the many options available. If you are working with Don, he can help you choose and can approve any hymns you desire. If Don is not involved in planning the music for your wedding, your choices should be reviewed with the priest at the meeting approximately one month prior to your wedding.

If you would like to hire musicians from outside the parish or include family members or friends as musicians for the wedding, you will need to review the music they would like to play/sing with the pastor. All musicians are required to follow the parish guidelines for celebrating the liturgy. Any visiting musician responsible for leading the wedding music (usually an organist or pianist) should be familiar with the parts of the liturgy that are sung by the assembly.

Fees for the organist, musicians and cantors are arranged directly with these individuals and payment should be given directly to them.

Section VIII: Flowers/Church Environment

The church environment reflects the various liturgical seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Ordinary Time. If you are getting married during the Christmas or Easter season, you should be aware of the flowers that will already be in the church. The décor for these seasons takes precedence over other décor.

For Friday or Sunday afternoon weddings, the church will be available to the florist and photographer/ videographer 1 hour ahead of the ceremony. On Saturdays, the church will be available beginning at 9:00 a.m. (following 8:00 a.m. Mass). In order to avoid any conflicts or disappointments, it is advisable to see if other events are planned in the church on your wedding day.

It is the florist's responsibility to see that any floral arrangements are in place. If the florist is not going to be setting up the church for your wedding, it is your responsibility to make arrangements for this to be done by others. If you wish, floral arrangements may be placed in front of the lectern, centered in front of the altar, or on either side in front of the altar. Nothing should be placed on the altar itself.

No candle arrangements are permitted in the church aisles or on the altar.

Aisle runners can cause accidents, therefore, their use is discouraged. If one is used, it is the responsibility of the florist or a member of the bridal party to remove it immediately after the ceremony.

Bows, ribbons or flowers may be attached to the pews using plastic clips, ribbons or elastic. No wire, tacks, staples, nails or tape may be used to attach them to the pews. At the end of the ceremony, the wedding party is responsible for the removal off all pew decorations from the church, and any other personal items used during the wedding.

Usually, floral arrangements are left in the church as a gift to be used at the weekend liturgies, and we do appreciate this generous gesture. If, however, you wish to remove them after the ceremony, kindly inform the pastor so that other flowers can be obtained for Saturday and Sunday Masses.

No rice, birdseed, pasta, confetti or rose petals may be thrown inside or outside the church. These present a hazard and a legal liability for the parish and for you. Please notify your family and friends of this ahead of time. Bubbles are permitted outside the church.

Eating and drinking are not permitted in the church building or on church grounds. Please be sure your limosine company and guests are aware of and abide by this rule.

Section IX: Photography, Videography, Audio Equipment

For Friday or Sunday afternoon weddings, the church will be available to the photographer/ videographer 1 hour ahead of the ceremony. On Saturdays, the church will be available beginning at 9:00 a.m. (following 8:00 a.m. Mass). In order to avoid any conflicts or disappointments, it is advisable to see if other events are planned in the church on your wedding day.

The photographer and/or videographer should seek out and speak to the priest before the ceremony begins to review Church guidelines.

Photographers and video operators may not interrupt any part of the processional, ceremony or recessional. They are asked to be as obscure as possible, and take pictures from the general area of the church or the choir loft. Photographers may not approach the altar during the ceremony. At no time should they be in the sanctuary.

A video camera mounted on a tripod can be placed near the organ and music stands to the right of the altar prior to the commencement of the ceremony. It **MUST** remain stationary throughout the ceremony. Video cameras may not be placed near the Tabernacle.

Pictures may be taken in the church or on the grounds in front of the church immediately following the ceremony. If requested, the celebrant will be happy to join the bride and groom for a picture. On Saturdays, we ask that the bridal party conclude the post-ceremony photos by 4:30 pm, so that preparations for 5:00 p.m. Mass can begin.

These guidelines are the same for anyone setting up audio equipment. Please communicate these instructions to your photographer or video operator.

Section X: Summary of Contributions

Listed below is a summary of contributions or possible expenses:

- Parishioner or child of parishioner (of at least one year).....\$250
- Non-member (Special Circumstance).....\$350
- One Altar Server (required).....\$25
- Celebrant stipend customary but not required
- Organist, musicians, cantors – arranged with and paid directly to them