

# THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

In

## Saint Kilian Parish & Holy Sepulcher Parish



**7076 Franklin Road  
Cranberry Township,  
Pennsylvania 16066  
724-625-1665  
[www.saintkilian.org](http://www.saintkilian.org)**



**1304 East Cruikshank Road  
Butler,  
Pennsylvania 16002  
724-586-7610  
[www.holysepulcher.org](http://www.holysepulcher.org)**

This booklet has been prepared to assist you in planning your wedding for Saint Kilian or Holy Sepulcher Parish. We have sought to present, as clearly as possible, our wedding policies and procedures to assist you in planning your wedding. It is our hope that this information will support you in ensuring that the preparations for the wedding, which lasts but a day, are as stress free as possible and that they not overshadow your commitment to marriage, which lasts a lifetime.

## INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church believes that marriage is a sacrament and a commitment made for life. With this in mind, the preparation for marriage must clearly recognize the significance of that commitment. Preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church is provided to ensure that both parties are capable of making such a commitment.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh maintains a webpage with information and resources which you may find helpful as you prepare for this lifelong commitment. You are encouraged to supplement this booklet with that website located at: <https://diopitt.org/marriage-family>

## PART ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION

### Days and Times for Weddings

While weddings may take place on any day of the week except Sundays, most are celebrated on Saturdays or Friday evenings. Because of regular Saturday evening Masses at 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., the available times for your wedding are as follows: Fridays (anytime), Saturdays (usually at 12:00 noon or 2:00 p.m.). **Exceptions to these times are normally not possible.** The time allotted for your wedding is usually no more than an hour and a half (including gathering before the wedding, the ceremony and pictures afterwards). The wedding Mass usually takes no more than 50 minutes and a wedding service last about 30 minutes.

### Suggested Offerings

Fees and suggested offerings (e.g. for the services of the organist) are discussed on a separate sheet supplementing this booklet.

### Place of the Wedding

Weddings celebrated within Saint Kilian Parish take place in the church on Franklin Road in Cranberry Township. The church is located toward the end of the main road on the property.

Weddings celebrated within Holy Sepulcher Parish occur at the church located on East Cruikshank Road in Glade Mills, Middlesex Township.

## **Invitations**

When invitations are printed, please utilize the name and address of the church as follows:

- “Saint Kilian Church, 7076 Franklin Road, Cranberry Township, PA 16066.”
- “Holy Sepulcher Parish, 1304 East Cruikshank Road, Butler, PA 16002.”

Please include directions to the church with your invitations.

## **PART TWO: A WEDDING IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

### **Introduction**

Since the Catholic Church believes that marriage is a sacramental commitment made for life, preparation for marriage must not only recognize that vision but also seek to ensure that both parties are capable of making such a commitment.

### **Pre-Marriage Assessment and Confirmation of Wedding Date and Time:**

As early as possible (and before any reception hall contracts are signed) please contact the pastor to discuss your wish to marry in the Catholic Church. **Please note, no date for a wedding at Saint Kilian or Holy Sepulcher is confirmed until this contact is made, and verification is provided by the pastor or his delegate.**

At an initial meeting, the priest or deacon will conduct the required assessment to confirm your freedom to enter marriage within the Catholic Church. His questions will deal with such matters as baptism, religious affiliation, previous marriages, age, and maturity. For the priest or deacon to conduct an accurate assessment, please be prepared to discuss any previous marriages. This includes those which took place before a Justice of the Peace or other civil official.

Please note, generally the marriages of non-Catholics before civil officials (including Justices of the Peace) are considered valid by the Catholic Church. Thus, these parties are not free to enter marriage again in the Catholic Church without some disposition of that previous marriage (e.g. by death or through a process of annulment).

During the assessment process, the priest or deacon may also ask you to complete a pre-marriage inventory to assist you in preparing for marriage within the Catholic Church.

The assessment process usually requires one meeting. Once the priest or deacon is certain

that nothing made known to him would prevent the marriage from taking place in the Catholic Church, he will sign the Initial Assessment Form and confirm the day and time of your wedding in the parish schedule. It is only then that formal plans for your wedding should be made.

### **Special Circumstances**

In the course of the pre-marriage assessment, it may become apparent that a particular couple finds themselves in special circumstances. One of these circumstances is a pre-marital pregnancy. Some assume that a pregnancy is an ample justification for marriage. However, experience has confirmed that a pregnancy clearly indicates the need for special pastoral sensitivity. In these instances, the priest or deacon may want to meet with the parents of the couple or seek additional evaluation. The goal is to assist the couple in arriving at a mature decision based upon all the factors involved.

There are several other circumstances which may become apparent during the course of the initial interview. These include a lack of readiness for marriage or a lack of appreciation for the sacrament of marriage, complete non-practice of Catholic faith or refusal to take part in pre-marriage preparation. When one or more of these circumstances is encountered, the issues must be resolved satisfactorily before the Initial Assessment Form can be signed.

### **Required Documents and Pre-Nuptial Forms**

Since marriage is a step recognized both by the Church and the state, it necessarily involves the gathering of information. This includes the completion of a standard set of forms by the priest or deacon who will be the official witness of your wedding. If you are a Catholic, Baptized and/or Confirmed in a parish other than Saint Kilian/Holy Sepulcher, we must have a recent baptism certificate (**dated no more than six months before the intake assessment occurs**). The couple is responsible for obtaining such certificates (by phoning or writing the parish where the sacrament took place). All documents submitted will remain on file in the Parish Center as a permanent record. If you were baptized in a faith community other than Catholic, you too will need to submit a copy of your baptismal certificate. A certificate of whatever age will suffice. It will be returned to you after the appropriate information is copied and recorded.

Often couples of different faith backgrounds decide to marry. There should be time devoted to discussing how each partner will contribute to the spiritual growth of the other and any children who might be born in their marriage. Among the forms to be completed

before marriage in the Catholic Church, is one signed by the Catholic partner marrying a non-Catholic. This form confirms the intention of the Catholic "...to continue practicing the Catholic faith and to do all in my power to share that faith with our children by having them baptized and raised as Catholics." In addition, the parents of non-Catholics will normally be asked to complete a simple form indicating that there are no obstacles or prior marriages that would prevent the marriage from taking place in the Catholic Church. In instances where one or both of the parties to be married is under the age of 21, it will be necessary to interview parents or guardians to corroborate the statements which were made regarding maturity and readiness for marriage.

### **Marriage Instructions (Pre-Cana)**

The specific preparation for Marriage in the Catholic Church involves a program providing information and opportunity for questions. The policy of the Diocese of Pittsburgh requires that engaged couples participate in a pre-marriage program best suited to their needs. The content of these programs includes: sacramentality, spirituality, communication, financial responsibility, family life, responsible parenthood, sexuality and spiritual growth within marriage. There are a variety of formats for these instructions, including:

- **Parish Program.** A local program sponsored by a parish. Parishes run these independently and thus there is no established schedule for these events. You can always check with a parish near you to inquire about their Pre-Cana offerings.
  - **Saint Kilian Parish** offers a program in which married couples along with a priest or deacon from the parish treat various topics dealing with married life. This program is conducted at Saint Kilian in the lower level of the church on a weekend beginning at 7:00 p.m. on Friday evening (usually concluding by 9:00 p.m.) and continuing the next day, Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until approximately 12:00 Noon. Couples must attend both days. Included with the presentations is the opportunity for questions. This program is usually held three times a year, in January, April and September. It is necessary to register for this program online at [saintkilian.org](http://saintkilian.org). There is a nominal charge for attending this program.
  - **Holy Sepulcher** parish participates in the *Butler Area Marriage Preparation Retreat* program. This retreat is offered once in the spring and once in the fall. The retreat consists of two Saturday sessions, and couples must attend both Saturday sessions to fulfill the program requirements. The retreat begins at 10:00

AM each Saturday and runs until 5:00 PM. Both Saturday sessions conclude with Holy Mass at 4 PM at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church. Mass attendance is part of the PreCana Program and satisfies the Sunday obligation. The retreat will be held at St. Michael the Archangel Church Parish Hall at 432 Center Avenue Butler, PA 16001. Information can be found on the diocese website or the Butler City Catholic Parishes website: <https://www.butlercatholicparishes.org/sacrament-of-matrimony>.

- Engaged Encounter Weekends offers couples a unique opportunity to look at their commitment to each other in a deeper way as they prepare for marriage. It gives them the opportunity to focus exclusively on each other in peaceful surroundings, free from the pressure and distractions of the outside world. Please see Engaged Encounter Weekend Pittsburgh's website: <http://www.pittsburghengagedencounter.org/>
- Renew the I do marriage preparation. Engaged couples and soon-to-be-engaged couples, gather for '*A Joy-Filled Marriage*,' a lively, insightful, and resourceful experience with your future spouse. You will gain the wisdom, receive the tools, and ignite the passion to help form a thriving marriage! Please visit the diocese's marriage preparation webpage for more information on this program: <https://diopitt.org/marriage-preparation>

In addition, any other recognized program sponsored by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, another diocese, parish, or campus ministry will suffice provided that the participants receive a certificate of participation and successful completion of the program.

## **Marriage License**

A Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Marriage License is required for any marriage taking place in the parish. This license may be obtained from any county license bureau within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Unless a proper license is provided, the wedding cannot take place. Please note that wedding licenses are only good for 60 days from being issued (so don't get it too early but don't procrastinate either). **The marriage license should be brought to the wedding rehearsal.**

## **PART THREE: THE WEDDING CEREMONY**

### **Common Elements**

Sacraments are always celebrations of the entire Body of Christ. Therefore, your wedding has special meaning for the entire parish community and should be celebrated with the joyful dignity that this implies. This special celebration should be carefully planned with the mutual cooperation of the priest or deacon, the parish director of music ministry and the couple.

### **Guest Celebrants**

Some couples wish to ask a priest or deacon other than ones assigned to this parish to be the official witness at their wedding. When initial contact is made with the parish, please indicate your intention to do so. That priest will be contacted by Saint Kilian/Holy Sepulcher Parish to ensure that he is willing and that the required preparations will be done. The Diocese of Pittsburgh requires a **Letter of Suitability for Ministry** for all clergy participating in any liturgy or ministry within the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

### **The Wedding Mass**

While the wedding of two Catholics normally takes place within the context of Mass, the Eucharist should not be assumed as a “nice background for our wedding.” If the couple to be married is not active in their Catholic faith, serious consideration must be given regarding the appropriateness of the wedding Mass unless they have intentions of becoming active once again.

The wedding of an inter-faith couple (a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian) is celebrated within a “wedding ceremony” rather than a Mass (see below). There are very practical reasons why an interfaith couple may not wish to avoid having a Mass. Among these are: so that non-Catholic family and friends may fully follow and participate in the celebration, that the symbols be those of unity and not disunity when non-Catholics are not permitted to receive Communion, and that the Eucharist not be celebrated amid a group of people many of whom lack an understanding of its meaning or faith in what is taking place.

The wedding of a Catholic and a non-Christian must take place in the context of a “wedding ceremony.” The directives of the Diocese of Pittsburgh dictate that in such circumstances the Eucharist may not be celebrated.

- **Elements of the Wedding Ceremony**

The elements that are always present in the “wedding ceremony” are: readings from Scripture, statement of intentions, the exchange of vows, the blessing and exchange of rings, the Lord’s Prayer and a special blessing. Elements that may be added include: general intercessions (prayers of the faithful), the unity candle, and the sign of peace and an offering of flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

## **Music**

Music is an important part of Catholic liturgy. It is required that the parish director of music ministry be involved in the wedding liturgy. The respective Director of Music is available to assist you in planning your celebration as well as providing the vocal and instrumental music. Our Directors can be reached by phoning the Parish Center (Saint Kilian 724-625-1665 or Holy Sepulcher 724.586.7610) or by means of the parish web site.

If you chose to employ additional musicians or vocalists to work with the parish director of music ministry, careful planning and collaboration is necessary and fees apply. If you wish to have other musicians supply all the music for the ceremony, the collaboration and presence of the parish director of music ministry is still required to ensure that the music selected is in accord with Church directives. Namely, all music before, during and after the liturgy is reflective of the reverence and dignity of the occasion, intensifies the Christian meaning of the liturgical service, and dignifies and enhances the sacredness of the wedding liturgy in a way that is consistent with the theological and liturgical tradition of the Catholic Church.

In addition to assure that the parish’s musical instruments and sound system are in working order before, during and after the ceremony, the parish director of music ministry must be present before and during the wedding ceremony and fees apply.

A more detailed discussion of the music for you wedding will be addressed in a separate informational handout provided by the Director of Music and included as a supplement to this booklet.

## **The Entrance Procession**

In recent years, several options have emerged for this aspect of the wedding. There can be an entrance procession similar to that of a Sunday Mass where the congregation stands

and sings an entrance song while the priest or deacon and the wedding party enter (including the bride and groom and sometimes their parents). Some brides are escorted down the aisle by their father (and/or their mother). At some weddings, the attendants are escorted down the entire aisle by the groomsmen, at others they walk alone and are met by the groomsmen at the front of the church. In any case, your preference regarding the entrance should be discussed with the priest or deacon presiding at the wedding.

- **Crash**

A "crash" (a long white strip of cloth or plastic) is sometimes unrolled at weddings immediately before the wedding party proceeds down the aisle. While this has become a custom in some places, it is not permitted at either Saint Kilian or Holy Sepulcher. The safety of the wedding party and all guests is a serious concern.

- **Scattering Flower Petals**

It is not permitted to scatter flower petals in the aisle before, during or after the ceremony.

## **Scripture Readings**

Readings from Sacred Scripture (Bible) are always a part of a Catholic wedding. The Scripture readings may be chosen in consultation with the priest or deacon from a selection provided through the Church. Family members or friends may be chosen to read the Scripture (other than the Gospel). Any person doing so, however, should be a good speaker, familiar with Catholic liturgy and feel comfortable in front of people and in a church setting.

## **Offertory Procession**

If the Mass is celebrated at your wedding, you may choose to ask some family members or friends to bring to the altar the bread and the wine. This may include as few as two and as many as four people.

- **A Symbolic Offering for the Poor**

Another wedding custom is for the bride and groom to present symbolic gifts for the poor. This custom usually takes the form of a basket of canned goods or non-perishable items being carried with the bread and wine at the offertory procession (at Mass) or other appropriate time within a ceremony. This custom is a sign that the couple recognize that their wedding is taking place within a wider community

about whose needs they are rightly concerned. This is completely optional.

### **Reception of the Eucharist**

It is the directive of the Catholic Church that only Catholics may approach the table of the Lord to receive Holy Communion. If Mass is being celebrated as part of your wedding ceremony, please make this directive known to non-Catholics who may be attending.

### **Exchange of Peace**

Before the Lord's Prayer (at a wedding ceremony or a wedding Mass) a sign of peace is exchanged. At that time, some couples choose to greet their families and the wedding party. While permitted, the exchange of peace is completely optional.

### **Flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary**

A Catholic wedding custom is the presentation of flowers at an image of the Virgin Mary shortly before the conclusion of the ceremony. This gesture is completely optional. The bride and the groom should perform this gesture together.

## **PART FOUR: MISCELANEOUS WEDDING CEREMONY ITEMS**

### **Post-Wedding Customs**

Please ask those attending your wedding not to throw rice, confetti, birdseed, or anything else in the church or anywhere on church property. Helium balloons are not permitted inside the Church and are not permitted to be released on Church property. In addition to being a safety hazard, the parish maintenance personnel have other duties on weekends.

### **Receiving Lines**

Receiving lines are better placed at the location of the reception than at the back of church. If you choose to have a receiving line at the church, please note that may limit your time for pictures.

### **Photography**

You are welcome to have a photographer or videographer record your wedding provided that there are no distractions during the liturgy. Taking pictures in the sacristy (before the ceremony) or from in the sanctuary (during the ceremony) is not permitted. The operative principal is that the church is a house of prayer and not a photography studio. Included

with this booklet is a set of guidelines to be given to any photographer or videographer included in your wedding plans.

## **Flowers**

Flowers have traditionally been a part of the wedding ceremony. They are, however, optional. If you choose to have flowers at your wedding, arrangements should be made with the florist of your choice. If more than one wedding is scheduled for your date, you may arrange with the other couple to purchase flowers together. Please inform the florist that no arrangements may be placed on the altar. Flower stands are available at the church. The married couple is free to leave flowers in the church following the wedding as a gift to the people of the parish.

## **Pew Bows and Accessories**

Pew bows are permitted; however, they must be secured with ribbon or rubber bands. Absolutely no tacks, tape or clip-on holders are permitted. Please inform the wedding coordinators if any pew bows, flowers or other accessories are to be kept as “keepsakes” as these items will be disposed of if left in the Church following the service.

## **Unity Candle**

The use of a "unity candle" (a set of three candles) may be considered an option in a wedding ceremony in which this custom is part of the non-Catholic's tradition. This needs to be discussed with the priest or deacon well in advance of the service for permission to be granted. Two of these candles are lit before the ceremony and the center candle is lit by the bride and groom following the vows. The symbolism represents the baptism of the bride and groom now joined as one. If you choose to utilize this rite, please bring the three candle set to the church at the rehearsal.

## **Additional Aspects**

If you would like to include any other features in your wedding, they must be discussed with the priest or deacon beforehand.

# **PART FIVE: OTHER PARISH MINISTERS IN ATTENDANCE**

## **Altar Servers**

Altar servers are usually not needed for a wedding. However, if the couple has relatives

or friends who regularly serve, they are most welcome to assist. An offering is usually given to those who serve at weddings and this is best handled through the wedding coordinators at the wedding rehearsal.

### **Parish Wedding Coordinators**

Parish volunteers are provided to assist the celebrant and the wedding party to ensure the Mass or ceremony goes as smoothly as possible. Our Coordinators will contact you prior to the wedding day, attend the rehearsal and will be of as much help as possible during the wedding. **No outside or freelance bridal/wedding coordinators are permitted** to assist with the wedding ceremony or activities occurring on parish grounds (most especially within the Church).

## **PART SIX: FROM REHEARSAL TO BRIDES ENTRANCE**

### **Rehearsal**

Usually a rehearsal is conducted the evening before the wedding. The time is set after consultation with the priest or deacon who is to be the official witness for the ceremony, and after considering the parish schedule and the time of any other rehearsals already scheduled for that evening. It is the couple's responsibility to ensure that the wedding party is on time for the rehearsal.

It is extremely important that rehearsals and weddings begin at the scheduled time. The priest, deacon and music minister have parish schedules that must be met. Understandably, traffic and other issues may arise, but it is the responsibility of the couple to inform their wedding party and guests that they should allow plenty of time because the rehearsal and wedding begin as scheduled.

The couple must present the marriage license at least by the rehearsal. Due to the sometimes frantic activity on the day of the wedding it is important to also provide all the fees and donations at the time of the rehearsal. It is also helpful to bring to the rehearsal (and to leave at the church) those things that will be needed for the wedding (e.g. the programs, wedding candle, etc.).

### **Wedding Party**

Ushers for the wedding (usually the groomsmen) should arrive at the church no later than

45 minutes before the scheduled time for the wedding. They should be prepared to seat or otherwise assist guests. The groom and best man should go directly to the sacristy as directed at the rehearsal. Please do not bring any food or beverages into the church. **No consumption of alcoholic beverages is permitted by anyone at the rehearsal or the wedding.** Violation of this policy or any public display of intoxication may mean the clergy will not be able to conduct the ceremony.

### **Seating of Guests**

Because the church is a house of prayer, talking and conduct in the vestibule and the church proper should be in keeping with the sacred character of surroundings. Ushers should promptly escort guests to their seats. The mother of the groom and the bride should be seated a few minutes before the wedding is scheduled to begin. This should not be delayed in order to seat those who arrive late (they may seat themselves after the entrance of the wedding party). Again, weddings must begin at the scheduled time.

### **Bride's Room**

Both Churches have specific rooms for the bride and her party. The room is ample and may be used for gathering before the wedding and last minute details. There is an adjoining rest room and the suite may be locked during the wedding. Saint Kilian Church has a Bride's Room on the lower level while Holy Sepulcher's room is to the right upon entering the Church through the main entrance.

## **PART FOUR: PARISH LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER THE WEDDING**

Catholics relate to Christ's universal Church as members of a parish. Such membership is important for many reasons. If you are not currently a member of a parish, please formally register at one as soon as possible. Following the wedding, it is also important to formally register in the Catholic parish nearest to your new home.

Our parishes strive to be supportive to its newly married parishioners and we want you to know that we consider you valuable to the life of our community.

If you will be living within the **Saint Kilian Parish** area after your wedding, please register with the parish if you are not currently members. Please consult the parish web site for details ([www.saintkilian.org](http://www.saintkilian.org)). If the parish staff can be of assistance to you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us at the Parish Center (724-625-1665) or by

email from the website.

If you will be living within the **Holy Sepulcher Parish** area after your wedding, please register with the parish by completing a census form and returning it to the parish office or placing it into the collection basket on Sunday. Census forms can be found at the parish office or you can register online at [www.holysepulcher.org](http://www.holysepulcher.org). If the parish staff can be of assistance to you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us at the Parish Center (724-586-7610) or by email from the website.

Seeing that you are truly a valuable part of the life of our parish family being a registered member of the parish helps to ensure we can provide effective, relevant and timely ministry to you. We invite you to become active in all that occurs within either of our parishes. If a priest, or member of the staff, can assist you in any way do not hesitate to contact us through either parish.

## **Special Elements for Consideration and Informational items**

### **Confessions**

The bride, groom and wedding party may wish to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) before the wedding. Please arrange for a time to do so well before the rehearsal because there is usually little time to celebrate this sacrament appropriately after the rehearsal.

### **"Marriage Banns"**

The "banns" of marriage are no longer required by Church law. Each Parish announces weddings in the parish bulletin as part of the regular schedule of liturgies.





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