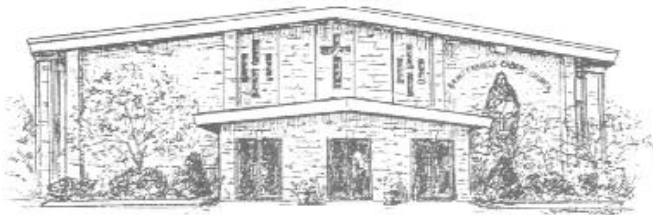


MARRIAGE INFORMATION BOOKLET

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INTRODUCTION

Celebrating a wedding at Saint Frances Cabrini Parish is a source of happiness for our entire parish because it is a sign of life and growth. We pray that God will both bless you abundantly during your engagement and as you prepare for your wedding.

This booklet has been prepared to assist you in planning your wedding. Presented within this guide are the wedding policies and procedures observed here at Saint Frances.

Saint Frances Cabrini Parish is concerned that your wedding be a joyful celebration and source of pride for you and your families. It is also our concern that it be an expression of faith befitting the dignity of a Sacrament with a ceremony appropriate for a church setting.

Finally, it is our hope that your preparations for the wedding, which lasts a day, not overshadow your commitment to marriage, which lasts a lifetime.

PART ONE

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Days and Times for Weddings

Weddings may take place on any day of the week except Sundays and holy days of obligation, but are usually celebrated on Friday evenings or Saturdays. Saturday weddings with Mass may start no later than 2 p.m.; weddings without Mass may be scheduled as late as 2:30 p.m. This allows sufficient time for your wedding ceremony and pictures (30 minutes) before evening Mass at 4 p.m. Only one wedding per day can be celebrated. Weddings are scheduled on a first come, first served basis.

PART TWO

PREPARATION for a WEDDING in the CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. Introduction

Since the Catholic Church believes that marriage is a commitment made for life, the preparation for marriage must clearly recognize the significance of that commitment. Preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church is provided to insure that both parties are capable of making such a commitment.

2. Pre-Marriage Assessment

At least six months before your wedding, you should contact a parish priest to discuss your intention to marry in the Catholic Church. Please remember, the date or time for a wedding is not confirmed until this meeting takes place. At that meeting, the priest will conduct the required assessment to confirm your freedom and ability to enter marriage within the Catholic Church. His questions will deal with such matters as previous marriages, age, maturity and readiness, knowledge about the spiritual and sacramental aspects of marriage, intentions, non-practice of the faith, openness to children, etc.

In order for the priest to conduct an accurate assessment, please be prepared to discuss fully any previous marriages. This includes those that took place before any civil officials. 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. through a formal process of annulment).

PART THREE

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

3. Required Documents and Pre-Nuptial Forms

Since marriage is an action recognized both by the Church and the state, it involves the gathering of information. This normally includes the completion of a standard set of forms by the priest who will be the official witness of your wedding.

If you are a Catholic and baptized in a parish other than Saint Frances, we must have a recent baptismal certificate (*dated no more than six months before the wedding date*) from your church of baptism. This recent certificate verifies that you are baptized and free to marry within the Catholic Church. All the documents submitted will remain on file in the Parish Office as a permanent marriage record.

If you were baptized in another faith community, you too, will need a copy of your baptismal certificate. A certificate of whatever age will suffice.

When 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 of any children who might be born. Among the forms to be completed before marriage in the Catholic Church, is one signed by the Catholic partner confirming his/her intention "...to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church." It continues, "to do all in my power to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and raised as Catholics."

A Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Marriage License is required for any marriage taking place in a Catholic Church. This license can be obtained from any county license bureau within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania up to sixty days before the wedding date. The Marriage License should be given to the priest officiating at the wedding no later than at the rehearsal.

4. Marriage Instructions

The Diocese of Pittsburgh requires engaged couples to participate in a pre-marriage program covering sacramentality, spirituality, communication, financial responsibility, family life, parenthood, sexuality and continuing formation within marriage. This requirement can be met by participating in an annual class sponsored jointly by Saint Frances Parish and Saint John the Baptist Parish (Monaca), by another Catholic parish or Diocese, or by attending an Engaged Encounter Weekend (www.wmepittsburgh.org). A certificate will be issued upon successful completion of one of these classes; this certificate will then be filed with the rest of the marriage paperwork.

Sacraments are always celebrations of the entire Body of Christ. Therefore, your wedding liturgy has special meaning for the entire parish community and should be celebrated with the joyful dignity that this implies. It is a time of prayer, promise, joy, and hope. This special celebration should be carefully planned with the mutual cooperation of the priest and the couple, as it is meant to deepen your love while praising God in the midst of a parish community of faith.

The Liturgy of the Word - Readings from the Scriptures (*one from the Old Testament and/or one from the New Testament, and a Gospel*) may be chosen by the couple in consultation with the priest who will witness the marriage. The various options for scripture readings are available on our parish website, <http://SFCCenterTwp.catholicweb.com>. Readers may be chosen from family or friends to read the Scripture and the Prayers of the Faithful. Any person who is doing a reading in church should be a good speaker, familiar with Catholic liturgy and feel comfortable in a church building, as he or she will proclaim the Word of God.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist - Every wedding in the Catholic Church is celebrated with the Liturgy of the Word and the Rite of Marriage. Two Catholics who marry should be married within the context of the Eucharist (Mass). If one of those to be married is not a Catholic, the couple may request that the Mass be celebrated at the wedding, but it is an option. It is important for these couples to seriously consider this matter. There are compelling reasons why an interfaith couple may not choose to request the Mass. Among these are: (1) so that non-Catholic family and friends may fully follow and participate in the celebration of marriage, (2) that the symbols be those of unity and not disunity when non-Catholics are not permitted to receive Communion, (3) 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.

Other Considerations:

Programs – A wedding program is not required, but if you decide to do one, please have the priest and organist preview it for accuracy and completeness before you duplicate it.

Offertory Procession - When a Mass is celebrated, you may choose family members or friends to bring the bread and the wine forward to the sanctuary. This may include as few as two and as many as four people.

Exchange of Peace - Some couples choose to present flowers to their mothers at the exchange of peace.

Flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary - An optional Catholic wedding custom is the presentation of flowers at a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the bride seeking her intercession to be a good wife and mother and her prayers for a holy marriage. If the bride chooses to perform this gesture, it is done with her husband near the conclusion of the ceremony.

Non-Parishioners - When neither the bride nor groom are members of Saint Frances Cabrini Parish, the couple is asked to contact his/her own pastor or some other priest to be the official witness at their wedding. That priest should contact the Parish Office confirming his willingness to handle all the details of the wedding. Details include obtaining the required documents, completing the necessary forms, insuring that the couple is properly instructed, conducting the rehearsal and the wedding, and submitting the papers to the parish prior to the wedding. For non-parishioners, the offering for the use, upkeep and care of the church is \$300.

Photography - Photographers/videographers are welcome, but are asked to avoid distractions during the ceremony. The church is first and foremost a house of prayer. Please ask the photographer to introduce him/herself to the priest before the wedding and become familiar with the wedding plans and church layout. In addition, photos in the sanctuary following the wedding are certainly permitted.

Music at the Wedding Ceremony - Music is an important part of the celebration of marriage. It should not, however, overshadow the essential element of the commitment of the bride and groom to each other. The organist at Saint Frances Cabrini Parish is Mrs. Mary Rita Rossetti, 412-913-3752, music@sfcabrini.us. The organist should be contacted well in advance to arrange for her participation in the ceremony and to guide the couple regarding appropriate selections for liturgical usage and expression of the Christian vision of marriage. Guest soloists are permitted, provided that this choice is discussed with the priest and the organist. Every effort will be made within the boundaries of good liturgy and good taste to make the musical part of your wedding both beautiful and memorable.

Flowers – Flowers should always be real, not artificial. Because of the sacredness of the altar, no flowers or any other items or mementos are to be placed on the altar. Rather, they are placed on the floor or on stands alongside or in front of the altar. No floral or other decorations should overpower celebration of the Eucharist or the ritual actions of the Sacrament of Marriage. It is customary, but not mandatory, to leave flowers in the church following the wedding.

Crash (Aisle Runner) - Out of concern for the safety of all guests, particularly the elderly, we ask that no aisle runners be used.

Unity Candle - The use of a unity candle or other actions and gestures, while popular and symbolic of the marriage union, is not part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage. These rituals are better placed within the reception as part of the blessing before the meal. A suggestion for doing this brief ceremony is provided at the conclusion of this booklet.

Post-Wedding Customs - Please ask those attending your wedding not to throw rice, confetti, bird seed, rose petals, etc., in the church or anywhere on church property.

Receiving Lines - Receiving lines are better placed at the location of the reception than at the back of church. Nonetheless, if you choose to have a receiving line at the church, please note that this limits your time for pictures since the church must be vacated by 3:30 p.m. for evening Mass.

Fees and Offerings – The organist will advise you of the fee for serving as organist for your wedding. Although the diocesan average for the offering to the church for weddings is \$250, for active, registered parishioners, we ask only \$100 for the use of the church. We keep this offering low because parishioners weekly support the use, upkeep and care of parish facilities. An offering for the priest who officiates your wedding is left to your discretion. For non-parishioners, the offering for the use of the church is \$300.

Altar Servers - Normally, altar servers are not used at weddings, but if you have family members, friends, or relatives who are trained for service at the altar and who you would like to serve in that capacity at your wedding, please discuss this with the priest.

Rehearsal - Usually a rehearsal is conducted the evening before the wedding at a time set after consultation with the priest who is to be the official witness for the ceremony. Please ensure that the wedding party is on time for the rehearsal. In order to keep your costs down, we do not normally use a wedding coordinator. However, if you would like one, please call the Parish Office.

Confessions - It is a Catholic tradition that the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) precedes major steps taken in one's life. Confessions are routinely heard the night of the rehearsal when requested by the couple, their wedding party, and/or guests.

Reception of the Eucharist - It is the directive of the Catholic Church that only properly disposed 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. A more complete explanation can be found in the full text of the U.S. Bishops' *Guidelines for the Reception of Communion* reprinted in the inside front cover of the missalettes in the pews of the church or available online, <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/intercom.shtml>.

Wedding Party - The entire bridal party should arrive at the church no later than one half hour before the scheduled time of the wedding. The groom and best man should go directly to the sacristy. Please do not bring any food (including chewing gum) or beverages into the church and respect the sacredness of the space and the event with appropriate behavior.

Seating of Guests - Ushers should promptly escort guests to their seats. Because the church is a house of prayer, please be respectful in the vestibule and throughout the church. The mothers of the groom and then the bride should be seated a few minutes before the wedding is scheduled to begin.

Pew Bows and Accessories - Please arrange for someone to remove any pew bows, flowers or other accessories that are to be kept as "keepsakes" immediately following the ceremony. Any items left behind after a wedding are discarded.

PART FOUR

LIFE AFTER THE WEDDING

It is indeed true that the marriage only begins after the wedding ceremony. The Catholic Church, in fact, is most concerned about the marriage. As a couple, if you will be living in the Center Township area after your wedding, you are invited to join the Saint Frances Cabrini Parish faith community. Please complete a new census form (available from the Parish Office) and return it to the Parish Office or place it in the collection basket on Sunday. If you are moving outside of this area, please contact the nearest Catholic parish about becoming a member there. It is important to become an active member of your parish as Catholics relate to Christ's universal Church as members of a Catholic parish.

Saint Frances Cabrini Parish strives to be of support to its newly married parishioners in various ways; you are valuable to our worshipping faith community. Please become a part of all that occurs here. If the parish priest or parish staff can be of assistance to you in any way after your wedding, please do not hesitate to contact us at the Parish Office at: 724-775-6363 or sfcabrini@comcast.net.

LIGHTING the UNITY CANDLE with 'TABLE PRAYER' at the RECEPTION

The wedding candle, two side candles, matches and tapers for lighting are set up at the table where the newly married couple will be seated. Just before the entrance of the bridal party, the parents, or some other family representatives, light the two side candles. The bridal party enters the reception hall according to custom.

Once all are in place a designated person may offer a blessing for the meal using the following or similar words:

**Lord Jesus, be present among us as you were present at Cana in Galilee.
Come with abundant gifts for N. and N.
May their union in marriage truly be an image your love for your Church.
Bless all of us, too, who have come to join with them in joyful celebration.
We thank you, Lord, for this food and for the grace to eat it together.
May we all feast with you one day at the banquet of eternal life.
We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, who lives and reigns forever and ever.
Amen.**

Immediately following the blessing, one of the attendants, possibly the maid/matron of honor, continues the prayer as the couple proceeds to light the unity candle, saying:

**We continue to ask God's blessing upon N. and N.
as we celebrate their commitment to each other
in the sacrament of matrimony.**

**As a sign of their marriage, they light the unity candle from the two candles
which represent their individual lives.**

Lighting their tapers from the two side candles, the bride and groom join the two flames and light the unity candle. As they do so, the attendant continues:

**As the two flames become one,
symbolizing their union with each other in the Lord,
we ask God to bless their marriage,
and to keep N. and N. close to Him in the years ahead.
May they always turn to God in times of joy and in times of need.
We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The two side candles are extinguished. The best man may then offer the customary toast and the reception continues.