

*The Catholic Community of Falmouth  
Parishes of St. Anthony, St. Elizabeth Seton, St. Patrick  
Chapels of St. Joseph and St. Thomas  
Guidelines for Marriage Preparation*

**Congratulations!**

**Congratulations on your recent engagement! We rejoice with you and pledge to you our prayers and support. As Catholics, we believe that marriage is a sacred covenant of love in Christ between a man and a woman for the purpose of sustaining a community of life and love and to accept children lovingly from God. Marriage is a sacrament: a visible sign of Christ's presence which empowers us through His grace. In the living out of this sacrament, God's love is made present in our world.**

**Of all the many preparations which you will make over these months prior to your wedding day, none is more significant than your spiritual preparation. Please make the time to pray together by coming to Mass each week, and, for those who are Catholic, to avail yourselves to the sacramental life of the Church. During our time together, we will discuss not only the details of the wedding, but, more importantly, we will assist you to prepare for your life together as husband and wife in the sacred bond of marriage.**

**The steps for marriage preparation for those contemplating marriage in one of our three parishes (and their chapels) are explained as follows.**

**Step 1: Initial appointment**

At least 8 months before the wedding, please call the parish office to make an appointment with one of the priests. It will only be at this appointment that the determination will be made as to the date of the wedding. **No dates will be discussed or booked over the phone or with a parish secretary.** The necessary paperwork will then be initiated for the wedding. **To schedule an appointment, call the main office 508-548-0108. ALL appointments, unless otherwise noted, will be at the collaborative main office which is at St. Anthony's parish offices, 167 East Falmouth Highway.** While most couples already have a particular date in mind, no firm commitments should be made until this first meeting. Because of the parish schedule of Masses, confessions, and baptisms, weddings are scheduled at the following times:

Friday: afternoon/evening: any time

Saturday: 10:00am - 2:00pm; 5:30pm to 7:00pm (at some of the churches).

Sunday: 2:00 pm or 3:00pm

Please note: St. Thomas Chapel on Falmouth Heights and St. Joseph Chapel in Woods Hole are available for weddings from Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day weekend. We remind you that there is no air conditioning or heat in these chapels.

A couple where both parties are of the Catholic faith generally will be married during a Mass. A marriage of a Catholic with someone of another faith tradition may be celebrated either at a Mass or at a wedding ceremony which is primarily a Liturgy of the Word and the Rite of Marriage.

After the initial appointment, the process of marriage will involve several meetings to deepen a couple's understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage that they will celebrate as well as to deepen their knowledge and love of each other.

If the couple is not from the immediate area, the priest will discuss how you might prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage at your local parish.

### **Step 2: FOCCUS Process**

FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study) is a self-diagnostic inventory designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their unique relationship. An appointment is to be made with the priest preparing you for the Sacrament of Matrimony to set up the meeting. Please plan for this meeting to last about an hour.

### **Step 3: FOCCUS Follow-up**

Several weeks after the completion of the FOCCUS Inventory, you will meet once again with the priest to discuss how the information from the FOCCUS process can be used for the deepening communication between a couple. The marriage preparation program (steps 4&5) will then be discussed along with the registration procedures.

### **Step 4: Marriage Preparation Program**

Fall River Diocesan guidelines require that a couple preparing for marriage attend a marriage preparation program. The options include:

1. **Diocesan marriage preparation programs:** With a larger group of engaged couples from different parishes, these programs are available in various areas of the diocese. They are generally held on weekends. You may register on-line at [www.fallriverfaithformation.org](http://www.fallriverfaithformation.org) under “Marriage”, then to “Marriage Prep”.
2. **Other programs:** If you are not from the area, you may participate in a program in your diocese or parish.

### **Step 5: Meeting with the Priest**

An appointment is now made with the priest in order to briefly discuss the previous programs. In addition, plans for the Wedding Mass/Ceremony will be finalized. You will receive a handout (also on line) to plan all the details of the Mass/ceremony, including the readings and other details about the ceremony.. Your choices should be made prior to this meeting so that they can be finalized at this meeting. The rehearsal date and time will then be set. The opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) will also be offered.

### **Step 6: Rehearsal**

Generally, the rehearsal is scheduled an evening or two before the wedding. All involved in the wedding party are welcome to participate. The rehearsal will be led by one of the parish wedding coordinators. It is **important** that all arrive at least ten minutes early so that the rehearsal will begin on time.

### **Step 7: Your Wedding Day!**

## Paperwork Needed

Each Catholic party is to bring a **newly issued** copy of their baptism and confirmation certificates **dated no longer than six months prior to the wedding**. A baptized person of another faith is to bring a copy of his/her baptismal certificate. An inter-faith marriage requires a few additional forms. The priest or deacon will explain this to you at your first meeting. If neither party is from one of our three parishes, you will be asked to provide a letter from your local parish priest granting permission for your marriage to take place here.

A priest/deacon who is friend of the family is welcome to celebrate the wedding. In this case, they must obtain a letter of suitability from their bishop or superior which is to be presented to the priest/deacon before he is allowed to perform the ceremony.

**A marriage license**, issued from a city or town in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must be obtained approximately one month from the date of the wedding. Please contact the city/town for further information. This license is to be given to the priest/deacon preparing you for marriage as soon as you receive it and certainly by the week of the wedding so that it may be included with your necessary paperwork.

## Fees

**Church:** Our parish communities are pleased to support you in the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The general donation in support of the parish is \$500. If this is a hardship, please feel free to discuss with the priest or deacon. Your donation is certainly appreciated and goes directly to the parish.

**Music:** The fee for musician(s) is in addition to the church donation and is determined by them. Please contact the music minister of the church where your ceremony will occur to discuss the specific details of your wedding. The following are the music ministers of our parishes and their contact information:

**St. Anthony:** Mrs. Kathleen Kanaley: [kkanaley@comcast.net](mailto:kkanaley@comcast.net)

**St. Elizabeth Seton/ St. Joseph Chapel:** Mrs. Kari Fietek [kfietek@falmouthcatholic.org](mailto:kfietek@falmouthcatholic.org)

**St. Patrick/ St. Thomas Chapel:** Mrs. Barbara Leighton: [bkleighton@verizon.net](mailto:bkleighton@verizon.net)

The music minister will provide you with details about the process for choosing liturgical music for your wedding as well as the various options (vocalists, instrumentalists) that are available. You may visit our collaborative website under weddings to listen to the various options for use in church. A couple should not make arrangements with any soloist or other musician until first consulting with the music minister of our parishes. All fees concerning music are separate from the Church donation and are the responsibility of the couple.

**Altar Servers:** The parish generally provides a server for the wedding. Please consult with the priest/deacon. The general offering for our youth is \$15 for each server.

**Wedding Coordinator:** The wedding coordinators will assist you at both the rehearsal and on the day of your wedding. The coordinator will contact you during the week prior to the wedding to introduce herself/himself and to ascertain information from you regarding the ceremony. Our coordinators are compensated for their service and the normal donation for their services is \$80.

**Envelopes:** The envelopes for the Church/server/coordinator/others involved in the liturgy as well as the marriage license should be brought the week before the wedding or to the rehearsal. The fee for those involved with the music will be handled between the music director and the couple.

## **Other Items**

### **Flowers and Decorations**

It is usual custom of the wedding couple to provide flowers for the sanctuary area. No flowers are to be placed on the altar. If you are planning to attach flowers or bows to the ends of the benches, please use wire, clips, or elastic cords. Please do not use adhesives or thumb tacks which can damage the finish on the benches.

### **Runner (white carpet)**

Because of the potential danger of tripping on the white runner by guests at the wedding, please do not plan on using a runner at the wedding.

### **Wedding favors/rice throwing**

Please discourage the throwing of rice at the wedding since this can create a hazard on the walks. No wedding favors, such as bubbles, rose petals, butterflies, birdfeed, bells, etc., should be given out in church prior to the ceremony to uphold the sacredness of the Marriage Liturgy.

### **Alcoholic Beverages**

Any alcoholic beverages, both inside and outside of the church, are not appropriate and therefore prohibited. If you are hiring a limousine, please instruct the company that alcoholic drinks are not permitted on the grounds of the church.

### **Receiving Line**

It is preferred that the receiving line take place at the reception since there is often a parish Mass after the time that weddings are scheduled and time will be needed to prepare the church for the parish Mass. Speak with the priest if you have a concern or question.

### **Record of Marriage**

Your marriage will be recorded in the following parish offices:

St. Anthony: St. Anthony's Parish Office

St. Elizabeth Seton and St. Joseph: St. Elizabeth Seton Parish Office

St. Patrick and St. Thomas: St. Patrick Parish Office.

The priest or deacon performing the ceremony will fill in the marriage license and send it to and at the City/Town Hall from where you obtained a marriage license, where it will be recorded.

### **Parish Registration**

After your wedding, you become a new family, united in Christ. It is important for you to register as a family in the parish in which you will be residing.

### **Cancellation/Postponement of Wedding**

At any time, if you decide to postpone or cancel your plans to get married in one of our parish churches or chapels, please contact the parish office.

### **Photographer/Videographer**

The photographer/videographer is to consult with the priest celebrating the Mass/ceremony to ascertain the proper procedure during the Mass or service.

### **Livestream**

Livestreaming is available at St. Anthony's Church only. Speak to the priest as to how your guests may join you for your wedding liturgy on that day.

If there are any questions that arise, please do not hesitate to contact the priest or deacon who is responsible for your wedding. Phone number for main office is 508-548-0108 All information regarding the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage may be found on the collaborative website: [www.falmouthcatholic.org](http://www.falmouthcatholic.org)