

Marriage Guidelines

St. Mary's Catholic Church, Palmdale



MARRIAGE IN CHRIST

With prayers and best wishes we share in your joy as you prepare to celebrate your love for each other in marriage. The Catholic Church sees marriage as a blessing from God from the beginning of creation and marriage between Christians as a Sacrament that symbolizes Christ's unbreakable union with his Church. We see every marriage as having a deep significance to the couple exchanging vows of love for life and also of deep significance to the parish community as a whole. These guidelines are presented to facilitate your planning and to help acquaint you with the regulations of St. Mary's and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

THE PLACE, DATE AND TIME

Place: The Archdiocese of Los Angeles requires that Catholic weddings be celebrated in a sacred place. It may be celebrated in the Church of either the bride or groom. If the marriage is between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the ceremony would usually take place in the Church of the Catholic party although it is possible to receive permission for the wedding to take place in a Non-Catholic Church or synagogue.

Date: Engaged Couples must contact a parish priest or deacon at least six months prior to the wedding date. We ask that you contact us at least one year before the wedding if one Catholic party has not made their First Holy Communion or Confirmation so preparations can be made to receive these Sacraments before the wedding if possible. When you meet with the priest or deacon you will participate in an assessment process on your readiness for marriage. The discussion points will include your faith experience, your relationship as a couple and your views on Christian marriage. A decision to proceed with or delay the wedding is made by the priest and couple following this assessment process. The wedding date is then finalized.

Time: Weddings at St. Mary's are on Saturdays at 11:30AM; 1:00 PM; 2:30 PM

Special Circumstances: If either party is under 20 years of age or shows marked immaturity;
If there is a pregnancy involved;
If there is non-practice of the Catholic Faith by a Catholic party;
If there is reasonable objection to the marriage by a parent or parents;
If there is a prior marriage to someone else,

no wedding date can be scheduled until the issue is resolved and your freedom to marry in the Catholic Church has been established in accord with the Guidelines of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The priest or deacon who will celebrate your wedding will meet with you a number of times to help in your marriage preparation. A visiting priest or deacon will need permission and delegation from the Pastor of St. Mary's to officiate at a wedding here. In such cases, the couple should tell the priest or deacon making the arrangements for the wedding the name and address of the visiting priest or deacon and if the guest clergyman will help in preparing the couple for marriage and in doing the necessary paperwork.

Necessary Documents:

- A new Baptismal certificate for each Catholic party must be obtained from the Church of Baptism (issued within the last 6 months). Contact the Catholic Church of your Baptism to obtain a new copy of your Baptismal certificate from the Church. The Church of Baptism will be notified after your wedding here so that the marriage may be recorded in your Baptismal record and will be noted on all subsequent Baptismal certificates issued;
- Certificates of First Holy Communion and Confirmation (photocopies would suffice) so we will know when and where you received these Sacraments; Non-Catholics are asked to bring any record or information they may have about their Christian Baptism; Two competent witnesses (preferably parents or brothers and sisters) are asked to meet with a priest or deacon or notary to give sworn testimony of the freedom to marry in the Catholic Church for each person being married. (Forms are available from the parish for this purpose. Please call for an appointment); if either party is a widow or a widower, a certificate of death of the former spouse must be presented.
- The couple must obtain a marriage license from the State of California. The marriage license and return envelope must be presented to the Parish Office prior to the wedding date. The license is valid for 90 days and can be obtained at the County Registrar's Office in Lancaster (at 1208 W. Avenue J-2, Phone Number: 661-945-6446). (Please note: in California your wedding ceremony in Church is also the civil ceremony recognized by the State of California – you will be married civilly and religiously in Church. Do not go through a civil ceremony in the Courthouse or elsewhere).

MARRIAGE PREPARATION CLASSES:

You will be required to attend one of the Archdiocesan approved marriage preparation programs. At these programs you will hear talks and have time to share on all aspects of marriage (e.g., life long commitment; communication; finances; sexual intimacy; children; the place of God in your life and marriage...). We ask that you complete the program no later than three months before the wedding date. There are two marriage preparation programs in our area:

- Engaged Encounter week-end (highly recommended)
- One-day marriage preparation programs.

The priest or deacon preparing you for marriage will share information with you on these programs. You will receive a certificate of completion at the end of the program and we ask you to present this with the other documents for your marriage preparation.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

The Parish Wedding Coordinator must be contacted and involved with your wedding preparation. Please call our Wedding Coordinator soon after you set the date of your wedding with the priest or deacon. She will meet with you and assist you in preparing the Readings, Prayers and all the liturgy of your wedding ceremony. She will schedule and conduct the rehearsal and be present at your wedding ceremony to make sure everything runs smoothly. She will advise you on Church customs, the Unity Candle, flowers, correct wedding etiquette, etc. Please call our Wedding Coordinator: Connie Vasquez at (661) 947-1697

WEDDING CEREMONY

The priest or deacon or Wedding Coordinator will be happy to help you in planning the Wedding Liturgy. You will receive a book to help you in choosing the prayers and readings and the different possibilities of involving your family members or friends in the Wedding Liturgy.

Music: The Wedding Coordinator will suggest or recommend musicians available from our parish and appropriate music for a Church ceremony.

Flowers: The parish welcomes all florists but recommends no more than four (4) large sprays or bouquets. We ask that you leave two flower arrangements for Sunday Mass as a thanksgiving to God. You may wish to talk with the Wedding Coordinator about the possibility of sharing flowers (and their expense) with other couples being married the same day. No home candelabras are permitted in Church because of wax damage. Our Church aisle is 75 Feet long. If a runner is used, it is the responsibility of the florist to remove it immediately after the ceremony.

Photography: Your photographer(s) must see the Wedding Coordinator before the ceremony begins for an explanation of Church rules. Flash and floodlights may be used only when the couple is coming down the aisle. Please use no flash or floods during the ceremony itself. No standing on the pews. No photographers moving around the sanctuary during the Ceremony. Posed pictures may be taken for 10-15 minutes after the wedding unless the Wedding ceremony ended late and another ceremony is about to begin.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

You and your Catholic wedding party and guests are encouraged to celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist as part of your wedding preparation. Confessions are heard each Saturday at St. Mary's from 3:30 to 5:00 PM and immediately after the Saturday 5:30 PM Mass or you can make an appointment with a priest of the Parish for another time. A priest is not usually available at the time of the wedding rehearsal.

DECORUM:

St. Mary's Church is a place of worship. Quiet, respect and dignity should be maintained at all times. Alcoholic beverages are forbidden in the Church or on the property of St. Mary's either before or after the wedding rehearsal or wedding ceremony. Rice, birdseed, confetti, rose petals, etc., are strictly prohibited. No exceptions, please! It costs to clean up such things and is also a safety hazard (especially for our older parishioners). Please inform your friends and relatives of this regulation.

PROMPTNESS:

It is imperative that weddings and rehearsals start on time as a courtesy to guests, the Priest or deacon, the musicians and other weddings or Masses that follow after your Wedding or rehearsal. Please advise your wedding party to arrive at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled time. The many activities of the Church make it important to keep on schedule.

DONATIONS AND FEES:

It is customary to make a free will offering to the Church to help cover all the expenses of the Church. A suggested minimal donation is \$400 or more if it can be afforded. The fee for the Church Wedding Coordinator is \$100. A refundable deposit of \$100 must be made to St. Mary's Church at the time of setting the date for the wedding. If the wedding does not take place at St. Mary's and the wedding is cancelled within three months of the wedding date (except for good cause), \$50 of the deposit will not be refunded. If Church workers are required to clean up the Church or rest rooms or Church grounds after your wedding or damage is done to the Church sound system by visiting musicians, the \$100 deposit will not be refunded because of labor costs. Fees for musicians will vary depending on the number of musicians and the use of soloists. The Wedding Coordinator will advise you on musicians available and their fees. If you wish to have altar servers helping at your wedding, please make arrangements with the Wedding Coordinator. We suggest that you give each server \$5-10 after the service. These donations or fees do not go to the priest or deacon who officiates at your wedding. You may wish to give a personal gift to the priest or deacon. Fees for musicians should be paid to the musicians or the Wedding Coordinator at the time of the rehearsal. All other fees (including the Wedding Coordinator's fee) should be Paid to the to the Parish Office one month before the wedding. If these suggested donations or fees cause a hardship to you or your family, please discuss this with the priest or deacon. Special arrangements will be made in the case of financial difficulties.

CONVALIDATION OR BLESSING OF AN EXISTING MARRIAGE:

In the convalidation or blessing in Church of an existing marriage, some of the guidelines listed here may be dispensed with (e.g., a donation to the Church may be given instead of the suggested fees above and use of the Wedding Coordinator may not be necessary). However, if you plan to have a large wedding ceremony with bridesmaids, music, limousine, flowers, etc., then the use of the Wedding Coordinator and other guidelines above must be followed. The priest or deacon preparing you for the blessing of your marriage in Church will advise you and help you in this matter.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HELPING YOU IN YOUR MARRIAGE

