

Celebrating Your Marriage at St. Mary's Church

Congratulations on your engagement! We welcome your inquiry about marrying in St. Mary's Church. We are happy to assist you as you prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony and promise to do all we can to make your wedding day reflect the importance and beauty of your commitment.

The Catholic Church esteems marriage as sacred – one of the seven sacraments of the continual presence of Christ among us. Saint Paul says the union of husband and wife is a sign of the union of Christ and the Church.

In witnessing your marriage, our Church community desires to uphold and support you faithfully for the rest of your lives as you grow together in God who is Love. We undertake this work with you as you begin preparing to live the Sacrament of Marriage.

This booklet is intended to inform you of the preparation process here at St. Mary's. It will also help you plan a wedding at St. Mary's Church in conformity with the Church's understanding of Christian Marriage. We desire to work with you so that your wedding may be a faith-filled, dignified, beautiful and memorable celebration. Please do not hesitate to contact us with your questions.

The Marriage Preparation Process

Whether you are an active-registered or non-registered/non-active, the marriage preparation outlined here is required for a wedding at St. Mary's. The first step is to meet with the pastor. After the initial meeting, he may meet with you for three sessions and/or have you attend a Marriage Class. The class provides a deep understanding of the Church's teaching on Marriage, an introduction to the Wedding process at St. Mary's, and the opportunity to complete the FOCCUS survey. (FOCCUS is a series of questions designed to facilitate discussion between the couple and mentor couple about topics related to married life. The couple's responses to the survey will be an aid to other parts of the preparation process.) All Catholics will need to get a current (within the last 6 months) copy of your baptismal certificate from the parish where you were baptized. (The baptismal certificate should include the full notations of all the sacraments you have received.) If you are not a parishioner of St. Mary's, you will need to provide a letter from your pastor granting his permission for your wedding at St. Mary's. Return the information and signature page at the back of this book to the office.

Once this information is turned into the office, the pastor will promptly set an appointment with you to set a wedding date. It is advisable for you to contact the parish as soon as you are engaged or one year before your desired date.

The preparation process at St. Mary's also entails 3 meetings with an assigned mentor couple, attendance at an Engaged Encounter weekend, and training in Natural Family Planning. Information on Engaged Encounter can be found at www.engaged.org. Information about Natural Family Planning training is provided by the parish

The last step in preparation will be to meet with the priest preparing you at least 1 month before the date to plan the ceremony. All parts of the preparation process are to be completed before this last meeting, if the wedding is to proceed as planned.

Setting the Date and Time

A wedding date may be set only after meeting with the priest. We are flexible in setting a time for the wedding.

The time of the rehearsal is set with the officiating priest. Rehearsals start promptly at the established time and last less than one hour.

Documents Needed

- **Baptismal Record:** A copy of your baptismal certificate, issued in the last six months, is required for your wedding file. Information about your confirmation must be included. Contact the parish of your baptism and ask them to send a copy of your baptismal certificate with "notations" of all sacraments received and with the parish seal stamped upon it. Non-Catholics are encouraged, but not required, to produce a baptismal certificate. These must be sent to our office prior to the meeting with the priest in order to set a wedding date.
- If either of you has been married before, an annulment declaration from the Church must also be presented. Please note that an annulment is a process that may take more than a year to complete.
- **Marriage Class Certificate**
- **Engaged Encounter Certificate:** the certificate of attendance at Engaged Encounter is also to be presented as part of your marriage file.
- **Natural Family Planning Training Certificate.**

- **Marriage License:** the civil license is given to the priest at the time of the rehearsal. You must apply for a marriage license in the county of your residence. While marriage licenses are valid throughout the State of Ohio, some restrictions vary by county. Please confer with your county courthouse for applicable restrictions.

Officiating Priest

Normally, the parish priest who has assisted in your preparation for marriage will officiate at your marriage ceremony. A priest who is your relative is welcome to officiate at the wedding in one of two ways: he may concelebrate the ceremony or he may be the principal officiant if it is arranged with the pastor. If a priest from outside of St. Mary's is officiating, he will need to sign the Visiting Priest Agreement and will need to provide a letter from his bishop guaranteeing he is in good standing. The agreement and letter should be given to the priest of St. Mary's preparing you by the time of your last meeting.

Please contact the Secretary of State for information pertaining to the civil license necessary for an out-of-state priest or deacon to preside over the ceremony:

Secretary of the State of Ohio
180 East Broad Street Columbus, OH 43215
614-466-4980
www.state.oh.us/sos

The Liturgy of Marriage

A Church wedding is a sacred ritual of the Church celebrated by the participants. As such, the religious nature of the ceremony is carefully preserved.

Your wedding is a part of the faith life of our parish. You, as the ministers of the Sacrament, have chosen to express freely your love and commitment to each other. The Rite of Marriage is centered on the exchange of vows and the blessing and exchange of rings. The ritual conveys the Church's desire to witness your vows, to strengthen your fidelity to them, and to prayerfully support you in your life together. As with all liturgical celebrations, the full and active participation of those present is desirable. **The Rite of Marriage takes place in one of two contexts: within Mass for two baptized, confirmed, and practicing Catholics or outside of Mass if either the bride or groom is not Catholic. Customs not contained in the Rite of Marriage are prohibited in Church but may be appropriate at the wedding reception.**

All wedding plans are finalized with the priest before the rehearsal.

Readings

The Rite of Marriage includes selected scriptural readings and prayers. You will find these selections in a special preparation booklet given by the priest

Music

Only liturgically appropriate music may be used at weddings. The Director of Music must approve all music, sacred or classical. Popular, secular music or music from the theater is reserved for the wedding reception.

The parish provides qualified musicians for your wedding. Only the parish musicians may be used. You may contact the Director of Music through the parish office to set up an appointment to plan the music for your wedding. Please refer to the Wedding Music Guidelines that accompany this booklet.

Ministers

Friends and relatives of the couple may participate in the liturgy in various roles. You may wish to select individuals to serve as readers and gift bearers at the liturgy. So that these ministers feel comfortable, they should be properly trained. Decisions about these ministers may be made when the liturgy is planned with the priest.

If you wish to invite children to be part of the ceremony, they must be 5 years or older.

Environment

Decorations

Very simple decorations are appropriate to enhance the liturgical space of St. Mary's Church. No decorations are to be placed on the altar. Normally, two live flower arrangements placed near the altar are sufficient for a wedding. The flowers are given to the church for the weekend Masses. Seasonal decorations (e.g. Easter) provide the environment for all weddings during those seasons. Florists will need to read and sign a Florist Agreement. This should be turned by the final meeting with the priest.

For safety reasons, the use of candelabra, lamps, and floral displays with candles is prohibited. **An aisle cloth is not used in our Church.**

The unity candle is not part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage; therefore, it is not included in the wedding ceremony.

For aesthetic and safety reasons, rice, birdseed, confetti, balloons, soap bubbles, alcohol, gum and food are not permitted on Church property. If any of the wedding party

have alcohol or drugs or are found to be under its influence at the wedding, the wedding will be immediately cancelled.

Dressing Facilities

A room can be made available (RCIA room in school building) for the bride and bridesmaid for dressing. After the ceremony, the rooms are to be clean and furnished as found. No alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs/paraphernalia or firearms are permitted on the church property prior to, during and after the wedding. The bride and groom are responsible for communicating this to members of the wedding party and family members. Disregard of this policy will result in immediate cancellation of the wedding ceremony and forfeiture of deposit.

Chewing Gum

Because of the sacredness of the worship space, chewing gum during the ceremony or rehearsal or at any time inside the church is not permitted. Any deposits of chewed gum found in the worship space before, during or after the ceremony will result in forfeiture of the deposit.

Receiving Line and Guest Book

Out of courtesy for your guests and out of respect for the sacred space and service schedule of the Church, receiving lines and guest books are held at the reception and not at the Church.

Photography

Photographers are welcome to take pictures before, during and after the ceremony. The Church itself is not a studio but a sacred place in which a community of believers worship. The photographer and videographer should keep this in mind before, during and after the celebration of marriage. We ask that the following rules be observed:

- Photographers and videographers may not enter the sanctuary (raised platform around the altar).
- Formal portraits with studio equipment such as screens, props, etc. are not to be used in the Church.
- Church furnishings are not to be moved for pictures.
- Flash photography may be taken during the processional and recessional only and not during the ceremony itself.
- The photographer is not allowed to stop or slow the procession (only from front of church and not in the aisle) or any other part of the liturgy.
- Photographers should be prepared to begin taking the formal pictures immediately after the wedding party leaves in the recessional. Pictures may be taken while the congregation departs.
- All photography is to be finished ½ hour before the next scheduled use of the facility.
- Family and friends typically want to take pictures during the wedding. In order to prevent situations that distract from the sacredness and dignity of the ceremony, please consider placing a sign at the door, a note in the program or have the cantor request that guests avoid excessive picture taking.
- Photographer/videographers will have to read and sign a Photographer/videographer Agreement. This must be turned in at the final meeting with the priest. Photographers who violate this agreement will not be allowed to return to St. Mary's.

Situations Requiring Special Attention

- Co-habiting couples present a serious concern for the Church. Co-habitation and sex before marriage are grave sins and contrary to the sacramental good of Marriage. St. Paul writes: "Fornicators will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven." (1 Cor 6:9). Living together before marriage

seriously compromises the teaching of the Church on the Sacrament of Marriage. It also can compromise the freedom of couples to enter into Marriage; statistically the divorce rate is higher among couples who lived together prior to their wedding. The decision to live together deliberately or inadvertently shows disregard for the sacred nature of the marriage vocation and covenant. Couples are encouraged to move out. If this is not possible they should at least sleep in separate bedrooms, abstain from sexual relations, and inform their family and friends of this change in lifestyle. They can still marry at St. Mary's; however, the ceremony cannot take place in the context of Mass because of scandal.

- Pregnancy is another concern. If pregnancy affects the timing of the marriage, the couple may undertake preparations in the usual manner. If the pregnancy affects the decision to marry, the couple may be asked to delay setting a date until it is established that both bride and groom are able to give full and free consent to the responsibilities and obligations of marriage.
- At least one party to a Catholic marriage must be an active, practicing Catholic. Sometimes a couple that does not regularly practice their faith approaches the Church requesting a wedding date. Often the preparation period for marriage will be extended so that the couple may demonstrate their good intentions, begin active practice of the Catholic faith, and restore their connection to the community of faith.
- An annulment is required for anyone who has been previously married. This applies to both Catholics and non-Catholics wanting to marry Catholics. If either one of you has been married before, please inform the priest at the first meeting. He will be able to explain the annulment

process and will be ready to help you begin the application.

We have reviewed this document and agree to follow the policies contained in it.

Name of Bride: _____

Signature: _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Number: _____

Work Number: _____

Parishioner of St. Mary's _____

Name of Groom: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Number: _____

Work Number: _____

Parishioner of St. Mary's _____

Complete this page and return to:

St. Mary Church
524 Sixth Street
Portsmouth OH 45662

Please call the parish office to schedule an appointment with a priest after you have returned this agreement.