



## Dear Bride and Groom,

The parish is always described as a *community of faith*. The parish and its individual members may be more or less committed to that faith...but there can be no doubt that **belief in Jesus Christ is at the heart of St. Mary's Parish identity as Roman Catholic and Christian**. The faith awareness that is therefore necessary for marriage in the parish certainly includes trust in God and in Jesus Christ, but **also includes a faith that has *presence, relationship and participation* in the Catholic Church**. After all, **that is what the sacramental parish is...a local community within the Catholic Church**. Any sacramental celebration within that Church is the celebration of the faith of the Catholic community in *this* parish.

What is meant by "**presence, relationship and participation**" in the Catholic Church? Simply stated, it means that *you are an active Catholic, that you are struggling to live Christian lives of prayer, moral uprightness, loving service to your neighbor, ongoing education in your faith, social investment in this community (or if you are from outside the parish, the parish in which you are a member), that you have a financial investment in the support of your church and that you celebrate the Eucharist frequently*. This is what it means to be a *registered and active member of a parish*. We hope that you and your spouse-to-be are the kind of persons described. **What if you aren't?** Then some soul-searching will have to take place.

Consider the following: We appreciate that belief and practice within the Church can at times be a difficult and trying thing. Who ever said that following Jesus would not have a cross? It is quite possible for one to "drift" from religious practice in one's young adult years. You may not have been to Mass for some time. You may strongly disagree with the Church's stance on some moral or doctrinal issue. Difficulties with your parents or with your pastor may have turned you lax or prodigal in the freedom of post-high school years. Well, now as you prepare to "settle down" and set up a household of your own, it is time to look again at *how* you are living out your religious convictions. We ask you to begin again, to come home, to pray together, to worship and praise God together in Sunday worship, ask questions, celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist together once more if you have been away for a while.

In fact, such a process *should have already begun* in your life if you are approaching us for marriage in the Church. **You should be maturing in your faith**. Those who continue on the "flip side" and in ways that may have colored their youth should not presume to *use* the church as a *nice setting* for a wedding. That would be sacrilegious. "*But I was brought up as Catholic and while I don't practice my faith, I still consider myself Catholic.*" Marriage in the Church is not a celebration of a *past* faith. You wouldn't marry someone who said to you, "*I loved you a few years ago so I want to marry you now.*" Using the same logic, is it *really honest* to request a church wedding on the basis of *past* faith alone? "*Well, I really will be interested in getting back to the church in a few years.*" Well, that's great! We'll support you in any way we can. But, would you marry someone who said to you, "*I want to marry you now, and I believe that, in time, I will actually start to love you?*" How honest is it to request a marriage in the church now on the promise of "future" faith and a "future" relationship with the Church?

I speak bluntly because of the high value we place on marriage as church; **we take the Sacrament of Marriage seriously!** We will try to respect your very real situation and help you to grow in your faith. At the same time, you will be asked to be honest regarding your own commitment toward actively living out your faith both in personal prayer and service as well as public worship and service in the faith community.

We hope that the experience of preparing for your life as a married couple will draw you closer to each other and deepen your spiritual life as lived out as an individual, as a couple and as a member of a faith community. We will work to help you make your wedding liturgy an expression of that faith according to the Rites of the Catholic Church and the policies of this parish.

Fr. Steve Binsfeld, pastor

# I'm Getting Married! What do I do?

## A Checklist for Marriage Preparation for couples who want to be married in the Catholic Church.

Congratulations on your engagement. Marriage is a big step in your life. We at St. Mary's will do our best to help you prepare not only for the wedding liturgy, but also for life *after* the wedding. This is a checklist for you to follow. Those items with \* are important first steps.

\* Reserve your date with the parish secretary. The date will be confirmed once the preparation work is under way. A non-refundable reservation deposit of \$100 is required to hold the date and you must sign the provided contract stating that you are aware of and accept the policies of St. Mary's Church.

If you are not a parishioner (or a son or daughter of a parishioner living away from home), a **letter from your pastor** giving us permission to witness your marriage needs to be presented to Fr. Steve.

\* Enroll for the Marriage Course or an Engaged Encounter sponsored by a Catholic Diocese in Minnesota. After the weekend, you will be given a certificate that must be presented to the Pastor. Contact the "Office of Marriage and Family Life" ([www.stcdio.org](http://www.stcdio.org) or 320-252-4721) for dates and availability.

\* Take and review the Fully Engaged pre-marriage inventory with the Fr. Steve or at married couple trained in reviewing the inventory. This is not a "test," but a tool to aid discussion that focuses on various aspects of married life. This requires about 3-4 meetings. It should be finished at least two months before your wedding.

Fill out the Pre-Nuptial Investigation required by the Diocese with Fr. Steve. This document gathers basic information and inquires about your freedom to marry in the Church and civilly.

Baptism Certificates are needed for EACH of you. Call or write the parish of your baptism and request that one be sent to you. If you were baptized at the St. Mary's here in Alexandria, yours will be on file here.

Freedom to Marry Forms are to be filled out for the bride and the groom if the priest witnessing your marriage does not know you personally. The form is to be filled out by *someone who knows you well* in the presence of a priest or his designate.

\* Declaration of Nullity. If you have been previously married *you must seek an annulment before your wedding can be scheduled in the Catholic Church*. Depending on the type of annulment needed, the process can take from 2 to 15 months. Contact your pastor or the Tribunal Office of the Diocese of St. Cloud at 320-251-6557.

Procure your Wedding License from the State of Minnesota. It is valid for 6 months but because of the 5-day processing time, applications must be made at least 5 working days prior to the wedding. The license is to be given to the Parish Secretary two weeks before the wedding so she may prepare it for the liturgy. After you complete preparation, a signed statement will be given you by Fr. Steve that entitles you to obtain marriage license at a reduced cost because of the time of preparation.

Begin to study and select Scripture readings for your wedding liturgy. St. Mary's has a folder of Scripture selections ready for your use.

Planning the Liturgy. Even though your wedding is personal, it is a public liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. See the attached pages for information on liturgy planning, wedding music planning, decorating, photography, and the general policies of the St. Mary's and Catholic liturgy. **Call St. Mary's Liturgy and Music Director, Laurie Youngers to plan the liturgy and to have assistance finding musicians.** Our policies for music, decorating and photography must be followed.

## WEDDINGS AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY

Many people must work together to make your wedding liturgy a memorable and beautiful worship experience according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church.

### **This is the fee scale for St. Mary's**

- \$450 for registered parishioners
- \$750 for non-parishioners

### **This fee covers the following services:**

--Offering for the use of the Church facility--

*Use of sanctuary for wedding rehearsal, pictures (two and one-half hours before the wedding, ending 30 minutes before wedding), the wedding, bridal room, and Great Hall (waiting room)*

- Offering for the priest or deacon who witnesses your wedding
- A wedding liturgy and music planning session with the Music & Liturgy Director
- Marriage preparation meetings with the pastor or his delegates (and their materials and training)
- Assistance in preparing a camera-reading order of service for your wedding worship aid.
- Copyright fees for music/text for programs
- The services of the wedding coordinator who will conduct the rehearsal and be present for pictures.

Our musicians are compensated separately. They are professionals who know how to use the resources of our space for liturgy and are able to set up what is needed for our sound and light system. Generally, this is what they ask for a wedding. Keep in mind that it takes them anywhere from 4-7 hours to prepare for your ceremony.

- A parish keyboardist                 \$150
- A parish cantor / song leader   \$100

\* If an outside soloist or instrumentalist is asked to sing or play select pieces by the bride and groom, a minimum of one extra rehearsal is required. Our parish keyboard players do this at the rate of \$35 per hour. The soloist is responsible for contacting the parish keyboardist at least 3 weeks prior to the day of the wedding to schedule a rehearsal, which cannot take place the day for the day before the wedding as the church or the organist is often unavailable those times. The soloist or instrumentalist is also responsible for coming to the rehearsal prepared, that is--*knowing* the music. It often happens that guest musicians do not know the pieces they are to perform. Our musicians can also assist the bride and groom in selecting music that uses both our cantor and the extra musicians together if the bride and groom so decide.

\*We can assist you in lining up instrumentalists for your wedding, such as a violinist or flute player. We are accustomed to working with many fine musicians who regularly assist with music at the Church of St Mary.

### **A non-refundable down payment to St. Mary's of \$100 is required to hold the date, due upon booking.**

Why do we do this? This discourages those who reserve dates at several churches to make sure they 'have a church.' It is our experience that some couples reserve a date at several churches, then decide upon another church and do not inform us of their decision. This is unfair to others who call to reserve dates for special events at St. Mary's.

### **Two (2) weeks before the wedding, the parish office needs to receive these items:**

- The Marriage License** (this needs to be completed by the secretary and will be placed in your wedding file until the day of the wedding).
  - A check made out to the St. Mary's keyboardist** you engaged, with his/her name on check for **\$150\***
  - A check made out to the song leader** you engaged, with his/her name on the check for **\$100**
  - A check to St. Mary's for the balance of the fee** (\$350 parishioners / \$650 non- parishioners)
  - \*A check made out to any instrumentalists** (*if you arranged for one*) for the amount arranged
- Our office will make sure the musicians receive their checks before the wedding liturgy begins.

## WEDDING MUSIC AT ST. MARY'S

People remember their wedding day for a variety of reasons. We hope that one of the special and meaningful memories you will have is one of the promises of faithfulness, permanence and openness to children that you will make in the context of your wedding liturgy.

The liturgy will be a time like no other in the celebration of your wedding day. The Church urges you to carefully assist in the planning of the liturgy. Remember your wedding is first and *foremost a public liturgy of the Church*. While it holds special place in the hearts of the bride and groom as the day of public commitment, it is not a private affair. All wedding liturgies must be planned on the Sunday model - a time of celebration for the people of God, the Church. **The same pastoral, liturgical and musical principles that apply in planning a Sunday liturgy apply in planning your wedding liturgy.** This wedding music policy will help you in making good choices and in selecting musicians to assist at the wedding liturgy.

1. Each couple must work through their wedding liturgy with our St. Mary's music director. If a priest from outside the parish is to witness the marriage, that priest must be made aware of this policy. Our Director of Music must approve plans. She will assist you with your worship aid (program) as well.
2. Only a St. Mary's keyboard person or one approved by our music director may play at St. Mary's. They are specialists in playing in this space and know the sound system and lighting system well.
3. A St. Mary's song leader must be retained for a wedding Mass, as they are familiar with leading the assembly in our church. A friend with musical talent may sing a solo before the liturgy or at prescribed places during the liturgy. The cantor and your guest singer may very well be able to sing well together. We also have access to other instruments such as the flute, violin, trumpet, etc.
4. There are many options available for songs during the liturgy. Popular songs, however, are prohibited since they may speak of love between a woman and a man, but do not necessarily speak of love in the Christian sense of being Christ for others, of living a life of praise, or of being a sacrament. "*Here Comes the Bride*" and the theme from "*The Newly Weds*" are also prohibited. Both come from operas that are spoofs on Marriage. Our keyboardists can offer many processional and recessional pieces that are much better suited for our church.

### SPECIFIC AND APPROPRIATE PLACES FOR MUSIC

**PRE-SERVICE MUSIC**-As people gather it is appropriate to have music played or sung.

**PROCESSIONAL MUSIC**-The purpose is to get people into church. We recommend a good march or voluntary, not a vocal piece or piano piece.

**A GATHERING HYMN**-The purpose is to unite people and get them participating right away. We recommend using a **familiar hymn** either printed in your program or from the Gather Hymnal in the pews.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM**-The purpose is to respond to the Word of God as proclaimed in the first reading with the Word of God. The **preferred way** is to have the people repeat a short refrain after the songleader and the songleader does the verses (as is done on Sunday). After each verse the assembly repeats the refrain. The Psalm is NOT to be recited. The refrain should be printed in the leaflet with copyright acknowledgments.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** The purpose is to prepare for the presence of Christ in the Gospel. It is NEVER recited.

**ACCLAMATION AFTER THE VOWS** - Following the exchange of vows we sing "Alleluia" or another appropriate refrain that celebrates the commitment just witnessed.

**SUNG WEDDING BLESSING**-If the lighting of the unity candle is not done, you may choose a sung wedding blessing here. The sung blessing is not done if the lighting of the unity candle follows.

**SONG OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING (DURING THE LIGHTING OF A UNITY CANDLE)** - The lighting of the unity candle is *optional*; it is *not* a part of the Rite of Marriage. If you choose to light a unity candle a song accompanies. The song may be a solo, an instrumental piece, or a song shared by the cantor and the assembly.

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**\*IF THE WEDDING IS CELEBRATED IN THE CONTEXT OF MASS (2 Catholics)**

**MUSIC DURING THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS**-This is a very short ritual involving the preparation of the altar. A short instrumental/organ piece or a very brief solo is appropriate.

**EUCCHARISTIC ACCLAMATIONS**-All Eucharistic acclamations are to be sung if Mass is celebrated.

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**THE LORD'S PRAYER**-This prayer, common to all Christian denominations, should be either recited or sung *by the assembly*. It may not be sung as a solo. If the assembly is a mixture of denominations, we recommend reciting the prayer.

**MUSIC DURING THE SIGN OF PEACE**- Instrumental/organ music or a song that is applicable to what is happening would be appropriate here.

**(If Mass) THE LAMB OF GOD**-A chant to accompany the breaking of the bread. It may be sung or recited. There are several music choices available.

**(If Mass) MUSIC DURING THE COMMUNION**-Appropriate music speaks of the *act of communing with the Lord and one another* (e.g. "When We Eat This Bread" etc.) or of unity. A short refrain sung by the Assembly with the soloist singing the verses is appropriate. Instrumental music is also appropriate.

**HYMN OF THANKSGIVING**- (option) It has become increasingly popular for the couple to select a hymn after the communion so that the assembly can proclaim its solidarity in the Lord Jesus.

**RECESSIONAL MUSIC** - Usually it is better to have some 'lively' music for the recessional. You need music to joyfully propel you out the door in celebration!

**PRESENTATION OF FLOWERS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**- While this is a very beautiful devotion, it is very difficult to mix private devotion with a public rite of the church. We suggest that you choose to present flowers to the Blessed Virgin as part of your rehearsal prayer the night before.

## Guidelines for Decorating for Special Occasions

*“The experience of mystery which liturgy offers is found in its God-consciousness and God-centeredness...A simple and attractive beauty in everything that is used or done in liturgy is the most effective invitation to this kind of experience (#12).”* Built of Living Stones

*“The environment is appropriate when it is beautiful, when it is hospitable, when it clearly invites and needs an assembly of people to complete it. Furthermore, it is appropriate when it brings people close together so that they can see and hear the entire liturgical action, when it helps people feel involved and become involved. Such an environment works with the liturgy, not against it (#24).”* Built of Living Stones

The design of our worship space helps to focus on the pulpit and the altar. It is at the pulpit and the altar that the main action takes place. All decorations must enhance, not detract from them. The environment also attempts to reflect and enhance the seasons of the Church Year: Advent’s red-violet & dark blue; Christmas’ white, gold, red & green; Lent’s blue-purple; Easter’s white, gold, and jewel tones; Ordinary Time’s green. Be sensitive to these seasons as you plan your wedding.

We base our policy on the principles as laid put forth in the U.S. Bishop’s document *“Built of Living Stones.”*

**EXISTING ENVIRONMENT:** Call the pastor or the liturgy-music director to find out what the environment for worship will be at the time of your celebration. All existing seasonal decorations in the church are to remain in place during any service. Your decorations must be added to them. Lent is a time when environment is sparse and should remain that way.

**FLOWERS:** All church documents speak of using that which is *real* and *natural*. All decorations should be natural rather than artificial if at all possible. This means that all sanctuary flowers must be real, that is, alive! Of course we welcome flowers left in the church from the wedding.

**UNITY CANDLE:** The Unity Candle is *not* part of the wedding ritual. It is a local custom. You may choose to have a candle for your wedding. If so, we will provide a 12” square pedestal on which your candle and two smaller candles may be placed. We recommend a floral arrangement that includes the three candles. We also have a candelabra that holds three larger candles that you may use. The unity candle is the only other ‘non-rite’ ceremony that can be used at the liturgy.

**PEW BOWS:** Decorations such as pew bows or end flowers may be added, but are not necessary. Bows must be affixed with elastic. Wire, double-sided tape, tape of any kind is prohibited. The use of “tulle” or the fine net-like fabric draped from pew to pew is not permitted.

**SPACE NEEDED FOR THE CEREMONY:** Nothing can be placed on the sanctuary floor—such as floor candles—as it may impede movement for the ceremony itself or be a hazard to health (such as the immolation of guests).

**TRELLIS & COLUMNS:** The use of a trellis at the end of the aisle is not permitted. That is best reserved for the reception. We have various pedestals available. We do not want to create the illusion of a “garden party”. All decorations must not impede the safe movement of those participating in the liturgy or the guests, nor should they impede the visibility of the sanctuary.

**CANDELABRA:** Two candelabra are permitted alongside the ambo (*pulpit*).

**CANDLES IN THE AISLE:** Aisle candles are permitted only if they are free-standing and not hazards to the assembly moving in and out of the pew for communion and the ritual. They are only permitted on the *flat floor*, not the *sloping floor*. There can be no open flames present to the assembly.

**AISLE RUNNER:** Aisle runners are highly discouraged. We find that plastic not only detracts from the appearance of the church but is also a hazard. People consistently trip over the edges when leaving the pews as well as when their heels tear through the plastic and get stuck. If you use it, clear, transparent tape must be provided for taping down both of the ends of the carpet (tape does not adhere well to carpet).

**MOVING FURNITURE:** Sanctuary furniture cannot be moved and are not to be used as stools for photography. Duct tape and double edge tape may not be used. Nothing is to be taped or affixed to altar candles or the processional cross.

**BE AWARE OF THE CHURCH SCHEDULE:** We celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at 4:00 PM on Saturday. People come to pray by 3:45. Everything must be dismantled quickly and quietly removed from the church. It is your responsibility to provide for people to go through all the areas of the church\entry ways, the dressing room, rest rooms, the gathering area, Great Hall and the church proper --to pick up any debris, programs, etc. and to make sure that the hymnals are in their proper place.

**AND NOW.....A WORD ABOUT FLOWER GIRLS AND RING BEARERS:**

There been a trend by couples to have ring bearers and flower girls who are one and a half to 4 years old. It was very difficult to conduct a rehearsal and impossible to conduct the wedding liturgy with children that young in the wedding party. Weddings are adult liturgies. It is simply too much for a child of that age. The flower girl (one) and the ring bearer (one), if you choose to have them, must be at least 5 years old.

# Guidelines for Wedding Photography at St. Mary's

**Bride and groom--please read carefully and share with your wedding photographer**

A wedding is a *religious event*. In keeping with the dignity of the Rite of Marriage and with reverence for the House of God in which the marriage takes place, we put forth these guidelines:

- 1. Use of church facilities (gathering space, the church proper) is permitted 2-1/2 hours before the beginning time of the wedding.** All photography must be finished at a minimum of 30 minutes before the liturgy. The facilities must be cleaned up and vacated by 4 PM on Saturday to prepare for Mass at 5 PM.
- 2. NO FOOD OR BEVERAGES ARE ALLOWED IN THE WORSHIP AREA.** Food may be eaten in the dressing room in the Great Hall around the tables. The bride and groom, along with the photographer assume responsibility for the conduct of the people involved. Absolutely *no alcohol is permitted on church property*. Please remember this is a sacred place where people come to pray. NO food or beverage is to be taken into the Church itself.
3. Either Fr. Steve or the wedding coordinator will turn on the lights for the church. The photographer will have to provide any *extra* lighting beyond that.
4. **Photographers are not to move sanctuary furniture.** The pedestal for the wedding candle may not be moved for photographs. Please do not use sanctuary furniture as stools for standing; bring your own equipment for this purpose.
5. **We insist that photographers be dressed appropriately for the formal liturgy and witness to professionalism.** It is a formal affair for the wedding party and the families. We expect the photographer / videographer to be respectful and dressed appropriately (no jeans, cut-offs, army fatigues, etc.)
6. During the procession photographs may be taken from the center of the church in the "cross aisle." The photographer may never *stop* the action.
7. **During the Liturgy**, photographs or videos may be taken from the back of the church in front of the statue of Mary, using a telephoto lens. The sight lines of the assembly are not to be disrupted by the photographer. No flash may be used except during the procession. Photographers may also stand near the large side windows. Photographers / videographers are to remain *inconspicuous* during the liturgy.

# Rite of Marriage Outside Mass

## (Liturgy of the Word without Liturgy of the Eucharist)

Spirituality is an important part of a marriage. It IS easier to practice one's faith *as a couple* if a couple is ONE denomination. It IS easier to raise children in the Christian faith if a couple is from ONE denomination. However, we have always had and will continue to have marriages between Catholics and baptized non-Catholics. Yes, it IS easier if the couple is one faith one denomination, but God works in ways that are different from our ways. Thank God for that! The Church recognized this and thus provides us with **several rites of Marriage that are to be used according to the circumstances of the couple.**

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy from the documents of Vatican II decreed that a marriage between Catholics should normally take place during Mass (#78). The Order of Celebrating Matrimony (2016) provides a ritual for a marriage between a Catholic and baptized non-Catholic person outside of Mass. "*If a Marriage takes place between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, the rite for celebrating Matrimony without Mass should be used.*" (no.36). The Church directs her ministers very strongly to celebrate the marriage of a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic in the context of the Liturgy of the Word—outside of Mass—so as to emphasize what we indeed share—our baptism into the life and priesthood of Christ, the Word of God, and our call to discipleship.

**Why does the church so strongly insist upon this?** If one of the spouses is not a Catholic, that spouse and his/her family would not be permitted to receive communion at Mass by the general law of the Church. This visible sign of disunity is jarring when it is juxtaposed with all the symbols of unity that are used on a wedding day. If there is some circumstance that arises with the couple that would lead to a significantly less-than-ideal celebration of the Eucharist—namely a situation where a number of the guests present would be silent spectators instead of active participants, or where one or both of the couple would not be receiving communion, the Roman Catholic Church very strongly prefers to celebrate marriage in the context of the Liturgy of the Word because of her respect for the **basic symbolism** of Marriage.

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony of 2016 acknowledges the importance of HOSPITALITY toward those who are not of the Roman Catholic tradition. When we have guests at our home, we don't invite them to the table and then say to them "*You cannot eat.*" That may sound silly, but because of the pain of separation between the Christian traditions this is what we would say to our non-Catholic guests. We cannot pretend that we are at such a stage of unity.

The wedding *is a Catholic Wedding*; it is a solemn and festive Rite that lasts for at least 45 minutes. It is an official Rite of the Roman Catholic Church. In her wisdom, the Church gives us a Rite that respects where the couple is at in their relationship as well as the traditions of the non-Catholic and the Catholic and their guests. By using this Rite, we do more to bring about *real* ecumenism not only within the relationship between the bride and groom but also *within the assembly gathered* to witness the Marriage.

*Revised 4/15/2020*