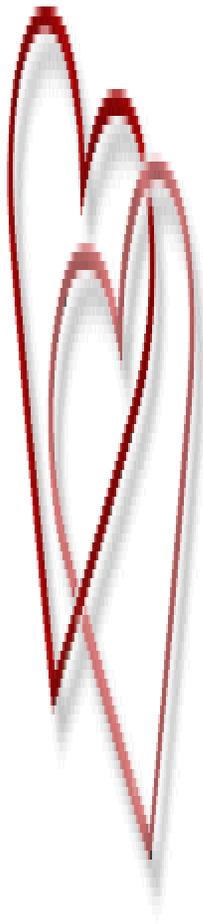


St. Mary - St. Catherine of
Siena Parish

A Wedding Preparation Guide



“There is no
limit to love’s
forbearance, to
its trust, its
hope, its power
to endure.”

1 Corinthians 13



Contents of the Wedding Preparation Guide

“The Celebration of Marriage” - a greeting from Fr. James Ronan

I. Requirements for Marriage at St. Mary-St. Catherine of Siena Parish

II. Documents Required

III. Rehearsal Night

IV. Offering for the Church

V. Music

VI. Florists

VII. Runners

VIII. Photographers and Videographers

IX. Unity Candles

X. Marriage Preparation Programs

XI. Wedding Programs

XII. Miscellaneous Questions

The Celebration of Marriage

Dear Friends,

It is a joy to welcome you at this blessed time in your lives as you prepare for your marriage in our Parish Church. The weeks and months ahead of you will pass all too quickly. We hope that these reflections and the specific information in this booklet will help you both keep in mind the most important aspects of your preparations.

Marriage is one of the seven sacraments instituted by Jesus. This sacrament is both a mystery and a visible sign of God's presence and love. The marriage bond is sacred and everlasting. Just as the couple freely gives their consent to each other, so, too, God promises His fidelity to the couple for all time.

The intimate partnership of life and love between a man and a woman is the deepest meaning of marriage. In the wedding liturgy, a man and a woman mutually present and accept each other and by God's grace, form a permanent, faithful and fruitful union which begins with their vows and continues throughout their married life.

Your life together will be a sacramental, that is, it will share in and even reflect the Mystery of God's life and love. Our role here at St. Mary-St. Catherine's is to help you to prepare for the sacramental celebration of your wedding day and the life long commitment of marriage. For this reason, we have a program of preparation and a list of guidelines that will be helpful for both the wedding ceremony and for the many years you shall live together as husband and wife.

Finally, there are so many things to do in the days ahead! Most couples find it a bit overwhelming to get everything ready and be prepared for their wedding day. You will likely have the same experience. I urge you to take time, every day, to stop and recall exactly what you are planning to do. Call to mind the gift of your love for each other. Allow your heart to be filled with wonder, joy and gratitude. A simple prayer of gratitude to God for this gift may be the very best way to stay focused and look forward to the future with hope.

With a promise of prayers during these special days,



*Rev. James J. Ronan
Pastor*

I. Requirements for Marriage at St. Mary-St. Catherine of Siena Parish

Because adequate time is essential for the preparation of your marriage, we ask that you meet with the Pastor or Pastoral Associate at least six months before your wedding to allow ample time for:

- A. Signing up for a marriage preparation program
- B. When applicable, completing the FOCCUS questionnaire (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understand and Study) and reviewing it.
- C. Arranging for conferences with the priest for the purpose of reflecting on the meaning and implications of a SACRAMENTAL Marriage.

Reservation of your marriage date on our wedding calendar can only occur **after** this meeting. In Addition,

A. If neither of you is a registered member of the Parish, one or the other must obtain a letter of “release” or “permission” from the Pastor of the Parish where you are registered.

B. You must be **FREE** to marry according to Church Law which states that:

- 1) An individual must be 18 years of age and never married
- 2) If a prior marriage was contracted, it was annulled or the former spouse passed away.

II. Documents Required

We ask that you send us the following:

A. One picture in which you are both viewed for the announcement of your Banns of Marriage in our weekly bulletin. Please send this picture as a .jpeg to jproctor@stmarystcatherine.org.

B. Recent baptismal and confirmation certificates. Since the baptismal certificate is “official” proof for freedom to marry, this certificate must be dated currently. (The certificate given to your parents at the time of baptism is not sufficient.) When requesting this certificate, be sure to state that it is being requested for the purpose of marriage and that it needs to include on the back of the certificate any other sacramental activity.

C. When you have completed the marriage preparation program, you will be presented with a certificate. Please bring that to your next meeting or drop it off at the Parish Office.

D. If either of you have been married before, please provide us with a copy of the death certificate of the former partner, if the partner passed away. If the marriage was annulled, please supply us with the annulment decree.

E. It is your responsibility to obtain the wedding license in compliance with the laws mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Please plan well in advance since there are time requirements.

III. Rehearsal Night

A. The date and time of the rehearsal is to be scheduled with the Priest witnessing your wedding. At St. Mary-St. Catherine's, the rehearsal times can be reserved on the Thursday or Friday before the wedding.

B. We ask that you be on time for your rehearsal. Another rehearsal may follow yours, or the priest may have other appointments scheduled for after the rehearsal.

C. Advise all who are participating in or attending the rehearsal to enter the church at the main door. The front doors will be open for rehearsals.

D. Present your wedding license to the Priest, Deacon or Wedding Coordinator before beginning the rehearsal. No priest is allowed to witness a marriage in Massachusetts without this document in his possession.

E. Please decide the order of procession for all in the wedding party **before** the rehearsal night.

F. Out of reverence to the Blessed Sacrament in our tabernacle, please: observe proper decorum during the rehearsal; wear appropriate attire; and refrain from any cell phone use, eating and drinking in church during the rehearsal or during the wedding itself.

G. On the evening of your rehearsal, or perhaps earlier in the week, you are urged to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance. Your wedding day is so special and sacred, that going to confession as a preparation for receiving the Sacrament of Marriage is very appropriate.

IV. Offering for the Church

It is the practice for a couple getting married to make an offering to the Parish. This offering is for the expenses of the Parish for the wedding and for the support of the church.

For those who are over 21 years of age and have been **active members** of our Parish for more than one year, we request a donation of \$500. Active membership is determined by three points: (1) registration in the parish for more than one year; (2) faithful attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days; and (3) use of the envelope system or direct-online contributing in support of the parish.

We ask that **non-parishioners** make a donation of \$1,000.

A deposit of \$100.00 is to be presented after the first meeting with the Pastor in order to confirm your reservation of the church. The remainder of your offering may be given to the Parish before the wedding day.

Please note that fees for the cantor, organist and singer are negotiated separately from the Church, and we do not advertise them.

V. Music

The music you choose should reflect the sacredness of marriage which is at the heart of the wedding ceremony. Sacred music has its origin and/or inspiration in Sacred Scripture and calls one to the transcendent. The use of secular music during the wedding liturgy, therefore, is not suitable, but may be reserved for the wedding reception.

Approximately three months before your wedding, please e-mail Daniel Saucedo (dsauceda@stmaryscatherine.org), our music director and organist. He will then contact you to schedule a meeting and assist you with appropriate music selections for your celebration.

VI. Florists

Please instruct your Florist to deliver the flowers for the wedding to the church one half hour before the wedding. Flowers are not to be delivered to the Parish Center or the Rectory. It is important to advise your Florist to refrain from the use of tape or thumbtacks when attaching floral arrangements to the pews.

VII. Runners

Because of the nature of our flooring and for the safety of your guests, we ask that you not use a runner.

VIII. Photographers and Videographers

In order to preserve the sacredness of the sacrament, please inform your photographers and videographers that they are not permitted in the sanctuary during any part of the wedding service.

IX. Unity Candles

Some couples wish to include a “Unity” Candle within their celebration. This is not a regular or integral part of the celebration. However, if you wish to include the candle, you are welcome to do so. The Unity Candle is purchased by the couple being married in order that it may be retained as one of the memorabilia of their wedding day. If you decide to include a “Unity” Candle, please bring it to the rehearsal.

X. MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

As soon as conveniently possible, engaged couples are urged to attend a program, often called **PRE-CANA**, which offers couples an opportunity to learn more about in depth aspects of married life. The programs are offered throughout the Archdiocese of Boston and there are various models: weekends, evenings, smaller and larger. Typically the experience includes presentations of significant themes and an opportunity for discussion. You can learn about the availability of these programs at:

<http://www.bostoncatholic.org/Offices-And-Services/Office-Detail.aspx?id=11658&pid=478>

In future meetings with the Pastor you will have an opportunity to discuss the experience as you prepare for your celebration and life together.

XI. WEDDING PROGRAMS

Wedding programs are not necessary. However, if you choose to have wedding programs for your guests, a useful website to peruse is catholicbrides.com

XII. MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

There are so many things to consider when planning a wedding! Here are answers to a few questions that usually come up after couples visit the Church.

Is parking available around Saint Mary’s Church? Curbside parking is found by the Church and nearby streets, but visitors should be respectful of signs marked for residents, the handicapped and emergency vehicles. There are also parking garages in the Charlestown Navy Yard, such as the one at the Residence Inn. Shuttles are also a good option for moving your guests between ceremony and reception, although there is no dedicated space for large vehicles to idle around our Church. Bus drivers usually seek an alternate location to park in the window for pick-up and drop-off.

What is the capacity for Saint Mary’s Church? Our Church can accommodate comfortably in the neighborhood of 700-750 people with a combination of 156 pews and benches. To gain a better idea of layout, you are welcome to visit during Mass.

May your wedding day be one that you will remember with happiness and joy throughout your blessed years together as husband and wife! It is our pleasure to be of assistance to you at this important time in your lives.

. . . May their love for each other be strong, beautiful, energizing, and resplendent for as long as they shall live.