



Sacred Heart Catholic Church
Pinellas Park, FL



Marriage Preparation & Policy Guidelines

This booklet belongs to

Bride

Groom

Date of Ceremony

Updated June 2020

Congratulations and Welcome!

*We at Sacred Heart Parish
are very pleased to welcome you to celebrate the
Sacrament of Marriage as part of our faith
community.*

*The Sacrament of Marriage celebrates the love
of a couple who enter into a covenant with God
and each other. It is a solemn celebration testify-
ing to the couple's mutual love and fidelity. It is a
sacred expression of the tremendous love that
God has for the Church, for all of us as the
People of God.*

*We at Sacred Heart want to do all we can to
assist you in preparing for your wedding day.
This booklet presents parish wedding guidelines
that we hope you will find helpful in your
wedding planning.*

*Once again, Congratulations!
Your love for each other is a gift,
a true blessing from God.*

*May God continue to bless you both
as you look forward to your wedding day!*

Notes

Introduction

The Catholic Church professes that sacraments are signs or manifestations of the living Christ present among us. Marriage is one of the seven sacraments. A Christian marriage reveals the love and presence of Christ in our midst through the love that a husband and wife offer to one another (Ephesians 5). The sacrament of Marriage is also a commitment to the Church. In marriage a couple promises to be a sign of God's creating and redeeming love to their local parish and the universal Church. They particularly attest to this reality when they worship in their parish on Sunday.

Practicing Your Faith

Marriage in the Catholic Church requires a faith commitment. Since marriage is a sacrament for the Church as well as for the couple, couples must actively practice and live their faith. Specifically, couples must worship weekly and strive to be holy and faith-filled in their daily lives.

Non-Catholics

The future spouse who is not Catholic is not required to become a Catholic. They are, however, welcome to participate in the parish Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). RCIA is a process of faith formation for non-Catholics. If the attendees wish, it can lead to full initiation and participation in the Catholic Church. A permission form must be submitted to the Marriage Tribunal of the diocese whenever a Catholic marries a person of another faith. On that form, the non-Catholic party agrees to baptize and raise the children in the Catholic faith.

The Place

A Catholic wedding usually takes place in the parish of the bride, or, if she is not a Catholic, in the parish of the groom. This is most often determined by the active participation of the couple or the geographic location based on the residence of the bride.

A person residing outside of this parish who wishes to be married at Sacred Heart, must obtain a letter from the pastor of the parish in which that person resides, giving permission to our Church clergy to perform the service.

The Date

A minimum of six months is necessary for the preparation of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Should circumstances require a Decree of Nullity of a former marriage, it will not be possible to set a final wedding date until the decree is obtained.

The number of weddings scheduled at Sacred Heart makes it advisable to notify the priest or deacon of the date you prefer as soon as possible.

The wedding date must be arranged by the parties with the Priest, Deacon or Wedding Coordinator.

Because of the many parish duties occupying the priests on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, weddings cannot be scheduled on these days. Weddings are not scheduled during Lent, and the parish may close other dates based on parish activity. Please know the parish clergy will be most happy to help in every way to help you identify a date that works.

The Time

The parish schedule permitting, Wedding inside of Mass and Wedding outside of Mass may take place:

- A. Saturdays at 11:00AM or 1:00PM
- B. Fridays on request based on clergy availability

Marriage Preparation

Since marriage is a sacrament, a Christian vocation, and a serious life commitment, the Church will permit the celebration of marriage only after it is satisfied that the bride and groom are sufficiently prepared to fulfill the obligations of a Christian marriage. This requirement is to be fulfilled by attending marriage preparation sessions suited to your particular circumstances.

Before the priest or deacon can officiate at a wedding, he must carefully ascertain whether each party is free to marry, whether any impediment exists which would prevent the marriage, and whether the couple is approaching the marriage with the right intentions.

The following tasks are required:

- A. Initial Interview for the bride and groom.
- B. An online survey (Pre-Marriage Inventory) & follow up meetings
- C. Attendance at a diocesan-based marriage prep program such as Journey to Matrimony
- D. Attendance at sessions on church teaching on the sacrament of marriage and the rite
- E. Submit the “Freedom to Marry” (Form B) documents, two per person, usually from relatives or close friends, to establish the couples’ freedom to marry.
- F. For the Catholic and Non-Catholic, submit a copy of the Baptismal Certificate. For the Catholic, the baptismal certificate must have been issued within six months of the date of the wedding
- G. Submit the marriage license issued by the state

In the event that either the bride or groom were previously married, one of the following documents will be necessary:

- A. Certified copy of the Death Certificate of the former spouse
- B. Decree of Nullity of the former marriage issued by a Church Tribunal along with documents of divorce

The Wedding Liturgy

The Rite of Marriage may take one of two forms:

The Nuptial Mass contains all the elements of the Wedding Ceremony, celebrated within the context of the Mass. The Mass is the most beautiful and meaningful way in which a Catholic couple can begin their marriage. The reception of Holy Communion by the bride and groom, together with their families and friends, clearly expresses the union of the couple to the Mystical Body of Christ and their desire to live their new vocation in the midst of the Christian community.

The Nuptial Mass is recommended for a Catholic marrying another Catholic.

The Wedding Ceremony outside of Mass is quite noble in its simplicity. The service begins with a greeting, readings from Scripture, and a homily by the priest or deacon. This is followed by the questions of intent, exchange of marriage vows, the blessing and exchanging of the rings, and the Lord's Prayer. The rite concludes with a prayer and the wedding blessing.

The Wedding Ceremony is recommended for a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic Christian, for a Catholic marrying a person of another faith tradition, or for Catholic families which are largely non-practicing.

The Church encourages the couple to select the Scriptural readings to be used at their wedding. You will be provided with the book, Together For Life, which along with various prayers and blessings, contains those Scripture readings most appropriate for use at weddings.

The Unity Candle, though a symbol used in some wedding ceremonies, it is not an official part of the Church's liturgical ritual, and therefore, it is not an option to be considered.

Visiting Priests

On occasion, a couple may wish to have a priest or deacon from another parish or diocese officiate at their wedding. Should this be the case, the couple should notify the Sacred Heart clergy during the pre-nuptial planning. Permission to officiate at a wedding must be granted to clergy who are visiting from another diocese by the Diocese of St. Petersburg and the pastor of Sacred Heart Parish.

Delegation to officiate at a wedding must also be granted to clergy who reside in the Diocese of St. Petersburg but are not assigned to Sacred Heart parish. Visiting clergy are expected to observe all the liturgical and practical norms set out in this booklet and by the Diocese.

Participation by Non-Catholic Clergy

In interfaith marriages, the non-Catholic party may wish his or her minister to take part in their wedding celebration. The Church, recognizing the importance of this day in the life of the couple, is happy to extend an invitation to the minister of the non-Catholic party to be a participant.

If the couple desires the presence of a non-Catholic minister, it becomes their obligation to see to it that he/she is invited and that he/she contacts the priest or deacon who will conduct the service.

Since there are special norms for conducting the wedding service in these circumstances, the particulars of the ceremony will be arranged jointly by the two clergy.

Readers and Servers

Readers are chosen by the couple. The couple should make arrangements with their readers well in advance of the wedding celebration. It is the couple's duty to provide their readers with a

copy of the Scripture text that will be used, chosen from those provided in Together for Life. Those chosen for this important role should be comfortable with public speaking and have a clear voice. It is highly encouraged that the readers chosen are familiar with Sacred Scripture. *If the wedding takes place within Mass the readers must be Catholic.*

Sacred Heart will provide altar servers for the wedding mass as well as the wedding ceremony outside of mass.

Spiritual Preparation

A wedding of two baptized persons is more than a personal and social contract. It is a Sacrament, one of seven signs of grace in which God gives Himself to us in a special way. To receive this Sacrament presupposes a life of faith, daily prayer, regular attendance at Mass, the frequent reception of the Eucharist, and the commitment to live according to church teaching. Even if one is free from serious sin, it is advisable to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for the marriage since it is the beginning of a vocation in life. The Sacrament of Reconciliation opens the Catholic party to receive the fullness of grace in preparation for marriage.

Music

The Sacrament of Marriage is a solemn occasion which is meant to be celebrated in a church setting. For this reason, all acts, prayers, gestures, and selected music must be respectful of this solemn occasion. This includes music before and after the ceremony, as well as music within the Mass or within the wedding ceremony. Since music for weddings at Sacred Heart forms an integral part of the Marriage Rite, the music must be liturgical in nature. The wedding fee includes the musician and cantor.

The Parish musician is available for consultation concerning the program of wedding music available for the Mass or Ceremony and has various selections which may be used for this important event. The musician is the only person authorized to conduct the musical portion of the wedding and should be contacted as soon as possible after the initial meeting with the priest or deacon.

The Rehearsal

It is important that all those directly involved in the wedding (the bride, groom, parents, attendants, flower girl, ring bearer, ushers, readers) be on time both for the rehearsal and for the wedding itself.

The following items are to be brought to the wedding rehearsal:

- A. The marriage license; **the marriage cannot be celebrated without it!**
- B. Signed copies of the photographer/videographer guidelines

The parish wedding coordinator will contact you approximately two-four weeks before the rehearsal to discuss the plans and details of the processional order, music selections, photographers/videographers, decorations and possible details related to a wedding inside or outside of a Mass.

Wedding Day

The bridal party should arrive at least 45 minutes before the wedding.

The church is open and reserved for the couple and their party 1 hour before and 90 minutes after the scheduled start of the wedding.

Decorations

The beautifully appointed Sanctuary does not require much additional decoration, and anything but the simplest floral pieces will detract from its beauty. If pew bows are used, please advise the florist that they must be tied on, rather than taped, clipped, nailed, or stapled.

Safety issues restrict us from allowing aisle runners for the ceremony. Throwing of rice, seeds, flower petals, bubbles, or any other material inside or outside the church is not permitted either.

If there are no scheduling conflicts, the florist may set up the night of the rehearsal or approximately 1 hour before the ceremony. This must be scheduled with the Wedding Coordinator. Flower decorations are allowed in the sanctuary as permitted with the size and the actual placement of the arrangement to be discussed with the wedding coordinator. Flowers are not permitted on the altar.

Please have a person designated from the bridal party to distribute and pin boutonnieres and corsages.

All wedding decorations are to be removed following the ceremony within 30 minutes.

If you have any questions about our Church policy, please consult with the church Wedding Coordinator as soon as possible.

Bride's Room & Groomsmen's Room

The bride's room is available for the bride, family, and attendants at the time of the rehearsal as well as 1 hour before the wedding ceremony. Items such as dresses, suits, decorations, programs

may be left in the bride's room overnight if the wedding is the following day. Following the wedding, care should be taken to leave the rooms clean and in good order.

Our Marian room is designated for the gentlemen, and is available for their use 1 hour before the ceremony.

Photographers/Videographers

Photographs and videos may be taken, provided the photographer/videographer is discreet, reverent and respectful of the sacredness of this religious celebration. The photographer/videographer may not enter the Sanctuary or take pictures in such a way as to disturb the congregation, the priest, and/or deacon. The photographer/videographer will also have 30 minutes after the ceremony to take photographs/videos. Because of time constraints, please plan to have your receiving line at the place of your reception. Please have photographers/videographers sign the Wedding Guidelines form and return them to the wedding coordinator.

Attitude & Appearance

Please remember that appropriate, reverent and respectful behavior must be maintained in the church during rehearsal and on the wedding day. Except for bottled water in the bride's room and in the Marian room for the men, other food or beverages of any kind are not permitted in any part of the church building.

Fee

The wedding fee is \$600. If neither the bride or groom are established parishioners at Sacred Heart, the required paperwork needs to be completed at their home parish and forwarded to us one month prior to the wedding.

Schedule of Payment

An initial deposit of \$100 is required to secure a date for the wedding. The outstanding balance is expected 1 month before the wedding

Important Phone Numbers/Information

Wedding Coordinator:

Lisa Gunnin

(727) 541-4447

sacredfaithformation@gmail.com

The church Wedding Coordinator will assist you in planning all the details of your church wedding. She will also be present at your rehearsal and wedding. If you have contracted an outside wedding planner, please understand that that person's responsibilities do not pertain to the church wedding liturgy.

Music Ministry:

Nick Gunnin

ngunnin@yahoo.com

Michael Marth

mjfm89@yahoo.com

Marriage Preparation Checklist

- Initial meeting with a Priest or Deacon at Sacred Heart
Date / Time: _____

- Complete the online Pre-Marriage Inventory

- Register for and attend a diocesan-based marriage prep program
(Journey to Matrimony or Pre-Cana)
Date / Time: _____

- Follow up sessions with a Priest or Deacon at Sacred Heart to
review the Inventory and discuss the sacrament of marriage
Date / Time: _____
Date / Time: _____

- Meet with the parish Wedding Coordinator
Date / Time: _____

- Meeting with Director of Music Ministry
Date / Time: _____

- Submit Form Bs (2 per couple)
- Submit Baptism certificates
- Submit Marriage License

Deposit Due _____

Balance Due _____

