



*Sacrament  
of  
Matrimony*



Saint Mary Catholic Church  
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## **REQUIREMENTS:**

Congratulations as you begin to make your preparations for the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. It is with profound awareness of the richness and beauty of the sacrament of marriage that the Catholic Church throughout the State of Florida has written a Common Policy for Pastoral Marriage Preparation.

- We only permit priests from Saint Mary parish to officiate weddings here.
- If there has been a former marriage, both the Marriage Certificate and Death Certificate or Declaration of Nullity must be produced.
- In a marriage of mixed faith, the Catholic party alone is to make a written or verbal promise to attend to the Catholic upbringing of all children born of the marriage. The non-Catholic is made aware of the Catholic's responsibility in this matter. In the case of a mixed faith marriage, the wedding ceremony does not include Mass.
- Submit a Certificate of Baptism for both parties, Catholic and non-Catholic, dated within six months of the wedding date. No photocopies are permitted. (The parish office can assist you in finding the address of any Catholic church.)
- Both bride and groom must complete, in the presence of a priest or deacon, a prenuptial questionnaire known as the "A" form testifying that they understand the nature and obligations of marriage and that they are free to do so in the Catholic Church.
- Two witnesses for each party must sign the "B" form to declare the freedom of each party to marry. This also applies to mixed-faith marriages.

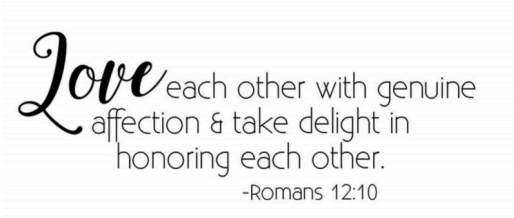
- The “B” form should be filled out preferably by your parents, or anyone who has known you since your 16th birthday. A priest or a deacon must witness these forms.
- All couples will take the FOCCUS Questionnaire as a means of determining strengths and weaknesses regarding readiness for the Sacrament of Matrimony.
- Completion of a marriage preparation course is required. We use CatholicMarriagePrep.com. Sign up for both the online pre-cana and the online natural family planning courses. Your pre-cana completion certificate qualifies you for a discounted fee on your Florida Marriage License.
- As a general rule, the marriage takes place in the parish of the bride and/or groom. If the marriage is to take place elsewhere, a letter of permission must be obtained from both the bride and groom’s pastor.
- The Catholic party should attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) before marriage.
- Obtain a civil marriage license from the Clerk of Court of Okaloosa County, up to 30 days prior to the wedding. Give this to the priest at your rehearsal. It will be signed immediately after the wedding. The church will send the original to the Clerk of Court Office. A copy will be placed in your marriage file.
- Permission may be granted by the Bishop for the ceremony to take place in a **non-Catholic church** in the case of a mixed-faith wedding. Permission is never granted to have weddings at another location, beach etc.. It’s possible to exchange vows in the church early in the morning, and then renew them in a communal celebration later that same day on the beach or at another location.

## INITIAL PREPARATION:

The bride or groom must be a registered, actively participating member of a parish for the last six months prior to making any arrangements. You are expected to provide ongoing support through the weekly offertory, contributing to the Annual Bishop's Drive (Catholic Sharing Appeal in our diocese), and participating in the ministerial and sacramental life of the parish. This assures the parish of your commitment to the Faith.

Arrangements should be made with one of the parish clergy at least six months prior to the actual anticipated date of your wedding. A wedding date will not be set until after the first meeting with the couple and priest. Weddings are not held on Sundays or during Holy Week. Weddings are normally scheduled on weekday evenings before 5:00 pm or on Saturdays between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm.

Since the marriage you are entering is a sacrament, you should be attending Mass regularly. You should discuss together your faith and how you will share it with each other and with your children.



## **FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**

**Church Fee** - If the bride or groom is an active, and regularly contributing member of this parish (or one of their parents are), there is no fee. For non members the fee is \$1000.00. An additional \$500 refundable security deposit is required. The fee is modest and does not meet the actual expenses of the church. All of these fees are due 1 month prior to your wedding date.

**Music** - You must contact the Director of Music to coordinate the music for your ceremony. He should be contacted as soon as a wedding date has been set. He will be able to assist you in selecting music and musicians, and will coordinate fees for the musicians. He is responsible for the piano and audio system in the church. Outside musicians are subject to the approval of the Director of Music and/or the clergy assisting at the wedding ceremony. You can contact the Director of Music at [music@saintmary.life](mailto:music@saintmary.life) or through the parish office.

**Clergy** - It is customary to give a stipend to the priest who helped you with the preparations for your marriage. The priest will be devoting his time and availability to you during document processing, counseling, rehearsal and the wedding ceremony.

**Altar Servers** - We do not typically use altar servers for wedding ceremonies. If you wish to have them, we can arrange for them. It is customary to provide altar servers with a small amount, normally \$10 each.

*All fees must be paid prior to the wedding ceremony*



## **PLANNING THE CEREMONY:**

We do not use outside wedding coordinators in the planning and execution of the wedding ceremony. Together with our clergy, the couple will plan the readings and wedding format prior to the rehearsal using our Rite of Marriage Liturgy Plan. This Liturgy Plan must be completed one month prior to the rehearsal and emailed to the priest preparing you for your marriage. Our clergy will fulfill the role in helping plan the details of the wedding ceremony according to the church, liturgical and social etiquette. He will conduct the rehearsal and guide the wedding ceremony. A wedding can take place with or without Mass.

We offer two options for the Entrance Procession. We do not vary from these options.

### **The First Option:**

The priest goes to the front doors of the church, receives the bridal party, without the bride and groom. The priest warmly greets this party, sharing their joy. The bride is out of sight, in the dressing room by the front church doors, and the groom is alongside the choir area of the church up by the altar area.

When the song or music begins, the procession to the altar takes place with the bridesmaids and groomsmen (max of 7 each) paired up and going first. The ring bearers and flower girls may follow. There is a maximum of two children for each role and they cannot walk unassisted under the age of 5. They approach the altar, bow in front of the altar and take their place in the first front pews across the main aisle from each other.

The priest comes last and proceeds to his chair behind the altar. When the priest reaches his chair, the groom comes forward and takes his place in front of the altar steps ready to greet the bride. When the song or music begins, the bride proceeds from the dressing room and proceeds up the center aisle with or without someone to give her away. The groom greets her at the third pew in front of the altar and escorts her to the altar steps where the priest will greet them.

### **The Second Option:**

The priest goes to the front doors of the church, receives the bridal party including the bride and groom and warmly greets them, sharing their joy.

When the opening song or music begins, the procession to the altar takes place with the bridesmaids and groomsmen paired up and going first, (maximum of 7 each). The ring bearers and flower girls may follow. There is a maximum of two children for each role, and they cannot walk unassisted under the age of 5. All approach the altar, bow in front of the altar and take their place in the first front pews across the main aisle from each other. The priest follows next, and the bride and groom are last. The bride and groom proceed up the steps in front of the altar and take their place at the chairs to the side of the altar.



## **MUSIC**

The Director of Music will assist you in selecting appropriate music, and will need to approve your final music selections for your wedding liturgy. He should be contacted as soon as a wedding date has been set and secured. Non-liturgical (secular) music is not permitted for use in a wedding liturgy. For more detailed explanations, including suggested songs, please contact our Director of Music at [music@saintmary.life](mailto:music@saintmary.life)

## **FLOWERS**

- Flowers for the church are your responsibility. No artificial flowers are permitted. Florists are asked to contact the parish office regarding delivery which is normally two hours before the wedding.
- Flowers should enhance the service, not distract from it.
- No altar furniture can be moved.
- Plants/flowers used at the wedding must be free standing. No flowers, plants, or anything else can be placed on the altar or other furnishings.
- Dropping of flower petals and aisle runners are not permitted.
- Floral decorations present in the church during Christmas and Easter may not be removed.



## PHOTOGRAPHS

- Photographs may be taken in the church one hour before the ceremony and a maximum of 30 minutes after the ceremony.
- Photographers are asked to remain either at the back of the church or in the back of the right or left transept for ceremony photos. They are not allowed up front or in the sanctuary. There is to be minimal photography, and no flash photography during the ceremony.
- Video recording is permitted with a stationary camera.
- It is important that the wedding party communicate this information to the photographers. If photographers do not follow the church guidelines, the priest will stop the ceremony to instruct them.
- The priest's sacristy is off limits for any pictures after the ceremony.



## MISCELLANEOUS

- All rented items brought into the church must be picked up immediately after the wedding or will result in loss of deposit.
- Candles are not permitted.
- No wires, nails, tacks, staples, florist tape, or any tape etc. may be used to attach decorations to any surface. Use ribbons or soft cords for floral decorations.
- Wedding party are asked to arrive at the church fully dressed and properly nourished for the ceremony at least one hour prior to the ceremony.
- The bride can dress at the church using the main sacristy (at the side of the vestibule).
- No smoking or alcoholic beverages of any kind are allowed in restrooms, vestibule, or any part of the church premises prior to, during, or after the wedding.
- Male attendants will enter the church from the north entrance of the church.
- Female attendants will be in the main sacristy (at the main entrance of the church).
- The parish school and administration buildings are not available. The church and any other rooms used by the wedding party are to be returned to their clean and proper status. If the cleaning is not done properly, it will result in loss of deposit.
- No rice, confetti, bubbles, or bird seed is permitted.

## REHEARSAL

- The wedding rehearsal is usually scheduled the day before the wedding, at a time convenient for all parties that does not interfere with any church activities. Rehearsal is scheduled for a one hour block.
- Be punctual. All participants in the wedding must attend the rehearsal.
- Our clergy conducts the rehearsal. We do not use outside wedding coordinators in the planning, rehearsal, and execution of the wedding ceremony.
- Present your marriage license to the clergyman celebrating your marriage if you have not already done so.
- If you have not already done so, bring the fee for the music director and the church as well as a stipend for the priest and the altar servers, if you are using altar servers.



## Marriage Preparation Timeline

**8 Months Out:** Meet with Priest, Complete Pre-nuptial Questionnaire (Form A), Take FOCCUS, Set Wedding Date, Meet with Director of Music

**6 Months:** Meet with FOCCUS Facilitating Couple, Meet with Officiating Priest, Register for online pre-cana course and online natural family planning course at CatholicMarriagePrep.com , Complete Documentation; Freedom to Marry (Form B), Baptism Certificates, Dispensation (if required), Annulment Forms (if required)

**2 Months:** 3rd Meeting With Priest

**1 Month:** Complete Selections from Rite of Marriage Liturgy Plan, Obtain Marriage License, Pay Church Fee

**2 Weeks:** Sacrament of Reconciliation (if Catholic)

**1 Day:** Rehearsal

↓  
**The Big Day**



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