

# PLANNING YOUR MARRIAGE

## WEDDING POLICIES and GUIDELINES

Parish of  
Saint Mary of the Nativity  
Scituate Harbor, MA  
781-545-3335

**(Revised 9-25-08)**

*Dear Friends,*

Congratulations on the announcement of your marriage! The pastoral staff of Saint Mary of the Nativity Parish wishes you every happiness and blessing as you prepare for this significant and solemn occasion in your lives.

We live in a society that puts more emphasis on the marriage day than on the marriage. And, although engaged couples look to marriage with great hope, many see preparation for married life as something to be gotten out of the way so they can get on with the time-consuming preparation for the wedding day.

Think about it.....

*Your Wedding Is A Day;  
Your Marriage Is A Lifetime!*

Even a quick glance at what is happening to marriages in our society should make us all stop to realize that marriage preparation, and especially engaged couple workshops, are not an inconvenience.....but a genuine necessity.

Therefore, it is the policy of the Archdiocese of Boston and Saint Mary of the Nativity Parish to provide the very best marriage preparation possible for each of our engaged couples. This preparation involves several steps that begin at least six months and, preferably, a year or more before the marriage.

The next months will be filled with many plans and preparations. The enclosed pages are the established guidelines of our parish. We hope that by giving you these guidelines well in advance of your wedding day, all plans will go smoothly. If you have any question regarding these guidelines or anything else, please call us and we will be most happy to help you.

*Your Parish Staff*

## *Before your wedding day...*

### *Arranging your wedding*

We, the Parish of St. Mary of the Nativity, welcome you to receive the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony in our Church. However, because of the number of requests for this Sacrament in our Church, some important guidelines and rules must be followed.

Active, registered adults of our Parish are our first priority for the Celebration at St. Mary's. Their appropriate family members are our second priority followed by others who wish to use our beautiful Church. We also consider the adult children and grandchildren of active, registered Parishioners and the brothers and sisters of active, registered Parishioners as "in-parish" and make the commitment to provide a priest or deacon for the actual ceremony. All others are welcome at St. Mary's, but the couple to be married must provide their own deacon, priest or bishop. When "booking" the wedding, the couple must have the deacon, priest or bishop write to us within two weeks to confirm that he will be the Church's witness for the wedding and confirm the day/date/time of the wedding. The deacon, priest or bishop is encouraged, but not required to attend the rehearsal. All "wedding papers" must be prepared in this Parish.

***Weddings are arranged only by the Priests (or Deacon) of the Parish with the couple themselves (not the parents of either the bride or the groom as they are not the ones getting married).***

Only ONE date and time may be reserved for each couple who are getting married. Fairness to you and others demands this.

Weddings are normally scheduled at the following times:

Friday evenings;  
Saturdays between NOON and 2:00 PM, and at 6:00 PM,  
Sundays at 2 PM.

Approximately six months prior to the scheduled wedding date, the couple must contact the priest or deacon for an appointment. In the event that the bride and groom both live out of state, they should still contact the priest or deacon via telephone and then follow his recommendations to facilitate the first meeting.

## *The Initial Meeting(s)*

The initial interview is marked by hospitality. The member of the parish pastoral staff will convey to you the Church's concern for you and a willingness to help you in preparing for the sacrament of Marriage. Your freedom to marry will also be established at this meeting. This is done by completing a form which asks for basic data as well as a statement of your freedom to marry and your intention for your intended marriage to be lifelong and permanent.

At this meeting we will discuss with you your option of being married at a Nuptial Mass or Ceremony. We will also describe the parish engaged couple workshop and other programs that are available to you.

Before this meeting, please arrange for the following required documents:

- 1. Baptism and Confirmation records for Catholic party/parties.** These should be requested from the parish(es) where these sacraments were celebrated and sent directly to the priest/deacon/pastoral associate you are meeting with at Saint Mary's.
- 2. Baptism record of a non-Catholic party, if applicable.** When a Catholic is marrying a baptized non-Catholic, this baptismal record should be presented in order to establish the person's Baptism in some other church or ecclesial community.
- 3. Consent letter from parent or guardian if you are under 18 years of age.**
- 4. Letter of permission from your pastor, if applicable.** If neither the bride nor groom is a parishioner of Saint Mary's, permission may be necessary from the pastor of one of your proper parishes.

## *Your Wedding Liturgy*

A marriage between two Catholics should normally be celebrated with a Mass. You may choose to be married either at a Mass or a Ceremony. In either case, you will want to have a hand in planning your wedding liturgy. You will be given a copy of Fr. Joseph Camplin's book *Together for Life* and we're sure you'll find it helpful.

Priest/deacon friends and relatives, in good standing, whether from the Archdiocese of Boston or from another diocese, are most welcome to celebrate the Rite of Marriage in our church. If you choose to invite a priest or deacon who is not assigned to this parish to officiate at your wedding, all of the elements of marriage preparation are ordinarily taken care of by a member of the pastoral staff of Saint Mary's Parish.

Please note: Any priest or deacon who is not a resident of Massachusetts must obtain written delegation from the Secretary of State on Beacon Hill. This may be obtained by mail and should be taken care of well in advance of your wedding to avoid confusion and possible disappointment.

Also, if either of you is a member of another faith you may want your clergyperson to participate in the ceremony. If this is the case, please make this known at your preliminary meeting with us.

## *The Engaged Couple's Workshop*

Each couple preparing for Marriage is expected to participate in an engaged couple's workshop. There is a wide variety of approved programs available to you such as Engaged Encounter Weekends, Pre-Cana Group Programs and Couple-to-Couple Programs. Our parish offers both Pre-Cana and Couple-to-Couple programs. These are given by married couples who share the ups and downs of their marriage experience. We've found that very often engaged couples go to these workshops, feeling that they don't need them and that they know pretty much all there is to know about being married. But, by the end, they tell us that they've learned a lot. Not even people who are already married know all there is to know about being married; it's a continuing process of communication. The great thing about these workshops is the chance to learn from and share with people whose Sacrament of Marriage didn't end on their wedding day.

At your preliminary meeting, we will talk with you about your involvement in an Engaged Couple's Workshop. Unless you choose an Engaged Couples' Workshop, we strongly suggest that you participate in one of our parish programs.

Important: Pre-registration is required for all programs. Programs tend to fill quickly...so...it's a good idea to register as early as possible in the marriage preparation process. The "best" time to participate in a program is six months to a year – or even more – before your wedding date. Also, very few programs meet in the summer. If you're preparing for a fall wedding, it's a good idea to attend a workshop during the previous winter or **early** in the previous spring.

## *Follow-up Meeting*

Following the Engaged Couples' Workshop, a follow-up meeting should be scheduled with the priest/deacon who will be witnessing your marriage. This is an opportunity to discuss your reaction to the workshop and to plan the wedding ceremony. The choice of readings, prayers and participation in the liturgy should reflect what you have learned about the sacrament of Marriage and what you wish to share with your family and friends.

At this meeting the following should be presented:

1. Certificate indicating you have participated in an Engaged Couples' workshop.
2. Wedding Liturgy Selection Page from Together for Life, if this has been completed at this point.

Please note: If this meeting is held with a priest or deacon who is not from Saint Mary's Parish, a copy of the Engaged Couples' Workshop Certificate should be mailed or delivered to our parish office for inclusion with your marriage papers.

## *Flowers and Decorating*

The flowers/decorations for your wedding may be as simple or elaborate as you wish. We have two stands available on which to place floral arrangements near the altar of sacrifice and/or there may be arrangements placed on the rear altar and/or on the marble stands on each side of the rear altar. Part of the fee you pay to your florist is to set up and clean up the decorations at the Church. It is expected that that any and all decorations used outside the Church will be removed by your florist *immediately* after the ceremony. It is customary, but not required, that the flowers for God in the Church are left after the ceremony. You are free to choose as you wish.

Because the main aisle in our beautiful church has been carpeted, we do not allow the use of an aisle runner. We have found that the combination of carpet beneath the runner causes heels to become caught and has the potential to result in a dangerous situation. If you have made arrangements for an aisle runner, would you kindly notify your florist of this change as soon as possible. **NO** exceptions shall be made.

If you are using bows on the ends of any pews they may be attached **only** by elastics or floral clips.

Candles on the altar will be lit but no other candles of any kind are allowed in any area of the church.

Any other form of decoration should be discussed well in advance of your wedding. It is to be noted that any seasonal decorations (Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter) in the sanctuary - floral or otherwise – **cannot** be removed for a particular wedding.

## *Photographers and Videos*

We ask that photographers exercise prudent judgment and good taste. The wedding cannot be interrupted at any time in order to have pictures taken. No cameras are allowed in the sanctuary area; the doorway from the sacristy allows for beautiful photo opportunities. Photographers may not direct the wedding procession. Video taping is allowed with stationary camera(s). Use of floodlights are prohibited.

## *Music and Musicians*

Music for your wedding should be selected with an awareness of the sacred nature of the celebration. Secular music is not to be used. This is better suited for your reception. The Liturgical Commission of the Archdiocese of Boston has established norms for choosing music at weddings which are followed at Saint Mary's Parish. There is a varied and beautiful repertoire of music in different styles that will meet these requirements. One of our liturgical musicians will be happy to help you select the music for this very special occasion.

It is a parish policy, as is customary in churches of all denominations, that a parish organist be used at all weddings. Please refer to the "Directory" at the back of this booklet. If, however, you prefer to have a guest organist play at your wedding, you may do that with approval, but the parish organist must be consulted about the selection of music.

Please call a parish organist immediately after scheduling the wedding to reserve the organist's services. At that time you may also make an appointment for a consultation, if you wish. Remember: musicians, wedding coordinators etc are professional lay people who make regular salaries and are not special volunteers for your wedding.

You may have a soloist of your own choosing. Hopefully your choice will not only be a competent vocalist but someone familiar with quality liturgical music. Our parish organist can recommend such soloists to you.

You may also choose to have instrumental music other than organ music. This should be discussed with the Music Director/Organist very early in the planning process.

All fees for music are arranged with the individual musicians and/or vocalists.

## *Your Wedding Rehearsal*

Please arrange for your rehearsal at the same time as arranging the wedding date. If you have a visiting priest or deacon, he is welcome to attend the rehearsal, but not required.

ALL rehearsal and weddings involve one of Parish Wedding Coordinators. The Coordinator will run the rehearsal and be present for your wedding. Our Coordinators are skilled and trained to assist you, your bridal party and invited lectors, gift bearers etc to be able to have a most beautiful wedding ceremony. Please plan to pay the fee (\$100.00) for this service at the rehearsal. The check is to be made out to the name of the Coordinator. You will be informed at the rehearsal of the name.

Rehearsals are normally held on Thursday or Friday evenings. As we often have several rehearsals on one evening, it is important that your rehearsal begin promptly *if you wish a proper rehearsal. The bride and groom should arrive at least 20 minutes before the rehearsal to meet with the Wedding Coordinator to go over details and then greet and welcome their bridal party to the Church.*

***The following are necessary to bring to the rehearsal. They must be present for the rehearsal to begin....***

1. \_\_\_ **Civil Marriage License**, obtained from a town/city hall.
2. \_\_\_ **Wedding Liturgy Selection Page** from Together for Life, if not already presented.
3. \_\_\_ **Wedding Unity Candle, if used.**
4. \_\_\_ **Church Program Booklets, if used.**
5. \_\_\_ **Offering for the Church.** Please refer to the "Directory" at the back of this booklet.
6. \_\_\_ **Check for \$100.00 (name - blank)**, to be made out to the Wedding Coordinator
7. \_\_\_ **Two envelopes with \$15.00 cash**, for each of the altar servers (if you are having a Mass).

*(Note: After your marriage, a copy of your **marriage certificate** can be obtained from the town clerk's office at the town hall where you applied, not St. Mary's.)*

## *Can we reach you?*

Throughout the entire marriage preparation process, please keep us up to date. Please provide us with a work and/or local telephone number and advise us if you have moved.

## *On your wedding day....*

### *Arrival*

*The Groom and his ushers need to arrive 30 minutes before the scheduled start time and the Bride needs to arrive 20 minutes before the scheduled time* in order for everything to happen before the actual start (i.e. seating guests, photos before of the groom and best man, other photos including the bride leaving the car, the lining up of the bridesmaids, the final preparation of the bridal ensemble). You do not want to keep the most important people in your lives waiting for the wedding to begin on time. Additionally, it is important to realize that very often other events are scheduled in the church before and/or after your event that require preparation.

### *Rings*

Don't forget your wedding rings. These should be brought to the church by the groom or best man and presented to the priest/deacon prior to the liturgy.

### *Parking*

The parking lot for the church is located across the street from the church. Limousines and cars must not block any entrance/exit from Saint Mary's property, including the driveway to the rectory. If this occurs it may be necessary to interrupt your wedding to have vehicles moved. Any other area in front of the church is permissible for your limousine to be parked.

### *Access for Persons with Disabilities*

There are several reserved parking spaces to the left of the front entrance of the church. A ramp into the church is adjacent to these spaces.

### *Rice, confetti, etc...*

*The throwing of rice, confetti, birdseed or any such matter is absolutely forbidden in the church or on the front steps or driveway as this can cause vermin to come into the Church.*

### *After your wedding day....*

Support and assistance to married couples is a priority of every parish community. As a newly married couple, it is important that you register as soon as possible in the parish where you will reside. You should try to establish a relationship with your new parish. Just as you need the encouragement, strength and support of a faith community, so also that community has need of the witness of your love for one another so strongly rooted in Christ...and perhaps, after a period of time, you would be willing to give witness to the demands and realities of living the covenant of Marriage in our society by being facilitators in an Engaged Couples' Workshop. As our Lord says in Sacred Scripture: "The gift you have received, give as a gift!"

**DIRECTORY**  
**Parish Offices are located in the Parish Center**  
**Across the street from the Church**

**Mailing Address:**

St. Mary of the Nativity  
One Kent Street Scituate, MA 02066  
Phone # (781) 545-3335 Fax # (781) 544-3678  
**www.StMaryScituate.org**

**PARISH STAFF**

Pastor: Rev. Brian Manning                      Admin. Assistant: Alice Keefe  
Parochial Vicar: Rev. Matthew Westcott      Wedding Coordinators: Mary Feeney,  
Stephanie Whelan, Dawn Rota

**Music Director and Principal Organist:**

Diane Dyson  
203-500-4530

**CHURCH OFFERINGS**

Following the Archdiocesan guidelines, the following is recommended:

All In-parish Weddings                      \$200.00

as active registered Parishioners faithfully, financially support the Church and the building week in and week out.

Non-Parishioner Weddings                      \$200.00

We also ask that non-parishioners contribute an additional \$200 to cover the use of the church for the rehearsal and the ceremony, and the services of the custodian. The officiating priest/deacon receives no part of this fee.

**WEDDING COORDINATOR**

Check to be filled out at the Rehearsal in the name of the coordinator.

**SERVERS**

Two envelopes (each one marked "Server," if you are having a Mass), with \$15.00 cash in each