

**THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY
PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE:
WEDDING POLICIES & GUIDELINES**

**Saint Mary of the Nativity Parish
Scituate Harbor, MA.
781-545-3335
www.stmaryscituate.org
(Effective July 1, 2018)**

Dear Friends,

Congratulations on your engagement and upcoming marriage. The pastoral staff of St. Mary of the Nativity Parish shares your joy as you prepare for this most significant and solemn undertaking in your lives.

Marriage is a natural institution established by God the Creator. It is a permanent, faithful, fruitful partnership between one man and one woman, established by their free and mutual consent. It has two purposes: the good of the spouses, called the unitive purpose, and the procreation and education of children. These two purposes of marriage are inseparable; they are two aspects of the same self-giving love of the spouses.

Marriage is a vocation, or divine call, as necessary and valuable to the Church as other vocations. Discernment of and preparation for marriage is a process that begins early in life and continues through the engagement period. With God's grace, couples are called to grow in holiness as they live out the demands of this vocation each day of their lives together.

Marriage faces many challenges in contemporary society and it needs the grace of God and a life-long commitment from each spouse. Proper preparation also is essential in providing a solid foundation for marriage.

Therefore, it is the policy of the Archdiocese of Boston and St. Mary of the Nativity Parish to provide the best possible preparation for each engaged couple. This involves several steps and begins with notifying the parish at least six months in advance, but preferably one year before the date of your wedding. It is imperative that you secure a date for your wedding before you book a facility for your reception.

The following guidelines are provided to help you in your planning process in order to ensure that all your plans will run smoothly. If you have any questions regarding these guidelines or the wedding ceremony itself please call us and we will gladly assist you.

Your Parish Staff

Arranging your Wedding

We welcome you to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony in our church, but because of the number of requests for this Sacrament, first priority is given to active registered adults of our parish. Their immediate family members are given second priority followed by others who wish to marry in our beautiful church. Two Catholics marrying one another are expected to have a Nuptial Mass. A Catholic marrying a non-Catholic will have a Wedding Ceremony.

The couple themselves (not their parents) are to arrange the date and time of their wedding with the parish secretary. In the case when one or both parties have been divorced, it is not possible to schedule a wedding date until an official declaration of nullity has been granted. Only one date and time may be reserved. Weddings are scheduled at the following times: Friday evenings from 3-6:00 p.m.; Saturday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.; or Sunday at 3:00 p.m.

After scheduling the wedding the couple should contact the pastor and set up an appointment to meet with him at least six months prior to the scheduled wedding date. This initial meeting allows the pastor and the couple to get to know one another and to complete a preliminary form, which collects basic information, ascertains your freedom to marry and your intention to enter into marriage as a life-long commitment that gives your spouse the right to have children. Questions you have may also be addressed at this time.

Before the meeting begins please arrange for the following documentation:

- **For Catholics:** Current Baptismal Certificate (not your original when you were first baptized). This can be obtained by telephoning the parish where you were baptized telling the secretary you need a Baptismal Certificate for marriage. This should be sent directly to St. Mary's to the attention of Alice Keefe.
- **For a non-Catholic:** You will need a copy of your Baptismal Certificate if you are a Christian or birth certificate if you are a non-Christian. This should be sent to St. Mary's as stated above. Also, at the time of your meeting with the priest, he will give you two forms, known as "Letters of Free Status," to be filled out by two members from your family or close friends, who can testify that you have never been married before.
- **Under 18 years of age:** A letter of consent from your parent or guardian.
- **Non-Parishioners:** If neither the bride nor the groom is a parishioner of St. Mary's then permission from your pastor will be necessary for Catholics.
- **Marriage Preparation:** Every couple is required to complete a Pre-Cana Program and provide a certificate of completion. This program discusses

important aspects of married life in order for you to have a happy and thriving marriage. It is important to schedule a program in a timely fashion. You may find a list of Pre-Cana/Marriage Preparation Programs on the website of the Archdiocese, www.rcab.org. This can be found on the Catholic Life tab under Other Resources where you click on the off site links for Family Life. (The Pre-Cana Certificate can be submitted after your initial meeting with a priest.)

NB: If a Catholic is coming from another diocese there is additional paperwork that must be completed and this can be time consuming. In this instance it is imperative to meet with the pastor as soon as possible.

When a couple planning to marry at St. Mary's comes from outside the Archdiocese of Boston then they are expected to meet with a priest from their own parish who will help complete the necessary paperwork and provide adequate instructions about the Sacrament of Matrimony. In this instance we will need the following:

- **Current Baptismal Certificate** (long form not more than six month old).
- **Birth certificate for a non-Christian.**
- **Status *Liber* forms** (two each for the bride and groom).
- **Testimonial Letter for Catholics.**
- **Pre-Marital Investigation.**
- **Pre-Cana Certificate.**

For those preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony at St. Mary's there should be at least one follow up meeting with a priest/deacon/pastoral associate, who will provide sacramental instructions. This also is an opportunity for the couple to ask further questions as they relate to marriage and the wedding ceremony. All necessary paperwork should be completed and turned in at this meeting.

The Wedding Ceremony

At the initial meeting the priest will give you a copy of “I Do & Beyond: Planning the Catholic Wedding Ceremony”. This book will help you to choose the prayers and readings that will be used for your wedding. It also provides a nice guide if you choose to create a wedding program. You also will receive a wedding selection page that you should complete and bring to the rehearsal.

A priest or deacon, in good standing, who is a relative or friend, is most welcome to celebrate the Rite of Marriage in our church. If you choose to invite a priest or deacon from outside the parish please discuss this with the pastor at your initial meeting. **A priest or deacon who is not a resident of Massachusetts will need to obtain a written delegation from the Secretary of State.** This may be obtained through the mail but it should be done well in advance to avoid confusion and possible disappointment.

Flowers & Decorations

The floral arrangements for your wedding may be as simple or elaborate as you wish but during the Advent and Lenten Seasons they should be done in moderation in keeping with the liturgical season. It is important to remember that part of the fee you pay the florist is to set up and clean up the decorations in the church. It is expected that any decorations used outside the church will be removed immediately after the wedding ceremony. It is customary, but not required, that the flowers used to give beauty and honor to the wedding ceremony are left in the church after the ceremony.

The use of an aisle runner is not permitted because the aisle is carpeted. The combination of carpet and runner causes heels to be caught leading to potential accidents. If you have made arrangements for an aisle runner please contact your florist and cancel this request.

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

Candles beside the altar will be lit but no other candles of any kind are allowed in any area of the church. **NB:** A candle ceremony is not part of the wedding ceremony and should be done at the wedding reception if you so desire.

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 & 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 but the doorway from the sacristy may be used. During the Consecration, within the Liturgy of the Eucharist, no photographs are to be taken in keeping with the sacred action on the altar. Photographs may resume after the distribution of Holy Communion to the congregation. Photographers may not direct or interrupt the wedding procession. Video taping is permitted with a stationary camera. The use of flood lights is prohibited.

Music & 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 during the marriage ceremony; it is better suited for the reception. St. Mary of the Nativity Parish follows the norms for wedding music established by the Office of Worship for the Archdiocese of Boston. There is a rich and beautiful repertoire of music that will satisfy a variety of tastes. You should plan to meet in advance with our Music Director, Diane Dyson, who will assist you in selecting your wedding music. Ms. Dyson can be reached at 203-500-4530.

As is customary in all churches, St. Mary's requires its musicians to be used at all weddings. As professional, contracted employees, these services are part of their enumeration. Other soloists or instrumentalists may be allowed to participate in the ceremony if they are qualified and are familiar with the Roman Rite. Our cantor and music director/organist will still receive their usual fees. When a guest organist is used St. Mary's organist will be present at the wedding to handle any unforeseen circumstances and to ensure the proper use of the organ. Guest organists may not change any combinations on the organ without the authorization of the parish organist. In addition you may choose to have other musical instruments along with the organ. This needs to be coordinated early on with the Music Director. If more than one rehearsal is needed there will be an added fee for the organist.

All of the musical fees should be arranged with the individual musicians and vocalist. Normally the parish organist and soloist receive \$350 and \$200 respectively. A fee of \$75 will be charged for an extra rehearsal with guest musicians. Payment for the organist and soloist is due sixty days prior to the date of your wedding.

The Wedding Rehearsal

You should reserve a rehearsal time and date with the parish secretary as soon as possible. Often we have more than one wedding on a weekend, which means potential conflicts with rehearsal dates. To ensure an acceptable time for your rehearsal make your arrangements early. Your rehearsal should begin promptly because of the potential for multiple rehearsals on a given evening.

St. Mary's assigns a Wedding Coordinator to all weddings and rehearsals. The Coordinator will guide you through your rehearsal and be present at your wedding to make sure everything runs smoothly. Our Wedding Coordinators have been trained to assist you in running the rehearsal so that your wedding ceremony may be as beautiful as possible. For their service the Wedding Coordinators receive a stipend of \$200, which should be paid at the time of your rehearsal; checks should be made out to the individual Coordinator.

Rehearsals are normally held on Thursday or Friday evenings. The bride and groom should plan on arriving about twenty minutes early in order to meet with the Wedding Coordinator to discuss the details of the wedding. You will then be ready to greet your guests as they arrive for the rehearsal. If you have a visiting priest or deacon, he is welcome to attend the rehearsal but his presence is not required.

NB: The following items must be brought to the rehearsal before it can begin:

- 1. A Civil Marriage License** (obtained from any city hall or town office in Massachusetts within sixty days of your wedding).
- 2. The Liturgy Selection Page.**
- 3. Church programs** (if they are to be used).
- 4. Offering for the Church** (please see the directory).
- 5. Check for the Wedding Coordinator** (\$200 made out to the Coordinator).
- 6. Stipends for the Altar Servers** (two envelopes with \$20 in cash if servers are used).

After your marriage, a copy of your marriage license can be obtained at the city hall or town office where you first applied for your marriage license, not at St. Mary's.

SELECTION PAGE – MARRIAGE

Date of Celebration: _____ **Time:** _____ **Mass or Ceremony**

Bride: _____ **Groom:** _____

Officiant: _____ **Rehearsal Date & Time:** _____

Contact Phone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Opening Prayer: Option # _____

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Old Testament Reading: Option # _____ **Read by:** _____

New Testament Reading: Option # _____ **Read by:** _____

Gospel: Option # _____ **Read By: Officiant**

RITE OF MARRIAGE

Exchange of Vows: Option # _____ **Blessing of Rings: Option #** _____

Nuptial Blessing Option # _____

Prayers of the Faithful: Option # _____ **Read by:** _____

Names of Deceased (if being mentioned individually): _____

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

of Gift Bearers: _____ **Names:** _____

Prayer Over Gifts: Option # _____ **Preface: Option #** _____

Communion: (circle those receiving) Bride, Groom, Best Man, Maid of Honor

Final Blessing: Option # _____

****Please e-mail your completed selection page to your wedding coordinator****

mary@feeney.com or cwfawcett@gmail.com

The Wedding

The groom and his ushers should arrive at least thirty minutes prior to the start of the wedding ceremony and the bridal party should arrive twenty minutes in advance. Please make sure your photographer understands this. It is important that the wedding start on time because there are often other events scheduled in the church, especially on Saturdays when Confession starts at 3 p.m. followed by Mass at 4:30 p.m.

Wedding Rings

The groom or his best man should bring the wedding rings to the wedding and give them to the priest, deacon or wedding coordinator.

Special Needs

There are handicapped parking spaces to the left of the church entrance where there also is a ramp into the church.

Driveway

There is no parking on the rectory driveway; this is a fire lane and must remain open during the wedding ceremony.

Rice, Confetti, etc.

The throwing of rice, confetti, birdseed or any other matter is not permitted in the church or on the front steps or on the driveway. In addition the driver of the limousine, or anyone else, is not to pop open champagne on the church steps.

Congratulations

Congratulations to you both as you begin your new life together as husband and wife. Support and assistance to married couples is a priority of every parish community. As a newly married couple it is important for you to register as soon as possible in the parish in which you will be residing. You should try to establish a relationship with your new parish. Communal support is important as you live out your new life as a married couple. The Church too needs your support and the witness of your love for one another so strongly grounded in the love of Christ.

