



Marriage Preparation Guidelines

St. Joseph Catholic Church

St. Johns, Michigan

Parish Office Hours:

Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - noon

& 1:00 - 4:30 pm

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*Wedding Coordinators,
Director*

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Congratulations!

We extend to you our best wishes for your engagement. May the time of preparation and the celebration of your wedding be filled with many blessings.

Getting Married at St. Joseph Church - Three Important Points

- ❖ Marriage of a baptized man and woman is a sacrament. If only one of the parties is baptized, the marital bond is still a sacred one. For Catholics, marriage signifies the union of Christ with his Church.
- ❖ Marriage is both personal & public. You are pledging your selves to each other in a life-long covenant of love and mutual support. The union of husband and wife and the establishment of a family are also the foundation of civil society and the community which is the Church.
- ❖ Marriage is an act of worship in which you pledge your lives to each other and receive blessings of God's grace to help you live out this pledge. Because vows are witnessed by the Church's minister and God's assembled people, it is your special day, but it is also ours.

Optional Forms of the Nuptial Liturgy

Marriage of two baptized Catholics traditionally takes place during the celebration of Mass. The marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic may take place during the celebration of Mass or a Liturgy of the Word. Wedding celebrations are presided over by a priest or deacon and require two additional witnesses; these are typically the *best man* and *bride's maid*.

Preparation Checklist

Interviews with Parish Staff

The first step is to schedule an interview; this should be arranged at the beginning stages of preparation. There will be two additional interviews as you are finalizing your wedding plans.

- **The Priest or Deacon** will interview the couple, outline the requirements for marriage preparation and set a wedding date at the Church.
- **The Marriage Preparation Director will then assign a FOCCUS Couple**, and is available to address questions, throughout the preparation process.
- **The Music Director** will review music options, with the couple, & finalize a plan for wedding music.
- **The Wedding Coordinator** will conduct a wedding rehearsal and assist the engaged couple with issues regarding Church usage.

Marriage Preparation Programs (See Information Folder for program details).

- **Catholic Information Series**, (four 2-hour sessions)
- **WeCare Seminar**, (two 3-hour sessions)
- FOCCUS Couple Sessions, (four – six, 90 minute sessions)

Sacramental Guidelines

- Celebration of Reconciliation, prior to the celebration of marriage is strongly recommended.

Sacramental / Legal Requirements

- Baptismal Certificates must be presented to the parish, for the wedding file.
- A Marriage License must be obtained 30 days prior to the wedding.
- Failure to comply with the above requirements may result in a cancellation of the wedding.

Parish Guidelines for Planning the Wedding

1. Scheduling the Wedding Date

Weddings are scheduled approximately 9 month following the first interview with the priest or deacon. They are typically scheduled for Saturday at 11:00 am or 1:00 pm. Weddings can also be scheduled for a Friday afternoon or evening, the specific time being negotiable. There is only one wedding per day, at St. Joseph Church. Weddings are not usually scheduled during Lent.

Do not reserve a reception hall or caterer **UNTIL** the priest or deacon has formally reserved the date for the wedding, and noted in the Mass book.

2. Planning the Ceremony

A. Celebrant/Presider

The priest or deacon who witnesses your vows represents the Church, as the 'celebrant' for a sacramental celebration; this is why it is required that a member of the clergy

presides at your marriage celebration. In the case of an inter-faith marriage arrangements can be made for a minister of another denomination to be present and participate in the wedding ceremony. Visiting ministers will be warmly welcomed. Speak to the priest/deacon preparing you to arrange for this.

B. The Marriage Liturgy

You will be provided a collection of scripture readings, prayers, vows and blessings from which you can choose selections, in planning the liturgy for your wedding.

C. Lectors & Servers

The couple may choose lectors to do the readings and altar servers. Readers will be asked to read from the chosen scripture readings and prayers of intercession.

D. Flowers

Arrangement for flowers can be made with a florist of your choice. Flowers must be natural, not artificial and are to remain in the church following the wedding.

E. Runners

The church does not provide aisle runners; they are not necessary with carpet. If used, they must be rolled out before the wedding procession begins.

F. Unity Candle or Marian Bouquet

The focal symbol in a Catholic wedding is the exchange of rings. A unity candle is not essential but *may* be used. If you choose to use one you must purchase it yourselves. The couple may also present a floral bouquet before the statue of Mary, instead of lighting a unity candle

G. Photographs/Videos

Videotaping and photos (with or without flash) may be taken while the bridal procession is entering and leaving the church. The full ceremony may be videotaped *from a stationary position in the choir loft*. During the ceremony guests/ professional photographers may take photos *without flash*. Time for additional photos is limited to one hour before and after the ceremony.

H. Music for your Wedding

Music for all weddings at St. Joseph is provided by the parish Music Director; provision for other musicians is allowed but must be arranged under the direction of the Music Director and approved by the pastor. Music selected for your wedding must be in accord with the sacred character of the celebration as well as the prayer of the Church. The marriage ceremony is an act of worship in which the bride and groom come together with family and friends to offer thanks and praise and ask God's blessing on their life together as husband and wife.

A Catholic wedding celebration can include the following music:

- Instrumental, choral or solo singing while guests assemble in the church.
- A processional piece, to begin the ceremony.
- An opening hymn, sung by the guests.
- A hymn at the Preparation of the Gifts.
- Hymns for the Reception of Communion.
- A recessional hymn or other recessional music.

- Other sacred songs, solo or choral pieces, approved by the Music Director.
Popular (non-sacred) music is inappropriate for the wedding ceremony and should be reserved for the reception or other social gatherings.

Couples must meet with the Music Director to plan music for their wedding. Please contact the Music Director directly.

3. Wedding Coordinator

The parish will assign you a Wedding Coordinator to assist with details and logistics in the church space. The Coordinator will be available to: (1) answer questions, (2) conduct the rehearsal and (3) be present to assist on the day of your Wedding.

- A. Rehearsals are arranged by the Wedding Coordinator and are typically the night before the Wedding.
- B. Personal conduct/courtesy issues
 - The wedding party is to conduct themselves in a manner respectful of a church. No eating, drinking or smoking is allowed in the building, including the Dressing Room
 - Cell phones should be turned off while the wedding party is at the church.
 - There is to be NO rice, confetti, bird seed or flower petals thrown either in or in front of the church. All boxes, extra programs or other handouts are to be removed from the church at the end of the ceremony.

C. Dressing Room

The *Msgr. Lunsford Room* (Nursery Room) in the basement complex of the church can be used as a dressing room for the women of the bridal party.

4. Offerings for Services

- Church: \$100.00
- Presider/Celebrant: Free will offering
- Wedding Coordinator: \$50.00
- Musician/Cantor: as contracted with the Music Director
- Altar Server: \$10.00



Final Word

We are here to help! We rejoice in your decision to get married and want to support you in every way that we can. May God richly bless your engagement and your marriage!

Pastor, Fr. Michael Williams

Deacon Marvin E. Robertson

Deacon Gerald Fust

Marriage Preparation Director, Nancy Joseph