



# Marriage Preparation Guidelines

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
109 Linden Street, St. Johns, MI 48879

**Parish Office:**  
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**Music Director:** Jeff Richards  
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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.

## General Preparations

*The last page of this booklet has a detailed checklist for preparations.*

1. **Meeting with Priest:** A couple wishing to complete the sacrament of marriage is expected to make an appointment with a parish priest at least nine (9) months in advance of the proposed wedding date. At this meeting the priest will interview the couple, go over the requirements and guidelines, and set a wedding date at the church. Any questions or concerns the couple has should be brought up at this time.
2. **Marriage Preparation Programs:** There are three programs that must be completed before a couple can get marriage: Catholic Information Series, WeCare Seminar, and FOCCUS Couple Sessions. Informational brochures will be provided when the couple meets with the pastor.
3. **Sacramental and Legal Requirements:** Baptismal Certificates are required for all baptized parties. The pastor will go over if anything else is required (i.e. dispensation, final decree of annulment, or death certificate). The marriage license must be obtained within 30 days of the wedding date and dropped off to the parish office at least 2 weeks in advance.
4. **Liturgical Selections/Stipends:** The liturgical selections, stipends, and signed security deposit form are due to this parish office a month before the wedding date. The names of the witnesses signing the license (generally the Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor) are also needed at this time.

## Parish Guidelines for Planning the Wedding

**Scheduling the Wedding Date:** Wedding are typically scheduled on Saturdays at 1:00 pm. Other days and time can be negotiated with the pastor. Weddings are not usually scheduled during lent due to the penitential nature of the liturgical season. Only one wedding per day will be scheduled at the church. Do not reserve a reception hall or caterer UNTIL the date has been formally scheduled.

**Marriage Liturgy:** You will be provided a binder that contains a collection of scripture readings from which you can choose selections for the liturgy for your wedding. Selections, along with the binder, must be turned in to the office at least a month before the wedding.

**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 and approval of the pastor and Director of Music. Music selected for your wedding must be in accord with the sacred character of the celebration as well as the prayer of the Church. Secular and/or recorded music is inappropriate for the wedding ceremony and should be reserved for the reception or other social gatherings. Couples must contact the Music Director directly to arrange a time to meet and plan music for their wedding.

**Lectors & Gift Bearers:** Up to three lectors can be chosen to read during the liturgy. They can read the 1st Reading, 2nd Readings, and Prayers of the Faithful. Lectors may be Catholic or any Christian denomination, but must be actively practicing their faith. During a ceremony with a full Mass, the bread and wine will be brought forward to the altar. Gift Bearers chosen must be practicing Catholics.

**Flowers:** Arrangement for flowers can be made with a florist of your choice. Flowers must be natural, not artificial and must be removed from the church following the wedding unless otherwise arranged with the pastor.

**Aisle Runners:** The use of aisle runners are not allowed due to tripping hazard.

**Unity Candle and/or Marian Bouquet:** A unity candle is not essential to the ceremony. If you choose to use one, they must be provided by the couple. Many couples also present a floral bouquet before the statue of Mary, in lieu or addition to lighting a unity candle

**Photographs/Videos:** Video and photos (with or without flash) may be taken while the bridal procession is entering and leaving the church. Videographers may record the full ceremony from the choir loft. During the ceremony guests/professional photographers may take photos without flash. Time for additional photos is limited to one hour before/after the ceremony.

**Wedding Coordinator:** A wedding coordinator will be assigned to the couple to assist with details and logistics in the church space. They will be able to answer questions, conduct the rehearsal, and be present to assist on the day of your wedding. The marriage license will be in the possession of the Wedding Coordinator before the wedding day.

**Wedding Rehearsals:** The rehearsal will be arranged by the wedding coordinator and are typically 6:00 pm the night before the wedding.

**Throwing Rice/Bird Seed/Flower Petals:** The throwing of rice, bird seed, or any other objects are not allowed, whether done in or outside the church. This includes the throwing of flower petals by a flower girl. This is due to tripping/slipping hazards and the cost of clean up. Bubbles are allowed, but again please make sure all containers are collected and disposed of after use.

**Dressing Rooms:** Separate basement rooms of the church will be available for use as a dressing room for the men and women of the bridal party.

**Personal Conduct:** The wedding party is to conduct themselves in a manner respectful of a church. No eating, drinking or smoking is allowed in church. Food and drink (no alcohol) are limited to the dressing rooms. Cell phones should be turned off while the wedding party is at the church.

**Clean Up:** All programs and other hand outs must be removed from the church at the end of the ceremony. The dressing rooms should be returned to the state they were found in.

## Wedding Preparation Checklist

- Bride's Baptismal Certificate sent to St. Joseph Parish
- Groom's Baptismal Certificate sent to St. Joseph Parish
- Choose readings from the provided booklet
- Choose Readers and Gift Bearers
- Contact Jeff Richards, Music Director, to arrange meeting for music selections
- Attend Catholic Information Series
  - Send copy of certificate of completion to the office
- Attend WeCare Program
  - Send copy of certificate of completion to the office
- Attend Engaged Encounter Weekend (*in lieu of Catholic Information Series & WeCare*)
  - Send copy of certificate of completion to the office
- Meet with assigned FOCCUS couple. (*The FOCCUS couple will be in touch with you to arrange these meetings.*)

### The Following Needs to be Submitted to the Parish Office at least One Month before the Wedding:

Wedding Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Liturgy selections form and selection binder
- Signed security deposit form with \$250 security deposit
- Fees for wedding coordinator (\$50) and musician (\$150)
- Marriage License (obtained no earlier than 30 days before wedding date) and witness names (Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor)

Questions about any of the above can be directed to the parish office.  
Any other questions can be answered by your wedding coordinator.

Wedding Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_