



Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church Wedding Guidelines

Introduction

Congratulations on your engagement and intention to enter into the sacrament of matrimony! It is by administering this beautiful sacrament to each other that you, as a couple before the witnesses of your church community, your family and friends, reflect the union Christ has with his bride, the Church. The wedding covenant is a major commitment, life changing and lifelong. It is a journey of joy and faith, a serious and sacred commitment that calls a man and a woman to each other in a most profound and permanent way. Christian marriage calls a couple to become a visible sign of Christ's unconditional and faithful love. It demands a living faith on the part of the couple and the awareness that they are entering into a covenant not only with each other, but also with God. Because of our firm belief that Marriage is such a sacred commitment we also believe that it deserves the careful attention and preparation on the part of all who are involved: the couple, the clergy and the Church. In order to assist you in this process, we have put together the following guidelines for weddings at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church. Please carefully read these guidelines. If you are using a wedding coordinator and/or photographer, please ensure that they review these guidelines and follow them prior to/and during your wedding. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the parish clergy at 636-239-3520.

Some Preliminary Questions

Why are there so many requirements to get married in the Catholic Church? People often wonder why the Catholic Church has so many requirements to get married. It's true, there is a lot the Church is asking of you as you prepare to get married, but keep this in mind, the Church's emphasis is not so much on the "getting married" as it is on the marriage itself. Marriage is hugely important in the Church, and weddings are a big part of it, but remember only a one-day part of it. Wedding preparation is for one day. Marriage preparation is for life. The Church wants to help you have a beautiful wedding and a holy marriage for as long as you both shall live that's why we take preparation so seriously. Perhaps the best way to put it is as Pope Francis has said; "marriage preparation should be a kind of 'initiation' into the Sacrament of Matrimony, providing couples with the help they need to receive the Sacrament worthily and to make a solid beginning of life as a family."

My fiancé is not Catholic; can we still get married in the Church? A marriage between a Catholic and another Christian of a different denomination or a non-Christian person is quite common. It is not necessary for your fiancé to become Catholic in order to be married in the Catholic Church. Before the marriage can take place however, we must ask the Archbishop to give his permission for you to marry a non-Catholic. The Archbishop usually grants this permission provided that the Catholic promises to remain loyal to Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church and to share their Catholic Faith with their children by having them baptized and raised as Catholics. The non-Catholic partner does not have to make any promises, but they do need to be aware of the promise the Catholic is making.

I, (or my fiancé) have been married before and are now divorced. Can we get married by the Church? The marriage law of the Church is admittedly complicated. Please come and talk to your priest/deacon about your circumstances. Some can be taken care of very easily while others may require that we see if

a previous marriage can be declared null (an annulment). Please realize that any circumstance with a prior marriage will have to be taken care of according to the law of the Church before we can set a date and begin preparations for the wedding. We will do all that we can, within the law of Christ and His Church, to help you.

We are already married by a justice of the peace or minister outside of the Catholic Church. How can we get our marriage blessed in the Church? Again, the Church's marriage law can be a bit complicated, but that is because the Catholic Church takes marriage very seriously. We believe that marriage is a vocation, a calling from God, and as such a marriage of a Catholic, called to be a disciple of Jesus, is required to take place in the family of God's Church, in the presence of His minister (priest or deacon). When a Catholic in a civil union wishes to receive the Sacrament of Marriage, it is called a "validation". If you would like to have your union validated in the Church, or in other words, if you would like to take your marriage vows in the Church and receive the Sacrament of Marriage, it is usually very simple to arrange. Your priest/deacon will assist you with the paperwork and preparation and plan a date/time when you can enter into the Sacrament of Marriage.

How can we schedule our wedding? Please contact a priest or deacon at Our Lady of Lourdes at least six months prior to the date on which you hope to celebrate your wedding. Please note that no dates are final until all the marriage preparation requirements set forth by the Church have been satisfactorily completed. The priest/deacon with whom you meet will assist you in completing these requirements in a timely manner. Weddings are scheduled with respect to the couple's wishes and subject to the availability of the church. Most weddings are scheduled on Saturdays; however, they can also be celebrated on other days of the week. There are also certain times when marriages cannot be celebrated due to certain parish events or Church feast days. The priest/deacon will be able to help you determine if your desired date is possible.

What does a wedding cost at OLL? Parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes are asked to make a donation of at least \$250 to the church. If neither party is a registered member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, a donation of \$1,000 is requested. For non-parishioners, at least ½ of the offering needs to be made at the time of scheduling the wedding date and no dates will be reserved until payment is made (\$150 of this deposit is non-refundable). The remainder of the amount is due one month before the wedding.

The Priest or Deacon: Normally the priest or deacon for your marriage preparation and wedding ceremony will be one of the priests or deacons at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. However, some couples have a special relationship with a particular priest/deacon from another parish or diocese and would like him to witness their wedding. In these cases visiting priests/deacons are welcome to celebrate weddings at Our Lady of Lourdes. However, if you are asking a visiting priest/deacon to celebrate your wedding there are a few general expectations. First, the priest/deacon performing the wedding will also be responsible for the marriage preparation, though exceptions for specific reasons are possible. Second, the visiting priest/deacon should also conduct the wedding rehearsal. Third, the visiting priest/deacon, if he is from outside the Archdiocese of St. Louis, will be required to have a letter of good standing sent from his legitimate superior. Finally, the priest/deacon must ask for delegation from the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes to witness the vows.

Marriage Preparation

Initial Meeting: In your initial contact with the parish clergy, set up an initial meeting to begin the marriage preparation process. The priest/deacon will help you fill out the initial paperwork and make sure you do not have any canonical impediments to the Sacrament of Marriage. The priest/deacon will explain the process and requirements of marriage preparation.

Marriage Preparation Inventory and Meetings with Priest/Deacon: Your priest/deacon will give you personalized login information for the “Fully Engaged” Marriage Preparation Inventory, or some other form of marriage preparation inventory. This is not a test, but a tool to help facilitate conversation about various issues concerning the marital relationship. After logging in, you will complete the inventory, the results of which will then be sent to the priest/deacon to be used in your meetings with him. The priest/deacon preparing you for marriage will help you schedule meetings to review this information.

Marriage Preparation Program: The Archdiocese of St. Louis requires couples preparing for marriage to participate in the “God’s Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage” marriage preparation program. Information about this program such as dates, locations and registration can be found at: <http://archstl.org/laityandfamilylife/page/marriage-preparation-class-schedule> or by calling 314-792-7180. Upon completion of this program you will receive a certificate of completion which you will be required to give to the priest/deacon preparing you for marriage.

Natural Family Planning Introductory Course: In order to help you live out more fully the Church’s teaching on marriage, sexuality and family, the Archdiocese of St. Louis requires couples to attend a Natural Family Planning Introductory Course. Information about these courses such as dates, locations and registration can be found at: <http://archstl.org/naturalfamilyplanning/page/nfp-introductory-sessions> or by calling 314-792-7180. Upon completion of this program you will receive a certificate of completion which you will be required to give to the priest/deacon preparing you for marriage.

Counseling: It may be determined in the course of marriage preparation that you or your fiancé or both of you may need professional counseling. This is not a sign of weakness or a mark against you, rather, if taken openly and seriously, it can be an opportunity for growth to help you live a healthier Christian life and thus a healthier Christian marriage. Your priest/deacon will discuss this with you if they deem it necessary and will provide you with a reference and information about how to attain proper counseling.

Sacrament of Confirmation: Confirmation in the Catholic Church is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation. It is important that all Catholics who are planning on entering into the Sacrament of Marriage should first have received all three Sacraments of Initiation. If you are Catholic and have not been Confirmed (or received First Holy Communion) please let your priest/deacon know ASAP so that we can help you take the proper steps to be confirmed before your wedding.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: It is appropriate for all Catholics to make frequent use of the great gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Confession as we sometimes say. We are all sinners in need of God’s mercy, and He offers it to us in this beautiful Sacrament. It is a time of forgiveness and healing and can be a fresh start in our continued path of discipleship of Jesus Christ. Whether you make use of this Sacrament frequently, or whether it has been years since you have been to Confession, we encourage you to receive God’s mercy in this Sacrament as part of your preparation for marriage, especially in the

days leading up to the wedding. This is a perfect way to prepare your soul to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage and to help you as you walk the path of discipleship in marriage.

Required Documents to Complete Marriage Preparation

Pre-Nuptial Investigation Form: This form will be completed in your meetings with the priest/deacon preparing you for marriage.

Baptismal Certificates: For Catholics, it is necessary to obtain an updated baptismal certificate from the church of your baptism. This must be obtained no more than six months prior to the wedding. You are responsible for calling or emailing the church of your baptism and having them send a copy of your baptismal certificate to your priest/deacon at Our Lady of Lourdes. It is also helpful for baptized Christians to show some proof of baptism, though this is not required if it is too difficult to obtain.

Letter of Permission: A Catholic being married outside of their own proper parish needs a letter of permission from his/her proper pastor. This is simple to attain. If you are Catholic and you live in parish other than Our Lady of Lourdes, simply contact the pastor of the parish in whose boundaries you live and ask him to send a letter of permission to get married at Our Lady of Lourdes.

Marriage Preparation Certificates: You must give the priest/deacon the certificates of completion of both the Marriage Preparation Program and the Natural Family Planning Course.

Civil Marriage License: A valid Missouri civil marriage license is required for all couples. It is the couple's responsibility to acquire this license and present it to the priest/deacon at your wedding rehearsal. Information on attaining a Missouri marriage license may be found by contacting your local county Recorder of Deeds. Please note that a civil marriage license is only valid for thirty days and must be obtained in the State of Missouri. More information may be found here: <https://www.morecorders.com/marriage-requirements> The marriage license will be signed by the officiating priest/deacon and the two witnesses after the wedding ceremony and the priest/deacon will send it promptly to the Recorder of Deeds.

Other Documents: Depending on your particular situation, further documents, such as declaration of nullity paperwork may be required to complete your marriage preparation. The priest/deacon preparing your for marriage will help you if this is the case in your situation.

Wedding Ceremony

In order to preserve the sacredness and dignity proper to Christian marriage, all wedding ceremonies **must** conform to the guidelines outlined below. Wedding coordinators and photographers are to be made aware of these guidelines and **must** agree to abide by them. There is some flexibility allowed for you to personalize your wedding ceremony. However, ceremony plans are not final until they are approved by the priest/deacon with whom you are working. The priest/deacon will assist you in planning your celebration.

Rehearsal: Couples should schedule the rehearsal with the officiating priest/deacon who will coordinate with the parish office. The rehearsal is normally scheduled for an evening shortly before the wedding

day. For example, for a Saturday wedding the rehearsal is usually scheduled on the previous Thursday or Friday. We expect all those involved in the wedding liturgy to be present at the rehearsal. All necessary paperwork and payments are to be completed and submitted prior to the scheduling of the Rehearsal. Failure to do so may result in the suspension (or cancellation) of your wedding. The civil marriage license must be brought to the rehearsal; the priest/deacon will keep it in a secure location at church. Musicians/vocalists should arrange a separate time for practice.

Wedding Party: The bride and her attendants may use Room 2, the Bride's Room, in the lower level of church for their preparation prior to the wedding. It is available 1 ½ hours prior to the ceremony only. We cannot allow hairdressers/beauticians to use our facilities. The groom and the men in the wedding party will gather in the Vestry, near the front entrance of Church. Please make arrangements to have someone pick up bags, trash, etc. from the rooms and take them to the dumpster behind church. We are not able to provide maintenance/custodial staff to be present to clean after weddings.

Appropriate Conduct/Dress: The consumption of alcohol on church property is strictly prohibited at any time before, during and after the wedding. Guests are not to indulge in alcohol prior to arriving on church property. Any violation of the above may result in the immediate cancellation of your wedding. There is no smoking or vaping allowed inside the Church at any time. Thoughtful consideration is to be made in regards to appropriate dress: we suggest "business-casual" for the Rehearsal and "formal" for the Wedding. Hats or caps are always inappropriate for men in church. Apparel selections for all parties involved in the wedding ceremony itself are to be made in respect to the Church.

Liturgical Celebration: There are two different liturgical celebrations in which we can celebrate a wedding. The first is within the context of the celebration of Mass. The second is within the context of the celebration of a Liturgy of the Word. The priest/deacon will help you determine which celebration is appropriate for your situation.

Nuptial Mass: Since the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Matrimony are both signs of unity, it is appropriate for practicing Catholics to exchange their marriage vows in the context of the celebration of the Mass. This is possible when both parties are practicing Catholics or when one party is a practicing Catholic and the other is a baptized Christian. In the latter case it is preferable for the wedding to take place outside the context of the mass because the non-Catholic party would not be able to receive Holy Communion. If, however, for a good reason, the couple wanted to celebrate their wedding within the context of Mass, permission must be sought from the Archbishop.

Reception of Holy Communion: It is the Church's policy that only practicing Roman Catholics may receive Holy Communion at Mass. If your wedding will take place during Mass, it is *your* responsibility to instruct non-Catholics attending of this policy.

Gift Bearers: You may want to choose two people to bring up the gifts of bread and wine for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: If you would like to have a family member or friend serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at your wedding mass, they must be practicing Catholics in good standing with their parish and presently serve as an extraordinary minister in their parish. They need to speak with the priest/deacon prior to the ceremony.

Wedding Ceremony: The wedding ceremony outside of mass is generally celebrated when one party is Catholic and the other is a baptized Christian, and it is the only option in the case of a wedding between a Catholic and a non-baptized person. It is also preferable for non-practicing Catholics to celebrate their wedding in this context. This ceremony looks much like that of a wedding mass with the exception of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Readings, Blessings, Prayers: The priest/deacon will provide you with guidance on appropriate readings, blessings and prayers for your wedding. You will be provided with a useful book, *Together for Life*, which contains all the options for readings, blessings and prayers that are allowed in a Catholic wedding. This

information is also available at the following website: <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/> Couples may want to select readers to proclaim the readings and general intercessions. The readers should be practicing Catholics.

Music: Music for the wedding liturgy, including prelude and postlude, is to assist and encourage prayer and praise to God. The music should express not only the faith and love of the couple but also the common faith and life of the whole Church. Song and music are important elements in the Catholic liturgy. For this reason it is essential that you have experienced vocalists and musicians who are familiar with leading music for Catholic worship. Regarding the selection of music for your wedding, it is essential to keep in mind that the wedding is a public liturgy of the Church. In keeping with the dignity of liturgical worship, all music must be approved liturgical music. Popular love songs or secular music, beautiful though it may be, are not allowed in the celebration of the liturgy, nor is pre-recorded music. In order to plan the music for your wedding, please contact Micki Marquart (mmarquart@ollwashmo.org), our Director of Music. She will assist you in selecting music and will make all arrangements with visiting musicians. The musical selections must be approved by the Director of Music and the Pastor.

Additional Ceremonial Notes: The following are a number of other considerations for your wedding ceremony.

Servers: You are welcome to have a family member serve the wedding liturgy. It is best if your chosen servers are trained active servers in their parish. If you would like Our Lady of Lourdes to provide servers, we will be happy to do that. The offering for parish servers is \$20 each and should be given as cash. The priest/deacon will be happy to disburse this for you.

The Blessing and Giving of the Arras: This ceremony is important to those in Hispanic and Filipino families and is certainly available to those for whom it would have deep significance.

Flowers to Mary: Some couples choose to bring flowers to the statue of Mary at an appropriate point in the wedding. This is permissible but should be done as a sign of true devotion to Mary as our Mother and as a consecration of your wedding to the Blessed Mother.

Unity Candle: This is not a Catholic practice, but somehow has become important to many couples as they celebrate their weddings. It is intended as a symbol of unity at the wedding, but is perhaps more appropriate for the wedding reception. The true signs of unity at a wedding are the Exchange of Vows and the Eucharist. In the recent revision of the Rite of Matrimony, the Church has prohibited the use of the unity candle at wedding ceremonies.

Sand Ceremony: The use of a popular sand blending ceremony as a sign of unity during the wedding is prohibited. Again this practice would be more appropriate for the wedding reception.

Flower Petals, Rice, Birdseed, Confetti or Bubbles: The throwing of flower petals, rice, birdseed, confetti, or the blowing of bubbles inside the church or on church grounds is prohibited as it is a messy injury hazard.

Animals and Wagons: The use of animals and wagons as part of the procession or ceremony is prohibited.

Church Decorations: You are welcome to add certain decorations to the church that are appropriate to a church and befitting the dignity of the celebration of marriage in a Catholic liturgy.

Church Furnishing/Decorations: Under no circumstances may *any* church furnishing and/or seasonal decoration be removed or rearranged without the explicit permission of the priest/deacon.

Floral Arrangements: Floral arrangements are to be furnished by the couple, should be kept simple, and should be respectful of the liturgical season in which the wedding takes place. Those used in the sanctuary should allow for free movement around the altar. Floral arrangements are not to be placed on the altar. It is requested that the flowers remain for the use of the Church.

Pew Decorations: You may decorate the pews in the main aisle, though to protect the pews from damage, nothing may be attached to the pews except by ribbon (no tacks, tape, etc.).

Aisle Runners: Aisle runners are a tripping hazard and are therefore prohibited.

Candles: The use of candles in the aisles as well as the use of candelabras and candle lighters in the sanctuary is prohibited.

Duration of Wedding: All weddings are not to exceed 90 minutes from the scheduled starting time; this includes photographs and reception lines. All photographers, parties and guests *must* vacate Church property no later than 90 minutes after the scheduled starting time of the wedding.

Receiving Line and Parish Hall Rental: You may greet your guests in the vestibule (lobby) of the Church as they leave. If you wish to utilize the Parish Hall for a reception, you may obtain rental information from the Parish Office by calling 636-239-3520. Keep in mind that for Saturday weddings the hall will not be available for the start of a reception until after 5pm mass.

Clean-up: At the conclusion of your ceremony please arrange for the complete clean-up of the church, the vestry, the bride's room and any other area you or your guests may have used. The weekend masses often begin shortly after weddings and the church must be clean and ready.

Photography: Photographers are welcome during the wedding ceremony. However, the following stipulations apply: under *no* circumstances may the photographer(s) enter the sanctuary at any time during the ceremony. Video recording is to be done from a stationary position. There should be no posed photographs during the ceremony, including stopping persons in the aisle during the processions. All photographers, parties and guests *must* vacate the church no later than 90 minutes after the scheduled starting time of the wedding. Please ask the photographer(s) to consult with the priest/deacon prior to the wedding ceremony for clarification of rules.

Parking: Guests are requested to remove their vehicles from the Church parking lot following the ceremony. Due to weekend masses, we cannot accommodate overnight parking. It is your responsibility to inform your guests of this policy.