

Weddings

Frequently Asked Questions



Getting Started

Q: How far in advance should we book our wedding?

A: You must book at least 6 months in advance to allow time for your marriage preparation.

Q: Are we required to be members of this parish?

A: Yes, we require that all couples wishing to get married in one of our churches or undergo marriage preparation with us be registered, active parishioners for 3 months before finalizing a date for their wedding. This includes filling out an online form, regular Mass attendance, and regular giving to the church. If you are interested in becoming a parishioner, please register at one of the following links:

- <https://eastsidefaith.org/new-parishioner-mary>
- <https://eastsidefaith.org/new-parishioner-cecilia>

Q: What if one of us is not Catholic?

A: The priest or deacon working with you in your marriage preparation process will walk you through any specific considerations for your circumstances. We will recommend a service, rather than a Mass, for your ceremony.

Q: What if one of us was previously married?

A: Before booking your wedding or beginning your marriage preparation, we will connect you with our Canon Lawyer who will ensure all proper processes are followed for valid marriages within the church.

Q: What if we are interested in a date, but aren't ready to book it yet?

A: You can put a hold on an available date. No deposit is required. Simply reach out to our marriage coordinator at slabarge@eastsideregion.org to inquire about getting started and placing a hold.

Q: What if we want to get married elsewhere, but want to go through marriage preparation with Eastside Catholics?

A: If you are registered, active parishioners for at least 3 months, but are getting married out of state, then we are open to walking with you through your marriage preparation.

Q: What do we have to do to officially book our wedding?

A: After meeting with our weddings coordinator via a short phone call and selecting an available date and time, our couples fill out an online information form and sign a contract.

Q: Are there any communication policies?

A: This is your wedding and your celebration of the sacrament of matrimony. For that reason, you as bride and groom are responsible for managing the details of your wedding at an Eastside Family Church. We will communicate with only the bride and groom; we do not communicate with parents, wedding planners, vendors, etc.

Scheduling

Q: What time slots are available for weddings?

A: Weddings can be scheduled at the following times.

- St. Cecilia:
 - Fridays at 4 pm
 - Saturdays at 1 pm or 6 pm
- St. Mary
 - Fridays at 6 pm
 - Saturdays at 1 pm

Q: Can we make an exception to schedule our wedding at another time?

A: Due to the other Masses, sacramental celebrations, and regular parish events, we are unable to schedule ceremonies outside of these times.

Q: Are there times of year when weddings are not permitted?

A: We do not schedule weddings over the Lenten or Advent seasons or over Easter or Christmas weekends. There are a few other select weekends where weddings are unavailable. Please check specific availability with our weddings coordinator.

Q: Do we need to meet with a priest before booking the date?

A: No, you will be assigned a priest or deacon for your preparation and ceremony at the time of booking. You do not need to meet with one before booking your wedding.

Marriage Preparation

Q: What preparation is required before we can marry?

A: Marriage preparation includes meeting one-on-one with our priests or deacons, completing an M-1 form, completing Natural Family Planning Classes, attending a Pre-Cana Marriage Retreat, and receiving mentorship from a FOCCUS couple after completing your inventory.

Catholics preparing to receive the Sacrament of Marriage should also receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before the wedding.

Q: How long does marriage preparation take?

A: 6-12 months.

Q: What documents do we need to provide?

A: You will need several documents:

- You will be required to obtain a **certified copy** of your baptism certificate.
 - A copy of your original baptism certificate is not sufficient, it must be a certified copy from the church of your baptism to contain the appropriate seal.
 - Please do not bring your original baptism certificate, it will not be returned to you!
- Upon booking your date, you will be given an M-1 form to complete.

Q: Will we meet with a priest?

A: Yes, you will meet with the priest or deacon overseeing your marriage preparation several times throughout the process.

Q: How many times will I meet with my priest or deacon for preparation?

A: It varies, but typically 2-4 times.

Q: When will we take and review our FOCCUS Inventory?

A: You are strongly encouraged to complete your individual FOCCUS inventories right away! We ask you to complete it at least 6 months before your wedding. Your FOCCUS Mentor couple will reach out to schedule a meeting with you 3-6 months before your wedding.

Ceremony & Rehearsal

Q: How long is a Catholic wedding ceremony?

A: Plan for approximately one hour.

Q: Will we have a wedding Mass or service?

A: We advise scheduling a Mass when both the bride and groom are Catholic and a service when one party is not Catholic.

Q: When should we arrive at the church?

A: The groom and ushers should arrive at least 45 minutes prior to the wedding. The bride and bridesmaids should arrive at least 30 minutes before the wedding. Please be prepared to begin your ceremony on time. The church will be opened one hour before the ceremony.

Q: When and how will we select our readings?

A: You will receive a pamphlet of suggested readings when you meet with your priest or deacon in marriage preparation. You will fill out a form at the back of this pamphlet for your presider with

your selections. Additionally, you will list your selections for your wedding coordinator once they are in touch with you by filling out the Wedding Coordinator Form. [You can see a digital version of the suggested readings here.](#)

Q: Can we ask friends or family to participate in our wedding ceremony?

A: Yes, you can select friends or family members to serve as Lectors (read your first reading and second reading), read your petitions, bring up the gifts, serve as Eucharistic Ministers, and serve as altar servers. You will note your selections to your Wedding Coordinator once you're in touch with them.

Q: Can we write our own vows?

A: Your wedding will include traditional, Catholic vows. While personal vows are not part of the formal ceremony, couples are welcome to share personal words with each other during the reception or in a private moment.

Q: Are unity candles or sand ceremonies permitted?

A: The Unity Candle is not a Catholic liturgical symbol and we do not use it in the ceremony. If desired, we recommend doing this at your rehearsal dinner or wedding reception.

Q: Where do the bride and groom sit during the ceremony?

A: There will be seats with kneelers placed on the altar near where the priest sits.

Q: Is there a bridal room or preparation space?

A: There are no facilities at either location for the wedding party to dress before the ceremony.

- At St. Cecilia, Fr. Jamie will open his home (the rectory) as a gathering place for the wedding party one hour prior to the wedding. As a reminder, this is his home (not a church meeting room), and your utmost respect is appreciated. No food or drink is permitted.
- At St. Mary, the bride and bridal party gather in Robisch Hall before the ceremony begins. Please note that all of the walls and doors are glass!
- The groom and groomsmen can go into the sacristy if they do not wish to see the bride beforehand.

Q: Are there any policies about alcohol?

A: The consumption of alcohol on church property before or after the wedding by any member of the wedding party is strictly forbidden. Any member of the wedding party that shows signs of having been drinking or of being under the influence of other controlled substances will not be permitted to participate in the wedding ceremony. Please note if the bride or groom show signs of consumption, they will not be permitted to be married. You cannot legally consent to marriage if you are under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances.

Q: When will our wedding rehearsal be?

A: Your wedding rehearsal time will be scheduled and communicated to you when you receive your confirmation email upon officially booking the church.

Q: Can we have our reception or rehearsal dinner at the church?

A: No, receptions and rehearsal dinners should be held outside of the church property.

Music & Programs

Q: How will we pick our music?

A: You will meet with the parish music director to plan the music for your ceremony (see their names and contact information below). For St. Cecilia couples, the parish music director will host a Wedding Sampler event where you will be invited to listen to available musical selections in the church. This is typically held each year in January or February.

Q: When will we meet with the music director?

A: You can expect to hear from the music director at least 3 months before your ceremony. See their contact information below.

Q: What music is allowed during the ceremony?

A: Our music directors will adhere to strict guidelines established by the Archdiocese. Music is an important element of all weddings and must reflect standard liturgical practices and, thereby, encourage the couple and the community to enter into the spirit of this occasion as a communal, liturgical event. Similarly, prelude music, because it sets the tone for the liturgical celebration which follows, must also befit the solemn nature of the church. We believe that Christ is literally present in the Eucharist in the tabernacle thus no profane music may be permitted. We do allow appropriate music even if it was not written with the direct intent of sacred use. The music directors may evaluate the appropriateness of music selections on a case by case basis.

Q: Can a friend or family member sing or play a musical instrument in the ceremony?

A: We love to include your friends or family where possible. You can discuss the options when you meet with your music director for approval.

Q: Is the cost of music included in our fee?

A: The services of the parish music director (consultation, one hour rehearsal, and ceremony) are included in the church fee. You are responsible for paying the cantor's \$200 fee directly to them. If you choose to add any additional instrumentalists, you are responsible for paying their fee directly as well - the music director can advise the rate based on your specific request. If additional rehearsal time beyond one hour prior is necessary because of the use of outside musicians, an additional fee will be set by the music director.

Q: Is a cantor/vocalist required?

A: Yes, a cantor/vocalist is required for all weddings.

Q: How will I find a cantor or additional instrumentalists for my ceremony?

A: Professional musicians familiar with both parishes can be contracted through the parish music director.

Q: What guidance or help can we have with our wedding programs?

A: Our music directors will help you create a wedding program.

Photography

Q: When can we begin pre-wedding photography?

A: All pre-wedding photography in the church can begin one hour prior to the scheduled wedding time and must conclude 30 minutes before the start of the wedding

Q: What are the photography restrictions during the ceremony?

A: The photographer and/or videographer should be discreet so as not to distract the priest, the wedding party, and guests or detract from the solemnity and beauty of the ceremony. Pictures and video may be taken in the church and in the church gardens.

Specific restrictions:

- Flash or extra lighting is not permitted during the ceremony.
- Pictures may not be taken from the head of the aisle, (i.e., the photographer must not position himself between the priest and the congregation).
- The photographer may not enter the sanctuary (step onto the altar) at any time.
- At St. Cecilia, photography from the choir loft is limited to immediately inside the entrance door.
- Pictures cannot be taken in the choir loft while musicians are performing.
- Eastside Catholics retains the right to restrict photographers found not to be observing these guidelines.

Q: When can we do post-wedding photography?

A: Post-wedding photography is welcome immediately after the ceremony and may continue for up to 45 minutes to allow time for family portraits and photos with your wedding party.

Flowers & Decorations

Q: Are there any restrictions regarding flower arrangements?

A: By Church:

- **At St. Cecilia** - flowers cannot be in front of the altar, we recommend two arrangements next to the tabernacle. You may choose to have flowers in front of the lectern.
- **At St. Mary** - We recommend 1-2 arrangements in front of the altar.

Q: Are there any vases or flower columns that we can utilize?

A: No, please work with your florist to provide any columns or pillars that are required.

Q: When can flowers be delivered?

A: By church:

- At St. Cecilia, flowers can be delivered after 10am for a Saturday wedding or after 3pm for a Friday wedding. Flowers may not be delivered the day before.
- At St. Mary, flowers may be delivered after 12pm for a Saturday wedding or after 5pm for a Friday wedding. The wedding coordinator will be there to meet them.

Q: How many pews are there?

A: St. Mary has 31 pews on the main level (6 are short and each altar side has 1 pew which is also small, these are included in the total) and 4 pews up in the balcony.

Q: Can we throw rice, petals, confetti, etc?

A: Throwing of rice, bird seed, confetti, rose petals, etc., is strictly forbidden. They create a safety hazard as well as a maintenance problem. You may use silk rose petals but someone in your wedding party will need to be responsible for staying after the ceremony and cleaning them up.

Q: Can we attach ribbons or flowers to the pews?

A: You may attach ribbons or flowers, but you may not use tape that would damage the wood. Florists or family members may come to the church to measure the ribbons or floral decor for pews ahead of time.

Q: Is there anything available at the church to reserve the front pews for the family?

A: No. You may choose to tie flowers or ribbons to some pews as a marker.

Q: Can we have aisle runners?

A: The use of an aisle runner presents a safety hazard so they are not permitted.

Q: Can we have other signs, wagons, animals, etc.?

A: All signs, wagons, animals, etc. are also strictly prohibited during the procession.

Q: Can we set out a guest book?

A: Guest books are not recommended at church and are best saved for the wedding reception.

Q: Who should I contact with questions about my flowers or decorations?

A: By Church:

- At St. Cecilia: Marta Misleh (mmisleh@eastsideregion.org)
- At St. Mary: Elizabeth Pyles (elizabeth_pyles@yahoo.com)

Wedding Coordinators

Q: Is the marriage preparations coordinator also my wedding coordinator?

A: No, you will be assigned a wedding coordinator after your wedding is booked. The marriage preparations coordinator will schedule your wedding details and guide you through the preparations process, but will not manage your day-of details.

Q: When will we hear from the wedding coordinator?

A: One month before your wedding date.

Q: What is the role of our wedding coordinator?

A: The wedding coordinator is your “day-of” contact for your wedding rehearsal and ceremony. The coordinator will reach out to you about a month before your wedding to gather information via a questionnaire. The coordinator will assist the celebrant in running your rehearsal, as well as making sure your wedding ceremony runs smoothly. The coordinator will arrive 1 hour before your wedding ceremony and remain through your church photos. The wedding coordinator assists with things like setting up the church (chairs, kneelers, etc.) preparing the altar for Mass, lining up and timing your procession, communicating with photographers and other vendors, etc.

Q: When does our wedding coordinator arrive the day of the ceremony?

A: 1 hour before the wedding begins.

Fees and Costs

Q: What are the fees for a wedding at our church?

A: The rate is \$975, and includes rental of the space, time with our wedding coordinators, marriage preparation materials, and an organist.

Q: What are the fees for marriage preparation with Eastside Catholics if the ceremony is elsewhere?

A: The rate is \$250, and includes your marriage preparation materials.

Q: When is our payment due?

A: Payment is requested immediately upon booking your wedding date or marriage preparation process and due within 60 days. However, we know every person's financial situation is different, so please let us know if you need additional time.

Q: How do we pay?

A: We are happy to accept cash, check, or online payment:

- St. Cecilia:

- Online payment is available at <https://giving.parishsoft.com/App/Giving/stcecilia>. Once there, you can indicate a one-time donation and select "Wedding Payment".
- Checks can be made out to St. Cecilia Catholic Church (memo: "Wedding Last Name/Last Name"), and can be sent to attn: Beverly Donahue at St. Mary Hyde Park 2853 Erie Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45208
- St. Mary:
 - Online payment is available at <https://www.wesharegiving.org/App/Form/ff4237ae-d140-4f3b-9a1e-15f9d644e370>. Once there, you can indicate a one-time donation and select "Wedding Payment".
 - Checks can be made out to St. Mary Hyde Park (memo: "Wedding Last Name/Last Name"), and can be sent to attn: Beverly Donahue at St. Mary Hyde Park 2853 Erie Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45208

Q: Is there a recommended donation for the celebrant?

A: \$50

Contact Information

Fr. Jamie Weber, Pastor // jweber@eastsidecatholics.org

Marta Misleh, Parish Staff // mmisleh@eastsidecatholics.org

Stephanie Ramsey, Wedding Coordinator, St. Mary // skb_steph@yahoo.com

Sarah LaBarge, Scheduling and Marriage Preparation // slabarge@eastsidecatholics.org

Ryan Leep, Music Ministry Director // rleep@eastsidecatholics.org // 513-871-5757, ext. 208

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