

# *Marriage Preparation & Wedding Guidelines*



St. Patrick Catholic Church  
1219 2nd Avenue South  
Nashville, Tennessee 37210

# ST. PATRICK CATHOLIC CHURCH

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION & WEDDING GUIDELINES

The main concern of the Church is that you understand the depth and significance of the commitment you intend to make. This commitment is to enter a partnership of the whole of life which is ordered to the procreation of children and the good of the spouses, rooted in fidelity, unity, and permanence. The following process exists in order to allow you the time and assistance necessary to enter freely and prudently into this partnership of life.

- (1) You must meet with the pastor of St. Patrick Church at least six (6) months prior to the desired wedding date. Parishioners of other parishes must have special permission from both the Pastor of St. Patrick AND their own pastor for the marriage to take place at St. Patrick. Your wedding date cannot be booked without a prenuptial investigation conducted by a priest or deacon.
- (2) If either the bride or groom has a prior marriage, the priest or deacon will discuss the additional process required. If either or both parties wishing to marry has a prior marriage, a wedding date cannot be set unless and until a declaration of nullity has been granted by a Tribunal of the Catholic Church.
- (3) Pre-marriage preparation is a requirement of the Catholic Church and the Diocese of Nashville. Verification of attendance/participation in an approved program of marriage preparation must be demonstrated before the wedding. If the couple resides in the Nashville area, they must participate in the parish's marriage preparation program. Other situations must be discussed with and approved by the pastor. Should outside marriage preparation be allowed, a certificate of the completion of marriage preparation must be submitted prior to the final marriage preparation meeting.
- (4) As part of the preparation process, you are required to provide **recently issued** copies of **baptismal certificates** for whichever of the spouses is Catholic. **Certificates must have been issued within the last six months.** To obtain a recent copy of your baptismal certificate, call or write to the church where you received baptism and request that a copy be sent to you.
- (5) **NOTE: If either the bride or groom is not Catholic, the non-Catholic party will need a baptismal certificate or letter from the church of baptism, stating when and where the Baptism occurred, or must provide for testimony by an adult witness to the baptism. If one of the parties is unbaptized, a special dispensation is required to marry; this will be requested by the priest or deacon on your behalf.**
- (6) It is the responsibility of the priest or deacon who is to officiate at your wedding to be satisfied concerning your readiness to enter into marriage. He may require additional steps in the preparation process at his discretion in order to ensure your preparedness.
- (7) St. Patrick Church accommodates 175 guests.

## St. Patrick Church Marriage Preparation Requirements

1. Allow for a minimum of six months for the marriage preparation process.
2. The couple will meet with the Pastor or his designate *in person* on at least three occasions for pre-marital preparation.
  - a. First meeting (1 hour): to conduct Pre-Nuptial Investigation and begin the marriage preparation process. Following this meeting, the couple may consult with the Parish Secretary to book the Church and discuss other requirements.
  - b. Second meeting (1 hour): to discuss the experiences and insights from the *Three to Get Married* Retreat (see below).
  - c. Third meeting (1 hour): to plan the wedding ceremony and other details. You should make this final appointment with the celebrant at least one month prior to the wedding. Be prepared to discuss with him why a church marriage is important to you and to talk about your understanding of the commitment you will make to each other in the Sacrament of Marriage. Scripture readings which you have selected should have been submitted to the celebrant by this time. Also, please have available for approval a rough copy of your wedding program if you plan to have one.
3. Couple must attend *Three to Get Married* Retreat. Register and pay at <https://stmarysdowntown.org/three-to-get-married-retreat>.

## Policies for the Use of St. Patrick Church

The following criteria must be met for the marriage to take place at St. Patrick Church:

- At least one of the intended spouses must be a Catholic in good-standing AND
- Either the bride or the groom, or the parents of either, are parishioners of St. Patrick Church (the definition of a parishioner can be found below under *Fees*) OR
- The Pastor of St. Patrick has given approval.

### Weddings between Catholics and Non-Catholics

A wedding between a Catholic and a non-Catholic normally takes place outside the context of Mass, that is, in a wedding ceremony that does not involve the celebration or reception of the Eucharist. This is because the Catholic Church does not practice inter-communion, i.e. Catholics are normally not allowed to receive communion in a non-Catholic service, and non-Catholics may not normally receive communion at a Catholic Mass. Therefore, to avoid any awkwardness or embarrassment brought about by some receiving and some not receiving communion, the Catholic Church does not permit Mass to be celebrated in such circumstances.

In a wedding that takes place without the celebration of Mass, the ceremony includes the opening procession and prayer, readings from Sacred Scripture, homily, exchange of vows and rings, the nuptial blessing, and final blessing.

### The Wedding Ceremony: Setting the Date and Time

Before a wedding can be scheduled, the engaged couple must meet with the pastor to conduct the prenuptial investigation, and must also contact the parish secretary to review guidelines and sign the guideline acknowledgement form.

Please be aware that there are certain days and times when a wedding cannot be celebrated.

Weddings are scheduled on Saturdays between 10:30 am and 1:00 pm, and between 6:00 pm and 7:30 pm. Weddings **MUST** begin promptly at the scheduled time.

No wedding can be scheduled on **All Souls Day** or **during Advent or Lent**.

Rehearsals are scheduled the Friday before the wedding between 4:30 pm and 7:00 pm.

**ONE HOUR** is allowed and the rehearsal **MUST** begin promptly at the scheduled time. If any member of the wedding party is not on time, the rehearsal will begin without him or her.

**ONLY THE BRIDAL PARTY SHOULD ATTEND THE REHEARSAL.** Other guests of the rehearsal dinner should go directly to that location.

### Fees

If the bride or the groom, or the parents of either, is a parishioner of St. Patrick, there is no fee for the use of the Church. A parishioner is understood to be someone who lives in the geographical boundaries of St. Patrick parish OR has been a registered, active, and supporting member for at least a year prior to scheduling the wedding.

Otherwise, a **NON-REFUNDABLE** fee of \$1000 is payable when the date of the wedding is scheduled.

A refundable cleaning deposit of \$250 is due at the time of scheduling the church from all persons, both parishioners and non-parishioners. This \$250 deposit will be returned if and when the Church is found to be entirely clean and re-ordered after the wedding ceremony is concluded, and all policies have been observed.

Checks may be made payable to St. Patrick Catholic Church.

### Attire

Proper attire that reflects the sacredness of the church space should be worn at the wedding rehearsal and wedding by all in the bridal party.

### Liturgical Norms

Liturgical norms must be followed as set down in the Church's ritual for marriage without addition or deviation, including all prayers, vows, readings, and blessings. A list of approved readings can be found at [foryourmarriage.org](http://foryourmarriage.org).

### Conduct and Behavior

The bride and groom will be required to place a deposit of \$250 and sign the St. Patrick Wedding Guidelines Acknowledgment Form. This deposit will be refunded after the wedding if no infraction of any kind has occurred.

For **both the rehearsal and the wedding** you are reminded that St. Patrick is a church, a sacred place of worship where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. It is not a museum or a rental hall. The conduct and attire of the wedding party and the guests should reflect the sacredness of the place. There should be no shouting, loud noise, or improper conduct inside St. Patrick Church or anywhere on parish grounds. Eating, drinking, and the use of tobacco and other nicotine products are not allowed inside the Church. **It is absolutely forbidden to bring alcoholic beverages and/or illegal drugs on the grounds of the Church or inside the Church itself.**

## **DRUNKENNESS AND THE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

If any member of the wedding party comes to the wedding or the rehearsal in any form of intoxication, **the wedding may be postponed or cancelled.** Inebriation and the disorderly conduct that accompanies it can ruin your wedding.

The bride and groom will be held responsible for the conduct and behavior of the wedding party inside St. Patrick Church and on parish grounds as outlined in the Acknowledgment Form. This also includes leaving the church and property neat, clean, and free of any damage. Please make your wedding day a happy one and avoid any type of embarrassment to you and your guests. Inappropriate behavior by any member of the wedding party will not be tolerated.

### **No Dressing Facilities**

St. Patrick has no dressing room facilities. All members of the wedding party are to arrive **fully dressed** no more than sixty (60) minutes prior to the wedding. Arriving in robes, petticoats, or other forms of undress is **strictly prohibited** and is considered **indecent exposure in a church.**

### **Lectors and Ushers**

It is expected that you choose experienced lectors who will read approved scripture readings chosen in consultation with the priest or deacon. Lectors must be in attendance at the wedding rehearsal to rehearse their part in the ceremony. Ushers should attend the wedding rehearsal and be given specific instructions as to what is expected of them.

### **Celebrant**

If the celebrant is someone other than a member of the St. Patrick Church clergy, delegation to witness the marriage must be obtained from the Pastor of St. Patrick. This delegation is to be sought in writing, with the request accompanied by proof of good standing with their diocese or religious order, at least four months prior to the desired date.

### **Flowers and Other Decorations**

Not much needs to be done to enhance the beauty of our historic Church. Flower arrangements may be placed at either side of the high altar in vases. These arrangements are to remain on the altar following the wedding.

No decorations are to be hung from the walls and columns of the church. Tape, staples, glue, and nail may not be used. Decorations attached to pews must use string or a padded clip so wood is not scratched. The use of an aisle runner in the center aisle is not permitted. No silk or plastic flowers are allowed in the church; no unity candles; no glitter of any type (on decorations or ribbons); no rice, seeds, confetti, flower petals, balloons, bubbles, or similar items are to be thrown or scattered anywhere in the Church or outside on the premises, before, during, or after the wedding. The only

candles allowed are the ones presently in the sanctuary which will be lighted for the ceremony. No additional candelabra or candles of any type may be used in the Church. The florist will be allowed one hour prior to the ceremony for decorating and one-half (1/2) hour after the ceremony to clean up. The florist must prepare all flower arrangements before they are brought into St. Patrick's. Keeping in mind with the historical nature of the Church, the florist must provide adequate protection for the floor, rugs, and altar, and must provide all required personnel and equipment.

### Photography

Pictures are nice remembrances; however, the photographer must not detract from the ceremony itself. It is recommended that you engage a licensed photographer. Only one official still photographer, with hand-held camera, is allowed for the wedding. No additional equipment is permitted, including flash or other artificial lighting during the ceremony. Only the official photographer is allowed to take pictures and should arrive no earlier than one hour prior to the ceremony.

### Video Taping

Video photography of your wedding is discouraged. If you intend to video tape your wedding, your videographer must agree to the restrictions set forth. It is recommended that you use a licensed videographer. You are permitted to have one videographer with a self-contained, battery-operated camera. The camera is to be in one position during the ceremony and not in sight of the congregation. The videographer should arrive no earlier than one hour prior to the ceremony. Video sessions are **NOT** allowed before the wedding inside the church, but may be taken after the wedding while the photographer takes his pictures. Videos can be taken outside of St. Patrick's before and after the wedding.

### Other Regulations

Regarding the florist, photographer, and videographer; they are to introduce themselves to our volunteer wedding guild members when they arrive for the wedding. These wedding guild members will ensure they abide by the guidelines outlined.

The proper place for the seating of the wedding party and attendants is in the first few pews of the nave of the church. **The attendants will not be allowed to sit in the apse or sanctuary.** Attendants will join the bride and groom on the altar for exchange of vows only.

Church furniture is not to be moved by anyone.

The use of animals and wildlife in St. Patrick Church or on parish grounds is absolutely prohibited (i.e. horse drawn carriages, caged doves, family pets, or exotic animals). No bubbles, rice, flowers, birdseed, petals, etc. are allowed inside or outside the church.

### **Music**

You must contact Marlene Tachoir, Director of Sacred Music at St. Patrick, if you plan to have any music at your wedding. Contact her at (615) 975-1300. She will help you with music selections, and organists or vocalists approved for St. Patrick Church. Fees vary based on musicians and cantors, and are arranged directly with the music director.

Since weddings are an act of worship, the music chosen must be sacred and assist those assembled in their prayer. Musical texts used before, during, and after the liturgy must be either biblical or sacramental in nature, free from association with secular or popular music. Sentimental favorites from movies, Broadway, or the radio are best saved for the reception where they can be heard in their proper context. Only live music is permitted; pre-recorded music is not acceptable.

Rehearsals for musicians are usually scheduled one hour before the wedding. Since the wedding rehearsal is designed to familiarize members of the wedding party with their respective roles during the ceremony, the musicians do not attend.

### **Scripture Readings**

For weddings both within and outside of Mass, there are three readings and a psalm response. These are selected from the Marriage Ritual book and can be found at [foryourmarriage.org](http://foryourmarriage.org). You may select one reading from the Old Testament, one reading from the New Testament, and a Gospel reading. You may also choose a psalm response in consultation with the music director. Lectors should be familiar with reading in public. If the wedding takes place within the context of Mass, lectors should be practicing Catholics.

### **Wedding Rehearsals**

Rehearsals are conducted by priest. One hour is allotted for the rehearsal.

A member of the St. Patrick Church Wedding Guild, acting in a supervisory capacity, is present at the rehearsal and the wedding and is available to answer any and all questions concerning policy and procedures of St. Patrick Church.

Rehearsals begin on time and last only one hour. If any member of the wedding party is late, the rehearsal will begin without them. The rehearsal cannot be delayed for later arrivals.

### **Security**

St. Patrick is not responsible for the security of vehicles or personal articles. Please lock cars and do not leave personal articles or gifts unattended.



**For the Day of the Wedding**

1. Designate a point person who will clean up after the wedding, especially flower boxes, glass vases, pins, plastic wrap, hangers, etc. after the wedding. Bottles of water, leftover wedding programs, and tissues will need to be removed from pews.
2. Select ushers to help guests to their seats as well as answer questions regarding the wedding and reception.
3. Please designate a person to help the musician know when to start and stop their selections of music for the prelude, and procession of grandparents, parents, bridesmaid, and the bride.

**IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE**

The Civil Government also has some requirements concerning your wedding. Please obtain the marriage license from the County Clerk's Office. The license is valid for thirty (30) days from the date of issuance. You must bring the license to the wedding rehearsal and give it to the priest or deacon conducting the ceremony. The clergyman will not proceed with the wedding under any circumstances without having the civil license in hand.

**Policies and Procedures are subject to change. However, couples will be informed of changes.**

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**Acknowledgment Form**

We, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby acknowledge that we are aware of and will abide by all of the policies and procedures set forth by St. Patrick Catholic Church. We understand and consent that if any of the policies or procedures are not met, we forfeit our security deposit.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

