

Policies and Procedures for Weddings



ST. JOSEPH

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

FROM THE PASTOR



Dear Bride and Groom,

Congratulations on your engagement and beginning your journey as a married couple. The information in this packet is designed to assist you in planning your wedding at Saint Joseph Catholic Church.

The clergy, staff and community of Saint Joseph want your wedding to be one of the most beautiful and memorable days of your life. We certainly understand that there are many details to take care of in planning your wedding ceremony and reception. However, we ask both of you to keep your primary focus on the sacramental union you are entering—you are not just planning a day, you are preparing for a lifetime together.

Please read carefully through these *Policies and Procedures for Weddings* at Saint Joseph Catholic Church. This information will assist you in maintaining a balance in your preparations, so that all the practical details—important as they are—do not overwhelm the importance of the sacrament.

The Saint Joseph clergy and staff are here to advise and assist you, and will be happy to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

We pray for every blessing on you as you enter into married life together, and we will do all we can to help you begin your life journey well and with great joy.

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Kyle Sahn

Pastor

CONTENTS

- I. Introduction**
- II. Scheduling Your Wedding**
- III. Contact Information**
- IV. Marriage Preparation Requirements**
- V. Required Documentation**
- VI. Diocesan Marriage Preparation Conferences**
- VII. Church is a Holy Space**
- VIII. Music**
- IX. Decorations & Flowers**
- X. Additional Information**
- XI. Fees**
- XII. Catholic Wedding Planning Checklist**



I. INTRODUCTION

The celebration of Christian Marriage is a unique moment in the life of the Church. The Community is called to rejoice in a special way when a bride and groom commit themselves to each other in faith and love for life. As the Apostle Paul tells us, this is a mystery, “a great foreshadowing,” of the love that God has for all His people.

A Christian Marriage is truly a religious as well as a secular event. As husband and wife, you will officially commit yourselves to one another before Almighty God and the community of the Church with the priest or deacon as the Church’s witness. This will raise your relationship to the level of a Sacrament, a holy union binding until death. So it is clearly a solemn event. Everything you plan to surround this event should be fitting to the occasion. The Staff of St. Joseph Parish is prepared to support you and to assist you in making appropriate decisions.

II. SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING

The Diocese of Harrisburg requires that arrangements for the celebration of marriage must be made at least 9-12 months in advance. Avoid renting a hall or making other commitments until you have spoken with the priest or deacon and confirmed the date and time of the wedding. A ceremony is not guaranteed until the premarital investigation and instruction are successfully completed.

St. Joseph Church will be made available for weddings of members of St. Joseph Parish on a “first come, first served” basis. Couples who are not members of St. Joseph Parish may celebrate marriage here, provided that at least one is a practicing Catholic, and permission of the proper pastor has been granted. Special permission must be obtained when the wedding takes place at another church which is not your parish church.

As a rule, Saturday weddings may be scheduled at 11:00 AM or 2:00 PM. In a sense of fairness to everyone, each couple will be allotted three hours in the church on the day of the wedding. This time limit includes one hour before the ceremony, one hour for the ceremony and one hour for pictures and/or receiving line.

III. CONTACT INFORMATION

SAINT JOSEPH PARISH OFFICE

2935 Kingston Road, York, PA 17402

Office Hours: Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Telephone: 717-755-7503 Website: www.sjy.org

CLERGY

Pastor: Father Kyle Sahd: sahd@sjy.org – Ext. 202

Parochial Vicar: Father Peter Rettig : rettig@sjy.org – Ext. 203

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC Stephen Falencki: falencki@sjy.org – Ext. 248

SACRISTAN Dona Smyser: smyser@sjy.org - Ext. 221

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR Bethany McKay: mckay@sjy.org - Ext 230

IV. MARRIAGE PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS

To ensure that all engaged couples understand the *sacramental* meaning to the Catholic wedding ceremony, Marriage preparation in the Diocese of Harrisburg shall take place over a minimum of nine months and consist of the following components:

1. Canonical Process - **Initial interview with the priest or deacon** where the required canonical forms are completed.
2. Pre-marital Inventory - “**FOCCUS**” stands for “Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study”. This survey is administered by the priest or deacon who will be witnessing your marriage, and is completed prior to God’s Plan for Love or an Engaged Encounter weekend. The priest or deacon will discuss the results of the survey with you and your fiancé(e) individually, then together as a couple. This survey helps the couple to identify the areas in which they agree, and the areas that will be challenging to them in their married life. Most couples find that FOCCUS is a helpful tool to promote honest communication of their hopes and fears. To schedule an appointment to complete the FOCCUS survey, contact the priest or deacon you have chosen to witness your marriage.
3. Formation
 - a. **Meet with mentor couple at least four (4) times, and meet with the priest or deacon (4) times.** At least one of these meetings must be with a priest or deacon for an instructional session on the nature of Catholic marriage.
 - b. Conference – **Attend ONE of the diocesan conferences**, per the preparing clergy’s instructions. (See conference information on the next page.) Note that these conferences fulfill the diocesan requirement to attend a short introductory talk on Natural Family Planning as well as a talk on the sacramentality of marriage: **God’s Plan for Love** – a single day conference focusing on the sacramentality of marriage and marital sexuality OR **Engaged Encounter** – a weekend retreat covering both life skills as well as the sacramentality of marriage and marital sexuality.
 - c. Concluding Assessment – Meet with the priest or deacon for a final assessment before marriage (done as needed).
 - d. Liturgical Planning – Meet with the priest or deacon (and any other liturgical ministers) to plan a prayerful and reverent ceremony.

V. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- **Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates: For Catholics**—a fresh baptismal certificate with notation of Confirmation. “Fresh” means it has to be reissued to you by the parish of your Baptism **no more than six months prior to the wedding**. If you were baptized at St. Joseph Church, you can simply inform the priest or deacon and the parish secretary will issue the certificate. **For Baptized non-Catholics**—simply bring the original certificate of your baptism which the priest or deacon will copy, or bring a letter from the Minister of the Church where you were baptized stating when and where the Baptism occurred.
- **FOCCUS Completion Certificate**
- **God’s Plan for Love Certificate OR Engaged Encounter Certificate**
- **Two witnesses verifying freedom to marry.** In order to establish the freedom of the bride and groom to marry, the signed testimony of four witnesses is required, two for each party.
- **Marriage License.** A Marriage License may be obtained from the Clerk of Orphans’ Court located at the York County Court House. **There is a three-day waiting period for all licenses. The license is valid for 60 days.** You must present the marriage license to the priest or the deacon before the wedding rehearsal. We recommend that you bring it a week in advance, but certainly no later than the rehearsal itself, so that it can be properly endorsed by the priest or deacon before the wedding.

VI. DIOCESAN MARRIAGE PREPARATION CONFERENCES

~ GOD'S PLAN FOR LOVE CONFERENCE ~

"God's Plan for Love" is a one-day seminar hosted by the Diocese of Harrisburg at either the Diocesan Center (4800 Union Deposit Rd., Harrisburg, PA 17111) or at a local parish within the diocese. Though the seminar is sometimes held at St. Joseph Church, registration is always handled through the Diocese (717-657-4804, ext. 317). "God's Plan for Love" introduces engaged couples to St. Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. It is a day of meditation and reflection on how living God's plan for marriage is what ultimately brings a couple deep happiness and joy. Through a series of talks by couple presenters, a priest, and video presentations by Christopher West, engaged couples learn about the beauty of sacramental marriage and sacramental sexuality. The program was developed by the Theology of the Body Institute and is published by Ascension Press. It is an engaging program that takes a new approach to the critical issues of premarital sex, contraception and pornography, each of which adversely affect the health of today's marriages.

With so many marriages ending in divorce today, "God's Plan for Love" aims to expose how the culture has shaped our views of sexuality and marriage in a way that goes against what God intended the union of man and woman to be. In addition, in a talk entitled "What are you saying *I Do* to?" couples take an in-depth look at the marriage vows, what they mean and how to really live them in their future marriage. Married love, properly understood and lived, is *free, total, faithful and fruitful* and becomes a sacramental sign to others of God's love.

The final talks of the day introduce the engaged couples to the concepts and benefits of Natural Family Planning as a way to live this free, total, faithful and fruitful love. In offering this program, the diocese hopes to give couples this understanding of marriage as the image of Trinitarian or "heavenly" love that it really is, and the tools to live a joy-filled marriage. (Written by Grace Targonski, Diocesan Director of Natural Family Planning and Theology of the Body Ministries, *The Catholic Witness*, 2/13/09)

Register for God's Plan for Love online at www.hbgdiocese.org/gp.

~ OR ~

~ ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKEND ~

Catholic Engaged Encounter (CEE) is a weekend retreat for engaged couples to spend time away as a couple and to learn more about the faith and about marriage. On the weekend, couples communicate in depth about their future lives together – their strengths and weaknesses, desires and goals, and their attitudes about money, sex, children, and their role as a family in the church and in society. For more information on Catholic Engaged Encounter, please visit their website <https://engagedencounter.com/>. Register for Engaged Encounter online at https://hbgdiocese.formstack.com/forms/preparing_for_marriage



VII. CHURCH IS A HOLY SPACE

St. Joseph Church building is the worship space of this parish community and calls for attitudes of reverence and respect. Decorations, candles, and other furnishings already present in the church may not be moved without explicit permission of the priest. Current liturgical law and practice prohibits the use of flowers at weddings during Lent.

In current Catholic theology, the altar is the most sacred furnishing of the church and is reserved for the celebration of the Eucharist. Only the needed bread, wine, and ceremonial books are placed on the altar. No flowers, unity candle, or other decoration should be placed on the altar itself, or obstruct it in any way. The ambo is the reading stand at which the Word of God is proclaimed and preached. It should be treated in the same fashion as the altar.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

Your wedding celebration is a special day you will want to remember throughout your lives. While photographers and videographers are welcome, they are reminded that the solemnity of the Sacrament in the present moment must not be interfered with. To ensure that all of our liturgical celebrations are first and foremost events of prayer, we hold the following policy regarding photography and videography:

Photographers/videographers may use the area to the left of the altar, near the flexible seating, and the area across the back and behind the pews taking care not to block the view of worshippers. Posed photographs may be taken in the church after the ceremony. Photographers/videographers should consult with the priest or the deacon in advance of the ceremony.

A NOTE ON MODESTY AT MASS

In God's House, there is a different standard of decorum and dress. Out of respect for God, the priest, and other parishioners and guests of the parish, it is important to choose clothing for Mass that is modest. This means women and girls of all ages should not wear clothing that reveals any cleavage or bare shoulders. Skirts should be worn at a length just above the knee or longer. Shorts, blue jeans, T-shirts and tennis shoes are not appropriate for Mass on men, women or children.

RICE, BIRDSEED, AND CONFETTI

The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti and other objects is strictly forbidden. This custom originates from pagan fertility rites and is not appropriate in the Christian celebration of marriage. Rice, birdseed and confetti also cause walkways to become slippery and dangerous.

ALCOHOL

There are to be no alcoholic beverages brought to, or consumed at the church or on church property at any time. Other food and beverage may be consumed only in the dressing areas.

No smoking is permitted in any area of the church building.

VIII. MUSIC

Once you and the priest or the deacon have agreed upon a date and time, and before you select any music for your wedding, please contact the Director of Music Ministry, Stephen Falencki. (See Page 5.) Stephen is fully instructed in, and obliged to enforce both Diocesan and Parish policies regarding music. He is knowledgeable of the numerous possibilities for music at weddings and will be available to assist you with suggestions and choices. If you choose to ask people outside our parish musicians, please consult with Stephen for guidance and recommendations.



IX. DECORATIONS AND FLOWERS

- Flowers are permitted in front of the candlesticks on either side of the sanctuary and in the narthex of the church. No formal arrangements or other decorations are to be placed in front of the Emmaus scene woodcarving. It is requested that flowers used to decorate the church and narthex be left for the weekend Masses.
- St. Joseph church has a non-slip tile floor in the aisles, which becomes slippery and dangerous when runners or flower petals are placed on it. Therefore, for the safety of the couple and their guests, the use of aisle runners and flower petals is strictly prohibited.
- NOTHING may be taped to the pews, altar or any other furnishing in the church or narthex. Ribbons and rubber bands (which do not harm the furniture) may be substituted. Balloons are forbidden inside the church and narthex.
- The wedding party is responsible for removing all ribbons, bows, boxes, bags, hangers, clothing and other extraneous items from the dressing areas, restrooms, narthex and church before vacating the building after the ceremony.

All questions recording decorations and the church environment can be directed to Dona Smyser. (See Page 5)

X. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

MIXED MARRIAGES

A marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic is called a Mixed Religion Marriage. In such marriages, the Catholic partner is required to promise to do his/her best to rear any children in the Catholic tradition. This promise is made with the full knowledge of the non-Catholic party.

CELEBRANT

Ordinarily, a priest or a deacon currently assigned to St. Joseph parish will officiate at marriages taking place at St. Joseph Church. Exceptions to this rule will be made only for Catholic priests and deacons who have permission from the pastor of St. Joseph Church. All visiting clergy must follow the guidelines for marriage set out by the Diocese of Harrisburg and St. Joseph Parish.

WORKING WITH THE PRIEST OR DEACON

In the course of your preparation for married life, you will meet about four or five times with the priest or the deacon who is to preside at your ceremony. The initial interviews with the priest are intended to document and establish an engaged couple's understanding of the Church's expectation of those who are to be married in the Church and their readiness to carry it out.

IF EITHER PARTY WAS MARRIED PREVIOUSLY

Be certain to inform the priest or the deacon at your first meeting if you have been married previously. Any previously married person must provide a decree of nullity issued by a Catholic Church Marriage Tribunal, or a death certificate for the previous spouse(s).



REHEARSAL

The wedding rehearsal is usually scheduled the night before the wedding itself. The rehearsal may take up to, but not exceed 60 minutes. Please make sure that the entire wedding party is present and on time since another rehearsal may be scheduled after yours.

WEDDING PLANNER

If you hire a wedding planner to coordinate the details of your wedding, please make sure your wedding planner understands that the entire wedding rehearsal and wedding ceremony are under the direction of the officiating clergy.

OTHER MINISTERS

Friends and relatives of the couple may participate in the liturgy as readers, servers, or in other functions if they so desire, provided that they are competent in the function they are to fulfill. Those chosen as ministers who do not regularly function at St. Joseph Parish must attend the rehearsal. We strongly suggest that children who participate in the ceremony be at least of school age because younger children often become distressed and overwhelmed by the crowd and the strange environment.

XI. FEES

Preparing for the wedding liturgy requires the time, energy, and talent of many people. As you express your gratitude to those who have helped in the wedding celebration, the following guidelines are recommended.

PARISHIONER

Optional Donation to the Priest (payable to the officiating priest)	\$250
Sacristan (payable to Dona Smyser)	\$100
Cantor (payable to the cantor*)	\$75
Organist (payable to the organist*)	\$150

*Please contact Music Director, Stephen Falencki for the names of the organist and cantor. (See Page 5)

Altar Servers (CASH ONLY/typically 4 servers per Mass)	\$10/server
Optional Live Stream (payable to A/V operator*)	\$50

*Please contact Communications Coordinator, Bethany McKay for the name of the A/V operator. (See Page 5)

NON-PARISHIONER

Church	\$300
Priest (payable to the officiating priest)	\$450
Sacristan (payable to Dona Smyser)	\$100
Cantor (payable to the cantor*)	\$75
Organist (payable to the organist*)	\$150

*Please contact Music Director, Stephen Falencki for the names of the organist and cantor. (See Page 5)

Altar Servers (CASH ONLY/typically 4 servers per Mass)	\$10/server
Optional Live Stream (payable to A/V operator*)	\$50

*Please contact Communications Coordinator, Bethany McKay for the name of the A/V operator. (See Page 5)

Final payments must be made two weeks prior to the Wedding.

Parishioner Rate is available when either the bride or groom, or both, live within the parish boundaries (York County, PA) and have been registered in St. Joseph Parish for at least one year prior to the date of the wedding, or their parents are active members of the parish.

XII. CATHOLIC WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

~ NINE TO TWELVE MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING ~

- ☐ Pray together with your intended spouse, to seek God's loving guidance as you begin to make decisions about your future together.
- ☐ Meet with your parish priest or deacon—he will do the initial paperwork with you, give you a copy of the Marriage Preparation brochure, and tell you how to register for required programs. At this point you will tentatively set a wedding date. At this session the priest or deacon will probably give you information on how wedding liturgies are planned in your parish. This includes information on musicians and what music is acceptable in the wedding liturgy.
- ☐ Immediately after you meet with your priest or deacon, register for God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage. Register at least four weeks before your desired program date.
- ☐ Make arrangements with the priest or deacon to conduct the FOCCUS survey, and follow through with the arrangements.
- ☐ Participate in the diocesan God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage.

~ AT LEAST SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING ~

- ☐ Return to your priest or deacon and discuss your marriage preparation so far. The priest or deacon will finalize your wedding date with you at this point and explain the next steps to you.
- ☐ Contact the parish music director about planning for the marriage rite.
- ☐ Discuss with the sacristan what flower arrangements are acceptable for a wedding in the parish church.
- ☐ In regards to Natural Family Planning, begin charting so that you are comfortable with the method before your marriage.
- ☐ If you are an interchurch or interfaith couple, be sure to meet with the clergy of the other faith tradition so that you both have a clear understanding of the other faith.

~ AT LEAST THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING ~

- ☐ Complete any additional sessions with your priest or deacon, where he will instruct you further on the Sacrament of Marriage.
- ☐ Finalize the plans for your wedding liturgy. You will have a choice of readings from the Bible that you can choose with your priest or deacon. In most cases you will plan the music with the assistance of the parish organist or music director.
- ☐ If you will be using a printed wedding program, this is a good time to finalize what will be in it. Remember, you must have reprint permissions for any songs that are reproduced in the program, and you must include copyright information. The parish will be able to assist you with this.

~ ONE WEEK BEFORE THE WEDDING/WEEK OF WEDDING~

- ☐ Register as a new family in the parish office.
- ☐ Rehearse the wedding ceremony at the parish.
- ☐ Participate in the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation/Confession).
- ☐ Continue to pray together with your intended spouse, so that your life together may be an abundant blessing to you, your family, and the Church.

