

*Planning Your Wedding
at
St. Stephen Catholic Church*



Getting Married...

Congratulations on your engagement!

Our parish rejoices in having the privilege of accompanying the two of you to the altar, where you will exchange your sacred vows with one another. This booklet is meant to guide you through the process of preparing for your special day and your lifelong commitment to one another.

What does it mean to be married in the Catholic Church?

Regardless of faith practice, it is a natural right for a man and a woman to join together in marriage for the whole of life. As a Church, we acknowledge God as the author of marriage. Therefore, the Church works to uphold the dignity of marriage and family life and to promote these goods in the ways that God intended them to be lived out by His people. In the scriptures, Christ elevates natural marriage to the rank of a Sacrament when two baptized Christians join together in this bond (Matt 19:3-6). The Church calls this a sacramental marriage, which means that the natural occurrence of marriage between a man and woman becomes something that is supernatural, oriented towards their salvation, is open to the procreation and education of children. ***Baptized Catholics are required to have their marriage in the Church; that means their vows must be exchanged (according to the approved liturgical formulas) in a chapel or church, before a Priest or Deacon who has the faculties and delegation from the local pastor to witness the marriage.*** A marriage may take place between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic. This is referred to as a mixed marriage. A marriage may also take place between a Catholic and a non-baptized person, but a dispensation must first be granted from the Diocese before this wedding can occur. In both instances, the Catholic party must promise to do their best to raise their children in the Catholic faith. Marriage in the Catholic Church is a sacred action where Christ is seen to be actively at work in the couple through the Holy Spirit. This grace is evidenced in the way that the spouses strive to offer themselves to one another out of love for each other. The vocation of marriage is a challenging one, but the Sacrament provides the grace necessary for the spouses to respond to one another with a supernatural love. In his 2016 Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis expresses what is meant by a sacramental marriage in the Church: “The Sacrament of Marriage is not a social convention, or an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment. The Sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses, since ‘their mutual belonging is a real representation, through the sacramental sign, of the same relationship between Christ and the Church.’”



Belonging to St. Stephen Catholic Church

As Catholics, we see ourselves as brothers and sisters who are united to one another through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are a faith family. Therefore, whether you are getting married at St. Stephen, or perhaps in another city or state, our parish requires that at least one member of the engaged couple (preferably both parties) register and show activity in our parish. This means officially taking the time to complete the registration forms, coming to Mass at St. Stephen on a regular basis and contributing with your time, talent and/or treasure to support the ongoing ministry of the parish. There may be exceptions to this norm, such as out of town circumstances or personal reasons. In these instances, please feel free to express these concerns with a priest from the parish and they will do their best to accommodate your situation.



For Couples Marrying



In order to receive marriage preparation at St. Stephen, at least one member of the engaged couple must be registered and active in the parish for a period of at least two months. If you are marrying in a Church within the Diocese of St. Petersburg, we encourage you to inquire about the possibility of receiving marriage preparation from the priest or deacon who will witness your marriage. If you are marrying out of town and plan to worship with our community after the wedding, we will be glad to facilitate your marriage preparation.

The Preparation Process

This process is meant to help the engaged couple foster their love for one another and to acquire the knowledge, resources and self awareness needed to sustain a lifelong marital commitment to one another.

This process must begin 6-12 months before the wedding date!

(For previous marriages, marriage preparation may not begin until a decree of nullity has been declared by a Diocesan Marriage Tribunal)

- 1) **Schedule an appointment to meet with a priest of St. Stephen Parish.** ____
During this meeting, the priest or deacon will take the time to get to know you as a couple and complete the necessary paperwork with you at this time.
- 2) **Secure wedding date.** ____
To schedule your wedding date, contact the pastoral care assistant to discuss options for your wedding date. A non-refundable deposit of \$200 is required at time of scheduling to secure the date.
- 3) **Obtain an updated copy of your Baptismal Certificate (for Catholics).** ____
This is necessary for the marriage file. Simply call the church where you were baptized and ask them to send an updated baptismal certificate with notations of the other Sacraments that you received to St. Stephen (or to your home to bring later). For baptized non-Catholics, please provide proof of baptism (as well as pertinent details such as when, where and which faith tradition you were baptized in).
- 4) **Participate in a Journey to Matrimony** ____
This is offered through the Diocese of St. Petersburg. A brochure will be provided.
- 5) **Meet with a Certified Natural Family Planning Nurse.** ____
This is a **one hour** meeting meant to inform the couple of the Church's sexual teaching and to equip the couple for family life. Linda McKenzie is the parish's Certified NFP nurse. You will need to contact her for an appointment.
- 6) **Complete and discuss a Pre-Marital Inventory Survey.** ____
Priest or deacon will discuss the results of your survey with you in private sessions.
- 7) **Attend mentoring evenings.** ____
You will meet with other engaged couples and married couples from the parish to build a community of support and to discuss how vital faith is for a marriage to be successful. The mentoring team will contact you directly, 2-3 months prior to your wedding day, to schedule a meeting session.
- 8) **Plan the wedding liturgy.** ____
This process involves picking the readings, music and coordinating the necessary details of the liturgy. At this point, you should also reach out to the Pastoral Care Assistant to confirm and remit final payment.
- 9) **Remember to obtain a marriage license.** ____
In the state of Florida, this license is good for **60 days**. Please bring it to the rehearsal.

Important Contact Information

Pastoral Care Assistant

Isabel Germes

(813) 689-4900, ext. 3080

Isabel@ststephencatholic.org

Natural Family Planning Nurse

Linda Mackenzie

(813) 541-8517

Fertilitycaretb@aol.com

Mentoring Couples

Contact the Parish Office

813-689-4900

Parish Music Director

Deacon Mike Sweeney

Traditional Organ Music

(813) 689-4900, ext. 3260

Dcnmike@ststephencatholic.org

Volunteer Wedding Ministry

Tonya Mendoza

(813)-529-2577 (work– preferred)

(813) 846-1769 (cell phone– after 6PM)

Wedding_Coordinator@ststephencatholic.org



Planning Your Wedding Liturgy

- 1) **Contact Tonya Mendoza three months prior to your wedding date at St. Stephen. ____**
He will provide you with a liturgy planning packet, which includes the options available for celebrating the sacrament. Please make sure to indicate to him if you are planning a Full Wedding Mass or a Wedding Outside of Mass. For the selection of readings, the priest will provide a booklet containing all of the suggested readings for a Wedding Liturgy. He will also arrange for altar servers to assist the priest or deacon during your wedding liturgy.
- 2) **Contact Deacon Mike Sweeney at least three months prior to your wedding date to arrange for music. ____**
Deacon Mike is the musician at St. Stephen and he will help guide you on musical selections appropriate to the liturgy and will be available to provide music for your wedding day.
- 3) **Consider who you will ask to participate in your liturgy. ____**
You can choose up to three readers to proclaim the Word of God and Universal Prayers during the Wedding Liturgy. If you are having a Mass, you may want to consider asking two people to bring up the gifts at the offertory. (Preferably Catholic)
- 4) **Meet with the priest or deacon who will witness your marriage at least two weeks prior to the wedding date. ____**
This meeting is to review the liturgy one final time in order to make sure that everything is set.
- 5) **Complete payment of fees at least one month prior to your wedding date. ____**
You may mail this fee to the parish or deliver it during office hours to the parish secretary. It may be cash or check.
- 6) **Feel free to send your wedding pictures to the communications coordinator at communications@ststephencatholic.org.**



Fees and Scheduling

Fees

The following fees apply to Wedding Liturgy at St. Stephen Catholic Church:

Deposit

- A **\$200 non-refundable deposit** is due at the time of booking a wedding date. (Non-Refundable)

Church

- Active Parishioner Rate: \$900.00
- Non-Active Parishioner Rate: \$1,300.00

Chapel

- Active Parishioner Rate: \$700.00
- Non-Active Parishioner Rate: \$1100.00

**Fees include stipends for one musician, presider, coordinator, preparation costs (excluding diocesan program fees) and use of parish worship space. Full payment is due one month prior to Wedding.*

Marriage Preparation Only:

- \$300 due at the beginning of preparation. **ONLY** if you are doing marriage preparation without the wedding ceremony elsewhere.

Wedding Times

• Wedding Ceremonies

- ♦ 11:00 am or 1:00 pm
- *The times listed above are for Saturday weddings. If you are considering planning your wedding date on another day during the week, our parish times may be more flexible. Please discuss any alternative days/times with priest or deacon, during the marriage preparation process, for approval. **Weddings are not held on Sunday's.***
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Rehearsal Time

Rehearsals are conducted at 6:00 p.m. the night before the wedding, but the day and time are flexible, if Wedding Coordinator is available.



"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ' So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate. "



SAINT STEPHEN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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