

# THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AT ST. MARTHA



**ST. MARTHA**  
PARISH & SCHOOL

**1100 West Grand River  
Okemos, MI 48864**

**517-349-1763 | [www.st-martha.org](http://www.st-martha.org)**

# Thank you for sharing your love with us...

Congratulations! We share your happiness, and we pray God will bless you abundantly during this time of preparation for marriage and throughout your married life. A marriage ceremony is both personal and public. It is personal in that it involves two different individuals who promise to become one in a covenant of intimate and lasting union. It is also public because it is a sign of God’s love for his people, it continues the human race, and it assures the well-being of family life and society at large. As Christians, we recognize that marriage is, above all, a covenant. Marriage is the way God created a man and woman to fully express their love for each other. The Bible uses the image of married love to describe Jesus’ love for us.



Fr. Ryan Riley  
Pastor

[frryan@st-martha.org](mailto:frryan@st-martha.org)

Your wedding, then, is more than a private contract or public exchange of promises. It is also an act of worship in which you promise your love to each other and receive promises of support from your families, friends, and the entire Church as represented by the Church’s minister. Your wedding is “your day,” but it is also the Church’s day, and so we celebrate and rejoice together. Your guests come not only to watch, but to participate by offering you their prayers, their support, and their encouragement.

The following information is presented to help you in preparing for your wedding and your marriage and to make you aware of St. Martha’s policies. Please carefully read this booklet and contact us if you have any questions.

God Bless,  
  
Fr. Ryan Riley

## Table of Contents

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Overview .....                   | 3 |
| Formation & Documentation .....  | 4 |
| Fees and Timeline .....          | 5 |
| Liturgy and Music.....           | 6 |
| Frequently Asked Questions ..... | 8 |

## Appendices

- Wedding Worksheet and Liturgy Planning Guide
- Usher Responsibilities
- Photography and Videography
- Floral and Decorations

*For additional copies of Appendix documents visit [st-martha.org/marriage](http://st-martha.org/marriage)*

# Overview

## Getting Started

**You're engaged - congratulations! Now the work begins.**

All Catholics are welcome to marry at St. Martha Parish. We also encourage you, if you are not already, to become parishioners so that you can continue to live your faith in the community where you celebrated your marriage. You can register online at [st-martha.org/register](https://st-martha.org/register)

If one of you is not Catholic, your priest or deacon will guide you through an additional form that will need to be completed.

If one of you has been married before, even in a simple civil ceremony, you must discuss this with the priest or deacon before you schedule a date to assure that you are free to marry in the Church.

To get the process started, you will need to complete our online form available at [st-martha.org/marriage](https://st-martha.org/marriage)

This form asks you for basic information as well as preferred wedding dates. While "wedding emails" are popular for planning purposes, we do need two individual emails for the bride and groom to get set up in the marriage inventory. Additionally, the form will ask for payment of the Church Fee of \$300 to reserve your chosen wedding date.

Once the inventory is complete, you will be able to schedule a time with Fr. Ryan to go over the inventory and complete all the necessary paperwork that is required.

If you have any questions during the initial process, please contact Hallie Card ([hcard@st-martha.org](mailto:hcard@st-martha.org)) at the parish office.

### Setting Your Date and Time

You should contact the parish office at least 9 months prior to your anticipated wedding date. At your initial meeting with the priest or deacon, you can expect an explanation of the Pastoral guidelines for Marriage Preparation and an understanding of their purpose. He will also explain the procedures for marriage prep here at St. Martha. The date and time of your wedding will be confirmed at this initial meeting assuming that the Church Fee has been paid in the intake form.

Weddings are usually scheduled for 1:30 pm on Saturdays or anytime on weekdays (subject to availability). We are not able to celebrate weddings on Sundays.

**Please do not schedule your vendors or reception hall before you meet with your priest. Your date may not be available at St. Martha.**

# The Formation & Documentation Process

The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership for the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized. To help you, we will guide you through a process called formation. There are multiple parts to this process that are designed to help your relationship grow and provide a solid foundation on which the two of you can build your life together.

## Marriage Inventory

This inventory helps to identify strengths and challenges in your relationship. This is not a compatibility quiz, but a way to identify places you can continue to grow and develop in your relationship. The inventory is the first step of the marriage process, login information will be sent to you by the parish office.

## MA and M1 Forms

The Church requires a form called the MA Form to be prepared by either the priest or deacon. This will be completed during your first in person meeting. Additionally, couples who will celebrate interfaith marriages must obtain permission from the Bishop, known as a dispensation. This is taken care of in the initial paperwork to be filled out at the church.

## Witness to Love

Witness to Love is a virtues-based, catechumenate model of marriage formation that integrates modern principles of psychology and the virtues to help couples facilitate an authentic dialogue about their relationship. Couples will choose or be assigned a mentor couple that will help facilitate these discussions.

## Baptismal Certificate

A baptismal certificate from the church in which each of the couple was baptized is required (issued no more than six months before the wedding date). This step is also mentioned in the Witness to Love Scavenger Hunt.

## Be More Retreat

This day retreat, generally held in February at St. Martha Parish, explores what God and the Church say about marriage and what it offers to you as a family and what your family can offer the world as a sign of God's love. You will be given the date and a registration form at your mentor couple introduction meeting.

## Marriage License

Finally, Michigan law requires that you obtain a marriage license, which can be applied for *no sooner* than 30 days prior to the wedding but *no later* than 3 days prior. This license must be given to the priest or deacon at the time of the wedding rehearsal. A copy of the license will be given to you following the ceremony.

# Timeline and Checklist

## TIMELINE & CHECKLIST

### 9 MONTHS OR MORE BEFORE THE WEDDING

- ☐ Complete online intake form with proposed wedding dates and pre-pay the Church Fee
- ☐ Complete Marriage Inventory
- ☐ Meet with parish priest to review inventory, complete sacramental paperwork, and confirm date
- ☐ Save the date for the Be More Retreat
- ☐ Meet with Wedding Coordinator Hallie Card ([hcard@st-martha.org](mailto:hcard@st-martha.org)) regarding the marriage preparation process
- ☐ Start meeting with your Witness to Love mentor couple

### 5-6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- ☐ Contact the Director of Music Ministry Tony Andorfer ([tandorfer@st-martha.org](mailto:tandorfer@st-martha.org))
- ☐ Submit **Baptismal Certificates** (see *Paperwork* below) to the church office

### 1-2 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- ☐ Finalize the wedding liturgy with your priest or deacon and the Director of Music Ministry
- ☐ No sooner than 30 days prior to your wedding obtain your **Marriage License**
- ☐ *If a visiting priest or deacon is presiding, arrange their payment directly with them*

### DAY OF WEDDING REHEARSAL

- ☐ Bring your marriage license with you and give it to you priest or deacon
- ☐ Bring remaining Fees due to Presider and Musicians
- ☐ Give your ushers copies of the **Ushers' Responsibilities** sheet (found in the Appendix) so that they may become familiar with that information
- ☐ Have everyone who is involved in your liturgy attend the rehearsal

[ *\*\*Please Note: To save time at your rehearsal, the musician(s) will not attend.* ]

## PAPERWORK

- ☐ **Baptismal Certificate** | A Baptismal Certificate can be obtained from the church where the baptism was celebrated. For Catholics, it must be a newly issued certificate (no earlier than 6 months prior to the wedding date).
- ☐ **Marriage License** | A Marriage License is available from the Ingham County Courthouse. Visit: [clerk.ingham.org](http://clerk.ingham.org) to get started. Please begin your application process no sooner than 30 days prior to your wedding.

*Contact your priest or deacon with any questions.*

## FEES

#### Church Facilities

- ☐ Church Fee: \$300 (due as part of the marriage intake form)
- ☐ Presider: A gift to the presiding priest is customary (\$250 is suggested)

#### Musician Services (due at wedding rehearsal)

- ☐ Director of Music Ministry: \$250
- ☐ Cantor: \$175 for Mass; \$150 for ceremony outside of Mass



# Planning Your Liturgy

Your wedding liturgy is the centerpiece of the day! It is when you and your spouse will promise before God and the Church to love and honor each other for the rest of your lives. Such a special commitment deserves a special time of prayer. The staff at St. Martha will walk with you to help prepare a beautiful liturgy that expresses your love for God and each other. A wedding of two Catholics will preferably occur at a full Mass. For the wedding of a Catholic and a non-Catholic, there is a Catholic Marriage Rite that omits the celebration of the Mass.

## The Liturgy of the Word

The readings at a Catholic wedding liturgy are a proclamation of God's Word and of the Church's faith about marriage. For this reason, they are limited to readings from the scriptures (the Bible). There are nine options for the first reading from the Old Testament, fourteen options for the second reading from the New Testament, and ten choices for the Gospel. You choose one from each of these categories.

Readings are provided in the Appendix for you to read together. You may find it helpful to reflect prayerfully on each reading and to choose those that speak to your hopes and dreams for your Christian marriage.

## Planning Your Music

To get started, contact our Director of Music Ministry, Tony Andorfer, at least five (5) months before your wedding to start the planning process. You can reach him by email at [tandorfer@st-martha.org](mailto:tandorfer@st-martha.org).

### A few points to keep in mind:

- You do not need to do this alone! The Director will walk through the entire process with you from beginning to end. If you have requests, he can help make them happen. If you need some ideas to get you started, he can provide that too.
- The Director of Music Ministry is the primary musician at your wedding. He is happy to work with other musicians, but his services will be part of your wedding liturgy.
- St. Martha cantors are accomplished vocalists. They proclaim God's word in song!
- Talented family members and friends are awesome, but we still need to make sure they can navigate through a relatively complex ritual like a Mass and make sure your liturgy is graceful and beautiful. This is especially important regarding singers. Contact the Director of Music Ministry to discuss your options.

### Music Selection

As you begin to plan, please review the next page of this booklet. These are the music selections that many couples choose from. These simply provide you with a starting point for your music. Other pieces certainly may be included, but please bear in mind that all of the music used in the liturgy must be of a sacred nature. Secular music is typically not permitted.

### "Can we sing \_\_\_\_\_? It's our song!"

You probably like a lot of different styles of music. Unfortunately, not everything is appropriate during the liturgy. The music at your wedding must be sacred in nature. By all means, bring your ideas to the table, but know that the Director of Music Ministry will make the final decision about whether or not something is appropriate for liturgy. (Remember, you still have a reception to plan!)

# Music Ideas and Suggestions

## Processional & Recessional Music

Canon in D (J. Pachelbel)  
Hornpipe (George Fredrick Handel)  
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (J.S. Bach)  
Ode to Joy (Ludwig von Beethoven)  
Prelude in Classic Style (Young)  
Prince of Denmark's March (Clarke)  
Trumpet Tune in D (H. Purcell)  
Trumpet Voluntary (John Stanley)  
Wedding March (Felix Mendelssohn)

## Responsorial Psalms

Psalm 19: Lord, You Have the Words  
Psalm 34: Taste and See  
Psalm 103: The Lord is Kind and Merciful  
Psalm 128: Blest Are Those

## Preparation of Gifts

Instrumental (Recommended)  
God's Love Is Everlasting  
I Have Loved You

## Communion

Gift of Finest Wheat  
Taste and See  
The Body of Christ  
How Beautiful  
In Remembrance of You

## Song at Marian Altar

Ave Maria (In Latin, Franz Schubert)  
Ave Maria (In English, Dan Kantor)  
Hail Mary: Gentle Woman

## Recessional

*See "Processional & Recessional Music" section*

Any songs not listed which are appropriate for Catholic liturgy will be considered by the Director of Music Ministry. If you would like more suggestions, please contact the Director of Music Ministry ([tandorfer@st-martha.org](mailto:tandorfer@st-martha.org)).



**Tony Andorfer**  
Director of Music and Liturgy  
[tandorfer@st-martha.org](mailto:tandorfer@st-martha.org)

# Frequently Asked Questions

**May we create a wedding booklet or program?** If you would like! St. Martha will provide a basic worship aid, but many couples choose to prepare their booklet or program that outlines the order of Mass and mentions the major participants. If you choose to create your own program, we will need to proof it no later than four weeks before your wedding to ensure the Order of Mass is proper (email it to [tandorfer@st-martha.org](mailto:tandorfer@st-martha.org)).

**Is there a bride's room available?** Yes! The bride's room at St. Martha is available for your use. Please note, however, that it is NOT locked during the liturgy, so please make arrangements to keep valuables in your car.

**May we throw rice, flower petals, or birdseed?** No. We do not have anyone on staff who can clean this up after your wedding, and it can present a safety hazard for your guests and parishioners coming for Mass after your wedding is finished.

**May the wedding party consume food, alcohol or other substances while at the church?** Some healthy snacks can be a good idea during the hours of preparation before a wedding (though not within an hour of the reception of Communion) -- we don't want low blood sugar to cause any fainting. However, alcohol, smoking, cursing, controlled substances, or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. Offenders will be asked to leave.

**Who will preside at our wedding?** Ordinarily, a priest or deacon of St. Martha Parish will officiate at your wedding. A priest or deacon who is a relative or good friend of the couple may be delegated as celebrant, if approved by the pastor. Other clergy, Catholic or non-Catholic, may assist as appropriate and in accord with liturgical laws.

**Can we use an aisle runner?** For safety reasons, we do not allow the use of aisle runners at St. Martha.

**How may we indicate seating arrangements?** Ribbons or flower arrangements are often used to identify the pews for your family and guests. The bows and flowers may be tied on the ends of the pews with ribbon or secured with rubber bands or special holders made for this purpose. Tape and wire are not to be used as they can damage the pews.

## Appendices

Wedding Worksheet and Liturgy Planning Guide

Usher Responsibilities

Photography and Videography

Floral and Decorations

*For additional copies of Appendix documents visit [st-martha.org/marriage](http://st-martha.org/marriage)*



## Decoration and Flower Policies

Many couples desire to place floral arrangements in the church. While any floral arrangements are entirely optional, we ask that you please observe the following when making arrangements with your florist.

- Please schedule someone to receive delivery of your flowers. It is most efficient if flowers are delivered to the Grand River Ave. entrance, Door #6. Once flowers are distributed the florist must clear away boxes, paper, and debris. Floral decoration should never impede the approach to or the encircling of the altar or any of the ritual movement and action. There are places in most liturgical spaces, however, where it is appropriate and where it can be enhancing. Floral arrangements may be placed on either side of the altar, but not in front or directly on the altar. We have pedestals for you to use if needed.
- Occasionally individual flowers for each mother/grandmother are presented at the Sign of Peace.
- Many brides choose to offer a presentation of flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary after Communion, especially if the bride herself enjoys a special devotion to our Blessed Mother.
- A Flower Girl is welcome to be part of the wedding party, but no flower petals, rice or birdseed may be scattered anywhere on the church campus.
- If you wish to discuss the possibility of sharing decorations with other couples that plan to marry on the same day as your wedding, you can contact the parish office, and request the names and phone numbers of those people.
- There may be no alteration of any of the seasonal church decorations, especially during the Christmas and Easter seasons. Arrangements that are already in place in the sanctuary may not be removed or adjusted, no matter what the time of year.
- We do not allow aisle runners of any kind for safety reasons.
- It is always appreciated if you choose to leave your floral decorations in the church after the wedding celebration for other members of St. Martha Parish to enjoy.
- It is not permissible to hang decorations of any kind. We welcome you to leave flowers in the Church as a donation for the weekend Masses. Please make these arrangements with the parish office.

*Last revised 2/26/2024*

## Photography and Videography Policies

The celebration of marriage is a sacred moment of rejoicing. We understand the desire to record this moment, and so we have studied carefully the different locations from which pictures might be taken without disrupting the congregation's prayer.

**Your videographer and photographer must see the priest or deacon at least a half hour before your wedding to discuss what is and is not allowed. Moreover, we ask that you share these policies with them so they know ahead of time what to expect.**

We ask you to observe the following so that the sacred joy of this day can be enjoyed without distraction:

- The photographer and videographer are not allowed in the sanctuary area (on the marble floor).
- Photographers and videographers are not permitted to interfere with the processional and recessional (they may not stop the processions in or out of the church for any reason).
- Photographers and videographers should maintain proper decorum before, during, and after the ceremony. Running, laying on the floor, dodging in between guests or blocking their view is not appropriate.
- Photographers and videographers may use the choir loft if they desire.
- Only the lighting already available in the church may be used. No additional lighting may be brought into the church.
- After the wedding, the church will be open for the taking of pictures (flash allowed). All photo sessions must be completed by 3:30 p.m. Absolutely no exceptions will be made. If group photographs are to be taken before the wedding, they must take place in the vestibule or outside of the church.
- No furniture may be removed or moved for any reason.
- After the procession, photographers and videographers must remain behind the first pew.
- ***For videographers,***
  - No wire draping will be allowed between cameras
  - No microphones may be attached to the church's furniture in any way
  - You may not connect to the church audio system
  - If using wireless mics, please check for channel frequency conflicts with the parish's wireless microphone system

*Last revised 4/15/2025*

## Photography and Videography Policies

The celebration of marriage is a sacred moment of rejoicing. We understand the desire to record this moment, and so we have studied carefully the different locations from which pictures might be taken without disrupting the congregation's prayer.

**Your videographer and photographer must see the priest or deacon at least a half hour before your wedding to discuss what is and is not allowed. Moreover, we ask that you share these policies with them so they know ahead of time what to expect.**

We ask you to observe the following so that the sacred joy of this day can be enjoyed without distraction:

- The photographer and videographer are not allowed in the sanctuary area (on the marble floor).
- Photographers and videographers are not permitted to interfere with the processional and recessional (they may not stop the processions in or out of the church for any reason).
- Photographers and videographers should maintain proper decorum before, during, and after the ceremony. Running, laying on the floor, dodging in between guests or blocking their view is not appropriate.
- Photographers and videographers may use the choir loft if they desire.
- Only the lighting already available in the church may be used. No additional lighting may be brought into the church.
- After the wedding, the church will be open for the taking of pictures (flash allowed). All photo sessions must be completed by 3:30 p.m. Absolutely no exceptions will be made. If group photographs are to be taken before the wedding, they must take place in the vestibule or outside of the church.
- No furniture may be removed or moved for any reason.
- After the procession, photographers and videographers must remain behind the first pew.
- ***For videographers,***
  - No wire draping will be allowed between cameras
  - No microphones may be attached to the church's furniture in any way
  - You may not connect to the church audio system
  - If using wireless mics, please check for channel frequency conflicts with the parish's wireless microphone system

*Last revised 4/15/2025*

## Usher Responsibilities

- Be present at the rehearsal and learn the locations of the sacristies, the bride's room, and the rest rooms in the church.
- Arrive at the church 45 minutes before the wedding.
- Be available to assist the priest with the movement of any sanctuary furniture.
- Obtain the programs or orders of worship. Place enough copies at the places where the bride and groom and attendants will be seated. Hand out the rest of the orders of worship to the guests.
- Begin to seat the guests no later than 20 minutes before the ceremony is to begin. Be alert for any disabled or handicapped persons who may need assistance from their cars and in getting to their place. We suggest that several couples be seated at a time. Be alert to seat any latecomers, using side aisles.
- During the ceremony, position yourself so that you can keep an eye on the entire assembly, including the wedding party. If anyone becomes ill, immediately help them out of the church with as little commotion as possible. Offer them reasonable help or call 911.
  - Locate the AED (Automated External Defibrillator) during the wedding rehearsal. It is located on the wall between the men's and women's bathrooms.

### **After the ceremony, the ushers should:**

- Help move the sanctuary furniture back to its original position.
- Check the usher's room, hallway, restrooms, sacristy, and bride's room for any empty flower boxes or wrappings and dispose of them.
- Pick up any programs or orders of worship left in the pews and check for forgotten photographic equipment and clothing.
- See to it that any pew decorations, outside decorations, flowers (if they are going to the reception) and all personal belongings from the attendants' room are taken.

*If you have any questions about your responsibilities, ask the priest or deacon at the rehearsal.*