



Getting Married in the Catholic Church

Notes for Engaged Couples

Why should I get married in the Catholic Church?

Catholic Marriage is unique among other marital relationships because it is a sacrament that makes Christ present in our world. The relationship between husband and wife mirrors the relationship of Jesus Christ for his people. In the Catholic tradition, husband and wife accept a role in God's plan for humanity. They are ambassadors of God's love, and they collaborate with God to keep humanity alive.

The vows exchanged by the couple are a sacred pact through which the spouses embrace each other and embrace Jesus as their partner. Through their union with Christ they participate in the unbreakable pact between God and humanity: the covenant that was sealed in the death and resurrection of Christ.

One of the many benefits of a sacramental marriage is the power of God's grace, which helps couples keep their commitment and find happiness together. Social scientists are finding that couples who recognize God's presence in their relationship experience more satisfaction and are more likely to achieve lifelong marriage.

All in all, couples who choose to bring their marriage into the Church receive many gifts – peace of heart, oneness with the Church, the fullness of the sacraments, and God's special blessing upon their marriage.

What if there is a prior marriage?

In the simplest terms, if a Catholic wishes to marry in the Church when there has been a previous marriage for either party, the partner in the earlier union must have died or the Church must have issued a declaration of nullity (frequently called an annulment) of the previous marriage. Couples should speak to the parish priest or deacon in situations where previous marriages are involved.

Can I receive my sacraments if I am engaged?

If you are a Catholic who has received Baptism, but not Eucharist or Confirmation, the Church asks that you receive these sacraments before your wedding, if possible.

According to Canon Law (Canon 1065 §1):

"Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of Confirmation are to receive it before they are admitted to marriage if it can be done without serious difficulty."

While Confirmation is not required for a valid Catholic marriage, it is strongly encouraged to help you grow in your faith and fully enter into the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

- **If you are not living together**, you should receive the sacraments before your wedding if it is possible.
- **If you are already living together**, you may receive the sacraments after the wedding.

Couples that are already living together are asked to commit to abstaining from conjugal relations (e.g., live as brother and sister) until their marriage.



Steps to Celebrating Marriage at St. Frances of Rome

1. **Speak to Your Spouse** - Discuss getting married in the Church with your spouse and make sure you are both on the same page. Please keep in mind that getting married in the Church does not mean you need to have a huge celebration or party. It can be kept very simple or as big as you so desire.
2. **Contact the Parish Office** - Speak with office staff regarding your desire to marry, potential dates and time you are interested in getting married. Weddings are normally scheduled on Saturdays at 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. Please note that you should contact the office 12 to 6 months prior to your anticipated wedding date to begin the preparation process. When meeting with the representative you will review and determine the most suitable type of ceremony, and review next steps.
3. **Obtain Recent Copies of Sacramental Certificates** - Make that request to the parish where the person received Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation. Once you have these certificates turn them in to the Parish Office. If the parish no longer exists or baptismal records are unavailable, contact the Parish Office for assistance.
4. **Attend a Marriage Preparation Retreat** - As part of your marriage preparation you are asked to attend a retreat designed for couples who are seeking the sacrament of marriage. Please note, this does have a separate cost associated with it and must be attended in the 6 month time frame before your wedding date.
5. **Marriage License** - As part of the Pre-Nuptial Investigation you will need to collect certain documents such as a marriage license from the county clerk's office. Please turn in this marriage license to the Parish office or to the wedding coordinator the day of the rehearsal. **Marriage licenses are valid for 90 days from the date of issuance**
6. **Scheduling a Meeting** - Call the Parish Office to meet with the pastor and/or his delegate to review the Pre-Nuptial Investigation, Witness Forms and to fill out any other documents.

More information regarding weddings can be found on our parish website www.sfrchurch.org