

Wedding Guidelines

Hamilton Catholic Pastoral Region

Parishes: St. Julie Billiart St. Peter in Chains St. Joseph

Congratulations on your engagement and upcoming wedding! Our parish community is glad to be part of your preparation.

Preparation process

- Initial meeting with priest or deacon: Introduction. Process overview. Reserve date and time of wedding. This meeting should be at least 9 months prior to the anticipated wedding date.
- Instructional evening: You are to attend once. These occur on the second Thursday of odd months or the fourth Monday of even months. Please schedule with the priest or deacon to determine which month you will attend.
- FOCCUS = Facilitating Open Couple Communication and Understanding Survey: After your first meeting with the priest or deacon, you will receive an e-mail with a link that will take you to a questionnaire of about 180 questions that usually takes 50-60 minutes to complete.
 - FOCCUS couple: After completing the survey, you will have one or two meetings with a married couple that has been trained to go over the results with you.
- Mentor couple / *Witness to Love*: You will identify a couple that has been married at least five years, is currently connected to their parish, and is chosen by you. Over the course of several months you will meet with them to complete various faith or commitment-based activities.
- Second meeting with priest or deacon: Focus on prayer in the home and growth in the life of faith for you and your future family.
- Pre-Cana weekend: This may be completed through the Archdiocese of Cincinnati (Genesis Retreat) or through Engaged Encounter or through Ruah Woods “God’s Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage” and “Living a Joy-filled Marriage.” You will receive available dates at your initial meeting with the priest or deacon.
- Meet with parish music director: You are required to meet once with the parish music director at least two months in advance of the wedding date to ensure that the ceremony observes the dignity and nature due the celebration of a Sacrament and liturgical ritual. Any music played as part of the ceremony – whether during the ceremony or as a prelude – must be approved by him. Guest musicians must also be approved by him to ensure their familiarity with Catholic liturgical practices.

Ceremony – Within Mass or Outside of Mass

It is preferred that the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony be celebrated within Mass since all of the Sacraments draw their life from the death and resurrection of Jesus that we commemorate at Mass. There may be circumstances that make it preferable to celebrate the wedding ceremony outside of Mass – especially if many guests cannot receive Holy Communion as often is the case when one spouse is not Catholic. Mindful of guests who will not receive, a couple may choose to celebrate the wedding during Mass for the additional graces since no other action of the Church can equal its effectiveness by the same title and to the same degree.” (SC #7) When one spouse is not Catholic permission must be received from the pastor to have the celebration within Mass.

Fees

Use of church: \$500 for active parishioner* \$1,000 for non-active parishioner

*Active parishioner means that bride/groom or their parents frequently celebrate Sunday Mass at our parish.

Music fee w/ parish musician: \$250

\$25 / rehearsal if guest musicians require more than two rehearsals with the parish music director.

Music fee to parish when parish musician does not play at the ceremony: \$100. The director of music is still involved in wedding preparation to ensure that the music is befitting of a Catholic sacramental liturgy and to ensure that the musicians who are at the ceremony are familiar with Catholic liturgy.

Servers: It is recommended you provide \$10 for each server when Mass is celebrated.

Note: A guest celebrant or guest musician(s) should be provided a stipend in addition to the above fees.

Music and Musician(s)

Music plays a very important part in a wedding, as it does in every liturgy. In the wedding liturgy, we sing about love – not a love initiated between two human beings alone, but a love that has Christ at the center, one that will deepen and grow through the years to become a sign for the world of the love God has for his people. With this in mind, hymns and songs that express this love rooted in Christ are appropriate for the liturgy. Secular, popular music is not centered on Christ and, therefore, not allowed in the church.

Prelude music played or sung while your guests are gathering in the church can help set the tone for the sacred nature of the celebration. It can help your guests transition from the world outside the church doors and begin to focus on the sacred – to focus on the wedding ceremony which takes place in the context of liturgical prayer. With this in mind, music from the sacred or classical repertoire is appropriate. Secular music is not allowed.

You are welcome to bring in your own musicians or soloists so long as they are familiar with the solemnity of a Catholic ceremony. Because of the extra preparation required with guest musicians, you need to meet with the parish music director at least four months prior to your wedding date and inform him at that time that you would like guest musicians. At that time, please provide the contact information for the guest musicians (or for the leader of the group).

Time of ceremony

St. Peter in Chains: Saturday before 3pm; Friday 4pm or later.

St. Joseph: Saturday anytime; Friday 4pm or later.

St. Julie Billiart: Saturday 1pm or 6pm; Friday No later than 5pm.

It is permissible to celebrate the wedding during a regularly scheduled Sunday Mass. However, the bride and groom would enter as part of a continuous procession with the priest and servers. Only one reading would be taken from the marriage rite and music options would be more constrained (but you might have a full choir).

Flowers, etc. Ringbearer/Flower girl

It is certainly appropriate to decorate with flowers to recognize the joy of the occasion. We ask that you not rearrange parish flowers (e.g. flowers during the seasons of Christmas and Easter), though you may add to them. Under no circumstances are flowers allowed on top of the altar. Weddings during the seasons of Advent or Lent require flowers to be at a minimum to reflect the character of the season. Flowers may be presented to parents during the sign of peace.

Flowers may be presented to Mary after the prayer after Communion and before the final blessing and presentation of the couple. This is a beautiful opportunity for quiet prayer asking our Blessed Mother's guidance and assistance as you begin your married life. After all, she was mother of the Holy Family in Nazareth.

At St. Peter in Chains we have two large, beautiful candelabra that are used to decorate the sanctuary unless the couple directs otherwise. Flowers may be added around the candelabra for greater effect.

The unity candle is not part of the Catholic ceremony for matrimony and is not permitted at the church. The symbols that are proper to the ceremony are the exchange of vows and the exchange of rings. If the unity candle is a symbol that you want to include that day, it can be set up at the reception hall. This would apply to sand or other performative actions that are not prescribed in the liturgical books.

Aisle runners and throwing of rice or confetti are forbidden for safety concerns. Flower petals may be spread ahead of the bride, but must be cleaned afterward by the family or wedding party. (If the petals are crushed it may require some scrubbing.)

Ring bearer(s) and Flower Girl(s) should be at an age by which they can make it down the aisle in a timely manner. It is recommended that they be 4 years of age or older. The priest or deacon celebrating the wedding will determine whether children younger than 4 are acceptable.

Decorations on the ends of the pews can be hung from a string (or mounted with a broad, padded clamp). It is not permissible to use tape, glue, or any other adhesive on the pews.

Photography / Videography

Please remember that a Catholic wedding is a liturgical ceremony. Photographers and videographers must be mindful of this sacredness. Flash photos may only be taken as the bridal party is processing into and out of the church. Photographers are not to enter the sanctuary (raised area at front of the church) at any time during the ceremony. Video cameras are restricted to the balcony during the ceremony. The photographer or videographer must introduce himself or herself to the celebrant prior to the ceremony. St. Julie Billiart is not available for wedding party photos from 2:30pm to 5:30pm on Saturdays.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal can take place either Friday or Thursday before the wedding at a time agreed to with the celebrant or wedding coordinator. At the rehearsal you will be shown the area available for the bridesmaids and groomsmen to prepare (no such space is available at St. Joseph).

St. Julie: Thursday and Friday rehearsals can begin no later than 6pm to accommodate choir rehearsal on Thursday and the evening Mass on Friday.

Fenmont

The large hall in the Fenmont (property of St. Julie parish) may be used for your wedding reception if there is no scheduling conflict for the date you have chosen. Contact Liz Moran (863-1040) for further details.

Contact info (musician, parish office, priest/deacon)

St. Julie Billiart parish office:		(513) 863-1040
Fr. Rick Walling:	rwalling@gphamilton.org	(513) 863-4344
Fr. Ed Hoffmann:	hoffmanne@stpeterinchains.org	(513) 416-3127
Fr. Jeff Silver:	frjeffsilver@gmail.com	
Deacon Jeff Merrell	merrellj@stpeterinchains.org	
Musician: Jonathan Alexander	jalexander@stjulie.net	(513) 863-1040

Checklist

Meetings with the celebrant _____ (1st 8 mo. – 1yr. ahead)
FOCCUS online survey completed _____
Parish instruction night _____ (7 or 8 mo. ahead)
Meeting(s) with the FOCCUS couple _____
Pre-Cana weekend _____
Witness to Love sessions _____
Recent Baptismal Certificate sent _____ (6 mo. ahead)
Meeting with Director of Music _____ (2 mo. Ahead)
Marriage License from courthouse _____ (60 days ahead)

Last revised: August 8, 2022