

# **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES for WEDDINGS AT ST. MARY MOTHER OF THE CHURCH**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the beautiful words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

...Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptized persons is a true sacrament of the New Covenant (1617).

Sacramental marriage is a liturgical act. It is therefore appropriate that it should be celebrated in the public liturgy of the Church...(1631).

From this, one can easily see that the celebration of a wedding in the Roman Catholic Church is first and foremost a sacred event and not some glorified civil ceremony/social gathering. It is also an act of the Church's *public* worship. The attitude that, "It's my wedding and I can do whatever I choose," betrays not only a lack of knowledge of what the celebration of a Catholic Church wedding is, but also a lack of appreciation for its sacramental/liturgical character. Because the celebration of any sacrament is a matter of the Church's public worship and not an individual's private affair, the Church, and in particular the local church parish, is duty bound to regulate how the celebration is to occur.

Although every attempt has been made to retain a certain amount of flexibility to allow for legitimate individual expression in the Church's public worship regarding the celebration of a wedding, it is because of the years of experience – unfortunately, often times negative – that require certain of the following regulations in order that the dignity of the sacramental celebration of marriage is safeguarded and be a sacred event to be remembered and cherished.

# REQUIREMENTS

## General Church Law

1. **Place of Wedding:** Marriages between two Roman Catholics should take place in the parish church of either the bride or the groom. A marriage between a Roman Catholic and a baptized Non-Catholic should take place in the parish church of the Catholic party unless a dispensation from Canonical Form has been granted. A marriage between a Roman Catholic and a non-baptized person should be celebrated in the church parish of the Catholic party unless a dispensation from Canonical Form has been granted. In the latter two cases, if circumstances warrant and the priest/deacon of the Catholic party so recommends, the Diocesan Bishop may permit a marriage to be celebrated in a suitable place other than a Catholic Church or chapel. Such determination must be left to the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop.
2. **Interfaith Marriages:** In an interfaith marriage between a Roman Catholic and a baptized person of another Christian denomination or a non-baptized person, the Catholic party must promise, in the presence of the Non-Catholic party, to live the Catholic faith and to do all in his/her power to baptize and raise any children in the active practice of the Catholic faith. *In the case of an interfaith marriage, the ceremony will consist of the Liturgy of the Word and the Rite of Marriage. A Nuptial Mass will not be celebrated nor is a Communion Service permitted.*

## Diocesan Policy

During the time prior to the wedding, the couple is to:

- identify and cultivate their strengths;
- deal with the areas of difficulty in their relationship;
- participate in assessment and preparation;
- recognize that marriage is essentially characterized by unity, fidelity, permanence, and an openness to children;
- attend one of the formal diocesan marriage preparation programs;
- participate in premarital evaluation and counseling, when recommended.

# **St. Mary Mother of the Church Wedding Policy**

## **1. Availability of the Church**

St. Mary Mother of the Church is available for weddings of registered parishioners, their children and those interested in becoming parishioners. The pastor should be contacted 9-12 months before the wedding date, which should be discussed with the pastor.

## **2. Times for Weddings**

- a. Friday: 6:30 PM; 7:00 PM
- b. Saturday: 10:00 AM; 1:00 PM; 6:30 PM; 7:00 PM
- c. There are **no** weddings celebrated on Sunday all day and evening; on the evening before a Holy Day of Obligation and on the Holy Day of Obligation itself; or at certain privileged times during the Church's liturgical year, e.g., Holy Week.

## **3. Church Fees**

A Fee of \$600 is charged for the use of the Church to non-members of the parish. The member status of the groom, bride, or parents of either, must already be established by a census record at the First time of Inquiry (the first phone call to the church desiring information about a wedding).

## **4. Initial Interview**

- a. At the initial interview (or shortly thereafter), if both are Roman Catholic, each party must provide a recent baptismal certificate issued within the last six months with all notations on the rear. These respective certificates, with the notations on the rear, establish the couple's freedom to marry as well as to note the date and place of Confirmation.
- b. The couple will be given an explanation of what is required of them in the marriage preparation process and will be registered for one of the formal diocesan marriage preparation programs.
- c. The couple will be given a chance to read the policies contained herein and indicate their understanding of same.

## 5. The Marriage License

The couple is expected to bring the *Marriage License* to the Church Office **2 weeks before the Wedding**. The Marriage License must be obtained from the Court House no sooner than thirty (30) days and no later than three (3) days before the wedding. The marriage license is valid for thirty (30) days from the date of issuance. To obtain this license, both parties will need Birth Certificates and Social Security Numbers (For further information, including fees, call the Clerk of Court Office, 233-0150)

## 6. The Rehearsal

- a. There will be a \$175 fee for the St. Mary Church Wedding Director to conduct the rehearsal and to be present the day of the wedding. No other wedding coordinator will be allowed.
- b. Rehearsals are usually held at 6:00 PM one or two evenings prior to the wedding. The day and time is negotiable with the aforementioned Wedding Director.
- c. Music is **not** to be rehearsed at this time.
- d. No food or drink, especially alcohol, is allowed in any of the buildings.
- e. Alcohol is **not** permitted on church property, (e.g. trolley, limousine, bus, etc.)
- f. **No** smoking is allowed in any of the buildings.

## 7. Attire of Wedding Party

- a. The attire of the wedding party, especially the bride and the bridesmaids, should reflect the dignity and sacredness of the Catholic Rite of Marriage. When meeting with the pastor more specific guidelines will be discussed. Therefore, it is best that the wedding dress should not be ordered until after the initial meeting with the pastor.

## 8. The Ceremony

- **Officiant:** It is presumed that a priest/deacon assigned to St. Mary Church will serve as officiant of the wedding. Should the couple desire another priest/deacon to officiate at the wedding, delegation is readily and gladly given by the Pastor of St. Mary Church to any Catholic priest/deacon who is in good standing in the Church. Mention of this desire is to be made by the couple at the initial interview. It is understood that any guest priest/deacon officiant will strictly abide by the policies contained herein.

In an interfaith marriage, the presence of the Non-Catholic party's minister is certainly welcome. He/she may participate in a very limited capacity.

- **Sanctuary Furniture:** The removal or rearrangement of any furniture (altar, celebrant's chair, pulpit, candles, etc.) in the sanctuary (altar area) is strictly prohibited. It is also not permitted to remove any decorations being used for liturgical purposes that may be present in the church and/or sanctuary.
- **Attendants:** Normally the bridal party should be limited to six (6) bridesmaids, including the Maid/Matron of Honor, and six (6) groomsmen, including the Best Man. In addition, only children five years (5) of age or older may participate as Ring Bearer and/or Flower Girl. Exceptions as regards the number in the bridal party and age of the children involved can be discussed during the initial meeting with the pastor.
- **Attire of Wedding Party:** The attire of the wedding party, especially the bride and the bridesmaids, should reflect the dignity and sacredness of the Catholic Rite of Marriage. When meeting with the pastor more specific guidelines will be discussed. Therefore, it is best that this not be decided until after the initial meeting with the pastor.
- **Music:** There is a rich treasury of appropriate sacred/liturgical music for use during the wedding ceremony. Therefore, secular music is best reserved for the reception after the wedding. St. Mary has a qualified organist who plays for all St. Mary Church weddings. The fee is \$250. If rehearsals are required a \$50 fee for each rehearsal is charged. The parish organist will also help the couple select vocalists and/or other instrumentalists, or the couple may select their own.

An exception for a guest organist is made only if the guest organist is qualified and experienced in playing a Roger's Digital Computer Organ. In this case, a \$75 consultant fee is to be paid to the St. Mary Church organist. This charge is for music selection approval, set-up of microphones, and meeting with the guest organist concerning our instruments.

- **Flowers:** Florist may bring arrangements 2 hours prior to the beginning of the wedding ceremony. Permission to bring arrangements earlier must be obtained from the Wedding Director. Flower arrangements may be placed under the statues of Mary and St. Joseph and/or in front of the arched beams behind the altar and/or on both sides of the Blessed Sacrament. Hanging decorations from the walls and wooden beams of the church is **not** permitted, as is the use of tape on walls, wooden beams, floors, or pews. The use of any kind of floral arches whatsoever is **not** permitted in any area of the church and sanctuary (altar area). The appropriate church staff person must approve all floral arrangements and other decorations.

Unless the floral arrangements are left for church use after the wedding, all floral arrangements and decorations must be cleared from the church *immediately* following the ceremony. (If the floral arrangements or decorations are to be left for church use after the ceremony, please contact the church office in advance so that there will be no plans for other flowers that weekend.)

*The use of rice, flower petals, confetti, bubbles; etc. are **not** permitted in the church or on the church grounds.*

- **Photography:** Only one (1) official still photographer, with hand-held camera, is allowed for the wedding. No additional equipment is allowed. *Only the official photographer is allowed to take pictures and must check-in with the Celebrant prior to the wedding.* Photograph sessions are **NOT** allowed before the wedding inside St. Mary church. Pictures can be taken outside the church before and after the wedding. An additional thirty (30) minutes may be used to photograph family group pictures on the steps of the sanctuary after the wedding. Pictures taken with flash may be used before and after the ceremony, but not during the ceremony. The bride or groom will see to it that the photographer is aware of these guidelines and intends to follow them, signing an agreement form. The photographer may request exceptions to these guidelines, contacting the pastor before signing the agreement form.

**Video Taping:** It is recommended that a licensed videographer be used. Only one (1) videographer with a self-contained, battery operated shoulder OR tripod mounted camera is allowed. Video sessions are **NOT** allowed before the wedding inside the church, but may be taken after the wedding while the photographer takes his/her pictures. Videos can be taken outside the church before and after the wedding. Lights can be used before and after the ceremony, but **not** during the ceremony. The bride or groom will see to it that the videographer is aware of these guidelines and intends to follow them, signing an agreement form. The videographer may request exceptions to these guidelines, contacting the pastor before signing the agreement form.

- **Candles:** Candles are permitted down the aisle of the church provided that they are encased in glass. Candelabras or other candle arrangements in the sanctuary (altar area) are not permitted.  
The use of the *Unity Candle* is **not** permitted. This is a secular symbol that is not provided for in the church's liturgy for marriage.
- **Aisle Runner:** **No** runner of any kind is allowed over the beautiful carpet in the aisle of the church.
- **Bridal Room:** **We** provide a special room in Founders Hall for the specific purpose of aiding the bride and bridesmaids in dressing prior to the ceremony. The Bridal Room is available 2 ½ hours before the beginning of the ceremony. The groom and groomsmen must arrive at the church already dressed in their wedding attire and are to wait in the Conference Room across from the sacristy in the church.
- **Cry Room:** **Please** be aware that our church has a "Cry Room" for parents with small children. It is located near the side/handicapped entrance to the church.
- **Food & Drinks:** **No** food or drinks allowed in any of the buildings. **No** smoking is allowed in any of the buildings.
- **Alcohol:** **No** alcohol permitted on church grounds (e.g. trolley, limousine, bus, etc.)

**We, the undersigned, understand these policies and, by our signature, agree to adhere to them.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Groom's signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Bride's signature**

**Date**

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