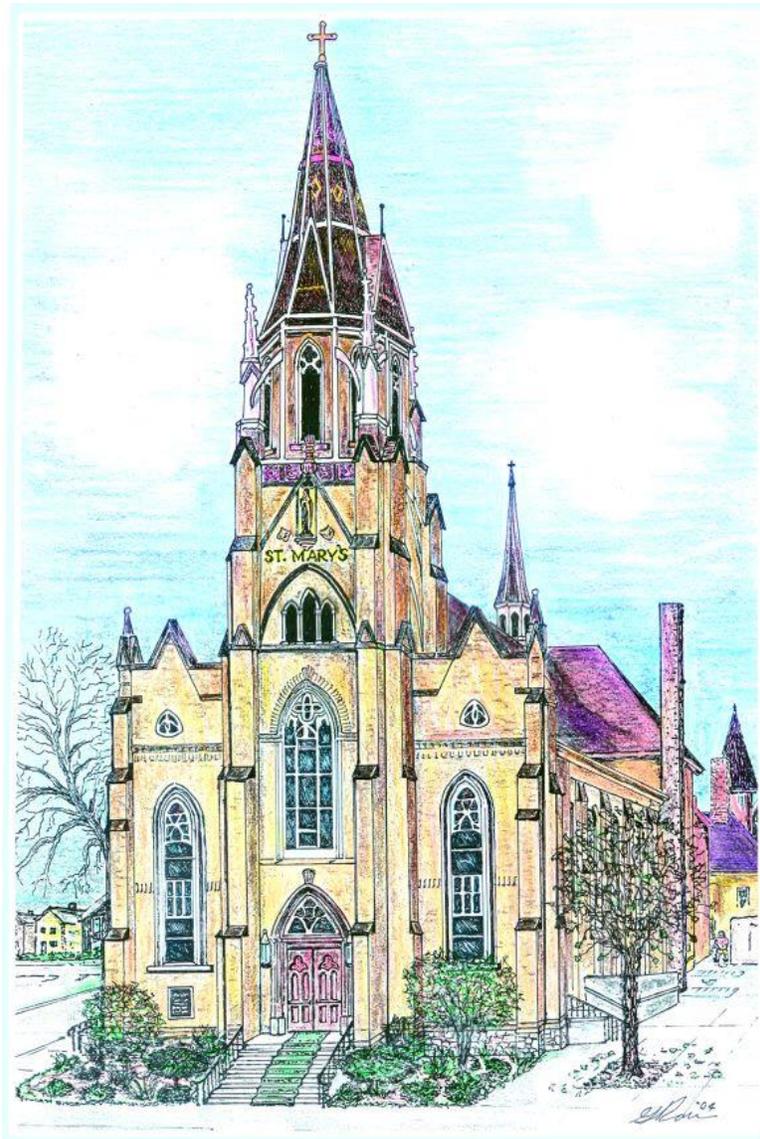


U n i t e d i n C h r i s t



Wedding Guidelines

St. Mary Catholic Church
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Revised: January 2019

How to Contact Us

St. Mary Roman Catholic Church
423 First Street NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504-5277

These guidelines, along with other useful marriage preparation information are found on our parish web site: www.stmarygr.org | Click on Sacraments – Matrimony

Parish Offices:

Tel. 616.459.7390

Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 8:30 AM-noon
(and by appointment)

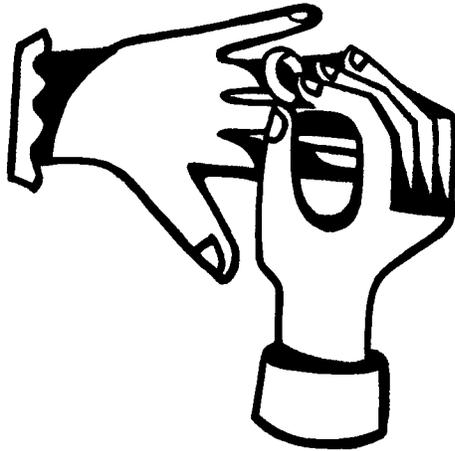
Wedding Liturgy Preparations (including music):

Director of Liturgy and Music Ministries, ext. 16
music@stmarygr.org

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*God is Love; let us
love one another as
he has loved us.*

MARRIAGE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Introduction

Congratulations on your engagement! You will be glad to know that we give personal attention to the preparation and celebration of wedding liturgies here at St. Mary's.

We have put together the following guidelines to inform and assist you in your marriage and wedding preparations at St. Mary Church. Answers to many common questions are gathered here for you.

Understanding these policies and guidelines is very important. If, after reading through this booklet, you have any questions or concerns that are not addressed, please contact our parish staff as soon as possible.

A Catholic wedding is not a private event, but a public liturgy celebrated with certain expectations and boundaries. By choosing to celebrate this sacrament at St. Mary's, you are choosing to respect the form and purpose of the liturgy and act within the boundaries set by these guidelines.

Preparation

The Catholic Church takes marriage very seriously. Requirements for your marriage preparation are not arbitrary, but come from the universal Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Province of Michigan, the State of Michigan, and our local church in the Diocese of Grand Rapids. A couple is expected to demonstrate evidence of our Catholic Christian faith being present and practiced in their lives and must show a willingness to take the time and make the necessary effort for proper religious preparation for the reception of the sacrament.

There are many dimensions to preparing for this sacrament. Spiritual preparation for the sacrament of Christian Matrimony demands more time, thought, prayer and discussion than the material preparations for the wedding day itself. While these material things must be arranged, they have little effect on the outcome of the marriage. They are merely incidental to it.

The Roman Catholic wedding is rich in tradition and meaning. Since a wedding is a liturgical worship service, great thoughtfulness and care should go into preparing the liturgy.

Marriage Preparation Period

The Catholic Province of Michigan requires a minimum of six months preparation time for all marriages. **(We recommend one year or more.)** At St. Mary's, this preparation includes:

1. a pre-marital questionnaire
2. an approved Pre-Cana program which includes a communication inventory. Details of upcoming marriage preparation sessions are available from the parish staff
3. fulfillment of all other preparation responsibilities, as outlined in this booklet

Age Requirements

If one or both persons are under the age of 18, or if there is a pregnancy involved, a longer and more careful assessment will be made, which will minimally include professional counseling, parental interviews and pastoral judgment. This may lengthen the necessary preparation period.

Inter-Denominational and Inter-Faith Marriages

The marriage of a Catholic to a non-Catholic is permitted if certain requirements are fulfilled and proper permission is obtained from the Church. When these weddings are celebrated at St. Mary's, the Rite of Marriage is celebrated within a Liturgy of the Word, and not within Mass. Proper dispensation may need to be obtained. The ceremony may take place in the church of the non-Catholic party.

Dates and Times

Reserving the Church

To reserve a wedding date at St. Mary's: Contact the parish office as soon as possible once you know you want to be married at St. Mary's. While there is a minimum of six months preparation time for all marriages, we strongly advise couples to contact the parish **one year or more** before the proposed wedding date.

The following details must fall into place before the proposed date will be reserved on the parish calendar:

1. **PREVIOUS MARRIAGES:** Both Catholic **and** non-Catholic people who have **ever** been married previously should consult with the Catholic pastor and parish staff to see what special documentation will be necessary in their specific cases to ensure that they are free to marry. Contact the parish at least 18 months in advance of the tentative wedding date. **Dates cannot be held for couples waiting for a declaration of nullity from the Tribunal confirming their freedom to marry.** The date should be set after the declaration is obtained, a process that sometimes takes 12 months or more.
2. The Wedding Information Sheet is to be filled out completely and turned in to the parish office.
3. The required deposit must be paid.
4. **The reserved wedding date is only tentative** until the couple meets with our parish priest or staff for an initial conversation. Couples living at a distance will need to make alternate arrangements with our staff.

Please wait until confirming your wedding liturgy date at St. Mary's before scheduling any other wedding facilities or services; your first choice of a date may not be available.

The Time of Year

The liturgical seasons of Advent (*which starts four Sundays before Christmas*) and Lent (*which starts seven Wednesdays before Easter*) are not as well suited for weddings. In Advent, restraints are placed on music and decorations that may not match your expectations. The same applies to Lent, with the additional restriction that neither flowers nor instrumental music are suitable to the season's liturgies.

Weddings are strongly discouraged during Lent for these reasons. Please be aware that there are some weekends of the year for which no weddings will be scheduled to accommodate other parish activities.

Confirming the Time for the Wedding Liturgy

Weddings at St. Mary's commonly take place on:

- Fridays**, somewhere between 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM, or
- Saturdays** at 1:30 PM

It is also possible to celebrate the sacrament of marriage at: a.) a regularly parish Saturday (Vigil) Mass, or b.) a regular parish Sunday Mass. These options have influence on the wedding liturgy preparations and should be decided upon only after speaking with the parish priest or staff.

The building would be open for wedding preparations no more than **2½ hours before** the scheduled wedding time. After a Saturday wedding liturgy, the church must be clean and empty no later than 4:00 PM. **Please inform your florist and photographer of these times and plan deliveries and photography times accordingly.**

Choosing the Time for the Rehearsal

Rehearsals for Saturday weddings take place most commonly on the evening before the wedding liturgy at a time that is convenient for everyone involved. For a Friday night wedding, remember that a Thursday night rehearsal may need to begin by 5:30 PM to finish in time for regularly scheduled music rehearsals taking place that same evening.

Wedding Fees

To help defray costs associated with weddings, our parish has set fee levels for members and non-members. *Please see Appendix 5, p.17 of this booklet, the current “Wedding Fees” information sheet.*

Because a wedding is a celebration of our Christian community, wedding liturgies are most naturally celebrated in the parish where one or both of the engaged is a member. Most of the cost of a wedding liturgy at St. Mary’s for established, active parish members is absorbed by the parish. Non-members are asked to pay a price that reflects the support a member family would likely contribute to the parish during a year through the gifts of “time, talent and treasure”.

Parish Membership Requirements

The membership of a parent or other relative does not constitute membership for the one seeking marriage. Persons 18 years of age and older are considered parish members if they meet these criteria:

1. at least one member of the engaged couple is registered under their own name for a minimum of one year before the wedding
2. they have been attending Mass here regularly on Sundays and holy days
3. they have demonstrated a consistent pattern of contributing to the financial support of the parish, and/or have volunteered their time and talent to parish activities

Anyone not meeting the three criteria above pays the non-member fee for weddings.

The use of the church is not a “rental” of the building. By getting married at St. Mary’s, you are agreeing to act cooperatively with our parish guidelines, even if a guest presider or visiting musicians are leading the liturgy.

Necessary Documents

Baptism Certificate For Catholics, this is **different** than the certificate given to the family at the time of baptism. Both the bride and the groom must acquire newly issued (within six months of the wedding date), notated copies of their baptism certificate from the church that holds their baptism records. (If you received baptism here at St. Mary’s, just let us know.) If the **sacrament of confirmation** has not been received, preparation and celebration of confirmation is expected for Catholics!

A non-Catholic person’s requirements are a bit different—ask our staff about what is needed.

Marriage License The couple must procure and submit to the parish office a State of Michigan Marriage License, no later than one week before the wedding. *Please refer to Appendix 4, p. 16 in this booklet, “Obtaining a State of Michigan Wedding License”.*

The Wedding Liturgy

Although beginning a marriage is a very special event for an engaged couple, it is much more than the personal exchange of vows and rings. **Weddings are public rituals of the community**, celebrated with family, friends and the rich traditions of our faith. By choosing to be married in the Catholic Church you are seeking a particular celebration in a particular spirit.

Wedding celebrations within the Catholic Church are much like Sunday Mass. They are celebrated in the community prayer space (the church building, not outdoors) and encourage those who have gathered not only to witness the vows of the couple, but also to participate fully in the liturgy. As on Sundays, the communal atmosphere of prayer colors all aspects of the wedding celebration. You are inviting people to experience God’s presence in your wedding celebration and your marriage. The following notes will help you make choices about ministries, music and the worship environment of your wedding liturgy.

For a marriage between a Catholic and a person who is not Catholic, the Rite of Marriage without Mass is used. For a marriage between two Catholics, they may choose to celebrate their wedding either within Mass or in a liturgy without Mass.

Expectations – A Reality Check

These guidelines are filled with a variety of expectations for you, but it is also worthwhile to examine are what is *not* expected.

***Not* a Part of a Catholic Wedding**

For carefully considered reasons, following are some things that are *not* a part of our Catholic wedding liturgies at St. Mary's. Please read the explanations carefully and bring any questions you have to the parish pastoral staff.

- **perfection**; there is no such thing as a perfect wedding! Couples who insist on a perfect wedding are inevitably disappointed. Be flexible, rather, and strive for a *prayerful* wedding
- **a procession for the bride that is separate** from the groom and the rest of the wedding party (see p. 11, *Appendix 1: The Catholic Wedding Procession*)
- **the men** in the wedding party standing in front, instead of participating in the procession (see p. 11)
- **giving away the bride** (see p. 11)
- **“Here Comes the Bride”/“Bridal Chorus”** [by Wagner] or the “Wedding March” [by Mendelssohn] (See our handout, *Music for the Sacrament of Marriage*.)
- **an aisle runner** (see p. 10)
- **flower petals being dropped** by a “flower girl” (see p. 10)
- **rice**, balloon launches, birdseed or confetti (see p. 10)
- **decorative fencing**, arches, tall plant stands, and/or extra candelabra (see p. 10)
- **seating guests by “bride’s side”/“groom’s side”** (see p. 5, *The Assembly*)
- **a photographer up close to the sanctuary during the liturgy** (see p. 9)
- a military arch of swords or sabers (see p. 13, *Military Traditions*)
- the influence of a professional wedding planner on the liturgy (see p. 8, *Use of the Church*)

What is Not Required?

It may surprise you to learn some of the things that are not required, but are optional at a wedding liturgy:

- **seating grandparents last**, just before the liturgy begins (optional)
- **a flower girl or ring bearer** (children in the wedding party are possible with some restrictions) (see p. 6)
- **lighting a wedding candle**, or having parents light the sides of a wedding candelabra (options) (see p. 13)
- **a prayer to our Blessed Mother** (an option if both the bride *and* groom have a strong devotion) (see p. 13)
- **hiding the bride and groom from each other** before the liturgy (we strongly discourage this practice)
- **a lot of decorations** (our church interior doesn't require a lot of decorations) (see p. 10)
- **a big wedding party** (only the two witnesses are expected; the rest are extra)

The People in your Wedding Liturgy

Who does what? You have probably considered the people you would like to participate in the wedding with you. As you know from Sunday Mass, there are a variety of ministry roles in the liturgy. Since secular wedding planners and etiquette books are not adequate guides in this area, this information will help you get an overall picture of the various ministries involved.

The Assembly

The goal of your liturgy preparation is to encourage the full and active participation of all who will gather to celebrate your marriage. Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church community. At any liturgy, the primary ministry belongs to the assembly of people who gather to celebrate. (When this is overlooked, the majority of the people at a wedding may feel like spectators at a show.)

When celebrating this sacrament of unity, designating one side of the church “for the bride” and the other “for the groom” is a counter-productive practice and will be avoided. Beyond seating immediate family together, the assembly will be seated equally and indiscriminately on both sides of the church.

How can we encourage everyone to participate? Many things contribute to people’s participation. Hospitality, a printed program, and familiar music for all to sing are some of the ways that help people to feel welcome and a part of the celebration. *The way that you and the other people with special roles in the liturgy conduct yourselves is also a key influence!*

The Couple

In the Roman Catholic wedding liturgy, **the engaged persons are the ministers of the sacrament.** The priest or deacon serves as the Church’s official witness, but does not “pronounce you husband and wife.” Since a great deal of attention is focused on you during the wedding, you also set the tone for the assembly by your own attitudes and behavior. If, for example, you are at ease before the liturgy and taking the time to greet people as they arrive, people will feel welcome and relaxed. If you enter into the prayers and singing during the liturgy, **others in the assembly will be inclined to follow your lead.**

The Wedding Party

Two witnesses are required to be present for the legality of the wedding according to the laws of both the State of Michigan and the Catholic Church. They must be at least 18 years of age and be competent to attest to the events as they have transpired. They may be men or women.

The size and makeup of the wedding party is a personal decision of the couple. It is our experience that **smaller wedding parties contribute to a smoother, more elegant and less confusing celebration.** Also, our church worship space is narrow, and wedding parties of more than four couples are more awkward to accommodate.

Hospitality is a wonderful way to show people how much you appreciate their presence at your wedding. It also encourages their active participation in the liturgy. The members of your wedding party (men *and* women) can be of tremendous help here as **greeters and ushers.** Ask them to cordially greet people arriving at the church, hand out any printed program for the wedding, and lead people to a seat near the front of the church. We encourage both the men and women in your wedding party to assist with this hospitality. It is an option to assign the role of ushers to people who are not in the wedding party.

People serving as ushers, assistants and/or MM of ceremony are also expected to assist **after the liturgy** by going throughout the church to collect loose programs (if any), clean up the pews and lift up the kneelers.

Children in the Wedding Party?

Caution is necessary if you are considering the inclusion of children in your wedding party. The sometimes seen social roles of “flower girl” or “ring bearer” are not needed nor expected.

Any children participating must be old enough to rehearse, remember and carry out their roles in a respectful and reverent manner. **Children under the age of seven should not be in the procession** unless walking with an adult. Even then, have a backup plan of who will care for them if they don't cooperate with the wedding plans!

Designating people to be junior/miniature bride & groom is strongly discouraged. It would be appropriate for any children in the party be dressed like the other members of the wedding party, but not to appear dressed as a bride and groom.

Assistants

It is important to assign one or more people of hospitality to act as assistants. (The title “master of ceremonies” doesn't really reflect their role.) These helpers provide a valuable service by: ■ helping with setup and cleanup ■ gathering people together for the photographer ■ distributing corsages and boutonnieres ■ serving as greeters before the liturgy ■ acting as “go-fers” ■ assisting as needed with anything and everything

The **parish wedding coordinator** performs the traditional duties of a “master of ceremonies” during the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding: ■ opening the building ■ serving as the host ■ leading the rehearsal ■ directing the wedding party and liturgical ministers ■ preparing any items needed for the liturgy (readings, prayers, candelabra, etc.) ■ assisting the presider ■ giving cues ■ answering questions

Lectors (Readers)

You will want to select readers from among the people who will be at the wedding. One or two people may be asked to proclaim the scriptures. One of these readers might lead the Prayer of the Faithful, or these prayers may be led by the cantor. People who serve as lectors at St. Mary's or in their home parishes are good choices because of their familiarity with the role. Otherwise, look for people with clear voices and good public speaking skills. (They do not need to be Catholic.)

Weddings within Mass only:

Gift Bearers

If both of you are Catholic and your wedding will be celebrated within Mass, you will need to assign at least two people to be gift bearers to bring the bread and wine for the Eucharist to the altar.

You may also choose to present **gifts for the poor** at this time. Friends and relatives are often exceedingly generous at weddings. You may already be overwhelmed by the outpouring of gifts. Some couples choose to express their gratitude to this outpouring of gifts by making a gift of their own to the needy in their area, perhaps in the form of a basket of food items that can be brought up with the bread and wine and placed before the altar.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

These ministers (usually two people) assist the priest with the distribution of the Eucharist. Holy Communion in both forms (bread and wine) is the clearer expression of the sacramental sign, and offers a particular opportunity of deepening the understanding of the mystery in which the faithful take part. If a marriage is celebrated within a Mass, it is important to offer Holy Communion under both forms if at all possible.

As with lectors, ministers from St. Mary's are the logical first choice since they are familiar with our routine. Otherwise, think of people who will be at your wedding who are ministers of Holy Communion in their home parishes. Of course, with the permission of our pastor, Catholic members of the assembly who are not commissioned may be able to serve in this role for this special event.

It is a beautiful expression of faith for the bride and groom to assist with the distribution of Communion.

Wedding Music and Musicians

Music is a key and integral element of any liturgy! Our director of music ministries is responsible for guiding all music selections and musicians for wedding liturgies, even if they will not be serving at your liturgy themselves. The director of music ministries will meet with you both well in advance of the wedding date to prepare the music for the wedding. This will give you an opportunity to ask questions, explore options and listen to appropriate examples. *Please refer to our handout, "Music for the Sacrament of Marriage" for important details. (If you do not have this handout, please refer to our parish web site: www.stmarygr.com → Sacraments → Matrimony)*

Restrictions and Other Information

The couple to be married is responsible for communicating this information to their family, wedding party, assistants, photographers, videographers, florist, and guests.

Use of the Church

We have a zero tolerance policy for alcohol. Alcohol is not allowed on the property, even the parking lot. If any of the staff discover evidence of alcohol consumption by the bride, groom or wedding party, the wedding liturgy can be cancelled. Don't even risk it. The wedding day is too important!

The buildings of St. Mary's and areas nearby any doors or windows are entirely no-smoking areas.

St. Mary staff will be on hand to open the church, prepare the church space for the wedding, run the wedding rehearsal and help with the wedding liturgy.

If you happen hire a professional wedding planner, please note: **a professional wedding planner will not be allowed to have any influence on the wedding liturgy.** Their assistance is allowed before and after the liturgy, but not during. While sharing these guidelines with them may be helpful, they will not be allowed to challenge these guidelines or instructions from our staff concerning the liturgy.

The **organ loft** may be used as an excellent vantage point for photography and videography during the liturgy. The wedding party may gather here before the wedding liturgy begins. The loft is not open to guests.

As a courtesy, **a room in the adjacent office building** will be available for the women of the wedding party to use for dressing, and then for the entire wedding party to use as a "staging area" before the liturgy. Ironing gowns and personal hygiene should be taken care of before you arrive. This room must be cleaned after the wedding liturgy. **Please do not leave any valuable items (purses, cameras, etc.) unattended in any room.** There are no dressing facilities available for the men of the wedding party. The rest of the office building is off limits, and may be in use for other activities. The doors to the outside from the office building may not be used except in an emergency because of security issues.

We strongly discourage the practice of "hiding" the bride from the groom before the wedding liturgy. Long gone are the days when a groom met his bride for perhaps the first time at the wedding. In our time, to pretend that they are meeting each other for the first time as the bride enters the church contradicts the work that goes into a relationship to prepare for marriage.

Please remember that St. Mary's is **not air conditioned**. The church seats up to about 400 people comfortably.

The parish Activity Center is available for rental for alcohol-free wedding receptions. Please contact the parish office if you are interested.

The Wedding Rehearsal

Except for the musicians, **ANY MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY WHO HAS A SPECIAL ROLE TO PLAY IN YOUR WEDDING LITURGY IS EXPECTED TO BE AT THE REHEARSAL.** This includes ushers, groomsmen, bridesmaids, witnesses, readers/lectors, ministers of the Eucharist, assistants (M/M of ceremony), people bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, altar servers, etc. It is very important that these people participate in the rehearsal because they need to see the specifics of the flow and expectations for weddings in this church. This will allow them to receive instructions, ask questions and familiarize themselves with what they will be doing at the liturgy.

Photography / Videography for Wedding Liturgies

IT IS IMPORTANT TO SHARE THIS PAGE WITH YOUR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS IN ADVANCE. *Copies of this page are available from the parish office and at www.stmarygr.org.*

A balancing act is necessary to respect the wedding liturgy and the worship space, record the event, and take photos or video that are artistic, creative and beautiful. Above all, photographers and videographers are expected to be both **reverent** and **discreet** during the liturgy.

The use of the church for pictures is a privilege, not a right of either the couple or the photographer. All photography or video before, during or after the liturgy must respect the sacredness of the sacrament and of the church. As a guest of our parish, do not move any existing flowers, furnishings, candles, plants, or seasonal decorations.

The building will be open no sooner than 2½ hours before the wedding. On Saturday afternoons, all photos must be completed, and the church empty of equipment no later than 4:00 PM. It is very important that you plan accordingly and communicate this in advance to all who need to know! Photo sessions may be held in the church before the liturgy and immediately after, within the set time boundaries.

We strongly discourage separating or “hiding” the bride from the groom before the wedding liturgy. Such a practice is incongruous with this sacrament. Please keep this in mind when scheduling photographs.

It is necessary to **avoid any movement** or action during the liturgy that will distract from or interrupt our worship. Therefore, photographers and video operators will not be allowed to operate near the sanctuary (front) during the liturgy. Movement up the side aisles is not allowed. *Please remain behind the assembly and work as discreetly as possible.* There is a **small space at the front of the side pews** where a stationary camera or video recorder may be discreetly placed and operated. A stationary camera may be allowed to the right, near the piano, only if it does not interfere with the musicians. (Please ask.) No cameras will be allowed between the other front pews and the sanctuary.

The **organ loft** is an excellent vantage point for photography and videography during the liturgy. Keep in mind that the traffic path of the organist to and from the north side of the organ console must not be obstructed.

During the entrance procession, flash may be used. There is only one procession, and it includes everyone—the wedding party, parents, and the bride and groom. The photographer may place themselves down the center aisle at that time, *but may not slow or stop the procession in any way.*

During the rest of the liturgy, only non-flash photography is permitted. Our worship space is not brightly lit. Our light fixtures cast an amber glow. Please plan ahead to bring the equipment you may need.

Please be aware that there are times during the liturgy at which the assembly stands. During those times, the lines of sight are most clear down the main aisle or from the loft.

Every moment of our worship—word, song and silence—is intentional and significant. This fact is especially important to anyone recording the liturgy with **video**. Consider continuous video footage of the entire liturgy to honor the spirit of our liturgy.

Photographers and videographers are encouraged to be familiar with the Roman Catholic *Rite of Marriage* as part of their preparation.

We may be able to offer a sound feed for video from our sound system. Please contact the parish staff in advance for more information.

Decoration Suggestions and Restrictions for Wedding Liturgies

Copies of this page are available from the parish office and at www.stmarygr.org to share with your florist. You are responsible for making sure they receive these guidelines.

The building will be open no sooner than 2½ hours before the wedding liturgy. On Saturday afternoons, any rented items must be removed no later than 4:00 PM. It is very important to plan floral deliveries and pickups accordingly!

Because of the style of our church building, we encourage those responsible for flowers and decorations at weddings to strive for beauty in **simple rather than extravagant** ways. The church is ornate, and does not require much for decorations to achieve the desired effect. One should be able to sense something special (and nothing trivial) in everything that is seen, heard, touched, smelled and tasted in our liturgy. When this is overlooked, the people at a wedding liturgy may feel like spectators at a show.

As a guest of our parish, do not move any existing flowers, furnishings, candles, plants, seasonal decorations, etc. without explicit permission from our staff. The church environment—especially during the Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter seasons—takes **priority** over any other décor, including decorations for a wedding. The church is the place where the parish faith community gathers for prayer, and existing church decorations for the regular liturgies may not be removed.

Decorations or arrangements may not be placed on the altar. (The *altar* is the sacramental table, not to be confused with the *sanctuary*, which is the raised area at the front of the church.)

Decorations may not be so large as to **obstruct the view** of the sanctuary furnishings from anyone in the church, nor should they ever **hinder any ritual movement** and action. Specifically, no decorations in the sanctuary should be taller than 40” (the height of the altar). Decorations on the main floor level should be no taller than 60”. Plant stands may be used to raise smaller decorations within the height limits. The use of arches, decorative fencing and/or extra candelabra are not allowed. (As a general rule, anything artificial is less than appropriate for worship, including artificial flowers.)

St. Mary’s has a wedding (unity) candelabra which you may use. It is adjustable in height, and holds two tapers and a 3” pillar candle. The candles are not provided by the parish. A photo of the candelabra is available upon request.

Aisle runners are a safety hazard and are not allowed.

Possible decorations (flowers or bows, for example) placed on the pews should be used to offer hospitality to the entire assembly, not to emphasize the aisle or to set apart special seating. If used, flowers or bows used on the center ends of the pews may also be matched by decorations on the outside ends of the pews. There are 25 pews on each side of the main aisle, although placing decorations on each and every pew appears excessive in our space. **No tape, tacks, or wire are to be used.** Chenille wire stems (pipe cleaners) are suggested.

For reasons of safety and cleanliness, we cannot allow balloon launches, or allow flower petals (fresh or artificial), rice, birdseed or confetti to be thrown or scattered, inside or outside the church. These all cause special problems.

Appendix 1: The Catholic Wedding Procession

“The gathering and entrance rites of the liturgy are designed to transform the many individuals in the church into a unified assembly of worshippers, ready to celebrate and hear the scriptures.”

Weddings are very meaningful occasions in our worship life. Because you will be customizing the form of the procession to your wedding party and family, you will need to consider the following to guide your choices.

Catholic wedding processions don't look like TV wedding processions. **There is no separate procession for the bride in the ritual, for instance.** The entrance procession is a liturgical action, the ritual entrance of the ministers for the liturgy.

The bride & groom, as the ministers for this sacrament of unity, are (both) included in a unified procession. You both enter from the same door, avoiding any visual suggestion that one is more important than the other. You are even encouraged to enter together. Separation of the men & women in the procession sends mixed messages, clouds the symbolism of the ritual, unnecessarily lengthens the procession, and may seem more like a fashion show.

The entrance procession at a wedding is an extended form of the regular entrance of the priest and other ministers at Sunday Mass. If the bride and groom will not be walking down together, consider each walking with both of your parents in the procession.

Why doesn't the ritual mention just the father walking the bride down the aisle? While that is an option, such a practice is not ideal, and falls short of embracing the symbolism for this sacrament.

Doesn't the father of the bride give her away? Whether or not the father walks with the bride down the aisle, giving the bride away is not a part of the liturgy. Besides, that practice of former years loses much of its attractiveness when its original purpose is known, namely, one man handing over a woman to another man. It dates to a time when women were considered as property, and was indeed a father giving away his daughter. Even though that is not what is now intended, we have a directive and a responsibility to do better. The way in which we worship both manifests our faith & affects our faith, although not always consciously.

There are many customs involved with wedding processions. These customs are not necessarily religious, and they often don't reflect contemporary attitudes toward marriage. The Church does not require such social customs, and not all of them are appropriate for a Christian wedding.

To embody the spirit of the Rite of Marriage, **here are three suggested forms for the procession.** Please look them over and choose how you will use or adapt these suggestions to order the procession for this liturgy. At the recessional, a similar order (in reverse) will be taken...

<u>Form 1:</u>	<u>Form 2:</u>	<u>Form 3:</u>
{Cross Bearer/Altar Server}		
Lector(s)		
Presiding Celebrant	Presiding Celebrant	Presiding Celebrant
Wedding Party Members	Wedding Party Members	Wedding Party Members
Witnesses	Witnesses	Witnesses
Parents of the Groom	Bride & Groom	Mother - Groom – Father
Parents of the Bride		Mother - Bride – Father
Bride & Groom		

Other variations in this spirit are possible, of course. Couples who want this moment to be a deeply meaningful part of the liturgy will keep this spirit in mind when customizing the procession to their wedding party and family.

[Please note that, for couples who choose the option to light a wedding (unity) candle during the liturgy, the side candles would be lit five minutes before the liturgy procession begins. Check out the notes in *Appendix 2: Adding Elements to the Wedding Liturgy, p.13.*]

Will the doors be closed before the bride enters, to give her a grand entrance? No. Anything that separates the bride from the rest of the liturgical procession is out of step with the spirit of the sacrament.

Will the music be changed when the bride enters? No (for the same reason).

So what about the Opening Song?

The introductory rites of Catholic liturgies are there to bring the people together as a community and prepare them to listen to God's word. An opening song combines the voices of those assembled and intensifies the unity of those gathered. Together, we become more conscious of ourselves as a worshipping community, not just individuals! The Church points out the importance of this simple but powerful action.

At wedding liturgies, an instrumental processional can be beautiful and serve to accompany the procession, but, if alone, fails to recognize the role and needs of the assembly. The assembly at a wedding is just as important as at any other liturgy, and there is still the need for an opening song sung by everyone together. You will be asked to choose such a song to be sung either during the procession or immediately after it.

Appendix 2: Adding Elements to the Wedding Liturgy

Wedding Candle, Prayer to the Blessed Mother, Arras, Lazo, Veil, etc.

Additional rituals and symbols, including ethnically derived traditions, may be admitted to the wedding liturgy after discussion with the parish staff as to their appropriate inclusion. These customs are not a part of the Rite of Marriage, may be redundant expressions of the sacramental action, and are not required. These are secondary to the central ritual actions of the wedding liturgy. Any such additions take place in the liturgy **after the blessing and giving of rings**, and before the universal prayer.

Wedding Candle If used, the wedding candle is placed on a candelabra near the sanctuary in a location where it does not interfere with ritual movement and action. St. Mary's has a wedding candelabra available for use at the wedding. Two small, lighted candles, perhaps the baptismal candles, are symbolic of the separate families and histories of the bride and groom. They are commonly used to light central, larger candle that represents their oneness in Christ. (The parish does not provide the candles.) The **side candles** are not extinguished, but left burning, as the families and histories of the couple do not cease to exist because of the marriage. Another meaningful possibility is to use a unity/wedding candle as the beginning prayer of the wedding reception.

For couples who choose the option to light a wedding (unity) candle during the liturgy, the side candles will be lit five minutes before the liturgy procession begins. They may be lit by the sacristan/wedding coordinator, the witnesses, the parents, etc, but no special ceremony is indicated or required for this.

Prayer to the Blessed Mother If both the bride *and* the groom have a genuine devotion to Mary in their prayer life, it is possible for them to say a prayer (together) in front of the image of the Blessed Mother, offering flowers, a lit candle or some other appropriate symbol.

Military Traditions

Although we recognize that an arch of swords or sabers is an act and symbol of loyalty, swords and sabers are not permitted in the church building because of the inherent conflict between Christian love and violence. Therefore, any arch of swords or sabers must take place *outside* after the conclusion of the liturgy.

Appendix 3: Preparing a Printed Program/Order of Service

Some couples may wish to prepare an order of service to be distributed to guests at the wedding liturgy (not a requirement). Upon request, our staff can furnish you with a computer template for a wedding worship aid which you can adapt and change to fit your needs. They are also available to offer suggestions or to proofread your worship aid before you "go to press."

The printed program is **primarily** a gesture of hospitality for those who gather to celebrate the sacrament. This sign might be especially important when a significant number of the assembly will not be familiar with the Roman Catholic liturgy and Rite of Marriage. A secondary function of a printed program is as a record of the event.

So, if you are going to list the **order of service**, of course you want to do it well. Using the notes you receive from the staff of St. Mary's will help you with the liturgical jargon and little details. The same goes for listing **key participants** (leaders, liturgical ministers, witnesses, etc.) – you want to do the best you can to be consistent and helpful. *How* you do that is up to your creativity!

Some general principles: quality counts should be easily readable should show consistency of formatting spelling and grammar count.

There are some things that are *not* set in stone: formal/informal style simple/complex design size shape color.

Following is some guidance to get you started...

Elements You May Wish to Include

Basic, essential details (who, what, where, when) might show up on the front, or at the top of an inside page if the paper to be used includes a pre-printed cover.

An **outline** of the liturgy / order of service should be included to invite and encourage the participation of the assembly. The vocabulary (jargon) of a Catholic liturgy is particular and important, so **samples of the contents** of the two outlines are included here. (NOTE: such an outline would be customized for your particular wedding, and items printed in *italics* would be replaced with the actual information in a finished version.)

The **names** of the parents, the members of the wedding party and others who contribute to this special occasion (lectors, presider, special ministers of Holy Communion, musicians, etc.) are commonly noted after the order of service.

The Wedding Liturgy Outline without Mass

INTRODUCTORY RITE

Procession (please stand)
Opening Song (all sing)
Greeting
Opening Prayer

Music Title (Composer)
Song Title, # in hymnal

LITURGY OF THE WORD (please sit)

Scripture Reading *scripture citation*
Responsorial Psalm # (cantor first, then all sing) *“text of sung response”*
Scripture Reading *scripture citation*
Gospel Acclamation (all stand and sing)
Gospel Reading *scripture citation*
Homily (please sit)

RITE OF MARRIAGE

Questions before the Consent
Consent
Blessing and Giving of Rings
Universal Prayer (please stand)
The Lord's Prayer
Nuptial Blessing
Blessing and Dismissal
Recessional

Music Title (Composer)

The Wedding Liturgy Outline within Mass

INTRODUCTORY RITE

Procession (please stand)	<i>Music Title (Composer)</i>
Opening Song (all sing)	<i>Song Title, # in hymnal</i>
Greeting	
Opening Prayer	

LITURGY OF THE WORD (please sit)

Scripture Reading	<i>scripture citation</i>
Responsorial Psalm (cantor first, then all sing)	<i>“text of sung response”</i>
Scripture Reading	<i>scripture citation</i>
Gospel Acclamation (all stand and sing)	
Gospel Reading	<i>scripture citation</i>
Homily (please sit)	

RITE OF MARRIAGE

Questions before the Consent
Consent
Blessing and Giving of Rings
Universal Prayer (please stand)

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST (please sit)

Preparation of the Gifts	<i>Music Title (Composer)</i>
Preface and Eucharistic Prayer (please stand)	
Holy (all sing)	<i>Title of Mass Setting (Composer)</i>
(please kneel, or be seated)	
Memorial Acclamation (all sing)	
Great Amen (all sing)	
The Lord's Prayer (please stand)	
Nuptial Blessing	
Sign of Peace	
Lamb of God Litany	
Communion (all sing)	<i>Song Title, # in hymnal</i>
Prayer after Communion	

CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal	
Recessional	<i>Music Title (Composer)</i>

Other possible details

Other details you may consider including:

- ❑ The assembly's responses may be included in the appropriate places.
(For example: “*The Lord be with you.*” — “AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT.”)
- ❑ Your new address and phone number.
- ❑ A personal message from you to your guests.
- ❑ The music that will be sung by all may be printed for the assembly to make it easier for them.
When music or lyrics are printed, copyright permission must be secured. The director of music ministries can help you with this task.
- ❑ It is recommended that scripture texts not be printed in their entirety, but merely the citations, perhaps with a summary phrase. (Reading along with the lector places a subtle barrier between the people and God's word proclaimed for our hearing.)

Appendix 4: Obtaining a State of Michigan Wedding License

How To Apply For a Marriage License

Apply on line: For Kent County, please visit:

https://www.accesskent.com/Departments/CountyClerk/marriage_app.htm

The fee to apply online is \$3.

Apply in person at:

Kent County Clerk
County Administration Building, 1st floor
300 Monroe Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2288
Tel.: 616-336-3550

- Before applying, arrange for wedding ceremony and date.
- One applicant must apply in person or online.
- Proof of age is required for both applicants. Bring in a birth certificate, along with driver's license, state ID, or passport at time of application. (Documents must be in English.)
- One applicant must be a resident of Kent or both be non-Michigan residents marrying in Kent. (Proof of address required such as current, valid driver's license.)
- \$20.00 fee for county residents, \$30.00 for Out-of-State applicants.
- 16 - 17 year olds need parental or guardian consent. (One parent must be present with their ID to sign consent form.)
- Note: if ceremony is to be in English, then both parties must understand English.
- Social security numbers required of both parties (**or** legal reason why none).

Picking up the License

- The license may be picked up at the County Clerk's office no sooner than three days after applying, by the applicant.
- The license is good for 33 days from and including the date of application.
- The license may be used in any of Michigan's counties.
- The bottom portion of the marriage license document is the marriage certificate. It is filled out by the presiding magistrate or clergy and signed by him/her, as well as by the two witnesses, and the bride and groom. Witnesses must be 18 years of age or older.
- There are usually three copies of the license/certificate. The presiding celebrant will present one copy to the couple after the marriage ceremony. St. Mary's will mail the other two to the office of the County Clerk.

Appendix 5: Wedding Fees

Updated: October 2013

To help defray costs associated with weddings, our parish has set the following fees:

I. Current Parishioners

At least one member of the wedding couple must be *registered* with our parish under their own name for a minimum of one year, attend Mass here regularly and have demonstrated a consistent pattern of financial and/or volunteer support to this parish to be considered as a “Current Parishioner.”

Fees:

Church Use Fee:	\$350.00 + a donation to the parish
Clergy	parish clergy included (<i>visiting clergy charge a stipend</i>)
Parish Wedding Coordinator:	included
Musician Stipends: *	included (accompanist and cantor) (<i>see our “Music for the Sacrament of Marriage” guidelines</i>)

A deposit of \$100 is required to secure the wedding date for Current Parishioners. The balance is due **one month** prior to the wedding day.

II. Non-Parishioners

If the above conditions have not been met, the following fees apply:

Fees:

Church Use Fee:	\$1,200.00
Clergy	parish clergy included (<i>visiting clergy charge a stipend</i>)
Parish Wedding Coordinator:	included
Musician Stipends: *	included (accompanist and cantor) (<i>see our “Music for the Sacrament of Marriage” guidelines</i>)

A deposit of \$600 is required to secure the wedding date for Non-Parishioners. The balance is due **one month** prior to the wedding date.

III. Other Considerations

At least one member of the engaged couple must be a practicing Catholic in order to have their wedding liturgy celebrated at St. Mary’s Church.

Weddings must be scheduled a minimum of six months prior to the wedding date. We recommend one year or more.

Please refer to page 3 of our wedding guidelines for further information.

* Any musician besides the parish accompanist and cantor will require additional stipends. Estimate \$150 as a minimum per musician for this expense. Music and musicians are chosen in collaboration with the parish Director of Music Ministries.

Appendix 6: Checklist

This list is provided to help you organize the tasks that go into preparing for the wedding day. It is our experience that completing these tasks early allows the final weeks or months before the wedding to be far less stressful.

Eighteen months or more ahead:

- ❑ If either of you (Catholic or not) have ever been married before, contact the parish as far in advance of the proposed wedding date as possible. **Dates cannot be held for couples waiting for a declaration of nullity from the Tribunal confirming their freedom to marry.** *Please refer to the "Reserving the Church" section of these guidelines, p.2.*

Six or more months ahead: (a full year is better!)

- ❑ You should wait to schedule other facilities or services until after your wedding date has been confirmed.
- ❑ Call the parish to request a wedding date and begin the marriage preparation process. We will mail a Wedding Information sheet to you along with other information.
- ❑ Promptly fill out and return the Wedding Information sheet with your deposit so that we may reserve your wedding date for you.
- ❑ Schedule a meeting with our pastor or associate pastor to fill out necessary Church paperwork. At this meeting you will receive a copy of the book United in Christ from the parish office containing guidance for your choices of scripture readings, prayers and other options for your wedding liturgy.
- ❑ If renting the Activities Center, schedule the rental with the parish office as soon as your wedding date has been confirmed.
- ❑ Contact the director of music ministries and schedule a meeting to select music and musicians for the liturgy.

At least five months ahead:

- ❑ Acquire *new* copies of your baptismal records. For Catholics, these must be issued (with notations) within the six months before the wedding date.
- ❑ Choose scripture readings for the wedding liturgy, preferably before meeting with the director of music ministries.
- ❑ Confirm the date and time of the wedding rehearsal with the parish office.
- ❑ Schedule a meeting with the pastor or associate pastor, if necessary, to follow up on any forms/dispensations that may need to be filled out, etc.
- ❑ If necessary, finalize the music and musicians for the wedding liturgy with the director of music ministries.

At least four months ahead:

- ❑ If renting the Activities Center, meet with the parish staff to iron out questions and responsibilities, sign the rental agreement, etc.
- ❑ Choose liturgical ministers for the wedding liturgy (lector(s), ushers; possibly special ministers of the Eucharist, people bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, altar servers, etc.)
- ❑ Participate in an appropriate "Pre-Cana" marriage preparation program and provide confirmation of your participation to the parish office.

At least three months ahead:

- ❑ If applicable, collect the information necessary to create a printed worship aid.

At least two months ahead:

- ❑ Provide a copy of the Photography/Videography page of these guidelines to any photographer or videographer that will be recording your wedding.
(Available from the parish office and at www.stmarygr.org)

- ❑ Provide a copy of the Decoration Suggestions and Restrictions page of these guidelines to anyone who is preparing flowers or decorations for your wedding.
(Available from the parish office and at www.stmarygr.org.)
- ❑ Decide on the details of the wedding procession with the assistance of our parish pastoral staff.
- ❑ If you will be printing a worship aid/order of service/program for the wedding, finalize and proofread the details, names, spellings, and layout.

At least one month ahead:

- ❑ Be certain all paperwork and choices for the liturgy have been received by the parish office.
- ❑ Pay any remaining balance of the wedding fees to the parish office.
- ❑ If applicable, arrange for the program to be printed at least a week before the wedding.
- ❑ Discuss the rehearsal time and date with all people who have special roles in the wedding liturgy [ushers, groomsmen, bridesmaids, witnesses, readers/lectors, special ministers of Holy Communion, assistants (M/M of ceremony), people bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, altar servers, etc. Musicians are not involved in the wedding rehearsal.]

Within the last month:

- ❑ Turn in any remaining wedding fee balance to the parish office no later than three weeks before the wedding.
- ❑ Obtain the State of Michigan marriage license within 33 days of the wedding date.
- ❑ Remind any photographers or florists that the building will not be open sooner than 2½ hours before the wedding, and to plan accordingly!
- ❑ Remind the following to all be at the rehearsal: witnesses, all men & women of the wedding party, ushers, assistants and any liturgical ministers (readers, gift bearers, ministers of Holy Communion).
- ❑ At least one week before the wedding, turn in the marriage license and payments for the wedding liturgy musicians to the parish office.

Resources:

The following resources were used in the creation of these guidelines. Some of them may be of interest for your further reading.

- Celebrating Marriage: Preparing the Wedding Liturgy — a Workbook for Engaged Couples*, third edition, revised, Paul Covino, ed., Pastoral Press, Portland, OR, 2011.
- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Second Vatican Council, 1963.
- Don y Promesa: Costumbres y Tradiciones en los Ritos Matrimoniales Hispanos*, segunda edición, Instituto de Liturgia Hispana y Oregon Catholic Press, 2005.
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Congregation for Divine Worship, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002.
- Guidelines for the Liturgical Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage*, Province of Michigan, 1999, esp. p.4.
- Lectionary (Introduction)*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- Order of Celebrating Matrimony, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016.***
- Parish Weddings*, Austin Fleming, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, Illinois, 1987.
- Preaching About the Mass*, Gabe Huck, Liturgy Training Publications, Archdiocese of Chicago, 1992.
- Rite of Marriage*, Congregation for Divine Worship, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1969.
- Sacramental Handbook*, Diocese of Grand Rapids, 2001.
- Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007.
- Together for Life* (fifth edition), Joseph Champlin, Ave Maria Press, 2012.
- United in Christ: Preparing the Liturgy of the Word at Catholic Weddings, Liturgy Training Publications, 2016.***
- Wedding policies of the Diocese of San Diego, Texas, 2000.
- Wedding policies of Holy Family Parish, Sparta, 2002.
- Wedding policies of St. Anthony Parish, Grand Rapids.
- Wedding policies of St. Clement Church, Chicago, Illinois.
- Wedding policies of St. James Parish, Grand Rapids.
- Wedding policies of St. Patrick Church, Troy, Ohio.

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