

St. Joseph Catholic Church
12675 Center Road
Traverse City, Michigan 49686
231-421-7310
www.stjosephchurchtc.org

MARRIAGE POLICIES / 2025-2026

We are happy that you are coming to our Church as you plan your wedding. As a community of faith, we treasure the family founded in Christian marriage as the fundamental building block of our Church. Bringing God into your life by way of a sacramental wedding is a great way to start. We are looking forward to working with you as you approach your wedding and helping bring God into your special day.

While we rejoice at each marriage that begins in our Church, marriage ceremonies in any Catholic Parish sometimes are a challenge. The Pastor, Pastoral Team and Parishioners try to prevent those challenges by forming regulations to minimize the impact on other activities in the Parish on the day of the wedding. Often more than one wedding may be planned in one day in addition to our normal Sacrament of Reconciliation at 3:45PM on Saturday and Saturday evening Mass at 5:00PM. Regulations help the couple be attentive to other events happening in the Parish on their wedding day. More importantly, regulations help couples emphasize the sacredness of a wedding in a Catholic Church. Sometimes wedding planners desire to move furniture about the sanctuary or allow a photographer in the Sanctuary space. Sometimes people wish to add flowers or candles inappropriate for placement on the Altar. Some even bring food or beverage into the Church. In effect, some mistake the Church for a reception hall. These regulations are aimed at avoiding any of these problems.

Basic Information Required: Often, the prospective bride, groom or one of the parents will call the Church Office and ask that a wedding be scheduled. We are pleased to do that when:

1. The prospective bride and/or groom are registered members of St. Joseph Parish, or the parent(s) of the bride or groom are registered members of the Parish, or
2. Non-Parishioners--Because of the limited availability of our Priest and the limited administrative resources available within our Parish Office, all marriage ceremonies of non-parishioners are subject to approval by the Pastor. If the request is approved, all preparation for marriage must be completed in the Parish of the Catholic party, in accordance with Diocese of Gaylord policy. That Parish will then submit the completed Marriage file through their Diocese, for transmission to the Diocese of Gaylord on behalf of St. Joseph Parish.

To schedule a wedding, the following information must be submitted:

1. Names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of prospective bride, groom and parents.

2. For prospective bride and groom, date and place of Baptism; if applicable, state which party is not baptized.
3. Preferred date and time of the wedding and rehearsal.
4. Plans for music and organist. All plans for music need to go through the Parish Music Director, David Freundl, at music@stjosephtc.org. Only proper music for church is allowed. Outside musicians and cantors are allowed with the approval of the Parish Music Director.
5. Disclosure of previous marriages and/or annulments; disclosure of any impediments to a valid Catholic marriage, including annulments in process. We will require a certified copy of any decree of dissolution or nullity, as well as any restrictions on future marriages.
6. For non-Parishioner, the name and address of their current Parish.
7. An acknowledgement that marriage preparation (including pre-Cana and FOCCUS Questionnaire) must be completed at least a month in advance of the planned wedding date. For a marriage involving a non-Catholic party, the preparation must be completed a minimum of 2 months before the wedding date.

Marriage Planning & Documents Needed: We must follow Canon Law, the guidelines established by our Bishop and regulations established by our Pastor and Pastoral Council.

Some important rules to follow:

1. Six months advance notice to the Parish Office.
2. Three meetings with the Priest during the preparation period.
3. Submission of all documents (including, but not limited to, Baptismal Certificates (issued within 6 months of wedding date), Certificate of Completion of the Pre-Marriage program, and Pre-Marriage questionnaire) at least 4 weeks before the wedding date (or 2 months for marriages involving a non-Catholic).
4. Disclosure and resolution of any impediments to a Catholic marriage, including disclosure of previous marriage(s) and status of any annulment proceedings.
5. Completion of a compatibility profile (Pre-Marriage or FOCCUS questionnaire) to build a stronger foundation for the marriage.
6. Completion of a Pre-Marriage Program such as Pre-Cana offered in most Dioceses of the country. The preparation may be done locally or elsewhere. A certificate of attendance is required as part of our pre-wedding documentation.
7. Obtain two (2) copies of Marriage License valid in the state of Michigan to be submitted to the office one week before the wedding; for residents, this license can be obtained at any Michigan County Clerk's office within 30 days of the wedding date. For non-residents, the license must be obtained from the Grand Traverse County Clerk. Please visit the Grand Traverse County Clerk's website for more information and to apply on-line.
8. A wedding ceremony (with or without Mass) cannot be scheduled after 2:00PM on Saturday and marriage with Mass cannot be held on Sunday or a Holy day.

Rehearsal: Usually a rehearsal is scheduled for the evening prior to your wedding. Once you agree to a definite time with the Parish Office, keep the schedule. The Priest will have set aside

the time and arranged other responsibilities to make time for your rehearsal. The rehearsal should be serious work to make the wedding day go smoothly. Remind your attendants (bridesmaids/groomsmen) about proper behavior. Again, please no food or beverage in the church. Immediately after the wedding, the Priest and witnesses will add their signatures to complete preparation of the license for filing.

Stipends: The Stipend is intended to offset the actual expenses incurred by the Parish:

- a. **Parishioners:** - \$250.00. **Must be a registered, active Parishioner faithfully supporting the Parish** (Children of Parishioners are classified as Parishioners. Grandchildren or other relatives of Parishioners are not classified as Parishioners).
- b. **Non-Parishioners:** - \$3,000.00. **If the couple arranges for a visiting Priest or Deacon to officiate at the marriage, they are responsible for any additional stipends paid directly to them.**

The check should be payable to St. Joseph Church. A payment of \$500.00 is requested at the time that the wedding is scheduled with the Church Office. The balance is due 60 days prior to the wedding date.

There is substantial work required of the Parish Staff in preparing for your wedding. The fee for non-Parishioners recognizes that they do not have the opportunity to support the Parish through the Offertory Collection and, thereby, helps offset the direct costs of the Parish.

Other Expenses:

Organist and/or Musicians. The cost for music is separate from all other wedding expenses. The Parish Music Director is available as an option. For fee schedule contact the Parish Music Director, David Freundel at music@stjosephhc.org. If using outside musicians, they must be approved by the Parish Music Director and contracted separately by the couple.

The **Priest.** A donation is suggested for the Priest/Deacon who officiates the wedding. A suggested minimum donation for the Priest is \$150. This check should be written directly to the Priest who will Officiate.

Mass or no Mass: We encourage marriage within the context of a Mass for all weddings taking place between two Catholics. With that said, the Sacrament is still complete and valid outside of the context of Mass.

If either the bride or groom is not Catholic, it is suggested to not ask for a Mass. The ceremony without a Mass is still complete with the same hymns, sacramental prayers, vows and devotional symbols. It is a full sacrament and can be celebrated without Mass, as are other sacraments, such as Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation.

Unlocking of Buildings: The Parish Office is open daily from 9:00AM to 5:00PM. The Church is usually unlocked on Saturday at 9:00AM. If access is needed outside these hours, please call the Parish Office.

Alcohol Policy: We do not allow the consumption of alcohol on Parish property. Please respect the sanctity of the Church and your wedding by observing our Policy on alcohol. If bridal party members are intoxicated or smell of alcohol they are out of the wedding. If either the bride or groom smell of alcohol, the wedding will be called off. There will be no exceptions.

Flowers: The Parish Office can suggest local florists, if requested. Please inform the Parish Office of any deliveries on the day of the wedding, so we can avoid a conflict with another wedding or funeral on your day. Flowers should NEVER be placed on the ALTAR or ISLEWAY. We have pedestals to use for displaying flowers. We would be most appreciative if you leave some flowers on the side altars for everyone to enjoy during our Masses for the weekend.

Cleanup: Your fee for use of the Church does not include cleanup. Our Parish is too small to afford custodial care and volunteers to do this. The Church will be clean before your use and must be clean when you are finished. There is an evening Mass following the wedding. Please remove any wedding booklets/programs, so they are not left in the pews. You may leave flowers for the Sanctuary area but should check with the Parish Office in advance to avoid conflicts with other plans for flowers. If you drop flower pedals, tissue or any other material, please have someone appointed to take debris for appropriate disposal. No glitter please! The throwing of rice, confetti or birdseed is not allowed. We recommend using hand-held bubbles if you want something festive as you leave the church.

Marriage License: As mentioned above, bring your marriage license to the Parish Office one week prior to the wedding. The Priest will fill it out before the wedding ceremony. It will be signed during or after the wedding ceremony by the Priest and witnesses to make the document ready for filing. We will mail the signed original to the County Clerk who issued the License. You should also keep a signed copy.

Photographer/Videographer: Please respect our sacred space and the holy sacrament of marriage. If you are having a photographer/videographer, they MUST check in with Father prior to the wedding.

Invitations: If you wish to invite the Priest to your reception, please extend the invitation well in advance so he can let you know whether he is or is not able to attend. The Priest may attend a wedding reception if it does not conflict with other events on his schedule.

Timeliness: We know that it is difficult to start a program on time. Please be courteous to Father and be ready to start the ceremony on time. You must arrive at the Church no less than 15 minutes before the wedding. Please remember that he will have confessions and an evening Mass to celebrate after your event.

Preparation Rooms: A special “bride” room has been set up for the bride and her attendants to prepare for the wedding. The groomsmen may use the church conference room.

Live Stream: Our parish has live-stream video capability for your ceremony. You may view live on our website at www.stjosephctc.org. The video will be available on the website for 30 days after the wedding.

Parking: You may use our parking lot during the ceremony. Because, however, we have a small parking lot and there will likely be a Church service immediately following your ceremony, please ask your guests not to leave cars in the parking lot after the ceremony.

Marriage Ceremony Approval: Any additions/alterations to the standard marriage ceremony must be discussed in advance and approved by the Pastor (regardless of who is performing the ceremony.) Many common wedding traditions, such as a unity candle, are not allowed in a Catholic ceremony.

Please call us or send an email if we can help. We are here to help you have a beautiful wedding day.

St. Joseph Parish

Rev. Ben Rexroat
Pastor

Print Name _____

Sign _____

Date _____

Print Name _____

Sign _____

Date _____

January 8, 2025