



Dear Bride and Groom,

Congratulations on your engagement! It is in God's designs that you are called to marriage. Holy Matrimony is a vocation (a calling) from God and He is calling you to follow Him in a special way!

On the day of your wedding, you will give public witness of your love for each other and your willingness to freely, fully, and faithfully give of yourselves for the rest of your lives. God abundantly blesses your love, and through the Sacrament will give you every grace necessary to love each other more perfectly day by day.

In the midst of your planning, please remember that your wedding will last a day, but your marriage is for the rest of your lives. This booklet is designed to help you with the information needed for the preparation of not just your wedding day, but for Holy Matrimony. Then, when the happy day arrives, you will have laid a solid foundation for the many years you will spend together; years that will be filled with joy and prosperity, and years that will finally give way to an eternity of joy and blessedness.

In the time until your wedding day, may the Lord Jesus, who himself was a guest at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-11), continue to bless and deepen your love and commitment to each other.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,  
Rev. Matthew R. Rader  
Pastor



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## Introduction

Sacred Scripture begins with the creation and union of man and woman and ends with "the wedding feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7, 9). Scripture often refers to marriage, its origin and purpose, the meaning God gave to it, and its renewal in the covenant made by Jesus with his Church. Man and woman were created for each other.

By their marriage, the couple witnesses Christ's spousal love for the Church. One of the Nuptial Blessings in the liturgical celebration of marriage refers to this in saying, "Father, you have made the union of man and wife so holy a mystery that it symbolizes the marriage of Christ and his Church."

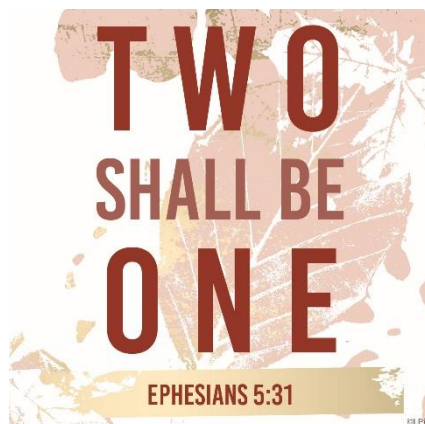
The Sacrament of Marriage is a covenant, which is more than a contract. Covenant always expresses a relationship between persons. The marriage covenant refers to the relationship between the husband and wife, a permanent union of persons capable of knowing and loving each other and God. The celebration of marriage is also a liturgical act, appropriately held in a public liturgy at church. Catholics are urged to celebrate their marriage within the Eucharistic Liturgy when both bride and groom are Catholic.

~from the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*

### Prayer

*"Blessed are you, O God of our fathers;  
praised be your name forever and ever!  
Let the heavens and all your creation praise you forever.  
You made Adam, and you gave him his wife Eve  
to be his help and support;  
and from these two the human race descended.  
You said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone;  
let us make him a partner like himself.'  
Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine  
not because of lust,  
but for a noble purpose.  
Call down your mercy on me and on her,  
and allow us to live together to a happy old age  
Amen, amen."*

**Tobit 8:5-7**



## Getting Started

### Making Arrangements

We are delighted that you have decided to get married and are interested in having your wedding here at St. Mary, Help of Christians Catholic Church. Please call the parish office at 419-447-2087 to schedule an appointment to begin the process. Please do not schedule your reception venue prior to your meeting with the Parish Priest. There is a minimum six (6) month preparation period; however, a longer preparation period is preferred.

### Wedding Times

Weddings are usually scheduled at 1:30pm on Saturday.

Friday afternoon/evening weddings are permitted at either 3:00pm or 5:00pm.

Requests for other times must be discussed with and approved by the pastor.

### Special Circumstances

No Catholic will be denied the Sacrament of Marriage; however, there are some special circumstances which may necessitate delaying the wedding for a time. No Catholic will be denied the Sacrament of Marriage.

#### Previous Marriage

Any previous marriage that either party was involved in will require a Declaration of Freedom to Marry and may require a Declaration of Nullity (commonly called an “annulment”). Please advise the priest or parish personnel immediately of any previous marriages, regardless of where or when they were celebrated. We are absolutely forbidden from setting a wedding date until these proceedings are completed in their entirety.

#### Pregnancy

We rejoice in the gift of life and your desire to raise your child in the stability of a home founded upon the permanent sacramental union of mom and dad. If you are pregnant at the time of scheduling the wedding, the wedding date will be set for after baby’s arrival. Previously scheduled weddings may not be moved forward; however, delaying the wedding until after baby’s arrival should be considered in consultation with the priest.

#### Completion of Sacraments of Initiation

Formation for the Sacrament of Marriage is a fitting time to also consider completing Sacraments of Initiation for those Catholics who have not received Holy Communion and/or Confirmation or even of Non-Catholics to seek Baptism or Full Reception into the Catholic Church. Sacraments of Initiation are typically celebrated in the spring. It would be appropriate to schedule the wedding for after the reception of these Sacraments. Preparation for both Marriage and Sacraments of Initiation can happen at the same time.



### Celebrant for the Wedding

Generally, the pastor, parochial vicar or deacon of St. Mary Parish will be the celebrant for your wedding. However, we warmly welcome visiting priests or deacons to celebrate your wedding, with the permission of the pastor of St. Mary. The priest or deacon whom you select to celebrate your wedding is responsible for completing the preparation requirements with you.

If a visiting priest or deacon is from outside the Diocese of Toledo, he must submit a letter of suitability from his own diocese or religious community to the Chancellor of the Diocese of Toledo. If he is from outside the state of Ohio, he will need to obtain an Ohio Ministerial License from the office of the Ohio Secretary of State.

### Marriage Formation Program

We joyfully look forward to your wedding day and the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony with you. But before we get to that day, we want to focus on preparing you for living out a happy, healthy, and holy marriage every day after the wedding. The Marriage Formation Program is how we achieve this goal.

#### Active Discipleship

A life of active discipleship – a dedication to learning and living the Christian life – is essential to a happy, healthy, and holy marriage. Therefore, the first step in any Marriage Formation Program is growth in discipleship. Daily prayer, weekly Mass (Saturday Vigil or Sunday), and regular reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist are the basis of active discipleship. If these practices are inconsistent, now is the time to commit to growth. As Venerable Patrick Peyton once noted, “A family that prays together, stays together.”

#### Formation Sessions

Formation sessions are facilitated with the minister who is scheduled to celebrate your wedding. Sessions are scheduled based on the mutual availability of the minister and the couple’s schedule and occur every 4-6 weeks. Topics to be covered include but are not limited to:

- Initial interview and getting to know each other;
- Relationship inventory review;
- Biblical, theological, and spiritual foundations of marriage;
- Children and sexuality within marriage;
- Communication and conflict;
- Practical tips for a thriving marriage.

#### Engaged Couples Retreat

The Diocese of Toledo requires that all couples complete an Engaged Couples retreat. There are multiple options for this retreat, from 2-day retreats sponsored by the Diocese to local 1-day retreats sponsored by St. Mary and St. Joseph Parishes. Local retreats rotate between St. Mary and St. Joseph and begin with the mid-morning Mass at the hosting parish. Retreats occur:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of March
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of July
- Sunday before Thanksgiving

## Natural Family Planning

Openness to children is essential to the valid celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. The Catholic Church teaches that contraception is immoral and contrary to Christian Marriage. Natural Family Planning (NFP) is fertility awareness, or knowledge of a couple's fertility. It is a means of reading the body's signs of fertility and infertility; the correct application of this knowledge is over 99% effective when seeking to achieve or postpone pregnancy. A married couple's virtuous application of this knowledge, either to try to achieve a pregnancy or to postpone a pregnancy, is called responsible parenthood. Completion of a training program, either in person or online is required.

## Parish Customs and Expectations Surrounding the Wedding Ceremony

You've been dreaming of your big day most of your life (well, at least the bride has) – and we know you have questions. The following section will help you understand customs and expectations at St. Mary Parish.

### Decoration

The church is available for decorating two hours before the wedding, or after the rehearsal providing there is no morning Mass, funeral, or other scheduled event. Please consult with the wedding coordinator to confirm the availability of the church.

#### Permitted decorations

You and/or your florist are responsible for placing AND removing decorations for your wedding ceremony. Flowers (both real or artificial) are to be delivered to the Sandusky St. entrance of the church. Floral arrangements are allowed on top of the high altar only, or in front of the altar of sacrifice and/or ambo. When placed in the sanctuary, flowers must not obstruct the view or actions of any of the ministers. Following your ceremony, you may take any floral arrangements with you, or you may choose to leave them in church for the parish to enjoy at the weekend Masses.

Any decorations attached to the pews must be affixed using ribbon or elastic bands. Tape, glue, adhesives, and screws are not permitted.

#### Non-permitted decorations

Church décor should never distract from the primary action at the altar. For this reason, arches, arbors, and canopies are not permitted. No candelabra or pew-end torches are allowed in the church. Only the candles present in the sanctuary will be used for the wedding ceremony. For safety reasons, no aisle runners please. No flower petals, bird seed, or confetti can be thrown either inside or outside the church.

### Clean up

The family is responsible for removing all decorations except flowers being left for parish use. Pews should be cleared of all programs, worship aids, or other debris following the ceremony. All boxes, bags, or containers are to be properly thrown away. Please leave the church building as clean or cleaner than you found it. All clean-up is to be completed no later than 3:30 pm on Saturdays, or 45 minutes after the conclusion of the ceremony.

## Photography and Videography

Photographers and videographers capture important memories of your wedding day; therefore, they should be chosen with care. St. Mary Church is set up with cameras to live-stream and/or record your wedding upon request without need of an outside videographer. To all hired photographers and videographers, it is your responsibility to communicate the following rules:

- Pictures scheduled before the ceremony are to be completed 30 minutes prior.
- Only one photographer and/or one videographer are permitted on the ground floor during the ceremony. Any additional personnel are to be stationed in the balcony.
- Photographers and videographers are expected to be discrete and judicious so as not to distract from the liturgy.
- Flash photography is limited to the entrance procession and recessional only; i.e., once the bride has reached the altar and until bride and groom depart from the altar, no flash is permitted.
- During the entrance procession, the photographer and videographer may position themselves in front of the pews at the center aisle but are not to enter the aisle. They must not stand between the altar and anyone walking to the altar.
- Once the ceremony has begun, photographers/videographers must remain behind the pews under the balcony, or along the side walls. If along the side walls, the break between pews is the furthest extent from the back allowed.

## Wedding Attire

The celebration of marriage is a sacred ceremony in the house of God. Modesty is expected of all in attendance so as not to offend the sacredness of the ceremony. We ask that strapless, low-cut necklines, and/or backless dresses be avoided or accompanied by a shawl.

Slacks and a collared shirt are expected for gentlemen, ties preferred.

## Dressing Room

A dressing room is provided for the bride and ladies of the bridal party located in the lower level of the church. There is no separate dressing room available for the gentlemen inside the church, if a room is necessary, please inquire for options. Light food and drink are permitted in the bride's dressing room as long as the area is left clean afterward.

## Bridal Party

The Catholic Church requires only two (2) official witnesses in addition to the celebrant. The Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor are the official witnesses who will sign the parish marriage record. The remainder of the bridal party should be modest in its size. Other questions regarding the bridal party may be directed to the celebrant or pastor.

## Flower Girls and Ring Bearers

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers are not required. When they are involved, please consider carefully whether their participation will add to or detract from the joyful solemnity of the liturgy. Participation of children under 4 years of age is discouraged unless they are able to walk on their own while being accompanied and guided by a child of at least 6 years of age. Infants and toddlers (especially children of those in the bridal party) are welcome to be carried in their parents' arms only. No carts or wagons are permitted. No signs are to be carried or worn; no flower petals, real or fake, are to be dropped.



## Wedding Coordinator

St. Mary Parish provides our own wedding coordinator to assist you with the church related details of your wedding. She is familiar with all the customs and expectations of St. Mary Parish and will be a valuable helper on your wedding day. Her services are provided by the fee paid to the church. **Outside wedding planners are not in charge of any aspect of the wedding rehearsal or ceremony.**

## Altar Servers

The parish will supply two altar servers for a wedding within Mass or one server for a wedding outside of Mass. If there is someone special you would like to serve, please inform the priest. Servers who are not from St. Mary Parish are expected to be present at the rehearsal to be trained by the priest. It is a common courtesy to give each server a gratuity, a gift of \$20 is appropriate.

## Lectors

In selecting someone to read at your wedding, please keep in mind that the person who fulfills this liturgical role will be proclaiming the Word of God. A Catholic who is already a trained Lector is preferable – the parish can provide upon request. It is permitted to have another Catholic, or indeed a baptized individual from another Christian denomination, fulfill this role. These individuals are expected to be present at the rehearsal to be trained in the proper protocol of the Catholic ritual and St. Mary practice.

## Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

If your wedding will include the celebration of the Eucharist, there may be a need for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. Family or friends who are commissioned EMHC in their own parishes may fill this role during the wedding, or the parish can provide upon request. Please discuss this matter with the priest when planning the Mass.

## Liturgical Matters

### Which Form of Celebration?

Within the Catholic Church, there are three (3) forms of Celebrating Matrimony: within Mass, without Mass, and between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian.

- For marriage between two Catholics, the Church recommends the Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass.
- For marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic Christian, we will use the Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass.
- For marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person, the Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian will be used.

## Principles of Planning the Wedding Ceremony

Since the wedding liturgy is a celebration of a Sacrament, it must follow the Liturgical expectations as established by the Roman Catholic Church. All readings are chosen from Sacred Scripture and indicated by the Church for the Order of Celebrating Matrimony. Music must reflect the sacramental and liturgical nature of the celebration.



## Music and Musicians

Music is an integral part of Catholic Liturgy and Worship and will add intrinsic beauty to your wedding celebration. As there are certain requirements regarding music within Catholic Worship, the parish music director is given priority for playing at all weddings celebrated within the parish. Our parish music director is trained in Catholic Worship, knows our worship space, instruments, sound system, as well as the practices of St. Mary Parish and parish priests. You may choose to include other musicians to work in conjunction with, or in some cases, in place of our music director. All guest musicians and music selections must be approved by the parish music director. Please schedule an appointment with the music director six to eight weeks prior to your wedding.

## Optional Additions to the Liturgical Rite

In addition to the prescribed ritual actions of the Order of Celebrating Matrimony, there are optional customs which are permitted.

- Hispanic custom of handing on *Arras* and placement of the *Lazo*
- Giving flowers to parents during the *Sign of Peace*
- Entrusting of your Marriage to the Blessed Virgin Mary by way of an offering of flowers

Lighting of a Unity Candle or the mingling of different colored sand are not permitted within the Wedding Ceremony.

## Logistical Matters

### Monetary Offerings

#### Wedding and Rehearsal

The Church does not charge for the celebration of the Sacraments. The “Church Fee” is requested to reserve the church building for your exclusive use. The fee covers: use of the church for a 1-hour rehearsal, 3 hours on your wedding day, office support throughout your preparation, the stipend for the wedding coordinator, and any custodial staff requirements. This fee is **\$200**. A \$50 non-refundable deposit is due when the wedding date is approved and is required to hold the wedding date. The balance is due 1 month prior to the wedding. Church Fee payment should be made payable to St. Mary Church.

#### Minister Stipends and Gifts

- Parish Priest or Deacon: An additional stipend is not required for a priest or deacon assigned to St. Mary Parish. Any gift is at your discretion.
- Visiting Priest or Deacon: a \$150 stipend plus travel and lodging expenses (current mileage rates may be obtained from the parish office)
- Parish Music Director/Organist: \$150 stipend made payable to the music director one month prior to the wedding
- Other musicians: paid directly as per their rates
- Servers: a gift of \$20 per server is appropriate

## Worship Aids and Programs

A printed worship aid, when properly prepared, encourages the active participation in the spoken and sung prayers of the service and helps those who are unfamiliar with the Catholic Liturgy to understand its basic structure. A worship aid also provides a thoughtful remembrance of the occasion. Sample programs can be obtained upon request.

## Required Documents

As part of marriage preparation, the following documents will need to be provided by each couple.

### Certificate of Baptism

A recently issued (within 6 months) certificate of baptism is required of all Catholics. St. Mary Parish will obtain this certificate for you. At your first meeting with the pastor, you will need to provide your baptismal information. At a minimum, this includes the name of the parish and the city where you were baptized.

Non-Catholics who are baptized also need to obtain a letter or certificate from the church where they were baptized.

### Marriage License

A Civil Marriage License is necessary to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage within the Catholic Church. This is to be obtained from the Probate Court for the county in which both or either of you presently reside. This license is valid for 60 days. Please submit the marriage license to the parish office no later than one week prior to the wedding. The priest or deacon must have the license before witnessing the marriage.

In Seneca County: Effective December 1, 2020, an appointment is necessary to apply for a Marriage License. Applicants must call the Probate Court at 419-447-3121 between the hours of 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday to schedule an appointment to obtain their Marriage License. The probate court is located at 103 E. Market St. Tiffin, OH 44883. Effective January 1, 2023, the cost of a Marriage License is \$70.00. More information can be found at <http://www.senecajpcourt.com/prbMarriage.php>

## Parish Customs and Rules

- St. Mary Parish is a smoke free facility. NO SMOKING OR VAPING is permitted anywhere in the building or near the entrances.
- ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES are **not** permitted in the church building or on parish property during a wedding or wedding rehearsal.
- Because of safety concerns, flower petals (real or synthetic) are not to be strewn in the aisle; carpet runners, rice, birdseed and sparklers are also prohibited.
- Bubbles and/or small bells may be used outside.



## Last Minute Reminders for Your Wedding

### The Week Before

- Submit your **civil marriage license** to the parish office. Please bring everything you received from county clerk (including any return envelopes).
- **Remember to pray!** Pray for yourself and for your fiancé! Pray every day!
- **Reflect on the readings you have chosen for your wedding day.** You may be too nervous to hear them well during the ceremony. Familiarize yourself with them beforehand to make the Word of God even more meaningful for your wedding day.
- **Take a close look at your wedding vows.** Pray through the words of your wedding vows and the questions of intent that you will be asked on your wedding day. These may be the most important questions you will ever answer, and the vows *will be the most important words you'll ever say!*
- **Consider going to Confession.** Catholics are strongly encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance (Confession) prior to celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony. You may do this at St. Mary or at any Catholic parish, either at the regularly appointed times or by making an individual appointment with any Catholic priest. If you would like, you may arrange with the priest celebrating your wedding to be available either before or after the rehearsal.

### The Rehearsal

- Your rehearsal will be on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.
- Please ensure everyone necessary arrives 15 minutes before the scheduled start.
- Please keep in mind the abiding Presence of Jesus Christ in the tabernacles and maintain a spirit of reverence inside the church.

### The Wedding Day

- No alcohol or controlling substances for the bride or groom before the ceremony on your wedding day! Both bride and groom must be completely sober. If either are found to be under the influence of alcohol or a controlling substance, the wedding will be postponed to a later date.  
Any member of the wedding party who is under the influence will not be permitted to participate in the ceremony.  
No alcohol is permitted on the parish property before or after the ceremony.
- **You've made it to your wedding day! Relax and soak in the beauty, joy and love of this day.**



## Important Contacts

Tiffany Fry – Parish Office Manager

Phone: 419-447-2087

Email: [tfry@stmarychurch.com](mailto:tfry@stmarychurch.com)

Janie Oddo – Wedding Coordinator

Phone: 567-207-8072

Tom Fretz – Director of Music and Liturgy

Phone: 419-934-0714

Email: [liturgy@stmarychurch.com](mailto:liturgy@stmarychurch.com)

Rev. Matthew R. Rader – Pastor

Phone: 419-447-2087

Email: [frmrader@stmarychurch.com](mailto:frmrader@stmarychurch.com)

## Notes