

**ST. MARY'S CHURCH
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Dear Engaged Couple,

These Marriage Guidelines have been compiled by the Pastor, Deacons and Music Ministries at St. Mary's Parish, with the hope of making your wedding preparations easier. The following information should answer "**the most asked questions**" and be a time saver for both you and your wedding party.

Best wishes,

- Rev. Christopher J. Waitekus, Pastor
- Deacon Donald Higby

PLEASE KNOW THAT BOTH PARTIES, CATHOLIC OR NOT CATHOLIC, MUST BE FREE TO MARRY PRIOR TO THE ST. MARY'S SECRETARY BOOKING ANY WEDDING. IF AN ANNULMENT IS PENDING, NO WEDDING DATE CAN BE BOOKED UNTIL THE ANNULMENT IS FORMALLY GRANTED AND THE ANNULMENT PAPERWORK IS RECEIVED BY ST. MARY'S PASTOR. NO EXCEPTIONS.

1. **ELIGIBILITY:** To be considered "eligible" to be married in our Parish Church, the prospective bride or groom *should* be a registered member of St. Mary's Parish or some Catholic parish in the country. (If you have questions about this, please speak to Father C.J.) The couple should contact the Pastor at least one year in advance of the wedding. The church date must be set **FIRST – BEFORE making any other arrangements.** This way the church date is secure, and this eliminates conflicts for everyone involved. If you're bringing in a priest or deacon from **outside Massachusetts**, please read #19 at the end of this document for instructions re: civil permission in the state of MA.
2. **THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE:** Ideally, couples should be practicing Catholics. If yours is an inter-faith marriage, the religion of the other person is **greatly respected.** When two Catholics marry, the Sacrament of Marriage is usually celebrated within a Mass. In the case of an inter-faith marriage, the Mass is optional. There is a difference between a Nuptial Mass and a Nuptial Service, so let me explain this in detail. In the Roman Catholic Church, a **Nuptial Mass** is normally celebrated and within the Nuptial Mass the wedding vows are exchanged. In a **Nuptial Service**, which is often celebrated between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the wedding vows are also exchanged but the celebration of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is omitted. The Nuptial Mass and the Nuptial Service are ***BOTH A CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE.*** In our Catholic

tradition, however, because the Eucharist is so central to our faith, it is highly encouraged that you exchange your vows within a Nuptial Mass. Please speak to the Priest or deacon about your choice in this matter.

3. **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:** First, the couple needs to fill out a PRE-MARITAL INVESTIGATION FORM with the priest or deacon. A Catholic needs copies of his/her Baptismal, First Communion and Confirmation records, **DATED WITHIN THE LAST SIX (6) MONTHS**. If the prospective bride or groom was not baptized at St. Mary's parish, a baptismal certificate with the **full address of the church** must be given to the priest or deacon celebrating the marriage. Normally, a Catholic getting married has already made the Sacrament of Confirmation. If you are a Catholic and have ***not*** made your Confirmation, please speak to the priest or deacon, and perhaps consider joining our next class of adults who will be making their Confirmation in the spring – we'd love to have you join us and complete your Sacraments of Initiation. Please ask the priest or deacon about this. A non-Catholic needs a copy of his/her Birth Certificate and Baptismal record if available.
4. **PRE-CANA:** Pre-Cana or some other MARRIAGE PREPARATION OPPORTUNITY (for example: Heart-to-Heart, Engaged Encounter Weekend, etc.), is **REQUIRED BY THIS DIOCESE**. Please ask the priest or deacon about pre-Cana in this area of the Diocese. Following the Pre-Cana session of your choice, you will receive a Certificate of Attendance and this needs to be given to the priest or deacon by the couple, to add to your file. St. Mary's offers classes about three times a year. If you're living in another area or out of state or country, you're welcome to do a pre-cana session near your home. There are also online class options including classes through The Marriage Group- <https://themarriagegroup.com/>, which are endorsed by Catholic churches nationwide.
5. **PRE-MARITAL INVENTORY (PMI):** Every couple is required by the Diocese to take the PMI Profile. This will be explained to you by the priest or deacon. The PMI is designed to help you examine your thoughts and expectations about entering into marriage. **THIS IS NOT A TEST!** You cannot pass or fail it! This premarital inventory is a 30–45-minute online survey for couples. Designed by relationship experts, it helps you discover your relationship's unique strengths, identify areas where you can grow together and gain insights based on scientific research.
6. The cost is \$65 per couple. Here's the link to take the profile: <https://catholicmarriageprep.com/courses/premarital-inventory/> Select Option One. After completing the inventory, your results are emailed back to you. You can then forward those results to Father C.J. at parishoffice@stmarylong.org. All answers are confidential. After he reviews it, you will all set up a meeting to discuss everything.
7. **MUSIC:** The couple is responsible for making **all the arrangements for the music**. Music, of course, is extremely important for any wedding and it is expected that your church music provides an air of "sanctity" and "mutual love" to your very special day. **All couples must contact our Music Director, Dr. Michael Carney 413-687-5897, email: mikecarneymusic@gmail.com** He will meet with you to consult in your selection of music. His fee is \$300, which includes consultation, correspondence and wedding ceremony. Michael can help you create a printable wedding program for an additional \$50 fee. Please provide a check *made out to him* **two weeks prior to your wedding or when you send in the remaining balance to the Church**. Further, a cantor/singer is required for a wedding Mass to sing the psalm, provide other music while your guests are arriving

and during Offertory and Communion. Our Music Director will contact the Cantor for you. The Cantor fee is \$150, *with a check made payable to them directly*. **You are responsible for contacting Michael and it would be prudent to call him as soon as possible.**

8. **DECORATIONS:** The couple shall take care of arranging all their wedding decorations (for ex. bows and flowers). PLEASE ADVISE YOUR FLORIST TO USE CLIPS, RIBBONS OR RUBBER BANDS to secure any bows to the pews. **ABSOLUTELY NO TAPE** IS ALLOWED DUE TO THE FACT THAT IT REMOVES VARNISH FROM THE PEWS!!! There are **38** pews on each side of the church. St. Mary's Church comfortably seats 600 adults.
9. **AISLE RUNNER:** St. Mary's Parish does allow aisle runners, but from past experience, they are discouraged due to the possibility of your wedding guests tripping on them. If you choose to use an aisle runner, you must inform your florist and they will make the necessary arrangements. It is the florist's job to properly fasten the runner to the carpet well in advance of the beginning of the celebration. Our aisle is 125 feet long. Please inform the priest or deacon at the rehearsal if you plan on using an aisle runner. Finally, **ABSOLUTELY NO RICE, CONFETTI, OR BIRDSEED IS ALLOWED TO BE THROWN AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH.** Rose petals on the aisle and bubbles **outside** the Church are acceptable. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.
10. **PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO:** Camera's (both flash and videotape) are allowed. Those taking the pictures or video are kindly asked to speak to the priest or deacon before the ceremony in order to get specific instructions as to where cameras/videos ARE and ARE NOT allowed. If your photographer will be taking pictures in the church following your Saturday afternoon wedding, we ask that your wedding party is finished by 3pm.
11. **REHEARSAL DATE AND TIME:** Make sure to set up the rehearsal date and time with the priest or deacon. The rehearsal is usually the evening before the wedding.
12. **MASS PLANNING:** During the last few months before the wedding, the priest or deacon will review with you the Marriage Planner entitled: *TOGETHER FOR LIFE*. The couple is asked to bring the completed LAST PAGE of this planner to the rehearsal so that the priest or deacon can make the final preparations needed for the wedding.
13. **MARRIAGE LICENSE:** Please arrange with the Town Clerk's Office (Vital Records Dept.) for your Marriage License. Couples **MUST** apply for their License **TOGETHER**. A three-day (3) waiting period will then follow. Only one of you is required to pick up your license after the 3-day waiting period and it is valid for up to 60 days from the day you apply. Massachusetts does not require couples have a blood test as of Feb. 2005. A \$35 fee is charged at the Longmeadow Town Clerk's Office – 20 Williams St. (Phone 413-565-4103) It is **CRUCIAL** that couples bring this license to the rehearsal the night before the wedding and **HAND IT TO THE PRIEST OR DEACON**. This is important because he then must sign it and mail it into the Clerk's Office. **Without the license, the priest or deacon CANNOT perform the ceremony.** A valid marriage license may be obtained from any city or town hall in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
14. **CHURCH OFFERING:** There is a **\$500** wedding offering asked from each couple for use of the church, which is shared between the Church and the priest. It is due in **FULL** when the wedding date is confirmed by Father C.J.
15. **SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION:** Since God is the "author of Marriage," it is a sacred celebration. We make many, many external preparations for this day; it is important that you as a couple prepare yourselves spiritually as well. An honest and good confession

would be a perfect way to prepare you for this wonderful “new beginning.” Whether you made your last confession two months ago or twenty years ago does not matter – what matters is your desire NOW to begin this marriage spiritually ready. Please think this through and know that the priest is more than happy and honored to celebrate this sacrament with you and your wedding party. Confession will be available after the wedding rehearsal if you wish. If you desire this sacrament, please inform the priest prior to the rehearsal.

WEDDING TIMES: Normal times for weddings at St. Mary’s are as follows:

Friday: Afternoons and evenings

Saturdays: between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Absolutely no weddings are allowed after 1p.m. due to confessions at 2:30 p.m.

Saturday evening: The pastor does not celebrate Saturday evening weddings due to the fact that he celebrates Masses at 4 & 5:30 pm.

SUNDAY WEDDINGS ARE NOT HELD HERE UNLESS THE FOLLOWING DAY IS A LEGAL HOLIDAY, THEN THEY ARE ALLOWED. (Examples: Memorial Day, Columbus Day, etc.)

16. PARISH REGISTRATION: An important question concerning you and your spouse AFTER your wedding day is: As a married couple, will you remain in the parish of St. Mary’s or will you be joining another parish family? If you remain in the parish, please know that you need to register as a new family. As a new family, where will you be living? What is your new phone number? What is your new address? - These questions, as well as a few others, need to be answered as a new family. You may talk to the priest or deacon about this or contact the parish office at your church with this information in order to fill out a registration form. It only takes a few minutes over the phone.

17. CIVIL PERMISSION/SECRETARY OF STATE’S OFFICE: If the priest or deacon does not reside in Massachusetts, he needs civil permission from the Secretary of State’s office. A document for this purpose may be obtained by calling our Chancery office at (413)732-3175.

Finally, these Marriage Guidelines were prepared to answer your marriage questions. If you still have questions, however, please feel free to call the priest or one of our deacons and they will be more than happy to answer any questions for you.

God Bless you both as you prepare for your special day!

Rev. Christopher J. Waitekus, Pastor
Deacon Donald Higby
Karen Casella, Parish Secretary