

New Kensington Catholic Community Parishes

Wedding Guidelines for Couples Preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage

A Word of Welcome

Congratulations on your engagement! The New Kensington Catholic Community rejoices with you as you prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage. This is a sacred and joyful time—not only for you and your families, but also for our community, which will keep you in prayer as you prepare to enter into this holy covenant.

Our goal is to walk with you through this season of preparation in a spirit of support and encouragement, helping you plan a wedding liturgy that is reverent, prayerful, and joyful, while also guiding you into a marriage that is strong and Christ-centered.

Getting Started: Complete the Wedding Request Form to Begin

Couples are asked to complete our parish [Wedding Request Form](#) at least 12 months in advance of the wedding. This form can be found on our parish website or picked up in person at the Mount Saint Peter's Parish Office – 100 Freeport Road in New Kensington.

The pastor and parish office will review your request form to confirm that your wedding date is available and the both parties are free to enter into a valid marriage in the Church. No commitments should be made with venues or vendors until your wedding date and freedom to marry is confirmed by the pastor and parish office.

Weddings are usually scheduled at 2:00 PM on Saturday. They can also be held on weekdays, but not Sundays. Weddings are not celebrated during Lent, on Holy Days of Obligation, and usually not during Advent.

When a Catholic is engaged to a non-Catholic and chooses to be married in a non-Catholic church, all paperwork must still be completed through Mount Saint Peter Parish. Catholic weddings are never permitted in secular or outdoor locations such as gardens, beaches, or banquet halls.

If you are unsure where to begin, our parish office can help you start the process and answer your questions.

STEP 1.

Marriage Preparation

One Year to Six Months Before Wedding Date

Once the Wedding Request Form has been reviewed and your wedding date has been confirmed, couples will receive an email from the pastor describing the couple's marriage preparation process.

This email will instruct the couple on how to take the online FOCCUS - Facilitate Open, Couple, Communication, Understanding and Study - Marriage Ministries questionnaire. Upon completion of this questionnaire, the pastor will be notified by FOCCUS, run a report, and meet with the couple to discuss the results.

In addition to FOCCUS, the Diocese of Greensburg requires that all couples preparing for marriage participate in a preparation program. This can either be online, or by participating in an Engaged Encounter Weekend.

Online Options:

- [The Marriage Group](#)
- [Getting Ready for Marriage](#)

Additional Options:

- [Engaged Encounter Weekend](#): A retreat-style weekend that begins Friday evening and ends Sunday afternoon, led by married couples, providing time for reflection and dialogue.
- Out-of-Diocese Preparation: Couples living outside the Diocese of Greensburg may complete an approved preparation program in their own diocese. Proof of participation must be submitted to the parish office.

Once you complete your FOCCUS and marriage preparation program, you are ready to take the second step in the process.

STEP 2.

Required Paperwork and Documents Six to Three Months Before Wedding Date

Once preparation is complete, couples will meet with the priest to complete the required church paperwork. Part of the paperwork is for baptized bride and/or groom to present a copy of their baptismal record; Catholic parties must present a newly issued certificate that is dated within six months of the date of the wedding.

Upon completion of the paperwork, the pastor will provide the couple with a "Together for Life" marriage celebration workbook. This workbook guides you through the planning of the Wedding Liturgy whether the celebration is with Mass or not. You are asked to select your preferences and complete the accompanying planning sheet before your meeting with the Director of Liturgy.

STEP 3.

Details of the Wedding Liturgy and Celebration One to Three Months Before Wedding Date

The Director of Liturgy will schedule a time to meet with the couple to review your "Together for Life" workbook choices, music selections and to finalize your Wedding Liturgy plan and program. This should be completed at least 3 months prior to your wedding.

To prepare for this meeting, please review the following:

- Local information for each church below.
- Review the information about your ceremony in the “Together for Life” workbook.
- Review the online information found [here](#).
- Complete the “Together for Life” Workbook Selection form for your Wedding Liturgy. This is found in the back of the Together for Life book, OR [online](#).

Be sure to bring to the meeting your selections.

Music Details

- Only liturgical music may be used. All selections must be approved by the Director of Liturgy.
- Outside musicians must be approved, and only the parish organist may play the organ unless otherwise arranged.
- Wedding programs (or worship aids) are recommended but not required.
- The Director of Liturgy must approve the worship aid – the couple will be given examples to help with this process.
- It is the couple’s responsibility to print and drop off the worship aids at the office no later than 1 week before the Wedding date.

Church Details

- **Flowers** – Two fresh floral arrangements provided by the couple will be placed in the sanctuary and remain for the Sunday Masses.
- Bows may be attached to pews with rubber bands only. No tape or pins are permitted.
- **Aisle Runner** – Not permitted due to safety concerns.
- **Unity Candle** – Not part of the Catholic liturgy and may be included at your reception instead.
- Altar Servers – Two altar servers will be provided unless you request otherwise.
- **Presentation of Flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary** – May be permitted if both parties have devotion to Mary.
- Throwing **Rice** or **Confetti** – Not permitted. Bubbles may be used outside only.
- Children – Participants should be at least 7 years old.
- Decorum – Food, drink, and alcohol are not permitted in the church or on church grounds.

Rehearsal Details

- Rehearsals are typically scheduled for 5 PM or 6 PM on the evening prior to the wedding.
- Rehearsals last approximately 45 minutes.
- All participants must attend – this includes the full wedding party and readers. Proper dress and conduct are expected.
- Please arrive on time as other events at the church may follow.

Wedding Coordinator

- Our wedding coordinator, Maria Guzzo (412.780.7452) will be present for both the rehearsal and the wedding day to assist the wedding party and ensure a smooth celebration.

Wedding Stipend Details

- Your wedding involves the time and service of several parish staff members who help ensure that your day is both meaningful and beautiful.
- The total wedding stipend is **\$1,000**. This amount includes the services of the priest/deacon/presider, organist, cantor, wedding coordinator, and altar server, as well as the use of the church facility.
- For non-members of the parish, an additional donation of \$250 or 5% of the total cost of the wedding is customary. This donation supports Mount Saint Peter Parish's Saint Anthony Food Bank, which assists those in need within our local community.
- The stipend should be submitted to the Parish Office no later than two weeks prior to the wedding.

Marriage License

- A Pennsylvania marriage license must also be obtained and presented at least 10 days before the wedding. Licenses may be obtained from any county courthouse in the state of Pennsylvania and are valid for 60 days.

Step 4.

Final Details

No Later Than 2 weeks prior to wedding date

Submit your Pennsylvania marriage license to the church office.

Submit all stipends to the church office.

Print Wedding Programs

Drop Wedding Programs off at the office.

Life After the Wedding

The Church's concern for your marriage continues beyond your wedding day. If you will reside in the area, we invite you to join our parish community as newlyweds and to stay involved in parish life as you begin your journey together. If you move elsewhere, we encourage you to join your new local parish. Clergy and staff of the New Kensington Catholic Community are always here to support you in your married life.

Quick Reference Checklist for Couples

Getting Started

- ☐ Complete the **Wedding Request Form** (found online or pickup at the parish office)
- ☐ Schedule a meeting with the pastor to confirm your wedding date and freedom to marry.

12 – 6 Months prior to Wedding Date

- ☐ Complete the FOCCUS Questionnaire
- ☐ Review FOCCUS results with pastor
- ☐ Complete one of the following **Marriage Preparation Programs**:
 - [The Marriage Group \(Online\)](#)
 - [Getting Ready for Marriage \(Online\)](#)
 - [Engaged Encounter Weekend \(Retreat\)](#)
- ☐ Request and gather **Baptismal Certificates** (Catholics will need a new copy within 6 months).

6 – 3 Months prior to Wedding Date

- ☐ Meet with pastor to complete paperwork and interviews.
- ☐ Receive and complete your “**Together for Life**” **workbook** (plan readings and prayers)

3-1 Months prior to Wedding Date

- ☐ Meet with **Director of Liturgy** to finalize your liturgy and music plans.
- ☐ Finalize and submit your Wedding Program draft for approval to the **Director of Liturgy**.
 - Once your program is approved, submit to your printer for printing.
- ☐ Review church décor and rehearsal details with the **Wedding Coordinator**.
- ☐ Obtain your **Marriage License** (valid only for 60 days).

2-3 Weeks prior to Wedding Date

- ☐ Submit **Marriage License** to the parish office.

- ☐ Submit **Wedding Stipend** (\$1,000) to parish office. Print and deliver wedding programs (at least 1 week prior to wedding date).
- ☐ Confirm all times and details for the rehearsal and wedding day.