

WEDDING POLICIES

Section 800

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801 WEDDING POLICY

Couples wishing to marry in the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Gary should notify their parish priest as soon as they become engaged or at least six months before the anticipated wedding date. The requirement to notify one's parish priest, requires that at least one party is Catholic and is a formally registered parishioner of a Catholic parish.

A Catholic wedding may vary with the addition of the Liturgy of the Eucharist or some additional cultural traditions. As a general norm, the Sacrament of Marriage is celebrated within the context of the mass when both the bride and the groom are Catholic and have already received their first Holy Communion.

For couples that are interfaith, or where only one Catholic has received the sacrament of Holy Communion, the Sacrament of Marriage at Saint Paul is celebrated only within the Liturgy of the Word.

Couples seeking an exception to these guidelines are to petition the Bishop in writing stating their reason{s} for an exception to this policy. This should be done at the earliest stage of marriage preparation. A copy of the letter is to be submitted to the pastor and placed in the couples preparation file.

The marriage of two Catholics takes place in the parish church of either the bride or the groom. For two Catholics to marry in another parish church, it is proper that permission is received from either of the respective parish pastors. Catholic ceremonies in private homes, out of doors or wedding chapels are not permitted.

Weddings in which only one of the parties is Catholic may take place in the Catholic Church or the non-Catholic party may request the wedding be done by their minister in that pastor's church. The Catholic party must receive permission from their Catholic Bishop, for the wedding to be celebrated by the non-Catholic minister in his or her church. This request is made to the Bishop after the couple has completed the Catholic Marriage Preparation within the Catholic parish.

Therefore Marriage Preparation meetings with the priest (Pastor or his designee), the lay Marriage Team and the Director of Liturgy are required of the bride and groom.

802 WEDDING REGULATIONS

In the Roman Catholic Tradition, a marriage is a Sacrament, a very sacred Covenant event. For this reason the reception of the Sacrament is to be received in the House of the Lord. The most important liturgical elements of the worship service at the wedding would be the Liturgy of the Word which informs the community as to God's plan for man and women; the freedom of consent from the bride and groom and the exchange of their vows.

At a scheduled meeting with the parish priest, the engaged couple is introduced to the Marriage Preparation process. This process is designed to help the parish priest establish the engaged couple's freedom to marry and assist the couple in assessing their readiness to receive the Sacrament of Marriage.

Couples are required to participate in the use of a pre-marital inventory during the parish preparation. Couples are required to attend and complete an approved Marriage Preparation Course either in the parish or through the Diocese of Gary, well in advance of their wedding date. Teams of married couples meet with engaged couples in a group setting, in addition to the pastor [or his designee] having individual sessions with the couple. Couples will be strongly encouraged to participate in a Natural Family Planning class as part of their sacramental preparation.

When a couple has special needs or circumstances, the parish priest may work directly with the couple or refer them for additional assistance to address a particular spiritual or pastoral need to help the couple and the pastor assess their readiness for the sacrament of marriage.

Saint Paul Parish recognizes the Sacrament of marriage between a man and a woman and the importance of this holy covenant. It is the policy of Saint Paul Parish that couples provide as much preparatory notice to the Pastor of Saint Paul Parish prior to the wedding so that the liturgical participants may arrange schedules and prepare the church for this sacred event.

Weddings are not celebrated during Lent and Solemnities.

803 REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

The couple will need to bring a recent copy of a baptismal certificate {issued within the previous six months} to the meeting with the parish priest or his designee. If one is not Catholic, but is baptized in another faith, they should bring a copy of the baptismal certificate.

For the parish priest to determine the couple's freedom to marry, each party will need to have two people witness to their freedom to marry. This is usually the parents of the bride and/or groom or someone who has known the couple for a long period of time. The parish priest must determine that both parties are free to marry in the Catholic Church. If one (or both) parties have been married before, that party will need to provide additional documentation.

Couples will have to obtain a civil marriage license and present it at the time of the wedding rehearsal.

804 WEDDING CEREMONY

Saint Paul Parish is a community of people lead by its Pastor. The Pastor or his delegate shall be the principal wedding and worship coordinator for all weddings conducted at Saint Paul Parish. Assistant parish wedding coordinators aid the pastor or his delegate at the rehearsal and wedding service or Mass.

All planning and preparation will be done by the Pastor [or his designee], and the Music Director with the bride and groom. The Pastor and staff will only discuss or plan the liturgy, scriptures and music with bride and groom. The Pastor [or his designee] will plan the Liturgy of the Word and or the Eucharist with the bride and groom. The bride and groom are to work with the Director of Music, who will assist them in the selection of proper liturgical music, musicians, cantors and soloists appropriate for a Roman Catholic wedding.

Brides and Grooms who wish to bring in outside musicians, cantors and/or soloists who are unfamiliar to the Director of Music, must be pre approved by a formal audition with the Director. They must show that they have a good understanding of the order of Roman Catholic worship and the wedding ceremony, and have a sufficient level of competency for public worship.

805 ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

Saint Paul Parish recognizes that wedding ceremonies require a large amount of planning and preparation. It is for this reason that additional wedding guidelines may be required by the Pastor. For example, the Pastor may require his approval of wedding attire, time of the ceremony, use of photography, decorations, etc. His approval must be sought regarding other planning details and trends.

Consideration must be given to the Pastor as he must adhere to Diocesan rules and Catholic tradition always mindful that the Sacrament of Marriage is a prayerful celebration before our Lord.