



Holy Family Parish

HOLY TRINITY • ST. ANN • ST. LOUIS • ST. PHILOMENA

United under the Cross of Christ, to be one mind and heart.

The Sacrament of Marriage Guidelines and Policies

Updated: March 2026

“By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligations, they are penetrated with the Spirit of Christ, who fills their whole lives with faith, hope, and charity.”

- Familiaris Consortio, # 56

Congratulations on your engagement!

Congratulations on your engagement! What an exciting time for you both. Marriage is a wonderful Sacrament, and marriage is a wonderful vocation. We are happy you have chosen to get married in the Catholic Church. Marriage is the most important decision a person can make. Therefore, it takes seriously discernment prior to making this lasting decision.

God first established marriage between Adam and Eve, covenants with His chosen people reflected this marriage bond. Christ further enhances marriage at the Wedding Feast of Cana.

This document provides the Marriage Guidelines we use here for Holy Family Parishes. Please read these carefully because your signature serves as your acceptance of these policies. Those who do not sign or adhere to these policies will not be married at Holy Family Parishes.

The following are required to be married in the Catholic Church

- 1) A man who is at least 18 years old, (man- male at birth) and a woman who is at least 18 years old, (woman- a female at birth)
- 2) At least one is Catholic
- 3) Both persons (male and female) must be free to marry. Free from any prior bond and impediments. (See below) *

The newly engaged couple must call the parish office to arrange a meeting with Fr. McCarthy before the marriage process begins. No wedding date will be scheduled prior to this meeting. This initial meeting must take place within six (6) months of the anticipated wedding date.

Please read, complete, and sign the last page of the Marriage Guidelines and bring it with you to the first meeting with Fr. McCarthy.

If the date is already booked, the couple will come up with another date. If Fr. McCarthy is unavailable on that date, you have two options: another priest approved by the Archdiocese/Fr. McCarthy or have the parish deacon officiate at a ceremony. This can be discussed at the initial meeting.

Prior Marriage

*** Only couples who are “free to marry” can get married in the Catholic Church.** What does “free to marry” mean? It means that neither party (groom or bride-to-be) has ever been married previously, including a civil marriage- i.e., justice of the peace or a marriage in another Christian faith unless that “marriage” has been determined null and void by the Church.

If the previous marriage has been granted a Declaration of Nullity “an annulment”, a copy of that annulment letter must be given to Fr. McCarthy. A divorce is not the same as a Declaration of Nullity. Before a marriage can take place, the couple or individual must go through the process to obtain an annulment; Fr. McCarthy can help you with the process. Note: Depending on the situation, an annulment may take about 12 months. Simply applying for an annulment does not automatically mean it will be granted. Again, speak to Fr. McCarthy if this situation applies to you.

If one or both parties are not “free to marry,” the marriage cannot take place either in the Catholic Church. If the couple does not promptly disclose any previous marriages, civil or religious, the wedding will be postponed or cancelled until the Declaration of Nullity is obtained. If this occurs, the responsibility for cancellation rests solely on the couple, not the priest, deacon, or parish.

Refusing a Marriage

Marriage is a public event and has certain requirements both in Canon and Civil Law. The priest or deacon can refuse to marry a couple if he believes there are serious reasons why a couple should not be getting married. In addition, marriage is a civil-matter, and why a state marriage license must be obtained prior to the wedding ceremony. Our parishes reside in Ohio; only an Ohio marriage license is valid. If this is a con-validation of a civil marriage, a copy of that license must be given to the priest during the first meeting. The parish or the individual clergyman is not liable for reimbursing the couple or their family for expenses incurred if the priest cancels the wedding.

The Rite of Marriage

The Mass is the greatest of all the Liturgies. It is also a sign of our faithfulness to our Lord and His Church's Teachings. Those who desire to have their wedding in the context of the Mass should do so only if they truly cherish and respect the meaning and goal of the Mass. If not, then the marriage will take place outside of Mass.

Requirements for a Wedding within the Mass vs. Ceremony:

- Both the Groom and Bride must be faithful and actively practicing Catholics (actively- living out their faith and adhering to the commandments of the Church).
- Rite of Marriage outside of Mass (Liturgy of the Word with no Holy Communion) must be used when a Catholic marries a **baptized non-Catholic** or a **non-baptized person**.
- If the marriage takes place between a Catholic and non-Catholic, the Catholic party will have to sign a statement promising to continue in the practice of his/her faith and to raise his/her children Catholic. This will be discussed in greater detail during the marriage preparation classes.

Wedding Times and Liturgical Seasons

Because of having Only One Priest, Wedding Masses Must be celebrated by no later than Noon on Saturdays. If you want a Wedding after 12:00 pm, then it must be a ceremony with a deacon, unless you can arrange for another priest, but must take place 2 ½ hours prior to the Weekend Mass at the Parish.

- **Friday afternoon and evenings are available- Please discuss times with Pastor**
- **Saturdays no later than 12pm**

Rehearsal Times:

Thursdays and Fridays 4:00pm-6:00pm

- Weddings during the Lenten season are allowed, but given the penitential nature of Lent, it would be a simple ceremony with no Mass.
- Weddings during Christmas and Easter are welcome, which are great, given the churches are so beautifully decorated. Because of this there would be a limitation on outside flowers and other decorations.
- Consider receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to your wedding in order to fully receive the graces available through the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The Wedding Liturgy

The celebration of Christian Marriage within the context of a Liturgy has a long tradition in the Catholic Church. The Wedding Liturgy is sacred, belongs to the entire Church, and will follow the rubrics the Church has established. Therefore, it is important that the ceremony reflects the beauty of marriage and its relationship to Jesus Christ and His Church. The focus of the Wedding Liturgy is not the couple but Christ, who gives the couple this amazing Sacrament.

Lectors: Lectors are those who proclaim the Old Testament and New Testament readings and, if desired, the petitions. Because the wedding is being celebrated within the context of a Catholic Liturgy, it requires that the reader be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church. The Gospel is reserved strictly to a Deacon or Priest.

Altar Servers: Servers from outside the parish are permitted, provided they are practicing Catholics who regularly serve at their own parish. The parish can obtain servers if requested prior to the wedding. Servers should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to Mass in order to receive instructions from the priest/deacon.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not needed given the sizes of each parish. Only the Body of Christ is distributed, the only exception is for the Bride and Groom if they choose.

The Holy Eucharist is only to be received by those who are practicing Catholics in good standing; in other words, those who attend Mass weekly on Sundays. It is the responsibility of the Wedding Couple to ensure their guests respect the Teachings of Mother Church regarding Holy Communion. Remember Holy Communion is not a sign of welcoming, rather unity with the Body of Christ, and His Church. Thus, only Catholics are to come forward to receive Holy Communion. A statement will be made by the priest to restate that fact. However, we ask that if you are creating a program for your wedding that you include the following statement:

Holy Communion is for those who are practicing Catholics, if you are not, we ask that you stay in your seats during the Rite of Communion, we encouraged you to pray for the couple and their future together.

Music

Couples are required to meet with the parish music director, who will guide them through the process; **please contact us a few months prior to the wedding to schedule an appointment**. If you wish to use another musician, he/she must be approved by the parish music director. The Director of Music & Liturgy may be reached at 513-732-2218. Music is an integral component of any liturgical ceremony. Couples are to select music that reflects the nature of the Sacrament. Questions on appropriate music is made directly to the music director. Recorded music is never permitted to be used during a Liturgy. The wedding planning booklet contains a list of suggested options.

The Wedding Party

The members of the wedding party are determined by the couple. Please keep in mind that two people must serve as official witnesses. They must be of sound mind, sufficient maturity and at least the age of fourteen.

When selecting a ring bearer and/or flower girl, please consider the age and attentiveness of the child.

No special requests will ever be granted to have a pet be part of the service.

NO ALCOHOL is permitted anywhere on the church property. Any member of the wedding party showing signs of alcohol use before the rehearsal or at the wedding will be asked to leave the church and its grounds. Alcohol and/or drugs impair one's ability to reason and to freely enter into a covenant or a contract. If the bride, groom, or any member of the wedding party is impaired, this could cause the wedding to be cancelled or delayed!

The Wedding Procession

The Church envisions that the procession will begin with the servers, the wedding party, the parents, and the bride and groom, and finally, the priest. The bride and groom walk together to express fully that the husband and wife are equal partners in the marriage. The reason the Church does not envision the father giving his daughter away is because the very act of marriage is the woman choosing this man to be her husband.

Yet, there has been a long tradition in America where the bride is escorted by her father, and the groom greeting the bride and father. Therefore, while the preferred way is man and woman walking together, the other can still be an option. Please ask about this when planning the wedding ceremony.

The Wedding Coordinator

The parish will assign you a wedding coordinator for the service and the wedding rehearsal. The wedding coordinator will be available to answer your questions about decorations, the order of the ceremony, and will help keep everything on schedule. The wedding coordinator will show you where the dressing area is. Please make sure that people using this room are respectful of the property and remain in the dressing room until it is time for the procession to begin.

Decorations

Flowers have always been a traditional decoration for a wedding ceremony. Keep in mind that during certain liturgical seasons the church is already appropriately decorated with flowers. This is especially true during the Christmas and Easter seasons. No one may move any plants or flowers that are already in place. A fresh flower arrangement is permitted on the floor in front of the Altar. Flowers are to be placed and removed from the church at times that will not interfere with other parish services.

- **Flowers must be real -- no artificial flowers are allowed.**
- **No plastic clips, metal hooks, pipe-cleaners or tape may be used.**
- **Aisle runners are not permitted because they create a safety issue.**
- **Please refrain from the throwing of birdseed, rice, confetti, or flower petals, or the blowing of bubbles. It creates a hazard to those attending the wedding and later liturgies.**
- **Clean-up is the responsibility of the wedding party; please leave the church and dressing room as clean as you found it.** (Be sure to appoint someone to stay behind to collect any items that may have been left in the church after the wedding.)
- **No candles or small vigil lights are permitted to be attached to the pews.**
- **No Unity Candle.** This has never been part of the marriage rite, but if a couple desires a unity candle it can be done at the rehearsal dinner or the wedding reception.

Marian Devotion

The presenting of flowers to Mary is not part of the standard Catholic Wedding Liturgy. However, due to the devotional nature and the importance of the Blessed Mother for the success of marriages, the couple can choose to do this. This should be discussed when planning the wedding ceremony.

Pictures

Pictures and video cameras are permitted during the procession and the recession of the bridal party. Wedding guests are instructed to refrain from using flashes during the ceremony. Some photographers wish to take pictures before the ceremony. This is permitted if arrangements are made ahead of time and the church is available.

Photographers may not move any sacred furnishings, nor are they permitted to stand on any pews or chairs. If the wedding takes place in the context of a Mass, no flash photography is allowed once the Mass begins. Please discuss these guidelines with your photographer beforehand to avoid misunderstandings.

Marriage Preparation Classes - MPC:

Couples seeking to be married in the Catholic Church are required to take MPC.

Step 1: Initial Meeting with Fr. McCarthy (or priest)

Before a wedding date is scheduled, the couple must set up an appointment to meet Fr. McCarthy. It will be at this meeting that Father will take general information about the couple, discuss the marriage preparation requirements, set a date for the wedding, and answer any questions the couple may have. It is also at this meeting the couple is to turn in the signed agreement, which is located on the last page of this document.

Step 2: Fully Engaged Personality Assessment

One of the beginning steps of the marriage preparation process is to take an on-line assessment of the individuals seeking to get married. The priest will ask for your email address, and you will receive an email with the test attached. When both individuals have completed the assessment, a scored copy will be sent to the priest.

Once the priest receives the results, he will contact a member of the preparation team who will set-up an appointment with the couple to cover of the results.

Step 3: Mentoring Component

Learning and listening to a mentor couple has been very impactful to many of the couples who have gone through marriage preparation. You are to choose a couple you respect and admire. Some basic requirements: 1) Must be practicing Catholics who attend Mass regularly. 2) Meet several times to watch and discuss videos, recommended that you attend Mass together and do videos/discussion after Mass. 3) Meet together with Fr. McCarthy after you completed the sessions to discuss how this was beneficial or not beneficial to your future relationship as a married couple.

Step 4: Complete Archdiocese Requirements

In addition to the requirements of the parish, the Archdiocese also has additional requirements. During the engagement period, a couple is to attend a one-day retreat called GENESIS (2019 Pre-Cana). For more information, please visit www.centerforthenewevangelization.org/marriage-family/marriage-preparation/genesis-retreat

Step 5: Final Meeting with the Priest or Deacon

At this final meeting we will complete the marriage paperwork, discuss details of the wedding ceremony, collect certificates for NFP, and Genesis retreat. In addition, all the other requirements such as Baptism Certificates, Ohio wedding license, payment, etc. is given to priest/deacon at the final meeting.

Necessary Documents

- The Baptized Catholic(s) need to provide a copy of their Baptismal Certificate issued within 6 months of the wedding. Contact the parish where you were baptized to receive a copy.
- Completing the Marriage-Inventory (M-I) questions – a copy of these questions will be given to you when you first meet the priest to begin marriage preparation.
- Certificate or letter confirming completion of Archdiocese requirements
- Marriage license by the State of Ohio - a license can be obtained within 60 days of the wedding. No wedding can occur without a marriage license.
- All fees and forms should be submitted to the Holy Family Parish Office by the final meeting with the priest. Failure to have all items submitted can result in delay or cancellation of the wedding.

WEDDING FEES

- Active Parishioner - \$450.00
 - One who is currently registered at one of the four parishes within the Family, separately from their parents
 - Attends Sunday Mass regularly at one of the 4 parishes and actively contributes
- Past Parishioner- \$600.00
 - One who grew up at one of the four parishes (parents are still registered Parishioners)
 - The bride and/or groom are attending Mass regularly at a different Catholic parish
- Non-Parishioner - \$1000.00
 - One who is not registered at the Family of Parishes but is an active Catholic in good standing

Checks payable to the parish where wedding is held.

Your signature indicates that you have read and accepted the terms of the guidelines required for marriage at the Holy Family Parishes and agree to pay all applicable fees. Neither Holy Family Parishes, Fr. McCarthy, or the Deacons will be held financially liable if a wedding is cancelled/delayed due to a failure to adhere to the procedures and policies set forth in these guidelines.

Engaged couples are to turn in this form, signed and completed, at the first session with Fr. McCarthy.

Name of the Bride: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Religion: _____ Baptized: Yes or No Church of Baptism: _____

Have you been married before? Yes or No

If yes, has that marriage been annulled? Yes or No Diocese? _____

Name of the Groom: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Religion: _____ Baptized: Yes or No Church of Baptism: _____

Have you been married before? Yes or No

If yes, has that marriage been annulled? Yes or No Diocese? _____

Please list some available dates/times and the office will confirm the scheduling of the date once this form has been reviewed by Fr. McCarthy.

Desired Wedding Dates: _____

Signature of Bride to be

Signature of Groom to be

Date

Date