

St. Joseph Catholic Church
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MARRIAGE POLICIES - 2016

We are happy that you are coming to our Church as you plan your wedding. As a community of faith we treasure the family founded in Christian marriage as the fundamental building block of our Church. Bringing God into your life by way of a sacramental wedding is a great way to start.

While we rejoice at each marriage that begins in our Church, marriage ceremonies in any Catholic Parish sometimes are a challenge. The Pastor, Pastoral Team and Parishioners deal with challenges by forming regulations to preserve other priorities in the Parish on the day of the wedding. Often more than one wedding may be planned in one day in addition to our normal Sacrament of Reconciliation at 4:00PM on Saturday and Saturday evening Mass at 5:00PM. Regulations help the couple be attentive to other events happening in the Parish on their wedding day. More importantly, regulations help couples who may not be fully aware of the sacredness of a wedding in a Catholic Church. Sometimes wedding planners desire to move furniture about the sanctuary or allow a photographer in the Sanctuary space. Sometimes people wish to add flowers or candles inappropriate for placement on the Altar. Some even bring food or beverage into the Church. In effect, some mistake the Church for a reception hall. These regulations are aimed at avoiding any of these problems.

Basic Information Required: Often, the prospective bride, groom or one of the parents will call the Church Office and ask that a wedding be scheduled. We are pleased to do that when:

1. The prospective bride and/or groom are registered members of St. Joseph Parish, or the parent(s) of the bride or groom are registered members of the Parish, or
2. There is a very good reason for the marriage of non-Parishioners (i.e. both prospective bride and groom are not registered members of the Parish) to occur in our Church. Because of the limited availability of our Priest and the limited administrative resources available within our Parish Office, it is the stated policy of the Parish to not allow "destination weddings" without good reason. If there are unusual circumstances that non-Parishioners wish to be considered, a telephone request from the non-Parishioner (stating the reasons for a deviation from policy)

must be made with the Parish Office. Such requests will be reviewed by the Pastor for a final decision. If the request is approved, all preparation for marriage must be completed in the Parish of the Catholic party, in accordance with Diocese of Gaylord policy. That Parish will then submit the completed Marriage file through their Diocese, for transmission to the Diocese of Gaylord on behalf of St. Joseph Parish.

To schedule a wedding, the following information must be submitted:

1. names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of prospective bride, groom and parents
2. for prospective bride and groom, date and place of Baptism; if applicable, state which party is not baptized
3. preferred date and time of the wedding and rehearsal
4. plans for music and organist; use of an Organist is who is not one of the Parish-approved Organists requires prior approval from the Business Manager for the Parish.
5. disclosure of previous marriages and/or annulments; disclosure of any impediments to a valid Catholic marriage, including annulments in process. We will require a certified copy of any decree of dissolution or nullity, as well as any restrictions on future marriages
6. for non-Parishioner, the name and address of their current Parish.
7. an acknowledgement that marriage preparation (including pre-Cana and FOCCUS Questionnaire) must be completed at least a month in advance of the planned wedding date; for a marriage involving a non-Catholic party, the preparation must be completed a minimum of 2 months before the wedding date.

Marriage Planning: We must follow Canon Law, the guidelines established by our Bishop and regulations established by our Pastor and Pastoral Council. Some important rules to follow:

1. Six months advance notice to the Parish Office.
2. Prompt meeting with a Priest to complete the Pre-Marriage Form (this is a Church required document).
3. Submission of all documents (including, but not limited to, Baptismal Certificates, certificate of completion of the pre-marriage program, and pre-marriage questionnaire) at least 4 weeks before the wedding date (or 2 months for marriages involving a non-Catholic).

4. Disclosure and resolution of any impediments to a Catholic marriage, including disclosure of previous marriage(s) and status of any annulment proceedings.
5. Completion of a compatibility profile (Pre-marriage or FOCCUS questionnaire) to build a stronger foundation for the marriage.
6. Completion of a premarriage program such as Pre-Cana offered in most Dioceses of the country. The preparation may be done locally or elsewhere. A certificate of attendance is required as part of our pre-wedding documentation.
7. A marriage license valid in the state of Michigan; for residents, this license can be obtained at any Michigan County Clerk's office within 30 days of the wedding date. For non-residents, the license must be obtained from the Grand Traverse County Clerk. Please visit the Grand Traverse County Clerk's website for more information and to apply on-line.
8. A wedding ceremony (with or without Mass) cannot be scheduled after 2:00PM on Saturday and marriage with Mass cannot be held on Sunday or a Holyday.

Rehearsal: Usually a rehearsal is scheduled for the evening prior to your wedding. Once you agree to a definite time with the Parish Office, keep the schedule. The Priest will have set aside the time and arranged other responsibilities to make time for your rehearsal. The rehearsal should be serious work to make the wedding day go smoothly. Remind your attendants (bridesmaids/groomsmen) about proper behavior. Again, please no food or beverage in the church. Bring you marriage license so that the Priest can complete it and have it ready for the next day. Immediately after the wedding, the Priest and witnesses will add their signatures to complete preparation of the license for filing.

Stipends: The Stipend is intended to offset the actual expenses incurred by the Parish:

- a. Parishioners faithfully supporting the Parish (children of Parishioners are classified as Parishioners). Must be a registered Parishioner for 12 months prior to the marriage date to qualify: No stipend.
- b. Non-Parishioners: \$1,200 stipend. If the couple arranges for a visiting Priest or Deacon to officiate at the marriage the stipend is \$500.00

The check should be payable to St. Joseph Church. A payment of \$250.00 is requested at the time that the wedding is scheduled with the Church Office. The balance is due 30 days prior to the wedding date.

There is substantial work required of the Parish Staff in preparing for your wedding. The fee for non-Parishioners recognizes that they do not have the opportunity to support the Parish through the Offertory Collection and, thereby, helps offset the direct costs of the Parish Office.

Inability to pay the amount, due to personal circumstances, should not be a deterrent to your marriage in our Church. You are encouraged to discuss your particular circumstance with either the Business Manager or the Pastor.

Other Expenses:

Organist and/or musicians. We have several Organists available, including our weekend Organist. Payments should be arranged directly with the Organist. Use of an Organist (other than our weekend Organist) or musicians requires prior approval in writing from the Parish Office; such approval should be sought at least 4 weeks before the wedding date. Only proper music for church is allowed. If an outside Organist and/or musicians are used, prior approval by the Parish Office of the music selections are also required at least 4 weeks before the wedding date.

The Priest. This is not a fee and should not be viewed as such. It is intended to cover time and expense of the Priest in preparing for and conducting the ceremony. A suggested minimum donation for the Priest is \$150.00. This check should be written directly to the Priest who will Officiate at the wedding and should be sent to the Parish Office at least a week before the wedding date. Please note that a stipend of \$150.00 is included in the Stipend for a “non-Parishioner” wedding.

Mass or no Mass: This is an important decision, and the decision to have a Mass (or not) is not automatic even for two baptized Catholics. The Sacrament of Matrimony can take place in its fullest without a Mass, though it is recommended that it take place in the context of the Mass if possible

As a general rule, you may ask for a Mass if a majority of the attendees are Catholic and the bride and groom are familiar with the Catholic Mass, the appropriate responses and at least one of them receives Holy Communion. A Mass should not be requested just to please parents or grandparents—it is your wedding!

It is suggested not to ask for a Mass unless both bride and groom are Catholic. There is a definite sign of “disunity” when one side of the congregation participates in song, prayer and communion while the other side sits and observes. The ceremony without a Mass is very complete with the same hymns, sacramental prayers, vows and devotional symbols. There is a definite sense of unity that Catholic and non-Catholic, alike, can be comfortable. It is a full

sacrament and can be celebrated without Mass, as are other sacraments, such as Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation.

Unlocking of Buildings: The Parish Office is open daily from 9:00AM to 5:00PM. The Church is normally locked during the week. The Church is usually unlocked on Saturday at 9:00AM. If access is needed outside these hours, please call the Parish Office.

Flowers: The Parish Office can suggest local florists, if requested. Please inform the Parish Office of any deliveries on the day of the wedding, so we can avoid a conflict with another wedding or funeral on your day. We would be most appreciative if you leave some flowers on the side altars for everyone to enjoy during our Masses for the weekend.

Parking: You may use our parking lot during the ceremony. Because, however, we have a small parking lot and there will likely be a Church service immediately following your ceremony, please ask your guests not to leave cars in the parking lot after the ceremony.

Cleanup: Your fee for use of the Church does not include cleanup. Our Parish is too small to afford custodial care and volunteers to do this. The Church will be clean before your use and must be clean when you are finished. Often there is another wedding or evening Mass shortly to follow. Please remove any wedding booklets, so they are not left in the pews. You may leave flowers for the Sanctuary area, but should check with the Parish Office in advance to avoid conflicts with other plans for flowers. If you drop flower pedals, aisle runner, tissue or any other material, please have someone appointed to take debris for appropriate disposal. The throwing of rice, confetti or birdseed is not allowed. We recommend using hand-held bubbles if you want something festive as you leave.

Marriage License: As mentioned above, bring your marriage license to the Parish Office no later than noon of the day of your rehearsal. The Priest will fill it out before the wedding ceremony. It will be signed during or after the wedding ceremony by the Priest and witnesses to make the document ready for filing. We will mail the signed original to the County Clerk who issued the License. You should also keep a signed copy.

Invitations: If you wish to invite the Priest to your reception, please extend the invitation well in advance so he can let you know whether he is or is not able to

attend. The Priest may attend a wedding reception if it does not conflict with other events on his schedule. If you ask him to offer a prayer at the reception, this should be done before any toast to the bride and groom. God comes first!

Alcohol Policy: Please respect the sanctity of the Church and your wedding by observing our Policy on alcohol: we do not allow the consumption of alcohol on Parish property. Please do not ask for an exception.

Timeliness: We know that it is difficult to start a program on time. Please be courteous to Father and be ready to start the ceremony on time. This will require that you appoint a “timekeeper” who will be sure that the Bride’s party leaves the hall 5 minutes before the starting time. Likewise, appoint a “timekeeper” within the Groom’s party to get them to the Church 5 minutes before the set time. Father will really appreciate your concern for his time. Please remember that he will have confessions and an evening Mass to celebrate after your event.

We are looking forward to working with you as you approach your wedding and helping bring God into your special day.

Please call us or send an email if we can help. We are here to help you.

St. Joseph Parish

Rev. James M. Bearss
Pastor

File: wedding policies – 011116