



WEDDING PLANNING GUIDELINES

Church of the Holy Family
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GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SACRAMENTAL MARRIAGE IN THE DIOCESE OF SAVANNAH

1. The minimum requirement for marriage preparation is six months in advance of the desired date.
2. By Church law, all weddings are to be celebrated in the Church.
3. No date can be set until it is determined by the priest that you are canonically free to marry.
4. If either of you were married before, even civil or common-law marriage, and the former spouse is still living, you will need to obtain a declaration of nullity (annulment) on the marriage from the Tribunal of the Diocese of Savannah or the Archdiocese of Mobile (depending which state you live in), if you do not already have such a decree. The priest or deacon will assist you in the starting this process.
5. Interfaith Marriage
 - a. In an interfaith marriage, the Catholic party make a promise to maintain his or her faith and do all in his or her power to ensure that any children born of the union will be raised in the Catholic faith.
 - b. The party who is not Catholic makes no promises but is made aware of the binding promise made by the Catholic party.

SETTING THE DATE

1. Reservation Procedure
 - a. To reserve a date for your wedding, you must provide evidence that you are a registered member of a Catholic church or complete a Church Registration Form and submit it to the church office.
 - b. Meet with the Pastor, call the office to schedule
 - c. You can find out the availability of your requested dates for the wedding from the church office. (Please note availability is not the same as a confirmed reservation.)
 - d. Following the meeting with the Pastor, the Office Coordinator will contact you to set your wedding date on the church calendar.
2. Reservation Fee
 - a. A meeting with the Office Coordinator will be held to review all needed forms and fees.

- b. The wedding date is officially reserved when the fee is paid. (See page 6 for fee schedule)
3. Visiting Priest
- a. If you are working with a priest or deacon outside of our parish, we will ask for his name and address to send him our Visiting Priest Form
 - b. The Visiting Priest Form confirms in writing that he is willing to officiate, work with the bride and groom to complete the necessary marriage preparation and paperwork required by Church law and abide by Church of the Holy Family policies and procedures
 - c. If he is not a priest or deacon within the Diocese of Savannah, he is required to apply for faculties through the Savannah Diocese within 60 days of the wedding date and furnish a copy of the letter granting those faculties

Wedding & Rehearsal Times

1. Weddings are scheduled on Saturdays at 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM.
2. The wedding and wedding party must be vacated from the church by either 11:30 AM or 3:30 PM, so the church can prepare for evening Confessions and Mass.
3. Wedding Time Breakdown
 - a. Setup - 30 minutes
 - b. Ceremony – 1 hour
 - c. Pictures/Cleanup – 30 minutes
4. Rehearsals are scheduled for the day before (Friday) at 5:00 PM

Wedding Coordinator

1. The wedding coordinator will work with you to help plan the logistics of your ceremony and assist the celebrant in coordinating your rehearsal and wedding day within the parameters of Church of the Holy Family.
2. The wedding coordinator will contact you directly and she can answer questions about many of the practical details of your wedding.
3. Please be aware that the entire ceremony is under the direction of the clergy, Church of the Holy Family and the wedding coordinator assigned to your wedding.
4. Outside wedding/bridal consultants, if you choose to have them, should not interfere, and are required to abide by Church of the Holy Family policies and

may function only under the direction of the officiant and/or our wedding coordinator.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The required marriage preparation includes a marriage preparation class, consisting of meetings with the officiant, completion of premarital inventory and review, as well as attendance at a pre-Cana program recommended by the Diocese of Savannah.

Premarital Inventory

1. This premarital inventory is a 30–45-minute online survey for couples. Designed by relationship experts, it helps the Pastor and the couple:
 - a. Discover your relationship's unique strengths
 - b. Identify areas where you can grow together
 - c. Gain insights based on scientific research
2. By completing this survey, you'll get a clearer picture of your relationship and learn how to build a stronger connection.
3. The bride and groom will complete the inventory separately.

Pre-Cana/Engaged Encounter Workshops

1. All couples are required to attend either a Pre-Cana class or Engaged Encounter Workshop as part of their required Marriage Preparation.
2. Various programs are available throughout the state and a calendar of upcoming weekend classes and retreats can be found on the Diocese of Savannah website.
3. It is possible that an online option is available. Your priest or deacon can help you determine which program will be best for you.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Church Documents – the following are required by the Church

1. Baptismal Certificate
 - a. Catholics need a “new” copy of their baptismal certificate issued by the church of their baptism with notations of all sacraments received.
 - b. It cannot be issued more than six months prior to the wedding.
2. Bride and Groom Questionnaires (Form A-1 & A-2)
 - a. These forms are completed by the Priest/Deacon/Pastoral Assistant at one of your meetings.
 - b. Forms are signed and witnessed to certify that the information is correct.
3. Affidavit for Freedom to Marry (Form B)
 - a. The bride and groom each need two affidavits completed on their behalf.
 - b. Affidavits are completed by relatives or friends who attest that each of the espoused is free to marry.
 - c. Forms will be given to the couple during their first meeting with the priest or deacon and should be returned as soon as possible.
4. Dispensation Form (Form D-1) *If Applicable*
 - a. Whenever a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, Christian or non-Christian, the Church requires this form to be filled out by the clergy and filed with the Diocese of Savannah.
 - b. Whenever a marriage ceremony (reception of vows) is conducted by a non-Catholic minister or civil official, a dispensation form is required as well.
5. Mixed Marriage Promises (Form D-2) *If Applicable*
 - a. In the case of an interfaith marriage (as noted above), the Catholic party make a promise to maintain his or her faith and do all in his or her power to ensure that any children born of the union will be raised in the Catholic faith.
 - b. The party who is not Catholic makes no promises but is made aware of the promise by the Catholic party.
6. Letter of Permission from Pastor (Form P)
 - a. If either party is a Catholic and a member of another parish, they will need to have the pastor, or their parish provide a letter of permission to be married outside of their home parish.

7. Final Decree of Annulment (Form E) *If Applicable*
 - a. If either party has been married before and the marriage resulted in a divorce, evidence of annulment will be required.
 - b. For those who have already obtained an annulment, a copy of the Final Decree is required.
 - c. If an annulment is required but not yet obtained, the priest or deacon can assist with this process.
 - d. A wedding date cannot be entered on the church calendar, even tentatively, until evidence of the annulment, in the form of a Final Decree, has been received.

Civil Documents

1. Civil Marriage License
 - a. A Civil Marriage License is obtained at any county Probate Court in the State of Georgia, however if you reside outside of the state of Georgia, you **must** obtain your license from Muscogee County.
 - b. License fees may vary from county to county.
 - c. The Marriage License, along with a stamped envelope, should be given to the church office at least one week prior to the wedding ceremony.
 - d. It is illegal in Georgia for a clergy member to officiate at a marriage unless the license to be signed is in hand at the wedding.
 - e. Assurances that the license has been issued are not sufficient.

FEE SCHEDULE

Item	Holy Family Member	Non-Parishioner
Church	\$200	\$2000
Wedding Coordinator	\$250	\$250
Music Director	\$150	\$150
Custodian	\$125	\$125

1. Type of Parishioner
 - a. Registered: an individual who has been regularly attending Mass at Church of the Holy Family for at least six months and giving of their time, talent, and treasure.

2. Church Fee

- a. The fee for the church covers the use of the church for the ceremony, rehearsal, and the Bride's Room
- b. This fee is due at the time of reserving your date.

3. Officiant

- a. It is customary for the groom to provide an honorarium to the priest and/or deacon preparing the couple and presiding over the wedding.
- b. The amount is a matter of personal discretion and should reflect your sincere appreciation.
- c. A recommended minimum of \$200 is appreciated.

4. Other Fees

- a. The Music Director fee covers the planning and performing of music.
- b. The Custodian must be present at all weddings for the purpose of opening the church and Bride's Room and monitoring the grounds before and after the ceremony.

5. Refund Policy

- a. If a wedding is cancelled at least nine months prior the fee is 100% refundable
- b. If cancelled within six to nine months prior the fee is 50% refundable.
- c. If cancelled within six months prior the fee is non-refundable.

PLANNING THE LITURGY

1. Ceremony

- a. The Sacrament of Marriage is assumed to be celebrated within the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
- b. However, for certain pastoral reasons, there are circumstances that permit a Catholic wedding to be celebrated outside of the Mass. This is left up to the discretion of the celebrant.
- c. The couple should understand that they are the ministers of Christ's grace to each other in the Sacrament of Matrimony.
- d. The priest who assists at the celebration of the sacrament receives the consent of the spouses in the name of the Church and gives the blessing of the Church.
- e. The purpose of the priest and the other official witnesses (best man/maid of honor) is to express visibly the fact that marriage is a public, ecclesial (Church) reality.
- f. It is also highly recommended that before their wedding, the bride and groom would each make a sincere and sacramental confession in preparation to receive the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

2. Interfaith Marriage

- a. If only one of the spouses is a baptized Catholic, it must be noted that only the Catholic party may receive Holy Communion according to Church law.
- b. The priest will give a brief explanation at Mass regarding the reception of Holy Communion and will invite those who are either Catholic and out of practice or not Catholic to come forward for a blessing, if they so choose.
- c. In addition, if one of the parties in the marriage is not baptized, then the wedding takes place most appropriately in the context of a Wedding Liturgy outside of Mass, which would not include Holy Communion.

3. Should you wish to include a note in your program explaining the sacrament, the following may be used: **It is the Catholic Church's doctrine that we are unable to extend an open invitation for everyone to receive communion. If you are not Catholic, or Catholic but unprepared to receive, we invite you to come forward at communion to receive a blessing (by crossing your arms across your chest) and to be one with us in this faith community praying for Christian unity.**

4. You will receive a book to help you select readings, prayers, and vows.

Music

1. To arrange music for our wedding Church of the Holy Family will put you in contact with our Music Director as the date draws closer.
2. Music for the Wedding Liturgy must be of a sacred nature written for the express purpose of communal Catholic worship.
3. If you desire a sacred hymn that is not found in the hymnal, our Music Director will be happy to work with you to find it or select a suitable alternative.

Flowers, Candles, Decorations

1. The decoration of the church may take place only on the day of the wedding.
2. All flowers and other equipment must be brought into the Church facilities on the day of the event during the rental time only.
3. Furniture or equipment that is owned by the Church is not to be used or moved without permission of the parish wedding coordinator, pastor, and/or Music Director.
4. Candles are not to be used by anyone other than the Church. The candles on both the High Altar and side altars will be lit for your ceremony.
5. Glass is strictly prohibited.
6. Balloons, rice, birdseed, glitter, confetti, liquid string, real flower petals are all prohibited on the property, either inside the sanctuary and outside on the grounds and/or parking lot.
7. Silk flower petals are permitted but must be cleaned up after the ceremony.
8. No tape, tacks, or nails may be used anywhere.
9. Cables, electrical cords, or wires are not to be placed in a manner that will cause a trip hazard.
10. The use of bows and floral pew markers is allowed.
11. All materials furnished by the florist are to be removed when the rental time is completed, except for the flowers that have been placed on the High Altar. If the couple chooses to leave the flowers on the High Altar for the weekend Masses, this will serve as a reminder for the parish to pray for the new couple.
12. Trash left over from the decorations and flowers should be placed in the Church trash dumpster in the St. Mary's parking lot across 12th Street.
13. Anything left in the buildings is not the responsibility of the Church of the Holy Family.

Altar Servers

1. Altar servers will be assigned, as required, for your ceremony depending upon availability.
2. All servers are required to have been trained at Church of the Holy Family or approved by the Pastor.

Photography

1. The photographer should direct any questions to the wedding coordinator during the time they are on Church of the Holy Family premises and must cooperate with direction provided by the wedding coordinator and officiant.
2. The choir loft will be open, permitting photographers that vantage point as well as the vestibule areas, center aisle positions to the rear of the seated guests.
3. The photographer **may not enter the altar area during the ceremony, nor may they walk down the center or side aisles, at any time during the service.**
4. Posed pictures taken on the altar following the ceremony must be confined to formal family and wedding party group shots.
5. Casually posed or irreverent photos of the couple or wedding party are prohibited on the altar.
6. **Church of the Holy Family does not allow flash photography during the ceremony**
7. **The official photographer, family and friends should keep in mind the sacred nature of the occasion and conduct themselves accordingly.**
8. Pre-Ceremony Photos
 - a. Wedding parties may not arrive at the church any earlier than one and a half hours prior to the start of the ceremony.
 - b. Pre-ceremony photos may be taken in various areas of the Church grounds and inside the Church.
9. Post-Ceremony Photos
 - a. The time allocated for photos after the ceremony is 30 minutes.
 - b. Please be prepared to move quickly through your list of photos.
 - c. We suggest creating a “must have” photo list for the photographer

Videography

1. All video equipment must be set up no later than thirty minutes before the scheduled time of the wedding.
2. The bride and groom may wear wireless microphones.

3. Video equipment must be stationary during the ceremony, no relocation of video equipment or steady cam shots.
4. Absolutely no floodlights or other special lighting is allowed.
5. No wires/cords may be laid across the aisles.
6. Nothing may be pinned, stapled, or otherwise affixed to the walls, furnishings, or floors.
7. Persons operating video equipment shall be dressed appropriately for a formal church service and in a manner comparable to guests in attendance.
8. The videographer may not “tap” into the Church sound system.

REHEARSAL

1. A rehearsal is usually scheduled for the day before the wedding.
2. The rehearsal time is Friday at 5:00 PM.
3. Please be aware that the entire ceremony is under the direction of the priest/deacon with the assistance of the wedding coordinator
4. All rehearsals will take place in the church and are limited to 45 minutes
5. Rehearsals will begin on time whether all are present or not.
6. All members of the wedding party must be mindful they are in a sacred place where respectful behavior is expected from everyone.

WEDDING DAY

1. The bridal party may not arrive earlier than 1 hour before the wedding time.
2. The florist, photographer, and videographer may set up 30 minutes prior to the wedding.
3. Tardy Policy
 - a. Due to the nature of the church’s daily schedule, it is imperative to start the ceremony on time.
 - b. If you are not on time, you may have to forfeit the post ceremony photo time.
4. Bride’s Room
 - a. The Bride’s Room is in St. Joseph Hall.
 - b. The Bride’s Room is for the exclusive use of the bride and her bridesmaids before the ceremony only.
 - c. Water is the only liquid allowed in the room.
 - d. Food is not allowed in the room.

- e. All personal items must be removed prior to the ceremony beginning and the room must be cleaned before the ceremony.
5. Dress Code
- a. Great sensitivity is required in choosing the wedding dress.
 - b. There can be no bare shoulders or back, and the hem must reach at least below the knee. **This includes the bride and the bridesmaids.**
 - c. If your dress is strapless, you will need to wear a shawl or bolero during the wedding ceremony.
 - d. The veil (if you choose to have one) is not sufficient to cover bare shoulders and back.
 - e. We ask that you be tasteful in selecting gowns for your wedding party and avoid dresses that are low cut or very short in length.

GENERAL REGULATIONS

1. The bridal party is urged to arrive at the church at the assigned time.
2. No smoking permitted anywhere in the church buildings.
3. No alcohol is allowed anywhere on the church grounds. No member of the wedding party will be permitted to participate in the wedding if intoxicated. No exceptions.
4. Receiving lines and guest books are not permitted in the church.
5. No room on the church grounds can be used for impromptu babysitting.

CANCELLATION POLICY

1. Church of the Holy Family reserves the right to cancel the wedding if the legal requirements under state of Church law are not met.
2. In the event of cancellation for any reason, please refer to the Fee Schedule section regarding refunds.

ORDER OF CEREMONY

Processional

Seating of Grandmothers/Mothers
Processional of Celebrant (if Liturgical Procession)
Processional of Attendants
Processional of Bride
Greeting/Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading
Psalm (sung or spoken)
Second Reading
Gospel Acclamation (sung or spoken)
Gospel
Homily

Rite of Marriage

Exchange of Vows
Blessing and Exchange of Rings
Universal Prayer (Prayers of the Faithful)

Liturgy of the Eucharist (if having a Mass)

Presentation of the Gifts
Eucharistic Prayer
The Mystery of Faith
Great Amen
Lord's Prayer
Nuptial Blessing
Sign of Peace
Lamb of God
Distribution of the Holy Eucharist
Devotion to Our Lady (if applicable)

Final Prayer and Blessing

Recessional

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSES FOR A WEDDING MASS

Greeting

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

Priest: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to N.

People: Glory to you, O Lord.

Priest: The Gospel of the Lord

People: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ

Invitation to Prayer

People: May the Lord accept this sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His holy Church.

Preface Dialogue

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Priest: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right and just.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts

Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The Mystery of Faith

Priest: The Mystery of Faith

People: We proclaim Your death O Lord, and profess Your resurrection until You come again.

-OR-

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim Your death, O Lord, until You come again.

-OR-

Save us, Savior of the world, for by Your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

Sign of Peace

Priest: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: And with your spirit.

Lamb of God

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:

Have mercy on us. (Repeat)

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:

Grant us Peace

Behold the Lamb of God

Priest: Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

People: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Concluding Rites

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

