



GUIDELINES

FOR CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

AT MOTHER OF SORROWS PARISH

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

- Marriage is one of the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church, a “sacrament of vocation.” It celebrates God’s summons to the engaged couple to form a permanent “community of life and love” together, patterned on the love of Christ revealed in the Gospel. Marital love is a sharing in Christ’s total and unconditional love for His Bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:25). Christ’s fidelity to us is expressed in His suffering, death and resurrection. It is love without limits.
- Marriage preparation at Mother of Sorrows Parish aims to help engaged couples reflect upon their marriage commitment as a part of God’s unique plan for their life together. Time is therefore required to consider the various aspects of marriage, to better understand the profound meaning of the marriage vows, to complete the necessary marriage forms and to plan the Wedding Liturgy. Ideally, marriage preparation should begin at least one year from the date of the wedding.
- The canonical requirements of the Church governing the Sacrament of Marriage are the same in all parishes of the Diocese of Greensburg. The way parishes approach the celebration may differ from parish to parish. We have established these policies at Mother of Sorrows Parish to ensure a reverent and memorable day for you and your guests. Please know that the clergy and staff of the parish are here to help you with any concerns or questions that you may have.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MARRIAGE

Before a date is confirmed for a wedding, the following matters are thoroughly reviewed:

- **Freedom to marry.** Each party must establish that he/she is free to marry, i.e. that neither party is bound by any previous marriage bond. (For those who have been previously married, the priest will review the documentation of any previous marriage to determine whether or not the marriage bond is valid according to Church law.) Freedom also means that there is no force or coercion on either party to enter into marriage.
- **Church affiliation and practice of the Catholic faith.** At least one of the Catholic parties must be a registered member of Mother of Sorrows Parish. A Catholic party from another parish must have his/her pastor’s permission in order to be married at Mother of Sorrows Parish. It is assumed that engaged couples are practicing their faith and seeking to grow spiritually as they approach the Sacrament of Marriage.
- **Intention and Maturity.** The vows of marriage express an unconditional love and commitment to a life-long and exclusive marital covenant. The couple must demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of fidelity and sufficient maturity to enter into a permanent marital bond.
- **Parenting.** Children are the natural outgrowth of the love of husband and wife. Both parties must express their openness to the procreation and nurturing of children as part of their marriage covenant. In the case of an inter-faith wedding, the Catholic party is asked to assume responsibility for baptizing and raising the child in the Catholic faith.

- **Required Documents.** Catholic parties are to present a **recently issued copy** of their baptismal certificate with a raised seal from the parish of their Baptism. This certificate can only be requested and must be issued within six months of the date of your marriage. For those baptized at Mother of Sorrows Parish, this record will be generated automatically and inserted into the marriage file. Catholics baptized elsewhere should contact the Church of Baptism and request a new copy of their baptismal record. For those who are not Catholic, a copy of the baptismal certificate from the church where they were baptized must be presented. A certificate from a non-Catholic church does not require a raised seal, and may simply be a photocopy of an original certificate.
- **Dispensations.** A dispensation or permission from the Bishop must be granted for a Catholic to marry a person who is not Catholic. In this case, the Catholic party is asked to promise to continue in the Catholic faith and to assume responsibility for the sacramental preparation and religious formation of children in the Catholic faith.

STEPS IN THE PROCESS

Please follow this step-by-step guide as you prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage to make sure that no important details are overlooked.

- First Interview (by phone or in person) with **Monsignor Michael Begolly** to determine freedom to marry and confirm the wedding date
- Participation in the parish WEDDING WORKSHOP with review of guidelines and liturgical rite
- In person meeting with Fr. Tony to review the FOCCUS Instrument and complete the required paperwork
- Participation in a program for MARRIAGE PREPARATION (options listed on separate attachment)
- Meeting with **Director of Music and Liturgy** to finalize musical selections and worship aid
- Meeting with priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding
- Apply for a PENNSYLVANIA MARRIAGE LICENSE within 60 days of the wedding and **present it to the Parish Office at least two weeks prior to the wedding**
- Wedding rehearsal
- Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage

PLANNING THE WEDDING

- **The Wedding Liturgy.** If both parties are Catholic, the Wedding Liturgy will normally take place within the Mass. If one party is not Catholic or not baptized, the wedding is celebrated “Outside of Mass.”

Normally, a priest or deacon from the parish will preside at your wedding. If you would like permission for another priest to officiate at your wedding, you may share that request with Fr. Tony at your initial meeting. The visiting priest will be required to read, agree to follow and sign the *Visiting Clergy Form*, in order to assure that the wedding policies of the diocese and parish will be followed.

In the case of a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, we heartily welcome the minister of the non-Catholic party to come and share in the ceremony according to our diocesan regulations. The minister must make a courtesy call to Fr. Tony as soon as the wedding date is set.

- **Date and Time of Weddings.** Weddings on Saturdays may be scheduled at 2:00 PM. Friday or weekday wedding times may be scheduled around the parish’s calendar. The time allotted for the use of the Church is 1½ hours from the start of the wedding.

- **Wedding Workshop.** All couples are required to attend the annual wedding workshop held on

January 10, 2026 at 10 AM to 12:30 PM

- **Wedding Rehearsal.** A parish Wedding Coordinator will conduct the rehearsal which is usually held at 5 PM on the day prior to the wedding. All those participating in the wedding ceremony should be present for the rehearsal, unless special circumstances apply. They should be present early enough so that the rehearsal can begin and end punctually.
- **Planning Music for the Wedding.** An appointment must be made with the **Director of Music and Liturgy** at Mother of Sorrows Parish to plan the music for the Wedding Liturgy. The Director serves as organist for weddings and will coordinate the hiring of additional musicians as necessary.
The parish will provide the worship aids for the congregation's use during the ceremony. The couple is responsible for providing the Director an electronic copy of the names of the wedding party for inclusion in the worship aid.
The Director will preview musical options at the **Wedding Planning Workshop** that will be held annually at Mother of Sorrows Parish. You will have an opportunity to meet with the Director who will help you to choose music that will enhance your Wedding Liturgy.
- **Altar Decorations.** The couple may provide flowers for the sanctuary. These flowers are then left after the wedding as a gift to the parish.
- **Aisle Runner.** Due to safety concerns the use of an aisle runner for the main aisle of the church is not permitted.
- **Use of Church after the Wedding.** The wedding party has use of the church for 1½ hours from the scheduled time of the wedding. Thus, 2:00 PM wedding parties should plan to leave the church premises by 3:30 PM to allow adequate time for the cleaning of the church prior to the next scheduled Mass.
- **Photography/Videography.** These professionals are asked to respect the church as a sacred space for worship. A copy of guidelines is included at the end of this booklet. Please share these with your photographer & videographer.
- **Livestream.** Mother of Sorrows Church has professional livestream recording equipment that gives the option for your ceremony to be streamed on YouTube. Arrangements for livestream are made with the Director of Liturgy and Music.
- **Unity Candle.** The use of a Unity Candle is not a primary Catholic liturgical symbol and its use is not part of the Wedding Liturgy at MOS. A prayer for using the Unity Candle at the reception is provided at the end of these guidelines.
- **Throwing rice, etc.** Objects such as rice, rose petals, confetti, birdseed, bubbles, balloons etc., may not be used on church premises. Please plan and advise guests accordingly.
- **Smoking, Drinking and Food.** Smoking is not permitted within the church building, including the restrooms. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on the church campus prior to and after the Wedding Liturgy. (Photographers may not stage wedding pictures in which alcoholic beverages are used either in the church or on parish grounds.)
- **Marriage License.** A Pennsylvania Marriage License is required by state law and is issued by the County Clerk of the Orphan's Court. It is valid for 60 days. **The couple should present the marriage license to the parish office at least two weeks before the rehearsal.**

- **Sacrament of Penance.** Catholics who come to the Church for Sacramental Marriage should be in the “state of grace,” i.e. be free of serious sin. Therefore, couples and the wedding party are encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance (Confession) prior to and in preparation for the wedding day. Plan to take care of this before the rehearsal.
- **Wedding Stipends.** For parishioners of Mother of Sorrows Parish who are registered and active for at least a year prior to the wedding, the stipend is \$725 which includes the priest/deacon presider, organist, cantor, wedding coordinator and altar server. There is no fee for the use of the church building, maintenance, heat or air conditioning, lights, etc. since you are a supporting member of the parish family.

For non - members, and parishioners who are not active, or who have only registered within twelve months of scheduling the wedding, the fee is \$1,000, with a non-refundable \$300 deposit at the time of booking their wedding. The additional amount is assigned for the use of the church building, maintenance, heat or air conditioning, lights, etc.

All stipends and fees must be submitted no later than two weeks prior to your scheduled wedding date. We know how busy those few weeks before a wedding can be. Therefore, as a courtesy, if your stipends and fees are not paid in full at least two weeks prior to your wedding date, you will receive a call from the parish office as a reminder.

If you are requesting a priest or deacon from outside the parish to preside, an additional stipend should be offered to him for his service.

If requested in advance, the Wedding Liturgy can be livestreamed for an additional fee of \$100.

The Wedding Procession

Processing, or walking, is a sign of your journey together towards God’s reign and your eventual entrance into paradise....***together!*** The Wedding liturgy is not only the joining of your lives as one, but is also the joining together of families, friends and all those dear to you.

With this in mind, the procession options offered at Mother of Sorrows Parish reflect this joining of your lives by inviting the entire bridal party, your parents, and children of the wedding party and ministers of the church to approach the altar of the Lord together with you.

You will notice that the bridal party processes toward the altar in pairs and that both the parents of the bride *and* the groom are an important part of the procession. Weddings are about moving forward together towards a life of Christian commitment, faith and love. Where better to begin than with your new family as you process towards this Sacrament?

In many countries the Bride and Groom walk together to church along with their families and friends as a strong symbol of the “new” family that is about to be created by the Sacrament of Marriage.

As you choose the procession option that fits your families’ needs, please remember that there are **three options** available to you. We know that you will find an option which allows you to reflect your families’ needs while at the same time remaining faithful to the precepts of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Wedding Procession Option 1



(Ring Bearer, Flower Girl, etc.)

Best Man and Maid/Matron
of Honor

Attendants as Couples

Parents of the Bride

Parents of the Groom

Priest

Servers



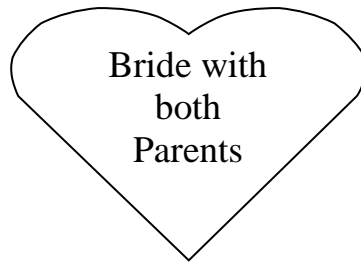
Seats for Attendants

Kneeler

Seats for Bride & Groom
Seats for Best Man/
Maid of Honor

ALTAR

Wedding Procession Option 2



(Ring Bearer, Flower Girl, etc.)

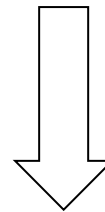
Best man and Maid of Honor

Attendants as Couples

Groom with Parents

Priest

Servers



Seats for Attendants

Seats for Bride and Groom
Seats for Best Man/
Maid of Honor

Kneeler

ALTAR

Wedding Procession Option 3

This option is used when Bride is being accompanied by ONE Person.



Children of the Bridal Party
(Ring Bearer, Flower Girl, etc.)

Best Man and Maid of Honor

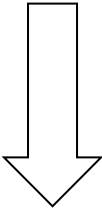
Attendants as Couples

Mother of the Bride w/ escort

Groom with his parents

Priest

Servers



Seats for Attendants

Kneeler

Seats for Bride and Groom
Seats for Best Man/
Maid of Honor

ALTAR

GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHER & VIDEOGRAPHER

In order to maintain a spirit of prayer and reverence during the wedding liturgy and to allow the couple to capture special moments of their wedding day in photographs, the following guidelines must be observed at Mother of Sorrows Parish:

- Only the official photographer/videographer is permitted to move about the church to capture photographs/video.
- Flash photography is not permitted during the Liturgy.
- The photographer/videographer is not permitted to rearrange altar appointments or sanctuary furniture.
- No one is permitted to take photographs standing within the sanctuary (the tiled area where the altar is located.)
- The use of stationary tripods to set up camera/video equipment is recommended for the Liturgy. However, the setup must not impede the movement of the Liturgy, nor block the entrance to the Eucharistic Chapel or emergency exits.
- Photographers/Videographers are not permitted to interfere with the wedding procession or recession by stopping subjects as they walk down the aisle.
- Videographers may utilize a direct audio feed from the PA system. An XLR output is located in the hallway at the rear of the church.
- Following the ceremony, 30 minutes are allowed for picture taking at the church (inside or outside) because of the Saturday evening Mass scheduled at 4:30.
- Please remember that the church building is sacred space and that an atmosphere of reverence must be maintained at all times.
- Photographers must follow any additional directions given by the Priest or the Parish Wedding Coordinator.

We continue to offer these privileges with your professional assurance that you will adhere to the regulations of Mother of Sorrows Parish. We know that your wish for the wedding couple echoes ours: that all will uphold the dignity of the Sacrament that they receive on their wedding day. Following these simple guidelines will help to ensure just that.

PLEASE SHARE THIS INFORMATION
WITH YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER

THE UNITY CANDLE . . . WHY NOT AT MASS?

Since the wedding candle, sometimes referred to as the unity candle, is not part of the Church's official marriage rite, it is not included in the ceremony. Moreover, when its use is accompanied by words of explanation, it overburdens the ceremony (especially the Mass) and overshadows the primary symbols, namely the exchange of consent (vows) and the exchange of rings which should stand out above all else. These are the Church's symbols of unity.

Because of its frequent use in some wedding ceremonies, however, some couples think that the wedding candle is an integral part of the marriage rite, and so it has become a popular visual symbol. You may want to consider using it as part of the table prayer at your reception, rather than adding it to the church ceremony.

Here is a table grace which may be used before the wedding banquet. It incorporates a ceremony of lighting the wedding candle. Used at the wedding banquet, rather than during the Liturgy, it can be an effective reminder of what happened in church. It may help those who attend only the reception to connect with the marriage ceremony.

USING THE WEDDING CANDLE WITH TABLE PRAYER AT THE RECEPTION

The wedding candle, two side candles, matches and tapers for lighting are set up at the table where the newly-married couple will be seated. Just before the entrance of the bridal party, the parents light the two side candles. The bridal party enters the reception hall according to custom.

*We thank you, Lord, for this food
and for the grace to eat it together.
May we all feast with you one day
at the banquet of eternal life.
We ask all this of you, Lord Jesus,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.*

We continue to ask God's blessing upon N. and N. as we celebrate their commitment to each other in the sacrament of matrimony. As a sign of their marriage, they light the wedding candle from the two candles which represent their individual lives.

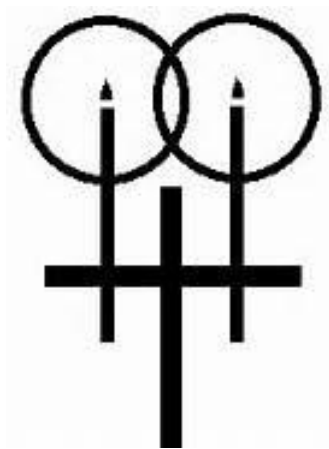
Lighting their tapers from the two side candles, the bride and groom join the two flames and light the wedding candle. As they do so the prayer continues:

*As the two flames become one,
symbolizing their union with each other in the Lord,
we ask God to bless their marriage,
and to keep N. and N. close to him in the years ahead.
May they always turn to God
in times of joy and in times of need.
We pray this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

The two side candles are extinguished. The best man may then offer the customary toast. The reception continues.

OPTIONS FOR MARRIAGE PREP

1. **Mother of Sorrows Sponsor Couples.** The Sponsor Couple Program uses a couple-to-couple approach for marriage preparation in which a married couple sponsors, or mentors, an engaged couple. They meet for 5-6 sessions, using the book “For Better and For Ever” by Rev. Robert Ruhnke, as a guide for discussion. All sessions are usually hosted by the Sponsor Couple in their own home with meeting times arranged to suit individual schedules and needs. Contact Ellen Mady, Pastoral Associate, Office of Discipleship and Parish Life for arrangements at 724-733-8870, Ext. 7056 or email emady@dioceseofgreensburg.org.
2. **Engaged Encounter.** Engaged Encounter offers a weekend-long approach to marriage preparation. Each diocese runs its own program, but you are welcome to register at whatever diocese makes the most logistical sense for you and your fiancé. You can access the Diocese of Greensburg’s or Pittsburgh’s Engaged Encounter schedule at www.engagedencounter.org. A fee to attend is charged, which includes room and board for the weekend and the cost of the program and corresponding materials.
3. **Marriage Preparation Program of the Diocese of Pittsburgh:** Information and a regularly updated calendar of classes can be found at www.diopitt.org/marriage-family. Scroll down the page and click on the link for “Diocesan Pre-marriage Program.” You must register to attend. The diocese also offers an Engaged Encounter Program. You may view the offered program at www.diopitt.org/marriage-preparation.
4. **Marriage Preparation Program of the Diocese of Greensburg:** The diocese offers the Engaged Encounter Program. You must register to attend. Please refer to the above information or consult your Marriage Guidelines sent to you in the enclosed packet.
5. **Online Marriage Preparation:** CatholicMarriagePrep.com is a deeply personal, online one-on-one mentor led program for parishes to offer to couples without sacrificing the personal attention or in depth Catholic formation. Each mentor couple journeys with each engaged couple for up to three months, more if needed. Register at [Catholic Marriage Prep.com](http://CatholicMarriagePrep.com).



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