

Marriage Information

Shepherd of the Valley Catholic Church

Introduction:

The Parish of Shepherd of the Valley Catholic Church welcomes you in your preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage. We celebrate with you and it is our hope that we can assist you so that your wedding and your marriage are a blessed event in your lives and in the lives of others. Please read over the materials below and keep in mind that although we do need to cover policies and guidelines, our ultimate goal is to help enrich your marriage and its connection with Christ and the Church. We are confident that you will find your marriage and wedding at Shepherd of the Valley to be inspiring and joy filled. Marriage is a great commitment, a new beginning in life, and not something to be entered into lightly. We want to invite you into a deeper and fuller participation in your faith where you can more fully offer your gifts and love for each other to God and his people on a regular basis. Why do we desire this? Simply put, that was the intention of Jesus all along and it is his intention for you. In other words, a wedding is a day but a faithful marriage is a lifetime.

The Sacrament of Marriage has a great deal of meaning for Catholics and Christians over and above the joining of two people in love. It is modeled on the passionate, intimate, and sacrificial love that God has demonstrated for us in Jesus. St. Paul specifically connects marriage to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and calls married couples to imitate that and enter into relationship with Christ and each other. His specific example is that Jesus went to the cross and gave all that he had and was for our sake. In a similar way we, the Church, offer ourselves completely and sacrificially to Christ in a grateful response. This is the reciprocal kind of covenant love that calls couples to offer themselves over for the sake of the other. Life is imperfect, but it is good to know that Jesus leads us in the Sacrament of Marriage to a type of perfection that is not possible without his love, help, example, and grace.

I invite you to take your marriage commitment seriously and put the hard work into it so that it reflects the fullness of what God intends it to be. Therefore, you will hear it stressed that we don't want to just "perform the wedding." We want you to pray together, go to Mass regularly, participate in the sacraments, educate your children in the faith, be generous with your gifts, serve the poor and disadvantaged, and be a visible witness of Jesus' love in the world. You will soon stand before God, your loved ones, and the Church to exchange vows that include a lifelong commitment of love and fidelity. As you make that commitment, it is God's will and our hope that this union will result in a lifetime of fulfilled joy!

Pre-Marriage Program:

The couple must contact the pastor at least six months prior to the date of the marriage. During this initial information session, the pastor will advise the couple on the steps necessary to be eligible to marry in the Church. If there have been previous marriages this may or may not hinder this ability. The options will be discussed at this time.

True preparation is necessary for marriage. Everyone comes to a relationship with a set of expectations that will influence married life such as: finance, communication, sexuality, and spirituality. Our marriage preparation program helps the couple prepare for the fullness of married life. This includes looking at many aspects of married life. Specifically, this will include meetings with the Pastor, Sponsor Couple meetings, classes or workshops from time to time, and an Engaged Encounter Retreat. In addition all the necessary paperwork and documents need to be completed and filled out in advance of the wedding. For your convenience there is a separate checklist at the end of this document. You may want to print it and save it for reference.

Music:

Music is an important element of the wedding and every effort must be made to have appropriate and good music in keeping with the religious nature of ceremony. Therefore, it is not permitted to have prerecorded music or music that is secular in nature including secular music that may have some religious component. Some instrumental music that might not be explicitly religious can be permitted if it is appropriate to the occasion. It is your obligation to provide an outline of the music you wish to use at the wedding well in advance for approval.

You are welcome to include musicians of your choice as long as they are capable of fulfilling the basic functions of a religious ceremony. If you are in need of musicians the pastor can get you in touch with some different options. Our cantors and musicians usually spend a considerable amount of time finding and practicing the songs and working with the couple. Therefore, it is expected that a stipend be given to them for their services. Please look over the recommended donation schedule for reference.

Photography:

Photos and video are fine, but care must be taken to ensure the sacredness of the event as well as the desire to keep distractions to a minimum so the focus can be rightly directed toward the marriage ceremony. A good photographer will be able to do both well. For example a photographer should not enter the altar area or be in the way. Flash should not be used and really isn't needed since the church is well lit. Photos may also be taken before and after the wedding service, but please be attentive to the time constraints that prior and later events will impose.

Decorum and Etiquette:

Keep in mind that the Church is a place of prayer and worship. Respect for the facilities and what it is used for should be maintained at all times. Yelling, running around, cursing, and disrespectful behavior are inappropriate. In addition, drinks, food, candy, gum, and trash are not allowed in the church and can create a mess especially with children. Rooms will be provided where water and some snacks may be stored, but care and cleanliness must still be maintained. Destruction or vandalism of the facilities will also not be tolerated. Please make sure that the wedding starts on time. This means that the bride and groom and those participating will need to come early and be ready to begin at the scheduled time.

It goes without saying, but I'm saying it for clarity, that drunkenness or use of drugs or alcohol on site will cause an immediate cancelation of the wedding. Brides or grooms that arrive intoxicated or hung over will cause an immediate cancelation of the wedding. Additional members of the wedding party that arrive intoxicated will be asked to leave.

Decorations:

Decorations, flowers, and other items may be allowed as long as they are not damaging to the church furnishings and they would not be dangerous to children or others. Whatever is used should be elegant, simple, and non-obstructing. You may wish to work together with the parish volunteer who arranges the flowers to coordinate your decorations with the usual decorations on the weekend. You can find her information at the front office.

Please do not use anything that could or would stain, damage, or leave markings or residues. For example real rose petals or leaves, ink, glitter, thumbtacks or tape, bubbles, rice, or anything else that can spill, is destructive, or may cause a safety concern are not permitted. If you have an idea of what you would like to do for decorations, check with the pastor to see if there are other things that might want to be considered.

Clean Up:

Because the Church is used for other services on the weekends, we ask that the church and other facilities be fully cleaned and cleared by 15 minutes prior to our next event. For example if your wedding is at 1:00 it must typically be totally cleared and cleaned by 2:45. The time allotted will typically be an hour and 45 minutes. It is helpful to assign someone to coordinate the cleaning up so the bride and the groom can attend to other matters.

Church Offering

A donation to the church is considered appropriate as an expression of thanks to the Lord for the blessings that have lead up to this joyous event and an expression of appreciation to the parishioners of Shepherd of the Valley whose contributions pay for the cost and upkeep of the facilities. Therefore, we do have a recommended donation schedule. Some items are grouped together and paid at the front office, some are arranged independently, and some are arranged independently and are optional.

Recommended donation schedule:

Use of Church: \$350

Marriage Preparation Process: \$50

Marriage Coordinator: \$100

Music: (arranged independently) Typically \$100-\$200 range

Priest or Deacon Celebrant: (arranged independently and optional) Typically \$100 or so

These are guidelines. Please feel free to discuss any special situations with the pastor. Some can do more as a percentage of their total wedding cost and some will need to do less. No one will be refused the sacrament due to financial considerations. Also, simple convalidations or "having your marriage blessed in the Church" are different than a full wedding ceremony.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

1. Do you have to be Catholic to get married? At least one member of the marriage party will need to be Catholic but both do not have to be. In fact, Christians and even non Christians can still marry. Keep in mind that the prayers and the focus of the wedding are Catholic in nature. We believe, however, that most will find the challenge and understanding of a Catholic marriage and wedding as attractive and encouraging even to those of other religious beliefs.
2. What if neither of us are Catholic but want a Catholic wedding? Unfortunately, we are not able to marry two non Catholics. Sometimes people do plan out a Catholic wedding and are also in the process of becoming Catholic so that they can become Catholic in the spring and marry in the summer. Talk to Fr. Mike if you are considering this option.
3. Is it true that a divorced person can't marry in the Catholic Church and are "excommunicated"? No, neither assertion is true. It is true that Catholics and non Catholics will need to be "free to marry". This means that any former marriages must be resolved in some manner. This typically happens through an annulment process and sometimes through other means. Please contact Fr. Mike at the front office early on to discuss your particular situation so we can assist you.
4. Can we be married outside? This used to be easier than it is today. Today only the Archbishop can give the exception and he typically does not do it. The good news is that the church setting works well and gives the marriage a festive yet elegant note. The reception afterwards lends itself well to an outside setting and many chose to do this after the marriage for an "outside" balance.
5. Can we have dancing processions, Elvis giving away the bride, Gothic themes, or animals involved? Again, the reception might be a better avenue for these types of things. Because the wedding is a sacred event in a sacred space, we want to maintain that atmosphere and reserve a festive yet appropriate ceremony in keeping with the dignity and intention of the rite.

Checklist of items to complete:

Paperwork and administrative information:

- Meet with the Priest:** Initial meeting with Fr. Mike or the presiding priest so that the process can begin.
- Freedom to Marry Forms:** Basic information the couple fills out about themselves.
- Witness Forms:** Two witnesses are required per person. These are not necessarily the same witnesses that you will have at your wedding, but simply validate your information.
- Dispensation or Delegation Forms** (if needed): These are used for visiting priests, marriages between a Catholic and a non baptized person, and marriages that take place in another Catholic Church.
- Baptismal Certificates:** Baptized persons must obtain recent copies of their certificates of baptism. These certificates must be within six months of the current date. They are obtained by calling the parishes where the person was baptized and requesting an official copy to be sent to Shepherd of the Valley.
- Marriage License:** You will need to go to the Jackson County Courthouse and obtain your marriage license to be used at the wedding. If you already are civilly married, you will need to provide a copy of your marriage license
- Annulment Papers** (if needed): Divorced Catholics or non Catholics may still be able to marry in the Catholic Church. There is a process for this to take place. Please contact Fr. Mike to begin this process as soon as possible if needed. It can take some time and must be completed before a wedding date can be assigned.
- Choosing and Reserving the Date:** The date will need to be selected and written into the Church Calendar in order for it to be reserved. This is only possible after the initial meeting with the priest and is done at the front office.
- Church Offering:** The offering must be arranged and paid before the wedding. Contact the front office of the Church to complete that process.

Preparation and Requirement Checklist:

- Meeting with the Priest:** There are typically at least a couple of meetings with the couple to talk about marriage as well as the wedding.
- Sponsor Couples Program:** This consists of at least three sessions with the couple and a parish couple. The arrangements are made between you and the sponsor couple after they call you.
- Engaged Encounter:** This is a weekend retreat in the Portland area. You can find dates, times, and information at their website: oregonengagedencounter.org
- NFP Workshop:** This is an informational workshop to help people to understand a natural and effective way for real family planning. It depends on the availability of an expert to be able to offer it but you will be given notice of the date and time when it is available.

Wedding Ceremony Checklist:

Wedding Readings: Readings to be used at the wedding must be selected by the couple. They include an Old Testament Reading, a Psalm, a New Testament Reading, and a Gospel Reading. For your convenience, the options are available on the parish website under the tabs “Ministries” and “Marriage” and then by clicking the link “Wedding Readings Options”. The instructions for selecting are given in the document link. Be sure to read over the commentaries and write down the texts you wish to use and communicate those to the priest performing the ceremony.

People to Assist in the Liturgy: If you have a Mass you will need to select readers (one or two), Eucharistic Ministers (two or three), Altar Servers (optional), Gift Bearers (to bring up the bread and wine), Ushers (to assist seating and movement), Ring Bearers, and the Court which includes the Best Man, Maid of Honor, (the different Godparents if necessary), and a designated “clean up crew”. If it is not a Mass, you will not need Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Servers, or Gift Bearers.

Musicians: The Musicians will need to be selected and knowledgeable on how to sing and play during a Catholic Wedding Ceremony.

Arras, Lazos, Flowers to the Virgin, Unity Candles, etc: Some cultures have additional items in the marriage ceremony. This is especially true among Hispanic Catholics. Please communicate these options to the priest or deacon so that they can be included in the wedding.

Decorations and Set Up: If needed, during the week of the wedding, the bride or groom can sign out a for decorations and set up. The church will be open at least an hour before the ceremony and many chose to use this time for final set up.

Rehearsal: Most weddings are on Saturday and most rehearsals are at 5:00 pm on Friday nights before the wedding. Since the church is often used on Friday nights, people who will be involved in the ceremony need to be focused and on time so that it can be completed in less than an hour.

General:

1. It is recommended not to put off the requirements until the end. Completing the items in a timely manner will help you not to feel pressured in the weeks approaching your wedding.
2. Make sure to know and follow the guidelines listed in the overall document to prevent misunderstandings or last minute changes.
3. Keep in mind that you are responsible for the completing of the Marriage Preparation Process. We will assist you so that the elements are completed. We will not, however, watch over you and give constant reminders or phone calls so that it happens. If the necessary requirements are not met, the wedding cannot take place so please take the time to understand and complete the necessary steps. If you have a question about something, please contact us so that we can assist you to do so.
4. Please note the instructions and requirements listed in this complete document to assist you in your planning and preparation and prevent misunderstandings.