

*Marriage Preparation  
& Wedding Guidelines*



**ST. MARY**  
OF THE SEVEN SORROWS  
CATHOLIC CHURCH  
Oldest Standing Church in Nashville. Dedicated in 1847.

## **Prayer for Engaged Couples**

Heavenly Father,  
in your great love you established marriage as  
blessing and grace for your people.  
Bless and guide this couple who are preparing to celebrate this  
wonderful sacrament.

Give them patience during times of stress.  
Give them reassurance in times of doubt and give them increased  
peace and joy as their wedding day draws near.

Strengthen their love for one another, for  
their families and for you.

May the prayerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the  
bridal guest at Cana, be theirs all the days of their lives.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord.

Amen.

## St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows Catholic Church Marriage Preparation & Wedding Guidelines

The main concern of the Church is that you understand the depth and significance of the commitment you intend to make. This commitment is based on your deep love for each other, which is a love rooted in God Himself. The question the Church asks is: “Are you ready to make this kind of God-centered commitment?” The following process exists in order to allow you the time and assistance necessary to answer that question.

- (1) You must meet with the pastor of St. Mary’s at least six (6) months prior to the desired wedding date. Parishioners of other parishes must have special permission from St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows Church AND (if permission is granted) their pastor for the marriage to take place at St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows Church.
- (2) If there is a prior marriage with either the bride or groom, the Priest will inform you as to the additional documentation required. The individual with a prior bond is advised to contact their local priest or deacon at least one year in advance. If one or two of the parties wanting to be married is seeking a declaration of nullity, Diocesan policy states that a wedding date cannot be set until it has been granted.
- (3) Pre-marriage preparation is a requirement of the Catholic Church and the Diocese of Nashville. Verification of attendance/participation in an approved program of marriage preparation must be demonstrated before the wedding. If the couple resides in the Nashville area, they must participate in the marriage preparation program and the Three to Stay Married weekend retreat offered through the parish. Other situations must be approved by St. Mary’s pastor. (Should outside marriage preparation be allowed, a certificate of marriage preparation completion must be submitted for your files prior to your final meeting. In the rare instance (such as military deployment) the pastor approves online marriage preparation, the following program will be used: [www.catholicmarriageprep.com](http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com))
- (4) Before securing your wedding date and time with St. Mary’s Church, you are required to provide **recent** copies of both your **baptismal and confirmation certificates**. **Certificates must be dated within one year of the date of the wedding**. To obtain a recent copy of the certificates call or write the church where you received the sacraments and request that a copy be sent to you.
- (5) **NOTE: If either the bride or groom is not a Roman Catholic, the nonCatholic party will need a baptismal certificate or letter from the church of baptism, stating when and where the Baptism occurred. Also, you will need an affidavit, signed by a parent or close relative, stating that you have never been married before.**
- (6) In light of special circumstances, such as a pregnancy involved or if one of you is under eighteen years of age, or for other reasons as well, then both of you may be asked to go for further evaluation to help you determine your readiness for this sacrament.
- (7) The Sacrament of Penance prior to the wedding is part of the Church’s preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage. The Sacrament will be offered at the rehearsal.

## St. Mary's Marriage Preparation Requirements

1. Allow for a minimum of six months for the marriage preparation process (from the first meeting with Fr. Neely to the wedding date)
2. Marriage must take place in a Catholic Church. Attire should be suitable for Church.
3. Couple will meet with Fr. Neely on at least three occasions for pre-marital counseling.
  - a. First meeting – complete forms and begin marriage preparation. Following meeting, instructions will be emailed regarding the FOCCUS pre-marriage inventory/questionnaire, which is to be completed online separately by the bride and groom. (\$15 fee to be paid upon login)
  - b. Second meeting (1 hour) to discuss FOCCUS inventory results
  - c. Third meeting (1 hour) to plan wedding Mass and other details. You should make this final appointment with the celebrant at least one month prior to the wedding. Be prepared to discuss with him why a church marriage is important to you and to talk about your understanding of the commitment you will make to each other in the Sacrament of Marriage. Scripture readings, which you have selected, should be submitted to the celebrant at this time. Also, please have available for approval a rough copy of your wedding program if you plan to have one.
4. Marriage Preparation Fee of \$50 (payable to St. Mary's) should be paid at/or before first meeting.
5. Couple must schedule and complete Natural Family Planning classes. Local Instructors for Natural Family Planning (NFP)
  - Diana Kendrick: dkendrick@onlifehealth.com
  - Heather Honeycutt: hehoneycutt@gmail.com or 615 308-7722
  - Kim Derrick: kimjohnderrick@comcast.net
6. Couple must attend *Three to Get Married* Retreat, led by Fr. Neely. Register and pay at [stmarysdowntown.org](http://stmarysdowntown.org)
7. Rehearsal time for night before wedding must be set with Fr. Neely before scheduled (in case he has other conflict)
8. Send newly-issued Baptismal certificates “with notations” for each person to:  
University Catholic  
Attn: Marriage Prep  
2004 Terrace Place  
Nashville TN 37203  
(To request your newly-issue certificate, please call the parish where you were baptized)

## St. Mary's Use of Church Policies

The following criteria must be met for the marriage to take place at St. Mary Church:

- Catholic in good-standing AND
- Either bride or groom is a member of St. Mary Church (definition of a member can be found under *Maintenance Fee*) OR
- St. Mary's Pastor approval for non-parishioners, with the approval of the bride's pastor.

### Weddings between Catholics and Non-Catholics

It is customary and normative for there to be **NO MASS** for a wedding between a Catholic and a non-Catholic. The reason for this is primarily because the Catholic Church does not practice inter-communion, i.e., Catholics are not allowed by the Catholic Church to receive communion in a non-Catholic church and non-Catholics may not receive communion at a Catholic Mass. Therefore, to avoid any awkwardness or embarrassment brought about by some receiving and some not receiving communion, the Catholic Church feels it is best not to have a Mass in such circumstances.

In a wedding without a Mass, the ceremony is similar to the Liturgy of the Word. Such a ceremony would include the opening prayer, readings from Sacred Scripture, homily, exchange of vows and rings, nuptial blessing, and final blessing.

**No mass is allowed in a wedding between a Catholic and non-baptized person.**

### The Nuptial Mass: Setting the Date and Time

Please be aware that there are certain days in the Church's calendar where a wedding Mass cannot be celebrated. In this case, a wedding may take place using the Mass of the day with the inserted marriage ritual or a marriage ceremony without a Mass.

Weddings are scheduled on Saturdays at 11 am and 2 pm. Weddings **MUST** begin promptly at the scheduled time.

No wedding can be scheduled on the eve of a major feast or a holy day of obligation. In addition, no wedding can be scheduled on **All Souls Day** or **during Advent or Lent**.

Rehearsals are scheduled the Friday before the wedding at 6 pm. **ONE-HALF HOUR** is allowed and **MUST** begin promptly at the scheduled time. If any member of the wedding party is not on time, the rehearsal will begin without him or her. **ONLY THE BRIDAL PARTY SHOULD ATTEND THE REHEARSAL**. Other guests of the rehearsal dinner should go directly to that location.

Before the wedding date can be placed on the St. Mary Church calendar, all payments must be made in full.

**Please keep in mind that the parking lot next to St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows Church is free for church events on Saturday and Sunday only.**

## **Fees**

If neither the bride or the groom, nor parents of either, is a member of St. Mary, a **NON-REFUNDABLE** fee of \$1000 is payable when the date of the wedding is scheduled. As stated earlier, a refundable deposit of \$250 is also due at this time. Make checks payable to: St. Mary Church. Having received the sacraments at St. Mary Church or intending to become a member of the parish does not exclude you from the maintenance fee. You must have been a registered, active and supporting member of the parish **prior to scheduling** your wedding to be excused from the \$1000 fee.

**NOTE:** A member of St. Mary's means that you are a minor (under 18 years of age) living with your parents who are registered, active and supporting members of the parish; OR you are 18 years of age, a full time student at a university and living with your parents who are registered, active and supporting members of the parish; OR you are 18 years of age and have been a registered, active and supporting member of the parish for a year prior to scheduling your wedding. If either the bride or groom, or their parents, is a member of St. Mary, the \$1000 fee will be waived. However, the \$250 refundable deposit is due and payable at the time the wedding is scheduled.

## **Attire**

Brides are to bear in mind the **necessity of modesty in dress** appropriate for a sacred occasion and place of worship. Keep in mind when selecting the wedding gown and bridesmaids' dresses that a shawl or wrap will be required to cover cleavage and bare shoulders of the bridal party.

Proper attire should be worn at the wedding rehearsal and wedding by all in the bridal party. This includes no shorts, halter tops, tank tops or mid-drifts, baseball caps, torn jeans, sunglasses, flip flops or other inappropriate attire.

## **Liturgical Norms**

Liturgical norms must be followed as set down in the ritual for weddings and in the General Instructions for the Mass. All readings are selected from the New American Bible. A list of approved readings can be found at [foryourmarriage.org](http://foryourmarriage.org).

## **Conduct and Behavior**

The bride and groom will be required to place a deposit of \$250 and sign St. Mary's Wedding Guidelines Acknowledgment Form. This deposit will be refunded after the wedding only if no infraction of any kind has occurred. It is the responsibility of the couple to ask for the refund within **30 days** following the wedding. If we do not hear from you within those **30 days**, we will assume you wish to donate the deposit to the church and will process the deposit accordingly.

For **both the wedding rehearsal and the wedding** you are reminded that St. Mary is a Church, a place of worship where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. It is not a museum or a rental hall. The conduct and attire of the wedding party and the guests should reflect the sacredness of the place. There should be no shouting, loud noise or improper conduct inside St. Mary's or on the Church grounds. Eating, drinking and smoking are not allowed inside the Church. **It is absolutely forbidden to bring alcoholic beverages and/or other drugs on the grounds of the Church or inside the Church itself.**

### **Conduct and behavior, continued**

**DRUNKENNESS OR DRINKING ALCOHOL WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.** If any member of the wedding party comes to the wedding or the rehearsal in any form of intoxication **then the wedding may be postponed or cancelled.** Inebriation and the disorderly conduct that proceeds from it can ruin your wedding.

The bride and groom will be held responsible for the conduct and behavior of the wedding party inside St. Mary's and on the Church grounds as outlined in the Acknowledgment Form. This also includes leaving the church and property neat and clean and free of any damage. Please make your wedding day a happy one and avoid any type of embarrassment to you and your guests.

Inappropriate behavior by any member of the wedding party is **strictly forbidden.**

### **No Dressing Facilities**

St. Mary's has no dressing room facilities. All members of the wedding party are to arrive **fully dressed** no more than sixty (60) minutes prior to the wedding. Arriving in robes, petticoats, or other forms of undress on the grounds of or in St. Mary's is **strictly forbidden** and is considered **indecent exposure in a church.**

### **Lectors and Ushers**

It is expected that you choose experienced lectors who will be reading from approved scripture reading and responsorial psalms. They must be in attendance at the wedding rehearsal to practice their part in the ceremony. Ushers should attend the wedding rehearsal and be given specific instructions as to what is expected of them.

### **Altar Servers**

Altar servers are provided for weddings celebrated at St. Mary's Church. Whether the celebrant is St. Mary's clergy or another priest, any arrangements for altar servers must be coordinated with the St. Mary's staff to avoid any duplication. One altar server must be an active St. Mary's server if a family altar server is involved.

### **Non-Parishioners**

Non-parishioners must have written permission from the pastor of the bride for the wedding to take place at St. Mary's Church, and the pastor of the groom's parish should be notified. If the bride is not a Catholic, the pastor of the groom should provide the letter of permission.

### **Celebrant**

If the celebrant is other than a priest of St. Mary's Church, delegation must be obtained from the Pastor of St. Mary. This permission is to be sought in writing, with proof of being a priest or deacon in good standing with their diocese (or religious order) at least four months prior to the desired date.

### **Priority Given for Diocesan and St. Mary's Church Decorations**

If your wedding date falls during one of the major liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas or Easter) when special decorations are already in the church, or when St. Mary's Church has been decorated for a Diocese of Nashville or a parish ceremony, you will not be allowed to change or adjust these decorations for your wedding. These decorations must remain.

### **Decorations during the Christmas Season**

Because of the special nature of the Christmas season (from the week of Christmas through the Feast of Baptism of the Lord in early January), Saint Mary's is solely responsible for decorating the church and no other decorators can obtain permission to decorate at that time.

### **Flowers and Other Decorations**

Not much needs to be done to enhance the beauty of our historic Church. Flower arrangements may be placed at either side of the altar in vases provided by the Church. These arrangements are to remain on the altar following the wedding.

No decorations are to be hung from the walls and columns of the church. Decorations attached to pews must use string or a padded clip so wood is not scratched. The use of an aisle runner in the center aisle is not permitted. No silk or plastic flowers are allowed in the church; no unity candles; no glitter of any type (on decorations or ribbons); no rice, seeds, confetti, flower petals, bubbles or similar items are to be thrown or scattered anywhere in the Church or outside on the premises, before, during, or after the wedding. The only candles allowed are the ones presently in the sanctuary which will be lighted for the ceremony. No additional candelabra or candles of any type may be used in the Church. The florist will be allowed one hour prior to the ceremony for decorating and one-half (1/2) hour after the ceremony to clean up. The florist must prepare all flower arrangements before they are brought into St. Mary's. Keeping in mind with the historical nature of the Church, the florist must provide adequate protection for the floor, rugs, and altar. The florist must come with all manpower and equipment needed.

### **Photography**

Pictures are nice remembrances; however, the photographer can detract from the ceremony itself. It is recommended that you engage a licensed photographer. Only one official still photographer, with hand held camera, is allowed for the wedding. No additional equipment is allowed, including flash or other artificial lighting during the ceremony. Only the official photographer is allowed to take pictures and should arrive no earlier than one hour prior to the ceremony.

Photographers are not to be in sight of the congregation or move about at any point during the ceremony, including the procession. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Please let your bridal party, family and guests know this to avoid embarrassment. Photograph sessions are **NOT** allowed before the wedding inside of the church. Pictures can be taken outside of St. Mary's Church before and after the wedding; however, if there is no time constraint, an additional 20 minutes may be used to photograph family group pictures on the steps of the sanctuary after the wedding.



### **Video Taping**

Video photography of your wedding is discouraged. If you intend to video tape your wedding, your videographer must agree to the restrictions set forth. It is recommended that you use a licensed videographer. You are allowed to have one videographer with a self-contained, battery-operated camera. The camera is to be in one position during the ceremony and not in sight of the congregation. The videographer should arrive no earlier than one hour prior to the ceremony. Video sessions are **NOT** allowed before the wedding inside the church, but may be taken after the wedding while the photographer takes his pictures. Videos can be taken outside of St. Mary's before and after the wedding.

### **Other Regulations**

Regarding the florist, photographer, and videographer; they are to introduce themselves to our volunteer wedding guild members when they arrive for the wedding. These wedding guild members will ensure they abide by the guidelines outlined.

The proper place for the seating of the wedding party and attendants is in the nave (i.e. four front pews). **The attendants will not be allowed to sit in the apse or sanctuary.** Attendants will join the bride and groom on the altar for exchange of vows only.

Sanctuary furniture is not to be moved by anyone.

The use of animals and/or wildlife in St. Mary's or on the grounds is absolutely prohibited (i.e. horse drawn carriages, caged doves, family pets, or exotic animals). No bubbles, rice, flowers, birdseed, petals, etc. inside or outside the church is allowed.

Because of the age of St. Mary's, maintenance is ongoing; therefore, periodically scaffolding will be erected as well as pews removed. Please understand that we will do our best to make it non-obtrusive.

### **Music**

You must contact Dr. Nancy Sutton, Director of Music at St. Mary, if you plan to have any music at your wedding. Contact her at [music@stmarysdowntown.org](mailto:music@stmarysdowntown.org). She will help you with music selections, organists or vocalists approved for St. Mary's.

Since weddings are an act of worship, the music chosen must be sacred music and assist those assembled in their prayer. The documents of the Second Vatican Council have ordered that musical texts, whether vocal or instrumental, must be either biblical or sacramental in nature, free from association with secular or popular music, before, during, and after the liturgy. Sentimental favorites from movies, Broadway, or the radio are best saved for the reception where they can be heard in a better context. The acoustics of the building and its setting make classical sacred music (as opposed to "contemporary Christian music") the most appropriate for music at your wedding. Only live music is permitted; "canned" music from CD's is not acceptable.

The fees for music are arranged between the wedding party and the organist or vocalist.

### **Music, continued**

Rehearsals for musicians are scheduled one hour before the wedding; no other times will be considered. Since the wedding rehearsal is designed to familiarize members of the wedding party with their respective roles during the ceremony, the musicians do not attend.

### **Scripture Readings**

For weddings both within and outside of Mass, there are three readings and a psalm response. These are selected from the Marriage Ritual book and are listed below. You may select one reading from the Old Testament and one reading from the New Testament. You may also choose a psalm response in consultation with the music ministry. Normally the priest or deacon selects the gospel.

Lectors should be practicing Catholics who are familiar with reading in public.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT READINGS**

Gen. 1:26-28,31/Gen. 2:18-24/Gen. 24:48-51,58-67/Tobit 7:9-10, 11-15/Tobit 8:5-7/Song of Songs 2:8-10,14,16/Sirach 26:1-4,13-6/Jer. 31:31-34

#### **PSALM RESPONSES**

Ps 33/Ps 34/Ps 103/Ps 112/Ps 28/Ps 145/Ps 148

#### **NEW TESTAMENT READINGS**

Rom. 8:31-35,37-39/ Rom. 12:1,2,9-12/ I Cor. 6:13-15, 17-20/1Cor. 12:31-13.8/Eph. 5:21-33/Eph. 5:25-32/Col. 3:12-17/1 Pt 3:1-9/1 Jn 3:18-24/ 1 Jn 4:7-12/Rev. 19-1,5-9

Please print a copy of the full text of the reading and give to your selected lectors to bring to the rehearsal and wedding.

### **Wedding Rehearsals**

Rehearsals are conducted by priest and sacristan. The time frame is ½ hour.

The St. Mary Church sacristan, acting in a supervisory capacity, is present at the rehearsal and the wedding and is available to answer any and all questions concerning policy and procedures of St. Mary Church.

Rehearsals begin on time and last only ½ hour. If any member of the wedding party is late, the rehearsal will begin without them. The rehearsal cannot be delayed for later arrivals.

### **Security**

St. Mary is not responsible for the security of vehicles or personal articles. Please lock cars and do not leave personal articles or gifts unattended.

### **For the Day of the Wedding**

1. Designate a point person who will clean up after the wedding – for the flower boxes, glass vases, pins, plastic wrap, hangers, etc. left in the Crypt and elsewhere after the wedding. Also, bottle waters, leftover wedding programs, and tissues need to be removed from pews.
2. Select ushers to help guests to their seats as well as answer questions regarding the wedding/reception. Someone should be available to represent the wedding party in order to answer any questions at the door.
3. Insure that guests know that if they park in St. Mary's parking lot for the wedding, they **cannot leave their** cars to go to the reception. We have Mass at 5 pm on Saturdays and need the parking lot. Also, Limousines/Trolley's etc. cannot idle in front of the Church. They need to schedule a pickup time after the wedding/photos, and the best location is on Charlotte - out the side door.
4. Also, please designate a person to help the Organist to know when to start/stop their selection of music for the prelude, and procession of grandparents, parents, bridesmaid, and then bride/father. At St. Mary the Organist cannot see when each group is ready to start processing down the aisle. Without someone to assist organist, the procession will not go smoothly.

### **THE STATE OF TENNESSEE**

The Civil Government also has some requirements. Please obtain the marriage license from the County Clerk's Office. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm and is located at 700 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. South, Suite 101, Nashville, TN 37210. Both parties must appear together. Each of you needs a certified copy of your birth certificate or a government issued photo I.D. (i.e. a valid driver's license, or passport or military I.D.) and proof of Social Security Number. (If you are under eighteen years of age, you must be accompanied by your parents).

**IMPORTANT:** The marriage license is valid for only thirty (30) days from the date of issuance. Please drop off the license folder and all of its contents to Saint Mary Church two (2) weeks prior to your wedding.

\*St. Mary's accommodates 400 guests excluding the balcony.

**Policies and Procedures are subject to change without notice; however, couples will be informed of changes.**