

Marriage Preparation at Saint Denis Parish

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Congratulations on your engagement! May God bless you in your preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony.

By choosing to be married at a Catholic Church, it is anticipated you will follow the Catholic Church's guidelines. If this is not your expectation, as explained in the following information, then you should seek to be married elsewhere, and we wish you well. It is the common policy of the Bishops of New Jersey that engaged couples contact their Parish at least a year before their intended wedding date. Please call the office prior to booking your reception to see if our parish can accommodate the date/time you are planning for.

The reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony takes place in a special, holy place - either our parish church or beach chapel. We invite you to welcome the assistance of priests, deacons, and/or those in the religious life you know as well as your faithful family and friends to help and guide you in selecting appropriate readings from Sacred Scripture and Liturgical Music. There are already many options that are available in the Catholic Church for many different pastoral needs; no substitutions are permitted.

Prayer of an Engaged Couple

Lord God, Source of all love, In Your wise plan you have brought us together.

As we prepare to be married, we pray for Your Grace. Please strengthen us by Your blessing. Help us to grow in our respect for one another, and to cherish each other with a sincere love. We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

OVERVIEW OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION

There are three stages to the marriage preparation process:

First Stage: Introduction & Orientation

We must first assess your freedom to enter into marriage in the Catholic Church. When you call the rectory office, you can "pencil in" a potential date for your wedding, based on the parish calendar, but you can only confirm the date for your wedding after your first meeting with the priest or deacon. At the first meeting, a priest/deacon will establish a couple's freedom to marry, set the expectations of preparation and will also address any special circumstances or questions you may have. You are asked to bring a \$200 deposit, counted towards your total donation to the parish.

Second Stage: Formation & Pastoral Sessions

Pre-Cana is only one part of the formation stage of preparation. (For an up-to-date calendar, go to <http://www.dioceseoftrenton.org/go/precana>.) Along with the Pre-Cana seminar, the couple meets with the priest/deacon at least three times. The parish utilizes a nationally recognized pre-marital communications survey called *FOCCUS*. After the completion of the survey, there are follow-up sessions to assist the couple to realistically look at their

relationship and talk about their expectations for married life. There are additional meetings to discuss the Sacrament of Marriage and the life of faith particular to the vocation of marriage. It is the responsibility of the couple to set up Pre-Cana, obtain necessary paperwork and set up the 3-4 wedding formation meetings.

Third Stage: The Wedding Liturgy & Beyond

The priest or deacon works with the couple to plan for the Catholic wedding liturgy two to three months prior to the wedding date. The couple are also advised how to register at their local parish as a married couple, after the wedding. Guidelines for choosing godparents are also given, for future need.

Additional Self-Directed Factors

Spiritual Preparation

A very important part of your preparation is spiritual. Regular Sunday worship at Mass together is the cornerstone of your preparation for Marriage, and normative for all dedicated Catholics. Couples with different faith backgrounds should have discussions on spirituality and religious practice, and what they value in common. Our life with God is our highest priority, and so it is of utmost importance for engaged couples to develop their spiritual lives. If practicing the faith is not a value, then please reconsider why you would want to be married in the Church.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) should also be incorporated into your time of preparation.

A review of your spiritual life, confessing your sins to God, and celebration of God's mercy and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a moment of deep spirituality and peace as you prepare to enter into the covenant of Marriage. You can make a meeting with a priest for Confession, or go on any Saturday, at the beginning of your engagement, and certainly a week or two before you celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage.

Frequently Asked Questions

When are weddings scheduled?

Fridays and Saturdays (12, 1, or 2pm.) and some Sundays. Weddings can be celebrated at Our Lady Star of the Sea Beach Chapel only outside the time between Memorial Day and Labor Day, as there is no parish parking lot at the Beach Chapel.

What is the difference of getting married “within” or “without” Mass?

Marriage within Mass would be appropriate when both the bride and groom are active Catholics and are able to share Holy Communion together.

Marriage without Mass would be appropriate when one person is a member of another religious tradition or does not practice any religion. It is not ecumenically sensitive to offer Holy Communion to a large number of non-Catholic attendees who are not able to receive Communion.

How long is the wedding? How much more time is added if the ceremony takes place within Mass?

A wedding is never more than an hour even within Mass. A Mass would add about 10-15 minutes. The factors that actually make the wedding take longer are the size of the wedding party and the punctuality of the wedding party and guests.

How do we make choices for the Wedding Liturgy?

Our parish website has the choices for readings, prayers, and vows that are part of the Catholic Order of Celebrating Matrimony. Nothing secular can replace these. There are permitted customs, approved by the Catholic Church, which you may incorporate if it is your family's custom. Visit our website and choose the “Liturgy” tab, or:

www.churchofstdenis.org/images/pdf/weddingplanningguide.pdf

Liturgical Music is chosen through our Liturgical Musician, Mr. Mark Martarangelo. Secular music not appropriate to the celebration is not permitted. **Please contact our Liturgical Musician at least two months prior to your wedding to set up an appointment:** email labradog07@comcast.net or call the parish office. Musician fees are paid directly to the musicians. (\$200 FOR ORGANIST AND \$175 FOR CANTOR)

Can we change the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church?

No. The couple does not have the right to misappropriate the Liturgy. It is assumed a member of the Catholic Church would not want anything else.

Please note that the following are not to be used:

Your Own Vows: A Catholic Vow formula describes the appropriate promises of the Sacrament.

Unity Candle has never been part of the Wedding Liturgy. This can be used at the reception and we can provide you information.

Signs are also not part of the Wedding Liturgy. Inappropriate signs will be confiscated.

Flower petals, fake nor real, are not permitted for safety reasons.

Fake snow/confetti/rice cannot be thrown for littering reasons.

Live animals, other than service animals, are not permitted in church.

Aisle runners cannot be used for safety reasons.

How can we involve family/friends in our Wedding Liturgy?

Readers: The First and Second Readings along with the Prayer of the Faithful may be read by family members and/or friends.

Altar Servers: Practicing altar servers in their parish may also assist at the wedding liturgy.

Gift Bearers: At a Nuptial Mass, two to four people may bring forward the gifts of bread and wine.

How can we plan to decorate the Church/Chapel?

Flowers add solemnity and festivity of a wedding. **Florists must contact our office at least two days ahead to coordinate the delivery of flowers.** Please advise your florist that ABSOLUTELY NO TAPE; PUTTY OR ADHESIVES may be used to attach things to the pew markers.

Logistical Factors to Consider

Couples schedule rehearsals with the priest or deacon and usually happen the evening before the wedding. **Couples must bring the NJ Wedding License to the rehearsal.** Feel free to bring any programs or bubbles or bells to be used after the ceremony. They will be kept, locked in the sacristy overnight.

Alcohol is not permitted to be served or consumed in the church or on parish property. An inebriated groom or bride forfeit the right to have the wedding take place, as it constitutes a potential nullification of validity of freedom of exchange of vows and rings. Inebriated bridesmaids and groomsmen will be asked to leave.

Church Donation is \$600.00 for registered parishioners and children of parishioners (who regularly financially support the parish in their weekly donations) and non-parishioners who are being prepared at their home parish (you should be donating at least \$400 to your parish for their work on your behalf). The cost is \$1,000 for non-parishioners who are being prepared at St. Denis parish. (Please know your donation helps the parish operate. It was always seen as an act of devotion to make an offering to God by donating to the work of the church. If the donation is a hardship, please let us know so we may appropriately amend the offering.) Checks are to be made payable to the "Church of St. Denis." You are asked to bring \$200 to the parish at the start of your preparation to show good faith in the preparation process. The rest can be given in installments or before your rehearsal.

WHAT DOCUMENTS DO WE NEED TO OBTAIN?

Certificate of Baptism issued within 6 months of your wedding date (it is your responsibility to contact the parish where you were baptized and request a "*Baptism Certificate with Notations*", notations are listed on the reverse of the certificate. We do not want/need your original certificate. Also, proof of Confirmation should be obtained by you.)

Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter Certificate (you will receive one when you participate in the program);

Testimonial Forms (we sometimes need to request forms indicating one or both persons are free to marry.);

Permission Forms (should they be required by Canon Law for non-Catholic persons);

NJ Marriage License (or Civil Marriage Certificate if you are celebrating a Convalidation). The Marriage License should be obtained within 30 days of the date of marriage.

(October 2021)

So they are no longer two, *but one.*
Therefore what God has joined together,
let man not separate.
Matthew 19:6



Understanding of Expectations and Checklist for Preparing for our Wedding at St. Denis Parish

- We understand that we are requesting a Roman Catholic Wedding and we are not going to request changes to the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church and liturgical customs.
- We understand that it is our responsibility to set up all meetings with the priest/deacon preparing us for the Sacrament of Marriage.
- We understand the date of our marriage is not formalized until we have been assessed for our freedom to marry within the Roman Catholic Church, we have provided a letter from our pastor (if needed), and we have given a \$200 donation (towards our total donation).
- We understand that if we are being prepared at another parish, the person/parish preparing us must mail a letter to St. Denis which expresses their accepting the responsibility to prepare us for our marriage. We are responsible to see that the completed wedding file from our church is forwarded to St. Denis and received 4 weeks before our wedding date.
- We understand that we are responsible to register for Pre-Cana and provide the certificate to the person preparing us for marriage.
- We understand that it is our responsibility to obtain our Baptism Certificates “With Notations” (dated within 6 months to the wedding date), obtain our Confirmation Certificate (photocopy accepted).
- We understand if one of us is not of the Catholic Faith, we will provide the “Affidavit Verifying Freedom to Marry” and also the necessary Permission/Dispensation form and obtain the permission/dispensation from the diocese in which the Catholic party resides.
- We understand that it is our responsibility to obtain a valid New Jersey Wedding License and that it must be presented at our rehearsal to the priest/deacon witnessing our marriage.
- We understand that no marriage will occur without the New Jersey Wedding License and proper Canon Law paperwork being completed.
- We will not do anything we want without asking permission from the priest/deacon two weeks prior to the wedding. (Including setting up anything on church property.)

_____ First meeting date _____ Second meeting date _____ Third meeting date

_____ Letter of Permission _____ \$200 donation _____ Completion of Donation

_____ Pre- Cana _____ FOCCUS _____ Baptism Cert. _____ Confirmation Cert.

_____ Wedding License Applied _____ Rehearsal Date chosen

Signature of Groom: _____

Signature of Bride: _____

Today’s Date: _____ Date of Wedding: _____

Site of Wedding: _____ Site of Preparation: _____