



Marriage Policy and Guidelines

Congratulations on your engagement to be married! The Catholic Church believes it is a great privilege and responsibility to be married in the Sacrament of Matrimony. This “marriage policy” is meant to assist you in preparing well for your marriage.

The priest or deacon assisting you will explain the various steps in your preparation for marriage. This process takes at least **SIX MONTHS** to complete. During this process, the primary emphasis is on marriage, which is a lifetime vocation. Only after you are prepared for marriage is it appropriate to focus on the wedding.

F.O.C.C.U.S

Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study (FOCCUS) is a tool used in the Archdiocese of St. Louis to help a couple discern the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship. The priest or deacon assisting you will administer FOCCUS and share the results with you so you can accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation Classes/Retreats

(Office of Marriage & Family Life)

Classes are two-day, 13 total hours, and take place at the Cardinal Rigali Center, 20 Archbishop May Drive, Shrewsbury, MO 63119, OR in an interactive virtual format. **NOTE: Several special Marriage Preparation Retreats will be held at select parishes throughout the Archdiocese. View the class schedule to pick the format of your choice.**

The program, **God’s Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage**, incorporates rich Catholic theology with sound psychology, and it is highly interactive, and engaging for today’s couples pointing them toward a deeper understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage. Springing from St. John Paul II’s teachings on “Theology of the Body,” the program invites couples to explore their own uniqueness by seeking their identity and mission in Christ. In addition, the program is designed to help couples celebrate their call to greatness. Many engaged couples come away from the program with a newfound awe and respect for the truth and meaning of human sexuality. They leave with a clearer understanding of the extraordinary gift marriage is to our society and themselves.

Cost \$225, unless otherwise noted and this should be paid at the time of registration.

<https://www.archstl.org/marriage-family-life/for-marriage/marriage-prep> to register.

Natural Family Planning

It is also recommended that you familiarize yourself with the various programs of Natural Family Planning (NFP) in keeping with the generous love to which the Catholic Church calls you. Your clergyman will provide you with information on NFP classes available in the St. Louis area.

Pre-Nuptial Investigation

The Archdiocese of St. Louis requires that the assisting priest or deacon fill out the pre-nuptial investigation with the intended bridegroom and bride. The purpose of this investigation is to establish there are no obstacles to the couple marrying in the Catholic Church.

Baptismal Certificate

A recently issued baptismal certificate (one dated within six months of your wedding) should be obtained from the church where you were baptized. This certificate should be given to the clergyman assisting with your wedding, and will not be returned.

Banns

The Roman Catholic Church requires that the wedding be announced publicly (banns) three times prior to the wedding. Catholic parties being married outside of their own parish should notify their own parish concerning the publication of the Marriage Banns at least one month prior to the wedding.

Wedding and Rehearsal Times

The times and dates of the wedding and rehearsal should be coordinated with the priest or deacon assisting with your wedding. The latest wedding time available at St. Norbert is 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays. No receiving line is permitted on Saturday weddings beginning after 1:30 p.m. to allow the church to be ready for Saturday confessions by 3:30 p.m.

Servers

St. Norbert will provide altar servers for your wedding ceremony unless the couple has relatives or friends who are willing to serve. Servers other than those from St. Norbert should already be familiar with service Mass in their own parish. It is customary to give each of the two servers a nominal offering, usually \$10 to \$20, placed in an envelope for proper decorum.

Parish Offering

It is customary to make an offering to the parish on the occasion of a wedding. The amount of this offering should be commensurate with the total amount you are planning to spend for the wedding. For most couples, the offering will be between \$200 and \$500. If neither the bride nor groom are members of St. Norbert Parish a minimum of \$500 is required. No couple will be refused the sacrament because they cannot afford the recommended donation. Merely speak to the priest and he will assist. We request that this offering be remitted to the parish office at least one month prior to the wedding.

Clergy Honorarium

Should you wish to give an honorarium to the clergyman who has assisted in preparing you for marriage, please use a separate envelope clearly indicating the offering is intended for the priest or deacon.

Still Pictures and Video Recording

Still pictures and video recording may unobtrusively be taken during the ceremony but should not distract from the reverence of the celebration or the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Flash photography is NOT permitted during the ceremony, but is allowed during the opening procession and after the wedding is over. Please notify your photographer that they will be **limited to 30 minutes** at the conclusion of the wedding. This should be considered when deciding whether to have a “receiving line” at church. Weddings taking place on Saturday after 1:30 p.m. will not be allowed to have a receiving line in order to allow for pictures and church clean-up before concessions begin at 3:30 p.m. Your photographer should be instructed to see the presiding priest or deacon prior to the ceremony.

Florist and Aisle Runner/Pews

Flowers and decorations are appropriate for a wedding, though not essential.

Aisle Runner is NOT ALLOWED. If you have decorations, bows on the pews, or aisle candles, please instruct the florist **not to use any adhesive tape on the pews.** There are 11 pews on each side of the center aisle.

Rose Petals (both real and artificial) are NOT ALLOWED.

Rice and Confetti

The throwing of rice, bird seed, confetti, etc. **is not permitted** at St. Norbert Church. This is due to safety issues and is required by our insurance carrier.

Meeting Before the Wedding

The groom and groomsmen generally meet in the sacristy 15 minutes prior to the wedding. The bride and bridesmaids may meet in the Gandy Room. The expectation is that the wedding party will arrive at church already dressed in their gowns and/or tuxedos. Ladies may make final “finishing touches” with their hair and veil at church. There are restrooms just off the gathering area. No food or beverages are permitted ANYWHERE (parking lot, gathering area, Grady Room, or church). Smoking is only permitted outside.

Clean-up

The couple should make arrangement for the church proper, gathering area, and Grady Room (Bride's Room) to be cleared of all debris (programs, tissues, florist boxes, aisle runner, etc.) within a half-hour of the wedding. If the couple prefer, the parish can make arrangements for this clean-up service for an additional \$50.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

The couple to be married and all the Catholic members of the wedding party are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the wedding. Confessions are heard at St. Norbert on Saturdays following the 8:00 a.m. Mass and 3:30-4:30 p.m. or you may make an appointment with one of the priests for another time. The priest assisting with your wedding will also be available for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation the night of your rehearsal.

Civil Marriage License

A marriage license must be obtained and given to the assisting clergyman at the time of the rehearsal. The license may be obtained from the Recorder of Deeds, St. Louis County Government Administration Building, 41 So. Central at Forsyth in Clayton (Phone 615-7180). The license office is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and closed weekends. You may apply any time prior to the ceremony but it takes three (3) full days between application and issuance. The license is good for thirty (30) days after issuance, but it is recommended that the license not be picked up more than two (2) weeks in advance. Both intended spouses must apply for and pick up the license. The fee is \$45 which includes a \$1.00 notary fee. Payments must be made in cash. No checks will be accepted.