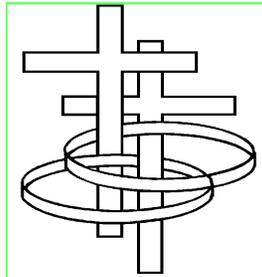


ST. BENEDICT CATHOLIC CHURCH

WEDDING HANDBOOK



**Preparing for Marriage
at
St. Benedict Catholic Church
Mt. Pleasant, S.C.**

Process for Marriage Preparation

1. Engaged couple meet with Pastoral Associate to:
 - *ascertain freedom to marry;
 - *review St. Benedict's Wedding Policy;
 - *explain and begin paperwork;
 - *set tentative date for wedding;
 - *inform the pastor and wedding coordinator;
 - *determine presider for the wedding liturgy;
 - *arrange for marriage preparation process.
2. After completion of marriage preparation program:
 - *meet with presider;
 - *review aspects of marriage;
 - *discuss and plan wedding liturgy.
3. Meet with parish Wedding Coordinator:
 - *discuss details of ceremony.
4. Meet with parish Music Director:
 - *review music guidelines;
 - *discuss choices for liturgy.
5. Create Worship Aid:
 - *submit to wedding coordinator for approval.



Reserve the Church

Please note that the bride or groom must be a Catholic in good standing and that only Roman Catholic ceremonies are held at St. Benedict's.

Ordinarily, at least one of you is to be a registered and active member of this parish. If you are not a member, or are new to the area, permission must be obtained from your local or former pastor.

Weddings may be scheduled on Saturdays at 11:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., or 1:00 p.m., depending on the availability of the presider, parish resources and the church building. Other days and times may be considered as long as the proposed wedding does not conflict with other activities at the parish.

Because Lent is a penitential season, the Church discourages wedding celebrations. Weddings may be scheduled by exception, but their celebration must conform to the subdued nature of the liturgical season. Weddings are not celebrated during the Easter Triduum or on Easter Sunday.

We are pleased that you have asked to be married at St. Benedict's Parish.

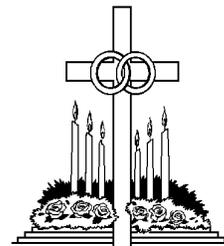
In choosing to be married in the Catholic Church, you are proclaiming publicly that you intend to live out your marriage within the Christian context. Your wedding liturgy is an act of worship, in praise to God for the love you have found in each other and a point of strength and nourishment as you continue the journey of life together. It is also an experience of transformation and prayer for all gathered with you on that day.

Your wedding liturgy should call everyone (and not just you as the wedding couple) to a deeper encounter with the Lord. The wedding liturgy should remind everyone that your marriage is a great sign, "the mirror of God's everlasting love." (*Rite of Marriage*)

All too often, a lack of experience in liturgical planning, misunderstood social expectations, and the influence of non-religious popular culture leads to too much time and effort spent on nonessential aspects of a wedding. As in many other areas of life, it is possible to overdo things to the point where the original focus or purpose is lost.

We have prepared this booklet in order to insure, as far as possible, a proper celebration for you, and to acquaint you with the norms and guidelines of the Catholic church. It contains the procedures to follow, people to contact, explanations of marriage preparation programs, and other information that will prove helpful in preparing for your wedding day, the ceremony, and your married life.

As you read this booklet, please note any points that need further clarification. Don't hesitate to call for assistance. By following these guidelines, your marriage liturgy will reflect its dignity and solemnity as a Sacrament of the Catholic Church.



Marriage Preparation Program

The Church expects all engaged couples to complete an approved Marriage Preparation program. Among the several that are available, we recommend the Engaged Encounter Weekend available in the Diocese of Charleston.

As an alternative, St. Benedict Parish offers the FOCUS Program, a pre-marital inventory which is professionally scored and followed by a private session conducted with a trained couple from our parish.

Engaged couples who live out of town must make arrangements for doing Marriage Preparation their local area's parish. A certificated of Marriage Preparation will be required, in that case.

THE CHURCH IS A PLACE FOR WORSHIP

Furnishings

Only those candles, candlesticks and candelabra provided by the church are permitted. The altar, ambo (pulpit), and other furnishings cannot be moved. The seasonal decor and other appointments in St. Benedict's Church (Advent wreath, Easter candle, Baptismal font) likewise, may not be altered. We will provide chairs, altar candles and other elements of the liturgy as needed.

The so-called "unity candle" is a commercial product of which no mention is made in the liturgical books of our Church. It has no real history or tradition behind it. For this reason it is not used in wedding liturgies at St. Benedict's.

At present, St. Benedict Church seats 450 people.

Flowers

The Parish Wedding Coordinator is responsible for the appropriate placement of floral arrangements in the church sanctuary. The Coordinator is not responsible for the personal flowers of the bridal party or at the reception. Bows or pew markers may only be attached with elastic bands, string, ribbon or pew clips. Tacks, nails, tape and metal devices are never permitted. Pew candles, candelabra, floral arches and pedestals are not permitted. Decorations outside the church are discouraged.

Because of the unique requirements of the worship space at St. Benedict's, it is important that the floral arrangements be of a particular size and color to compliment the environment and the liturgical season. For this reason, the Coordinator will discuss with you various options to achieve the most desirable results.

It is never appropriate to place flowers on the altar or to block the view of the liturgical movement. During festive times, such as Christmas and Easter, additional floral arrangements may be a complement to, not a substitute for, decorations already in place. The Advent wreath, Lenten Cross and Easter candle cannot be moved. Because of the special nature of the Advent and Lenten seasons, no flowers are permitted.

The church building may be locked when no services are scheduled. Flowers, therefore, may only be delivered at a **pre-determined time**. Please make arrangements with the parish Wedding Coordinator. Floral arrangements in the sanctuary are generally given as donations to the church after the wedding ceremony.

Flower girls are not permitted to sprinkle flower petals, confetti, or other substances anywhere in the church. Age of flower girls and ring bearers ought to be at least five.

For safety reasons, no aisle runners are allowed.

Military-Style Weddings

Military swords, as well as other real or ceremonial weapons, are never permitted in the church. The wedding ceremony is a sacrament of the Church, therefore military displays, if necessary, may only take place outside the building.

Rehearsals

The rehearsal is usually scheduled by our coordinator for the night before the wedding. St. Benedict Wedding Coordinator will lead you through the liturgy so that everyone will be familiar with it. Rehearsals are limited to one hour. It is a good idea to have your readers practice their texts at the rehearsal.

Photographers and Videographers

Photographers and videographers are welcome to film the liturgy but should not intrude upon the liturgical action. Flash photography and external lighting are *not* permitted. Formal photos in the church may be taken for one half-hour following the wedding. Photos involving the presider should be taken first.

Before the Wedding

St. Benedict's parish is an active church community. Due to our limited facilities, we are unable to provide an appropriate place for the wedding party to dress. If changing rooms are required, private arrangements may be made with one of the local inns or hotels. The groom, groomsmen, ushers and greeters should arrive at church at least 40 minutes prior to the ceremony. The bride and her attendants should arrive 20 minutes prior to the wedding. It is essential to begin the liturgy on time due to the schedule of other events and commitments.

After the Wedding

Receiving lines after the liturgy are not appropriately held at the church but are a function of the wedding reception. The marriage license will be signed after the ceremony followed by a photo opportunity in church.

To insure that nothing is stolen or left at the church, please assign someone the responsibility of securing all your belongings. The area is unsecured and we are *not* responsible for any goods that are lost or stolen.

Food, tobacco or **alcohol** is not permitted in the church or on the property. Please save your celebrating for the reception!

No rice, birdseed, confetti, or flower petals are to be used in or near the church. Rice is a serious hazard to humans, birds and other animals.



THE PEOPLE IN YOUR WEDDING CEREMONY

The Assembly

The basic ministry in any liturgy is that of the Assembly - the people gathered for prayer and worship. Everyone in the church is, first and foremost, a member of the Assembly: the couple, the wedding party, the presider, readers, communion ministers and the musicians. It is the assembly that celebrates the liturgy. Specific people fulfill various ministries as part of the assembly. You may have attended weddings where this important point was overlooked and which resulted in the majority of people at the wedding being treated as an audience watching a show. Again, the primary goal in preparing your wedding liturgy is to encourage the full and active participation of everyone who will gather to celebrate your marriage.

The Couple

In the Roman Catholic wedding liturgy, the bride and groom are the ministers of the sacrament. The priest or deacon serves as the Church's official witness. It is the couple who give themselves, one to the other, in marriage. Since the principal focus will be on you during the liturgy, your behavior and attitudes can also help to set the tone for the entire assembly. Your participation in the prayers and singing will enable all gathered to feel comfortable and at ease in taking an active role in the liturgy. It is recommended that you not take on additional roles during the liturgy, such as reader or communion minister. Though permitted, these ministries are best left to others in the assembly.

The Presider

The pastor is responsible for all sacramental celebrations that take place in his parish. He may delegate this authority in return to other priests or deacons who hold the necessary faculties. A visiting presider must first obtain the required delegation from the pastor of St. Benedict's. This can only be granted when all of the paperwork, permissions and dispensations have been completed and sent to our parish office. Clergy of other faith traditions are welcome to participate in the liturgy by reading a selection from scripture or offering a prayer. The Catholic clergyman must officiate at the wedding, and the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church is always used.

The Witnesses

While the entire assembly is a witness to your wedding, three individuals have a special role in the liturgy, as well as for the civil and religious records. The presider acts as the Church's official witness. In addition, the best man and the maid or matron of honor fulfill a requirement as witnesses who formally attest to the fact that the wedding took place. They need not be Catholic or even baptized. Though not traditional, it is possible for these two witnesses to be exclusively male or female.

The Attendants as Greeters and Ushers

The groomsmen and bridesmaids can fulfill a critical role in your wedding liturgy by serving as greeters and ushers for those who gather. By acting as the initial ministers of hospitality, they can greet the people as they enter the church, give them a printed program and escort them to their seats. Additionally, members of the wedding party can also help to encourage the participation of the assembly.

The Ministers of Music

Music for all weddings is under the supervision of the parish Music Director. You must contact the director at least three months before your marriage. It is understood that all musical selections must be in keeping with the guidelines of the Catholic Church and the Diocese of Charleston. A cantor is required for all weddings at St. Benedict's. He/she serves a key role within the liturgy by singing parts of the service particular to this ministry and in helping to lead the assembly. Guest soloists may only be employed at the discretion of the parish music director. The parish organist is under contract to play for all weddings. Other instrumentalists may be involved, depending on specific musical requirements. Pre-recorded music is never permitted.

Cross Bearer and Acolytes

Since all weddings occur within the liturgy of the Church, it is most appropriate that the Gathering Rite officially begins with a procession. The cross bearer may be chosen from the wedding party or from among your guests. Acolytes, or servers, are permitted, but not generally required.



Readers (Lectors)

These ministers perform the crucial role of proclaiming God's Word in the Scriptures and offering the General Intercessions. While it is possible to ask people who regularly serve in this ministry during the Sunday liturgy, most couples choose readers from among those who will attend their wedding. You may select one or two individuals, depending on the number of readings. Additionally, a third person can be asked to read the General Intercessions. Unless they are regular readers at St. Andrew's, those whom you select should be good public speakers and should be given an opportunity to practice in the church.

Communion Ministers

Eucharistic Ministers are necessary when the wedding occurs within Mass. These individuals help the presider in the distribution of Communion. Please inquire among family and guests to determine if any are commissioned for this special ministry.

Gift Bearers

If Mass is celebrated, two people from the assembly may be invited to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine.

Parish Wedding Coordinator

The parish Wedding Coordinator provides many important and vital functions before, during and after the wedding. The coordinator is totally responsible for implementing the policies and customs of St. Benedict's. She will consult with a guest presider; conduct the rehearsal; give directions for the procession and placement of the wedding party; and insure that the altar furnishings, candles and lights are properly set.

Because of the unique nature of Catholic liturgy, and requirements of this parish, the responsibility of a professional wedding director ends at the church door and may resume after the ceremony is complete. She may offer to assist the parish coordinator.

THE WEDDING LITURGY

Worship of the Church

Every liturgical celebration is a worship experience, the prayer of the entire Church, regardless of who is present or the kind of event. Contrary to a common notion in our society, a wedding is not a "show" featuring the bride and groom before an audience of family and friends. It is a religious ritual that focuses not only on the couple, but on the entire community that is gathered to offer praise and thanks to the God who loves us and who manifests that love, in a special way, in the persons of the bride and groom.

The community of family and friends, then, are not just spectators but active participants in the wedding liturgy. The very word "liturgy" is translated from the ancient Greek as "the work of the people." In preparing your wedding liturgy, you will help your family and friends become active participants in the ritual actions, words, songs, and gestures of a people gathered for prayer.

Within Mass or Outside of Mass

Should you celebrate your marriage in the context of Mass (the Eucharist) or a non-Eucharistic service? First, a definition of terms might be helpful. Every Mass consists of a Liturgy of the Word (gathering rite, readings, homily, general intercessions) and a Liturgy of the Eucharist (presentation of bread and wine, the Eucharistic Prayer and communion). When a wedding is celebrated at Mass, the rite of marriage takes place after the homily and is followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist. When a wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, it also takes place after the homily but then concludes with the Lord's Prayer and final blessing.

When either the bride or groom is not Catholic, the celebration of the wedding occurs outside of Mass.

The Importance of Hospitality

Keeping in mind that your wedding is the liturgy of the Church, it is very important to make choices that are welcoming, hospitable and respectful of all who will gather for that communal prayer. Your choices should engage and invite your family and friends to active participation.

The choice of Scripture readings, hymns, sung responses and acclamations, processions, postures, the place of bride and groom (as well as attendants), and prayers must help everyone to enter into the celebration, even if many or most of the congregation is not Catholic.

Everyone gathered:

- *Should be able to participate in the congregational music (familiar, appropriate to the occasion, sing able);
- *Should be given the means to participate fully in the liturgy (through the use of a worship program);
- *Should be able to understand the readings proclaimed and the prayers offered (those asked to do these should be capable readers and practiced);
- *Should be able to see (careful placement of plants and flowers so as not to obstruct the assembly's view or movement in the sanctuary or aisle);
- *Should be greeted and welcomed in a warm and inviting manner.
- *As in all aspects of a wedding celebration, the liturgy itself should be hospitable.



A Marriage is a Lifetime // The Wedding is a Day!

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- *Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire
Biographical and attitudinal information needed for validity of sacrament which becomes part of the permanent file.
- *Certificate of Baptism
A new certified copy required for Catholics;
A certified original is required for non-Catholics
- *Certificate of Confirmation
Original can suffice, unless noted on rear of Baptismal certificate.
- *Affidavits
Testimonies regarding freedom to marry.
- *Marriage Prep Certificate
Provided at completion of a suitable-approved program.
- *Civil License
Submit to parish office at least two weeks before your wedding.
- *Letter of Freedom
Non-parishioners must get this from their pastor.
- *Letter of Intent and Delegation
Required for visiting presiders.
- *Decree of Divorce and Annulment

OFFERINGS & FEES

When the couple meets with the Pastoral Associate, discussion of offerings and fees will be addressed. Fees differ for parishioners and non-parishioners.



*The church fee covers the rental of the building, utilities and maintenance, as well as pre-marital counseling, paperwork and staff support. It is pro-rated for active members based on their twelve month financial and stewardship record prior to date of contract. One-half of this offering is required at the time of the contract. The balance and all other fees are due two weeks prior to the wedding. If the wedding is canceled, a refund will be made, less a \$75. office fee. The marriage license and proof for the liturgy program are due no less than two weeks prior to the wedding. There is no fee for the presider, however, the pastoral associate will discuss a fee which is a guide for an *honorarium*.

RITE OF MARRIAGE

(Follows the Liturgy of the Word)

INTRODUCTION:

My dear friends, you have come together in this church
so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love
in the presence of the Church's minister and this community ...

STATEMENT OF INTENTIONS and CONSENT:

___ and ___, have you come here freely and without reservation
to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

(Each answers, in turn, "I have!")

Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Each answers, in turn, "I will!"

Will you accept children lovingly from God,
and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

(Each answers, in turn, "I will!")

Since it is your intention to enter into marriage,
join your hands, and declare your consent before God and his Church.

EXCHANGE OF VOWS:

(Repeat) I, ___ take you, ___, to be my husband/wife.

I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health.

I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

You have declared your consent before the Church.
May the Lord in his goodness strengthen your consent
and fill you both with his blessings.
What God has joined together, let no one ever divide.

(sung acclamation here)

BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS:

(Each, in turn) ____, Take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

NUPTIAL BLESSING:

INTERCESSIONS:

Nuptial Mass: The Liturgy of the Eucharist now follows.

Ceremony: The Liturgy concludes with the Lord's Prayer and

Final Blessing.

WEDDING LITURGY PLANNING GUIDE

(Bring this form with you to all planning sessions)

BRIDE _____ GROOM _____

PRESIDER _____ WEDDING DATE / TIME _____

ORDER OF WORSHIP

GATHERING RITE

*PRELUDE:

*SEATING OF PARENTS:

*PROCESSIONAL:

GREETING:

*CONGREGATIONAL HYMN:

OPENING PRAYER:

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING:

**PSALMODY:

SECOND READING:

**ACCLAMATION:

GOSPEL:

HOMILY:

RITE OF MARRIAGE

STATEMENT OF INTENTIONS:

DECLARATION OF VOWS:

**WEDDING ACCLAMATION:

PRESENTATION OF RINGS:

NUPTIAL BLESSING:

INTERCESSIONS:

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

*PRESENTATION OF GIFTS:

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER:

**HOLY, HOLY:

**MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION:

**GREAT "AMEN"

COMMUNION RITE

LORD'S PRAYER:

GREETING OF PEACE:

**LAMB OF GOD:

*COMMUNION

CONCLUDING RITE

CLOSING PRAYER:

FINAL BLESSING:

DISMISSAL:

*RECESSIONAL:

*POSTLUDE:

* = Music, vocal or instrumental..

** = Liturgical Acclamations which are sung.

*** = Weddings without Mass consist of the
Gathering Rite, Liturgy of the Word, Rite of
Marriage, Lord's Prayer and Concluding Rite.



WEDDING CHECKLIST FOR BRIDE AND GROOM

Please review this list to insure that all these items have been addressed before the wedding,

- ___ The date and time of rehearsal and wedding ceremony has been confirmed.
- ___ Letters of Delegation, if needed, have been obtained for Bride, Groom and guest Presider.
- ___ All paperwork has been completed at least six weeks before wedding.
- ___ Baptism and Confirmation certificates have been turned in.
- ___ Marriage Preparation program has been completed and certificate obtained.
- ___ Scripture readings have been selected and communicated to the Presider.
- ___ The Music Minister has approved music choices (at least 30 days prior to wedding).
- ___ Each reader has received a copy of their reading and confirmed the date and time of rehearsal and wedding ceremony.
- ___ General Intercessions have been composed and submitted to Wedding Coordinator.
- ___ Individuals are designated to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine (only for Mass).
- ___ Eucharistic Ministers have been selected (for Mass).
- ___ Planning sheet and draft of worship program have been given to wedding coordinator (at least two weeks prior to wedding).
- ___ Florist has been contacted with proper delivery time (determined by the Coordinator.)
- ___ Marriage license obtained from County Clerk and presented to the office at least two weeks prior to the date of the wedding.
- ___ Worship programs are printed and will be brought to church at rehearsal.
- ___ Have paid all the Church fees (due two weeks prior to wedding).