

SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE

WEDDING GUIDELINES

“The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1603) We are here to help you prepare well to enter into that vocation, body and soul. Prayer, study, and asking questions help you better prepare for your big day. We know that a lot goes into planning a wedding and that many things hinge upon the date of the wedding. Dresses, venues, caterers, and photographers all take time to find and book. *That being said, we strongly recommend that you don't book anything until you have a confirmed date on the parish calendar.*

We look forward to helping you prepare for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony and the beautiful life you will live together as husband and wife! These guidelines aim to assist you as you begin your wedding preparations. Wedding preparation is a multi-step process, involving some meetings at the church with the clergy or delegate and diocesan Pre-Cana studies. We want to inform you of several customs and procedures of the Catholic Church and St. Paul the Apostle parish to aid you in your planning and preparation, outlined below.

OVERVIEW:

1. Submit the Wedding Inquiry Form to Dr. Laurie Navin, Coordinator of Marriage & Family Life, lnavin@stpac.org, which is available on our website. ***This does not reserve the wedding date.*** You can also call the office at (614) 882-2109 for more information.
2. Initial Interview with Clergy/Delegate—Come meet us and tell us about your plans. This meeting can happen as soon as you get engaged and **must** happen no less than six months before the proposed wedding date. ***The wedding date may only be reserved after this meeting.***
3. Begin your pre-Cana studies and start collecting the necessary documents. Throughout this time, you will continue meeting with the clergy/delegate.
4. Get in touch with a St. Paul the Apostle wedding coordinator and the wedding organist or music director. This can happen as soon as you have a confirmed date.
5. Please review the wedding day details below and make any necessary selections. You can discuss these details with the Marriage Prep Coordinator as you go.
6. Please note that we are unable to accommodate requests for rehearsal dinners or wedding receptions in the church at this time.

Each of these steps is detailed below. If you encounter something confusing or need more information, you can call or email at any time! A checklist is provided on the last page for your convenience. You can see at a glance what has been completed and what still needs attention.

STEP 1: GETTING STARTED

We are excited about being with you throughout the preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony! The best way to get started is by submitting the Wedding Inquiry Form on the parish website.
www.stpac.org/sacraments/matrimony.

At this point, we want to start preparing for the various parts of marriage preparation. These are the things we need to start:

1. Schedule **Initial Interview with clergy or delegate**: You will begin the marriage preparation process by scheduling an interview with the priest, deacon, or delegate.
2. **Baptismal Certificate**: If you were not baptized at St. Paul the Apostle Church, you must contact the parish where you were baptized to request a new (issued within the last six months) annotated baptismal certificate. We need this to ensure your sacramental freedom to marry.
3. **Reserving a Date**: Some couples will have already chosen a wedding date when they contact the parish. We advised that we cannot confirm a time and date for your wedding until your initial interview with the clergy or delegate. He/She will work with you to ensure that nothing stands in the way of your readiness to marry before a date is confirmed. Please note that all scheduled weddings are *tentative*, pending the successful completion of the marriage preparation process and the parish's judgment that the couple is free to marry, capable of marriage, and consent to a valid marriage. These are the minimum requirements.
4. **Freedom to Marry**: Part of the pre-marital investigation will include you and your fiancé going through a separate interview with the priest or delegate to ensure that you are free to marry within the Catholic Church. This is not something that the parish invented but is Canon Law (1067,8). All who wish to marry in the Catholic Church must establish their freedom to marry, Catholic or not.

If one has never exchanged marital consent with another before, there are a few ways that that person's freedom to marry can be established. It may be achieved through affidavits given by those who have known the person since they have come of marital age and can attest that the person has never exchanged marital consent with another before. If both of the parties are Catholic, this may be accomplished through the publication of the banns of marriage in each party's parish's bulletin.

When the person who wishes to marry has exchanged marital consent with another, and that relationship has ended in a divorce, the establishment of that person's freedom to marry becomes more involved. Jesus Christ taught that marriage is an indissoluble bond. Therefore, once one has exchanged marital consent, by which this indissoluble bond is formed, the person is presumed to be married unless it can be proven otherwise. All those in this situation need to establish their freedom to marry. The process by which this is accomplished involves a Church Tribunal and obtaining a **Declaration of Nullity** (Annulment). The manner in which this involvement takes depends on the details of the people who exchanged marital consent and the manner of that exchange of consent.

As the annulment process takes time and the exact date of declaration is unknown, **it is imperative that a wedding date is not scheduled until the declaration of nullity is issued**. Once the declaration of nullity has been granted, please give a copy to the person doing your marriage preparations. Please note that this process is not a civil process but a Church process. Any documentation, dissolution, civil annulment, or divorce decree that you obtained from the civil court **does not** give you the freedom to marry in the Church.

The Church annulment process is required for Catholics and non-Catholics, baptized or not. No matter what denomination you are or your baptismal status, if you are planning to be married to a Catholic in the Church, you will need to obtain a declaration of nullity.

If you are planning on being married at another Church and are simply doing your marriage preparations at St. Paul, please know that we will still complete a pre-marital investigation even if you have already completed one at the Church of marriage. Also, St. Paul will not begin your marriage preparations until we have established a direct line of communication with the clergy at the Church where you will be married ensuring that we are on the same page with your preparations and your freedom to marry. The same process will take place if you are doing your marriage preparation at another Church and just being married at St. Paul. If St.

Paul is not your home church where you are a registered parishioner, you will need a Letter of Permission from the pastor at your home church to be married at St. Paul.

STEP 2: INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH THE CLERGY/DELEGATE

No less than six months before the wedding, your marriage preparation will begin with a meeting with one of the priests, deacons, or delegate. They will lay out the marriage preparation program and allow you to ask any questions you may have about it. This will be a very comfortable conversation so that you can get to know each other and have the chance to tell them about yourselves, your courtship, your upbringing in the faith, etc.

If it is determined that both parties are free to marry in the Church, we will be able to schedule the date and time of your wedding and rehearsal, pending church availability and approval.

- † Weddings take place on most Saturdays of the year.
- † Wedding times are 11:30 am & 1:30 pm.
- † Rehearsals take place the day before the wedding.
- † Possible rehearsal times are 5:00 pm & 6:00 pm. Once your date is confirmed, one of our wedding coordinators will contact you to discuss the details of your wedding, usually within two months of the wedding date.

STEP 3: PRE-CANA PROCESS

Preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church requires much study and learning, which is why it takes a minimum of six months to complete. You are preparing for a sacrament that will last as long as you both shall live! So, it only makes sense that you should know well the gift of God that you are preparing to receive and learn how to be ready to receive it.

The Pre-Cana Process has the following parts:

1. **Prepare/Enrich Pre-Marital Inventory:** Prepare/Enrich is a series of questions answered by both the bride and the groom separately that examines all aspects of your relationship. This instrument is not an exam but merely a tool to help you examine your relationship. You will identify your strengths and weaknesses and, in a follow-up meeting, discuss how to improve areas in your relationship that need growth.
2. **Marriage Formation Day:** This one-day course allows you to receive an in-depth understanding of specific essential topics, such as:
 - † Marriage as Sacrament and Covenant
 - † Families of Origin and Procreation
 - † Marital Sexuality and Natural Family Planning
 - † Communication and Conflict Resolution
 - † Money and Finances
3. **Natural Family Planning Course:** Natural Family Planning teaches couples how to embrace God's beautiful design for the life of intimacy that husband and wife will share. As the use of contraception has become so prevalent in our society, NFP is an essential part of the preparation that couples receive for marriage. There are four preferred NFP courses to choose from, which can be taken through the Marriage and Family Life Office of the Diocese of Columbus.
4. **Witness to Love:** *Witness to Love* is a six-month marriage prep program that works to connect couples to their parishes through mentors and powerful online resources. The Marriage Prep Coordinator will be happy to connect you with faith-filled couples from the parish; however, it is recommended that you choose a couple you are already familiar with. The mentor couple must have been married in the Catholic Church for at least five years and be active in their faith. Through this program, you and your mentor couple will discuss and review a Catholic marriage's sacramental and practical aspects. *Witness to Love* is required by St. Paul the Apostle Church. Some resources and steps need to be taken when completing this program. Please review the necessary steps with the Marriage Prep Coordinator before getting started.

At this point, you will also be collecting some important paperwork:

1. **Baptismal Certificate:** If you were not baptized at St. Paul the Apostle Church, you must contact the parish of your baptism to request a new (issued within the last six months) annotated baptismal certificate. Also, if St. Paul the Apostle is not your home parish where you are registered, you must obtain a Letter of Permission to be married at St. Paul from the Pastor at your home parish.
2. **Freedom to Marry Affidavit:** The clergy/delegate will provide more information about this.
3. **Marriage License:** The bride and groom must obtain two original copies of their marriage license before the ceremony, depending on which county you reside. This may be obtained up to 60 days before the wedding takes place. If the bride and groom do not reside in Ohio, the marriage license must be obtained from Delaware County to be married at St. Paul the Apostle Church.

STEP 4: LITURGY AND MUSIC

In regard to the wedding readings and liturgy, please use the *Together for Life* booklet to choose the readings and prayers you want. This book will be given to you by the clergy/delegate. Please discuss your selections with the priest or deacon performing your ceremony and the wedding coordinator. **If you wish to have a visiting priest outside the Diocese of Columbus to be the celebrant or concelebrant, they must send a letter of good standing to the Diocese of Columbus Chancery and the Marriage & Family Life Coordinator to receive permission from our pastor to participate in your ceremony.** All visiting priests/deacons must receive permission from our pastor to concelebrate at your wedding. *The visiting priest must also agree to be present at your wedding rehearsal.* The 'norm' for visiting priests would be that a priest from St. Paul is the celebrant of the ceremony, and the visiting priest is a concelebrant who may have permission to preach. If the celebrant, the visiting priest must also agree to celebrate the Mass or ceremony according to our parish guidelines and customs. Relatives and/or friends of the bride and groom are invited to participate as readers and gift bearers during the wedding. Please note that only a wedding concelebrant or Eucharistic Minister of Holy Communion can distribute Communion during the wedding Mass.

Readings

Please choose a First Reading (Old Testament), a Responsorial Psalm to be sung by the cantor, a Second Reading (New Testament), and a Gospel Reading. It is required by the new *Order of Celebrating Matrimony Rite* that one Reading have an asterisk next to it as that Reading speaks explicitly about marriage. The Universal Prayer must follow the format in the *Together for Life* booklet (J1 or J2). For the Consent (Marriage Vows), please select one of the two formulas in which the spouses recite the vows to each other. The option to simply respond "I do" is reserved for those who have a speech impediment or significant anxiety related to speaking in public. If you believe this applies to you, please bring this to the attention of the person preparing you for marriage.

Wedding Music

Regarding the ceremony for the Sacrament of Matrimony, the emphasis is not on the couple's romantic life but on a communal prayer service emphasizing the Sacred Union of man and woman to the Divine. For this reason, we do not include secular music during the wedding ceremony or its prelude/postlude.

Before the couple requests a specific song/hymn, they should consider the context in which it is heard. Is the song more readily associated with a scene from a movie or a musical rather than a Sacrament? Is the song more readily associated with an evening of dining and dancing rather than a Sacred Moment of Prayer? These favorite songs should be included at rehearsal dinners and receptions. There are many beautiful songs/hymns appropriate for use during the Sacrament of Matrimony. To that end, we have created a web page on our parish website detailing the wedding music and cantor selections. All music selections are to be made in coordination with the wedding organist or Director of Sacred Music. No outside musicians or instruments are permitted. Found on this webpage:

- † Sound files of wedding songs as sung by St. Paul the Apostle cantors.
- † Sound files of processional and recessional music as performed on our pipe organ.
- † The *Wedding Music Selection Form* will assist the couple in making their music selections.
- † The contact information for our music director, wedding organist and those cantors who are frequently requested for weddings.

STEP 5: DETAILS FOR YOUR WEDDING DAY

Please be on time. We cannot stress this enough. A late start will shorten your allotted time for taking wedding pictures at the end of your ceremony due to other scheduled activities at the church.

Bride's Room (St. Peter Room)

- † Available up to 60 minutes before your wedding time. *All personal belongings, floral boxes, trash, and everything you brought into the room must be removed from the bride's room before you leave the church for your reception.* The groom and groomsmen will be in a Parlor Room off the church's main level. *Please do not arrive wearing pajamas, lingerie, or robes.*
- † Your hairdresser and professional make-up artist are not to be invited to the bride's room.
- † Please limit the number of people in the bride's room to the bride, bridesmaids, and mothers.
- † Please exercise modesty when choosing a wedding dress and bridesmaid dresses. Modesty is a Christian virtue that is in accordance with a Catholic wedding, and anything that deviates from this would not be appropriate in this setting.
- † The church cannot be held responsible for the damage or loss of any belongings. Common courtesy dictates that this room be left as it was found.

Flowers & Other Décor

We welcome floral arrangements that add beauty. However, this already beautiful Sacred space can be made to look ostentatious when "too much" is added. We encourage one to strive for elegance brought about through simplicity.

As of July 2010, the Diocese of Columbus has banned the use of the unity candle, as this practice has never been part of the Order of Celebrating Matrimony. Due to our very active parish, florists should assume they will have only 45 minutes before the ceremony to set up. Candelabra, lamps, floral displays with candles, aisle runners, and strewing flower petals are not permitted for safety reasons. As a matter of aesthetics, flower walls, trees, sculptures, balloons, or large pillars are prohibited. Pedestals to elevate floral arrangements are allowed with a maximum height of 4ft. for the entire arrangement. No decorations may be placed on the altar. No means of attaching anything to a pew, which could damage the pew or its finish, should be used.

As the Church strives for authenticity, natural floral arrangements/plants are preferred to artificial ones. Except for flowers around the altar, ambo (pulpit), and tabernacle, all pew decorations and other adornments must be removed before the wedding party leaves the church. Altar flowers are to remain in the church after the wedding, as they are considered "a gift to God." No confetti, birdseed, balloons, or anything that remains on the ground is to be used in or around the church. No flower petals are to be thrown on the church floor by the flower girl. No aisle runner is permitted. No receiving line may be held at the church after the ceremony.

Notes on Photography and Videography

Only formal pictures of the bride and groom and their bridal party will be taken in the Sanctuary. Informal "fun" photographs don't fit with the sanctity of the church and should wait until you are outside the church or at the reception. We welcome photographers and videographers to document this wonderful occasion. However, please remember that this space is considered most sacred. All poses should bear this in mind. Upon arrival, the photographer should consult with the wedding coordinator to learn where pictures and videos may be taken. The photographer will be given time before and after the ceremony to take posed pictures. Once the ceremony begins, the photographer should remain as unobtrusive as possible. The photographer may not go up the steps into the altar area during this time. Equipment and wires should not pose any obstructions. Church furnishings should not be moved without first consulting the Wedding Coordinator. The church cannot be held liable for the damage or loss of any equipment.

Honoraria & Fees

- † Church Fee (reservation of date & use of Church facilities- At least 50% is due at the time of scheduling, and the remainder is due no later than 30 days before the wedding date):

- † \$500 for parishioners (registered for at least six months or have a parent registered)
- † \$2,000 for non-parishioners
- † Celebrant: \$250
- † Organist: \$200—the Music Director or Assistant Organist of St. Paul Church serves as the organist for all weddings.
- † Cantor: \$150—St. Paul Church has qualified and trained Cantors to serve as wedding vocalists. If an outside vocalist is requested, a \$75 rehearsal fee will be charged should that vocalist need to rehearse with the organist on a day before the wedding day.
- † Altar Servers (3): \$20 each
- † Live Streamer/Videographer: \$50
- † \$250 for any couple only wanting to complete their marriage preparations at St. Paul (i.e. getting married elsewhere)

If you are completing your marriage preparation at St. Paul but are getting married outside the United States, the Diocese of Columbus Chancery Office will charge you an additional \$100 for processing and mailing your marriage file. Please include this fee with your “marriage preparation fee,” and we will submit the shipping payment to the Diocese of Columbus.

Discernment of a Wedding Mass vs Ceremony

A. *A Wedding Mass* may be celebrated if the engaged couple meets the following criteria:

1. Both parties are baptized Catholics *and* actively practicing the Catholic faith (i.e. attending Mass weekly, tithing regularly, and going to Confession)

Please note: If both parties are not Catholic and have a sufficient rationale for wanting a Wedding Mass instead of a Wedding Ceremony, the priest may approve this request at his discretion after meeting to discuss the matter in more detail.
2. Both parties live separately and practice chastity OR agree to live separately and practice chastity until after they are married. In the latter case, they must also agree to refrain from receiving holy communion until after Confession.

B. *A Wedding Ceremony* will be celebrated if any of the following criteria applies:

1. One of the parties is not Catholic or baptized and, therefore, would not be able to receive Communion (a Diocesan Petition for Dispensation and Permission will also need to be obtained).
2. The couple is currently cohabitating and plans to continue living together as husband and wife leading up to the wedding.
3. One or both parties are not actively practicing the Catholic faith (i.e. attending Mass weekly, tithing regularly, and going to Confession).

Our goal is that each wedding celebrated at St. Paul will be licit (according to Church rules and law), valid (and thus a sacrament), and fruitful (grace-filled). A non-practicing Catholic can enter into a valid marriage that is not fruitful due to not being in a state of grace. Therefore, regular Mass attendance and Confession are key for the fruitfulness of the sacrament of marriage.

Visiting Priests

- A. All visiting priests must be approved by the Pastor at St. Paul, provide a letter of good standing if required, and agree to celebrate the Mass or Ceremony according to St. Paul’s parish guidelines and customs. The visiting priest must be present at the wedding rehearsal as well as the wedding. The ‘norm’ for visiting priests is that a priest of St. Paul is the wedding celebrant, and the visiting priest is a concelebrant who has permission to preach at the wedding. In some cases, a visiting priest may be permitted to be the wedding celebrant at the discretion of the Pastor.
- B. Complete a separate form providing the rationale for the visiting priest.

Scheduling a Wedding & Wedding Date

- A. No weddings can be scheduled until the engaged couple completes the prenuptial investigation, signs the Wedding Contract and places a deposit, and has recently issued baptismal certificates from their church of baptism.

- B. Before a wedding can be scheduled, at least 50% of the church fee must be paid, with the balance due in full no later than 30 days before the wedding date.
- C. We believe that men and women are created in the image of God. We are equally His children in our human dignity and supernatural calling. However, equality does not mean 'Sameness:' A man is not a woman, and a woman is not a man. Only a biological man and a biological woman, through their distinctive otherness that is ordered to each other, can join in a spousal union (USCCB, 2024). In addition, all members of the wedding party should uphold this belief, and only a biological woman can be a maid/matron of honor or bridesmaid, and only a biological man can be the best man or a groomsman. It is encouraged that the wedding party is limited to no more than eight (8) bridesmaids and eight (8) groomsmen (including the Maid of Honor and Best Man) so as not to distract from the liturgical significance of the wedding Mass or ceremony. If there are any extenuating circumstances that are not in line with the beliefs and traditions of the Catholic Church that the bride or groom wishes to raise, please discuss this with the Marriage Prep Coordinator and celebrant early in your marriage prep process.
- D. **Wedding Banns Announcement:** Per the *Code of Canon Law §1067*, norms concerning a couple's freedom to marry in the Catholic Church dictate that the names of the couple and the date they plan to marry be published or announced prior to the marriage for the purpose of discovering any impediments to a proposed marriage. Therefore, an announcement of your name and wedding date will be published in the parish bulletin approximately 3-5 weeks prior to your wedding date. The publication of marriage banns will give public evidence not only of a particular couple's intent to marry but also of the necessity of the sacrament of matrimony.
- E. All scheduled weddings are tentative pending the successful completion of the marriage preparation process and the parish's judgment that the couple is free to marry, not in need of a declaration of nullity, has no pending ecclesial annulments, is capable of marriage, freely exchanges their consent to marry and consent to a valid sacramental marriage.
- F. Please note that if the marriage preparation requirements are not completed in a timely manner, St. Paul Church reserves the right to postpone the rehearsal and wedding dates to ensure there are no outstanding requirements at the time of the wedding.

I have read, understand, and agree to the *Wedding Guidelines* set forth by St. Paul the Apostle Church. I understand that any deviation from these guidelines can result in the delay of our marriage date.

Bride's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Groom's Signature: _____ Date: _____

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- † The rehearsal time will be one hour max
- † Modest dress is a must for the rehearsal and the wedding (no pajamas, robes, or lingerie)
- † The ring bearer and flower girl must be 3 years old or older.
- † Alcohol is not permitted on St. Paul Parish property before or during the rehearsal or wedding ceremony. Failure to comply with this rule may lead to the cancellation of the wedding.
- † Illicit drugs are not permitted on St. Paul Parish property. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the authorities being contacted.

WEDDING INFORMATION & CHECKLIST

- † **Date of submission of the Marriage Inquiry Form (online):** _____
- † **Date of Initial Interview:** _____
- † **St. Paul the Apostle Parish Wedding Date and Time:** _____
- † **Rehearsal Date and Time:** _____
- † **Contact music director: Notes:** _____

Readings:

First Reading: _____

Reader: _____

Responsorial Psalm: _____

Cantor: _____

Second Reading: _____

Reader: _____

Gospel: _____

Priest/Deacon: _____

Complete:

- † Prepare/Enrich online assessment & meeting, Date completed: _____
- † Marriage Formation Day, Date completed: _____
- † Natural Family Planning Course, Date completed: _____
- † Witness to Love Program, Date completed: _____

Appointments with clergy/delegate:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Required Paperwork:

- Baptismal Certificate, new and with notations:
 - Bride
 - Groom
- Freedom to Marry Affidavits:
 - Bride
 - Groom
- Witness to Love Certificate of Completion
- Pre-Cana (Marriage Formation Day) Certificate of Completion
- Natural Family Planning Certificate of Completion
- Marriage License (two original copies)

BUDGETING: Church Fee Paid, Date: _____

- Payment of stipends are due at the time of the rehearsal. Checks should be made out directly to the individuals.

VISITING CLERGY POLICY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of bride & groom: _____

Date of wedding: _____

Name of visiting priest *and/or* deacon: _____

CHURCH NAME AND ADDRESS

Diocese: _____ Parish: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Role of visiting clergy:

Relationship of clergy to engaged couple:

The pastor of St. Paul must approve all requests for visiting clergy. The 'norm' for visiting priests is that a priest of St. Paul is the wedding celebrant, and the visiting priest is a concelebrant with permission to preach. In some cases, the pastor may permit the visiting clergy to be the wedding celebrant at his discretion. All visiting clergy must agree to attend the rehearsal as well as the wedding and agree to celebrate the Mass or Ceremony in accordance with St. Paul's parish guidelines and customs.

A Letter of Good Standing is required for all visiting clergy outside of the Diocese. Please send the Letter of Good Standing to the diocesan Chancellor (below) and the Marriage Prep Coordinator at St. Paul:

Reverend Mister Tom Berg, Jr.
198 E. Broad St.
Columbus, Oh, 43215