



St. James Parish

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THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AT ST. JAMES PARISH, RED BANK

What a marvelous gift you have discovered God is calling you to through the vocation of marriage. God was so delighted at the union of the mystery of male and female created in God's own divine image, that God said it was "very good". God rejoices in your response to God's invitation of marriage revealed to you as you have grown in your relationship, commitment and desire for the best of your future spouse.

This time of engagement in preparation for your marriage and your life together is a very special and exciting time. The community of St. James congratulates you and offers you our prayers and guidance to help you prepare not just for your wedding day, but for the covenant of your marriage. Remember your wedding is a day; your marriage is a lifetime.

We at Saint James are pleased that you have invited us to be a part of God's blessing to you. We will do all that we can to help make your liturgy prayerful, holy and a beginning of the grace that will be bestowed upon you by God through the covenant of marriage. Following is information and guidelines to assist you in your preparation.

Congratulations and May God Bless You!!

What is Christian Marriage?

From the very beginning of creation, the Lord God said, "it is not good for the man to be alone...that is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body."

A nuptial covenant was established between God and the human family when God said, "I will be your God and you will be my people". Marriage shares in the mystery and mission of God's nuptial covenant with the human family when the marriage covenant is accepted by the spouses to be for each other, a gift, a blessing, and a sharing in the growth of the marital union. Marriage is a mystery in that a man and a woman engage the depth of their personhoods to live out their destinies together as well as in an intimate relationship with God in response to the initiative of His grace in them. Marriage is a mission in so far as the married couple assumes responsibility for each other and for the children given to them as they help sanctify one another by manifesting faith to each other, their children and the commitment in which they live.

Marriage is God's creation and the work of husbands and wives. It is understood that the spouses as ministers of Christ's grace, mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of matrimony by expressing their consent before God and the Church. The minister and the witnesses receive the consent of the groom and bride in the name of the Church and share with the couple the blessing of the church. The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive each other is sealed by God. The covenant



between the spouses is thus integrated into God's covenant with the human family. Authentic married love is caught up into Divine love and made sacred.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Requesting to Celebrate Your Wedding

In the Roman Catholic dioceses of New Jersey, couples ideally arrange their marriage a year in advance of their wedding date so that there is adequate time for spiritual preparation.

To begin the process, you should contact the Parish Secretary at 732-741-0500 or visit the Parish Office to request a wedding. Preliminary information will be taken at that time, including names, addresses, religious affiliation and parish membership of the individuals as well as the requested date for the wedding. A pastoral minister will contact you thereafter to further discuss and confirm arrangements.

Although not necessary, priority is given to parishioners of Saint James Parish, those who have attended our parish schools and the children of parishioners.

A pastoral minister (priest or deacon) assigned to your wedding or if you are requesting a specific priest or deacon of our parish, will contact you and make an appointment to begin your marriage preparation and answer your questions. Please expect your first appointment with a pastoral minister to be approximately one hour. Additional appointments will be necessary for the completion of your marriage preparation, which will include: the completion of the Preliminary Nuptial Investigation (PNI), administration and review of the FOCCUS Communication Inventory, planning with the Music Coordinator; planning the liturgy. Additional preparation may be scheduled if needed. Both parties are asked to be present at all appointments.

St. James permits a priest or deacon from another parish to officiate at your wedding at your request, however, an initial meeting with a pastoral minister with St. James will still be necessary. Please contact him so that he will confirm his ability to preside. Your priest or deacon will be asked in writing to express his willingness to officiate, complete marriage preparation requirements with you, request delegation and provide necessary testimonial letters. It is preferred that whenever possible, the celebrant who is officiating also complete the marriage preparation. Visiting clergy are expected to follow the policies of St. James Parish regarding the conduct of the ceremony and to cooperate with parish staff.

Times of Celebrations:

Weddings are celebrated at St. James Parish on Saturdays at 11:00 am, 1:00 pm and 2:45 pm or Friday afternoons at a time acceptable to the minister (generally between 3:00 and 5:00 pm). The scheduling of the wedding date is made at the first meeting with your pastoral minister.

Fees:

It is customary for the marriage couple to make a donation to St. James Parish for wedding. Suggested donations are \$350 for parishioners, those who attended our parish schools or are children of current



parishioners and \$1,500 for non-parishioners. Additional fees are assessed for the organist, cantor and additional musicians. These fees are discussed directly with the Director of Music.

Freedom to Marry:

To be married in the Catholic Church, both parties must be free to marry, that is, there are no impediments as defined in canon law present, such as neither party may have a prior bond (marriage civil or religious) without the benefit of a declaration of nullity by the Church.

- An individual previously married in either a civil or religious ceremony, whose former spouse is still living, will need to obtain a declaration of nullity of that union. Your pastoral minister can answer any of your questions and assist you in starting the annulment process. The process may take up to one year to complete and a declaration of nullity is not guaranteed. Therefore, a date for your marriage may not be confirmed until the annulment is received.
- In regard to Inter-denominational Marriage (a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic Christian or a marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person can be celebrated in the Church. In such cases, permission to marry a baptized, non-Catholic Christian or an unbaptized person will be discussed with you during your initial interview. In an interfaith marriage, the Catholic party promises to do all in their power to maintain his/her faith and the faith of any children by having them baptized as Catholics. The non-Catholic party makes no promise but is to be aware of the promise made by the Catholic party.

Marriage Preparation Programs

In addition to a series of the meetings with your pastoral minister engaged couples are requested to participate in two marriage programs.

- FOCCUS Inventory (Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study)

Each couple will be asked to complete the FOCCUS Inventory. This tool enables couples to learn more about themselves, their unique relationship and to identify strengths and weaknesses in their relationship prior to marriage. Areas explored include lifestyle expectation, communication skills, religious values, readiness issues, etc.

- Participation at one of the following marriage preparation programs is expected:
 - Engaged Encounter: A weekend away for Engaged Couples to dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives together, their strengths and weaknesses, ambitions, goals and attitudes.
 - Pre-Cana Conference: Usually a one-day experience centered on the process of listening and group discussions through which the couple manifests and communicates their own feelings about marriage.



- To Trust Again: Designed particularly to meet the needs of couples where one or both persons are marrying after the loss of a spouse through death or divorce.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

It is appropriate for a Catholic bride and groom to prepare themselves for the celebration of their marriage by receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance). This sacrament may be received at the ordinary times of parish confessions, by appointment, or if a priest is available at the time of the wedding rehearsal.

The most important aspect of all your preparation is a spiritual one, so as to ensure your readiness to be united in this sacrament. In the time leading up to your wedding day, it is vital that you take time to examine your relationship with God, reflect on the practice of your faith, such as Sunday Mass attendance, your prayer life and the possibility of receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation. The grace proper to the sacrament of Matrimony is intended to perfect the couples love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

Pre-Nuptial Investigation

At your first meeting, this form will be started by you with the pastoral minister. This is a canonical document that remains in your permanent marriage file in the parish archives. The purpose of this document is to assess that there are no impediments to marriage and an appreciation of Christian Marriage.

Baptism Certificate

- All Catholics must obtain a new copy of his/her Baptismal certificate, issued within six months of the wedding date. This document can be obtained from your parish of record (i.e., the parish where you were baptized). Please request that this document include “all notations”. Your pastoral minister can assist you in obtaining this certificate in situations of closed and merged parishes.
- A baptized non-Catholic should submit a copy of their baptism certificate, or may obtain a letter from the faith community in which they were baptized.

Confirmation

For Catholic persons, a copy of a certificate of Confirmation is requested, if not noted on the baptismal certificate. If not confirmed, the possibility of Confirmation can be discussed. While Confirmation is not required for Sacrament of Marriage, it is encouraged.

Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana Certificate

Upon completion of either of these two programs, a certificate of attendance will be issued to you.



Canonical Dispensations and/or Permissions

In situations that require a dispensation and/or permission for marriage (i.e., mixed marriages), the pastoral minister will assist you in obtaining additional documentation and completion of additional forms.

- Form 1-A: Required to indicate freedom to marry for baptized non-Catholics or unbaptized persons.

Permission of a Parish Pastor

For Catholic who is not a member of St. James Parish, the person will need to contact their parish and request permission for them to be married at St. James Parish. This is a courtesy to your parish who is responsible for your spiritual needs.

Civil Marriage License from the State of New Jersey

A Civil Marriage License from the State of New Jersey is required for the celebration of marriage. Legally a marriage license must be obtained no more than 30 days and not less than three days prior to the wedding date. You must bring the license to your rehearsal in order for the wedding to take place.

In cases of the convalidation of a marriage already celebrated civilly, a certified civil marriage certificated is required.

Death Certificate of Former Spouse or Annulment Decree

If a person has been previously married, even if this marriage was not officiated by a Catholic priest or deacon, the death certificate of the former spouse or a Church decree of nullity must be presented.

All documentation should be received so that you may presented it to your pastoral minister during your second meeting. Your pastoral minister will inform you that your second meeting should generally take place upon the complete of the FOCCUS instrument and Pre-Cana/Engaged Encounter.

PLANNING THE LITURGY

It is most important, in the planning of the wedding, to prepare a liturgy that is both sensitive to and respectful of the sacramental status and the religious practices of the bride and groom as individuals and as a couple. To assist you with the planning of the specific elements of the Nuptial Mass or Liturgy of the Word, you will be given a book, "Together for Life". A session with your pastoral minister will be scheduled with you to go over your liturgy plans.

The bride and groom are the ministers of Christ's grace in the sacrament of Marriage. The ordained minister (priest or deacon), who assists at the celebration of the Sacrament, receives the consent of the spouses in the name of the Church and gives the blessing of the Church. The official witnesses (Best Man



and Maid of Honor), as well as the attending community, express visibly the fact that marriage is a public, ecclesial reality.

- The celebration of the sacrament of Marriage between two baptized Catholic Christians usually takes place during a Nuptial Mass, because of the connection of all the sacraments with the Paschal mystery of the Eucharist. A Liturgy of the Word without Eucharist is also an option for a Catholic couple.
- If either the bride or the groom is a baptized Christian of another denomination, the sacrament of Marriage may be celebrated during a Nuptial Mass, however, only those who are Catholic may receive Holy Communion. For the sake of the couple's unity or because of family sensibilities, a liturgy of the Word outside of Mass may be more appropriate.
- If the bride or the groom is not baptized, then the marriage normally takes place during a liturgy of the Word outside of Mass.

Your pastoral minister will explain these options to you.

Liturgical Ministers

- **Lector/Reader of Sacred Scripture:** You may request that a member of your family or a friend proclaim the first and second Scripture readings during the Liturgy of the Word, as well as the Universal Prayer following the homily. Please remember that the proclamation of God's Word is a liturgical ministry and should be done by someone who is a commissioned lector or someone who is able to fulfill this responsibility prayerfully and capably.
- **Extra-ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:** A member of the parish or your family commissioned as an EOM may assist in the distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ during the Communion Rite.
- **Altar Servers:** The coordinator of the Altar Server ministry will arrange for two altar servers to be present at a nuptial Mass to assist the celebrant. If you would like to have members of the family or friends who are currently altar servers assist, please inform your pastoral minister.
- **Presentation of the Eucharistic Gifts:** During a Nuptial mass, members of your family or friends may bring up the gifts of bread and wine. Generally, two people.
- **Ring-bearers and flower girls:** A reasonable number of such attendants are recommended, particularly if the children are very young. Wedding rings used for the ceremony are to be given to the Best Man and not attached to the Ring Bearer's pillow.

Your pastoral minister will assist you with any questions about these roles.

Devotional Practices within the Wedding Liturgy

- **Flowers to the Blessed Mother:** While not a part of the Wedding Rite, if the Bride and/or Groom have a personal devotion to the Blessed Mother and wish to demonstrate this devotion on their



wedding day, it is appropriate to leave flowers at the Blessed Mother's Altar after the Communion Prayer during Mass or following the nuptial blessing during a Liturgy of the Word Ceremony. An appropriate Marian hymn can accompany this devotional.

- Wedding Candle or Unity Candle: The Unity candle ritual is best suited as an opening blessing at the Rehearsal Dinner or at the Wedding Reception.

Music Selection and Coordination

All music for the wedding liturgy must be discussed with and approved by the Director of Music at Saint James Parish, who will assist in the selecting of music, cantors and instrumentalists. All music should be sacred and suitable for liturgical worship and appropriate for a wedding. The Director of Music must be consulted for guest organists, instrumental musicians and soloists.

Please schedule a meeting with the Diane Testa 732-778-4381, Director of Music, at least six months in advance of your wedding date.

Environment

You may use your own florist for arrangements in the Church. No flowers may be placed on top of the altar of sacrifice or in any location that adversely affects the celebration of the wedding liturgy. Sanctuary furnishings may not be moved or removed. Altar flowers may be removed or donated to the church for weekend use.

Bows or flowers can be attached to the pews with plastic clips or rubber bands and must be removed immediately after the ceremony and disposed of by member so the wedding party. Under no circumstances may any arrangements be attached with tape, tacks, staples or any gummy substance.

For safety precautions, no aisle runners are allowed. Flower petals, real or artificial, rice, confetti, birdseed, etc. may not be strewn outside after the wedding.

Photography and Videography

Your wedding is a liturgical prayer and all are asked to respect the Church's sacredness of this holy occasion. Photography and/or video is permitted. Your photographer/videographer should keep the following in mind:

- Photo/Video equipment must not interfere in the proper flow of the liturgy or setup in the sanctuary.
- No wires may be laid down across the aisles.
- Flash and special lighting should be discussed with your wedding officiant.
- After the wedding ceremony the photographer may take posed photographs respecting the nature that the church is not a studio backdrop.
- It is the prerogative of the officiant regarding the wearing of sound recording devices.



Please advise the photographer and videographer of these regulations. It is respectful for your photographer/videographer to speak with your officiant prior to the beginning of your wedding to inquire of any special request.

Rehearsal

A rehearsal will be scheduled at your initial preparation meeting with the pastoral minister. Rehearsals are usually scheduled for the night before the ceremony at either 5:00 or 6:00 PM. The allotted time for a rehearsal is 45 minutes. Please ensure that all members of your wedding party are on time for the rehearsal. It is helpful to make sure that the order of attendants has been decided in advance so that the practice of the procession is done smoothly.

The civil marriage license must be brought to the rehearsal and given to the officiant.

Please note that there is no smoking is permitted anywhere in parish buildings or on the grounds. No alcohol may be consumed on parish grounds or brought into parish buildings either at the rehearsal or during the wedding liturgy.

Wedding Coordination

The couple and/or the couple's families/wedding party are responsible for the coordination of certain pre- and post-liturgic arrangements (i.e, flower deliveries, photographer set-up, removal of flowers, programs, etc). Any outside wedding consulting must not interfere in the Church planning or celebration. Your pastoral minister can assist with any questions regarding these matters.

Please feel free to contact the Parish Office for any questions regarding these guidelines or your marriage preparation. We trust that you will find your preparation at Saint James to be a sacred time and your marriage a blessing for a lifetime.