

Dear bride and groom,

First and foremost, congratulations! It is a joyous occasion that we prepare for as you move from engagement to matrimony. We are excited to be part of your wedding and support you in the commitment you are making to join as husband and wife.

These next steps mark the beginning of your more formal preparation for marriage. Ultimately, this is the formation that builds upon the strengths of your relationship. The Church has much experience in marriage (2000 years and counting!): it is our hope that what we have to offer in this program of preparation will help build the strongest foundation for your marriage.

Included in this packet, we have included a few resources to help answer questions and prepare for planning:

Welcome letter
Wedding preparation checklist

Wedding policies

Please take some time to go over these together; they are references for planning as well as a way of keeping track of what steps have been taken and which ones are to come.

Thank you for your witness of love, both to each other and of God, as you prepare for marriage. It is a joy to participate with you in this sacrament. Please don't hesitate to call our offices if you have any questions.

Your brother in Christ,

Fr. Ross, pastor
Saint Mark, Shoreline

A handy checklist of the things to do after your first meeting with the priest

Once you have met with the priest (or his delegate) and each of you have completed the initial interview with him, these are your next steps. These may be completed in any order – but all must be completed before your wedding date will be finalized on the parish calendar.

Paperwork

- ☐ Recent baptismal certificates turned in (must be dated no more than six months ago) Please contact the parish where you were baptized and ask them to send to:
St Marks 18033 15th Ave NE Seattle WA 98155
 - ☐ Bride's baptismal certificate
 - ☐ Groom's baptismal certificate
- ☐ Civil marriage certificate turned in (**Only if already civilly married**)

Tasks

- ☐ Arrange for witnesses to be interviewed at any Catholic parish – one witness for each of you (witnesses must be well-acquainted with you, family is preferable) Witness form sent to St Marks 18033 15th Ave NE Seattle WA 98155
 - ☐ Bride's witness
 - ☐ Groom's witness

Only if applicable (when neither Catholic party lives in Saint Mark parish's territory)

- ☐ Receive necessary permission(s) from the pastor(s) of the Catholic party or parties (please ask for form)
 - ☐ Bride (if applicable)
 - ☐ Groom (if applicable)

Formal preparation

- ☐ FOCCUS exam (online or at the office) – you will need to provide the parish office with individual e-mail addresses for the bride & the groom to receive the exam
 - ☐ Bride's FOCCUS exam
 - ☐ Groom's FOCCUS exam
- ☐ Call office to make appointment after both have completed FOCCUS exam – the results will be reviewed and discussed together
- ☐ Wedding classes-12 hours minimum: Engaged Encounter or "Beloved" (Formed.org)
All series with summary notes completed.
- ☐ NFP Training- Overall summary

Wedding policies

The Church, universally and locally, lays out for our consideration many guides in the celebration of marriage. During your preparations as bride and groom, it is never too early to review these and plan accordingly!

Location

Marriage is to be celebrated in a parish church. (CIC 1118, §1, §2)
Couples should be aware that **exceptions are extraordinarily rare and generally not given**. Marriages may not be celebrated outside of the parish church **where one or both parties are members** without the express permission of their pastor. (CIC 1115)

Time

Marriages **may never be celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday**. In our parishes, marriages during Lent are at the pastor's discretion.

Liturgy

Matrimony, whether celebrated in Mass or outside of Mass, is a liturgy given by the Church. Therefore, **no changes may be made to the Mass**, either in additions ('unity' candles, mixing of sands, et cetera) or subtractions (replacing Scripture readings with poetry, literature, et cetera).

Music

Music must be liturgical – hymns or other approved liturgical music.

Ministers

The sacrament of Matrimony is always witnessed by a Catholic deacon or priest. Ordinarily weddings are celebrated by the pastor of the parish and assisted by ministers trained at our parish. Outside clergy and ministers are permitted with proper paperwork.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and Altar Servers from outside of our parish must provide a letter of recommendation from their pastor to assist at Mass.

Attire

Recognizing the dignity of the sacrament celebrated, all those participating in the liturgy are expected to attire themselves accordingly.

Shoulders must be covered (veils are acceptable and encouraged) and **dresses must extend to or below the knees**.

The clothing of the groom and groomsmen should be in the category of **formal dress**. It is customary to wear suit and tie, dress pants and dress shoes.

Environment

The church building, by virtue of its function and what it contains – namely the Eucharist and the people of God – has of its own right a dignity and value.

Floral arrangements, though a welcome addition to the liturgy, must be approved by the wedding host. It must be remembered that they are an accompaniment, not the focus. Accordingly, they should never be on the altar or side altars, nor placed in such a way as to become a distraction. Altar arrangements must be real.

Banners, signs or other displays are never permitted in the church. They may be placed in the narthex (entry way) of the church **at the pastor's discretion**.

Photography

Memories, though important, are secondary to the Sacrament being celebrated. Photography is to be done in a manner that is unobtrusive and respectful.

Hire a professional who knows how to take photos so that no one notices them.

Photographers are expected to dress professionally. Flash photography is not permitted during the liturgy.

Stipends

While no marriage will be refused due to financial hardship, there are costs to celebrating a wedding. While planning for their wedding, couples should include in their budget compensation for the parish and all those who contribute their time and effort to the celebration.

- **Parish** stipend*, \$600 for parishioners (who have been contributing members of the parish for at least 6 months), \$1000 for non-parishioners
- **Priest-** gift optional
- **Altar server** stipend, \$20-25 (if applicable)
- **Organist fee**, \$175
- **Church Wedding Coordinator**-\$300
- **Cantor fee**, \$175

Stipends must be turned into the parish office before the rehearsal date.

Marriage preparation fees only (marrying in a different parish) - \$300