

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ENGAGEMENT!

SCHEDULING

Why allow a minimum of eight months for Preparation?

One of the most important decisions that a person makes in life is the entrance into marriage. We often spend years of academic preparation for a career which we change quite readily, whereas we spend little time understanding the skills that result in a happy marriage to which we commit ourselves for a lifetime. Statistics inform us that half of all present-day marriages end in divorce, and that forty percent of the divorces occur within the first two years.

The Church has great concern that couples allow an adequate preparation for marriage. We believe at least eight months is needed to adequately prepare a couple for marriage (*and sometimes longer if issues arise*).

Some couples begin their preparation a year or more before the date of their wedding. Occasionally a couple will decide to postpone or call off their wedding if they discover issues which reflect a lack of readiness. We will spend whatever time necessary until you feel that you are as ready as possible for the celebration of your marriage. Remember, you are being prepared for both a lifetime of marriage as well as a Church wedding.

When and where celebrated?

A wedding ceremony can be celebrated on any Saturday, except for Holy Saturday or a Saturday that itself is a holyday, Christmas or the eve of a holyday, such as Christmas Eve or the Easter Vigil. Weddings are not permitted on holidays or the eve of a holiday. Our Saturday morning service occurs at 8:00 am and our evening Mass is at 4:30 pm. We ask that you do not reserve a reception facility until we have confirmed your wedding date and time.

Wedding ceremonies may be scheduled on a Saturday between the hours of 10:30 am and 1:30 pm or at 6:30 pm. A Friday evening wedding is also an option. Any variations need the approval of the Pastoral Associate responsible for marriage preparation.

Church Canon Law provides that wedding ceremonies are to be held on “consecrated ground”. Here at St. Columban, a wedding may be held in either the church or the day-chapel. Outdoor weddings are not permitted under any circumstances in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Who presides?

The pastor is the normal celebrant for the Sacrament of Matrimony. If the celebration is to be without Mass, either the pastor or one of the deacons may be the celebrant. If you have a special relationship with a priest or a deacon from another parish, that person may be designated to celebrate your wedding. Permission is to be obtained from the pastor of St. Columban. If a non-Catholic party has a special relationship with his/her minister, that minister may be invited to assist in the ceremony.

Mass or Ceremony?

If both the bride and groom are practicing Roman Catholics, the wedding takes place within the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass). If only one party is Catholic and the other is either a baptized Christian, or a non-baptized person, the wedding (ceremony) takes place outside the Mass.

PREPARATION

Preliminary

Your first meeting is held with Mary Beth Meyer, a Pastoral Associate at St. Columban Church. It is a time for gathering information and for explaining to you the process that will follow as you prepare for your wedding/marriage. An initial meeting will last about two hours. If a priest or deacon from another parish is scheduled to officiate at your wedding ceremony, that person may be involved in this initial meeting and in the subsequent portions of your preparation. Mary Beth can be reached at 513-683-0105 or mbmeyer@stcolumban.org.

Proof of Baptism/Freedom to Marry

The Catholic party is required to submit to Mary Beth, the name and location of the church where he/she was baptized. A non-Catholic party will need verification of his/her baptismal status and freedom to marry. This is usually done by having parents or relatives complete an MB form supplied to the non-Catholic person by Mary Beth. The non-Catholic person does not have to convert to the Catholic faith.

FOCCUS Instrument

The acronym "FOCCUS", stands for Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study. This is a pre-marriage instrument used to help you discover the extent of your sharing and communication of your goals, needs, and expectations. The use of this instrument is required by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. It will be administered during your first meeting. The results will be used as part of your preparation program.

Sponsor Couples

A sponsor couple will be assigned to aid you in your preparation for marriage. These married couples have been fully-trained and will be available to you as associates, not as teachers. They will share with you the results of the FOCCUS questionnaire, and will use it as a guide in their meetings with you. They may share some of their experiences with you, but their main desire is to assist you in your communication skills and sharing with each other.

Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana Archdiocesan Programs

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati requires that engaged couples attend either an Engaged Encounter Weekend or a one-day Pre-Cana Conference. You should make arrangements to attend a session as soon as possible. This information is available online by visiting:

www.catholiccincinnati.org/ministries-offices/family-life/family/marriage/

Follow-up

Mary Beth Meyer is available to meet with you during the months leading up to your wedding. She will assist and answer any questions you might have about the ceremony and issues related to marriage. She will meet with you a month or so before your wedding to plan your ceremony.

M-1 Form

Each (Arch) diocese has a formal document that is completed by the person preparing a couple for marriage and is retained in the parish archives. In our Archdiocese, it is called the "M-1 Form".

This form contains a series of questions about your canonical freedom to marry, spiritual and personal readiness for marriage in the Church. You will be given a copy of the questions to the M-1 Form at your initial meeting. Although most couples attest that it takes about 30-40 minutes to complete, you will be asked to return your responses within 30 days.

Expectations

For a priest or deacon to witness a marriage in the Roman Catholic Church, at least one of the parties must be an active, practicing Roman Catholic. It is our hope that both parties will have a good faith life. If neither party is actively practicing their faith, then we must question their reasons for requesting a marriage ceremony in the Catholic Church. We expect that the Roman Catholic party is serious about his/her commitment to participate in the faith community on a regular basis. Both parties must be free to marry and consent to rear any children born of your union in the Roman Catholic faith.

Marriage License

The marriage license must be obtained in person, by the bride and groom. Licenses are normally issued by the county where either party resides. If neither party resides in Ohio, the license can be obtained in Clermont County where St. Columban Church is located. It can be obtained as soon as 60 days prior to the wedding.

The marriage license must be present at the wedding rehearsal. If the license is not in the possession of the celebrant prior to the wedding, the ceremony will not take place.

Couples who cohabit

We realize that many couples choose to live together before marriage. Statistics tell us that the chance for divorce is 38% higher for couples who cohabit than for couples who do not live together before marriage.

MARRIAGE LITURGY

Marriage as a Sacrament

Marriage (Matrimony) is the only Sacrament in which baptized persons receiving the Sacrament are also the ministers and sign of the Sacrament. The priest or deacon witnesses your wedding vows. This Sacrament doesn't just happen on the day of your wedding. Rather, you give the grace of the Sacrament to each other as you live through the various life cycles and changes in your marriage. We encourage you therefore to conduct yourselves during the marriage liturgy with a mature manner, respectful of your dignity as ministers and signs of the Sacrament. This includes the need for the entire wedding party to refrain from the consumption of any alcoholic beverages prior to the ceremony.

Planning

You will be involved in the planning of your marriage ceremony. The pastoral associate and celebrant will aid in the selection of readings and in choosing various prayers and blessings. It is important to remember that your marriage is a Sacrament of God's people, the Church. In your marriage you are very much in the center of life within the Christian community. Your wedding ceremony is thus a prayer for and by the entire assembled community and should be regarded as a time of public prayer together. The planning of your marriage ceremony should thus reflect your faith.

At your initial meeting with Mary Beth Meyer, you will be given a booklet, *Celebrating Marriage*, which includes a planning sheet with some brief explanatory notes about appropriate wedding music. It is helpful to become familiar with this information before meeting to plan the liturgy.

Music, Musician(s), Vocalist(s)

The parish Music Director (Ms. Mary Bellman) is responsible for all music at weddings. She will assist you in the selection of music for your marriage celebration that will be appropriate for a Christian liturgical celebration. Consult Mary as soon as possible even if you plan to use another musician or vocalist.

Ms. Bellman's fee is currently \$200.00. Please make your check payable to St. Columban Church, Attention: Ms. Mary Bellman, and submit 30 days prior to your wedding. If you plan to include a singer or musician from outside the parish (a friend, family member or professional) there will be an additional fee for a rehearsal. This amount varies according to how much rehearsal time is involved and will be discussed at your music planning meeting.

If you would like to hire musicians from outside the parish or include family members or friends as musicians for the wedding, contact Mary Bellman. All musicians are required to follow the music guidelines from *Celebrating Marriage* and our parish guidelines for the celebrating liturgy. It is presumed that any visiting musician who has the responsibility for leading the wedding music (an organist, pianist) is familiar with the wedding liturgy and plays regularly in a Catholic parish. If this is not the case, you must hire an additional organist or pianist to lead the parts of the liturgy sung by the assembly. Ms. Bellman can be available to do this or may recommend other musicians for you to contact.

If you have any questions about the music guidelines, please contact [Mary Bellman](#) at the Parish Office 513-683-0105 ext. 2102.

Readings

You will be asked to select readings from *Celebrating Marriage* (supplied by the parish) for your wedding ceremony. You will choose an Old Testament reading, a Responsorial Psalm, a New Testament reading and a Gospel. Dividing a reading between two persons is not permitted.

During the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, if you are having a marriage celebration within a Mass liturgy, the second reading (New Testament) must be from the readings for the upcoming Sunday liturgy.

Because this is an important ministry, we encourage you to choose those persons who are capable of proclaiming the Word of God well. The vocalist or musician cantors the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation. The Gospel reading you select is always proclaimed by the celebrant.

Petitions (Prayers of the Faithful/General Intercessions)

You will be given resources as a guide for preparing petitions for your wedding ceremony. You may have friends or family members proclaim the Old and New Testament readings and your petitions. Again, dividing a reading between two persons is not permitted.

Flowers and Decorations

In the church, everything should be natural. Therefore, it is improper to use artificial flowers on the altar. St. Columban Church was designed to use a minimum of decorations. An excess of flowers or other decorations will make the church look overdone. The decoration of the church may begin one-hour prior to the ceremony. Flowers, if left, may be used as part of the decorations in the church for the balance of the weekend liturgies.

Since the decor must be returned to the way it was before the ceremony, any decorations, candle holders, etc. that you want to save should be taken with you after the wedding. At times there may already be proper and sufficient decorations in the church and additional decorations would be unnecessary.

Wedding Rehearsal

Your wedding rehearsal is normally conducted by one of our parish wedding coordinators. The priest or deacon presiding at your wedding liturgy is normally not present for the rehearsal. The rehearsal is held the evening prior to the wedding at 5:30 p.m.

The entire wedding party, including parents and readers, should be in attendance. Please ensure that everyone involved in the rehearsal is informed of the importance of being punctual. Ask them to allow at least fifteen minutes longer than normal due to heavy traffic in the Loveland area at rush hour. Out of respect for the bride and groom, rehearsals will begin on time.

Dressing Policy

The Family Room (just off the main gathering space of the church) can be used by the bride and her attendants (wedding party) to freshen up. It is recommended that all the wedding party members dress at home before coming to church. Because the Family Room and Restrooms are used on Sundays, all hangers, cosmetics, etc., must be removed before the wedding party leaves the church for the reception. We encourage you to ask a responsible person to be charged with this duty. These areas can be accessed up to 60 minutes before an afternoon or evening wedding.

If extraordinary circumstances necessitate the need for additional preparation time, contact Cathy Nagy at x 2104 for information concerning the rental of a room in the Parish Hall.

OPTIONS

Pew Decorations/Information

Candles and/or floral pieces may be placed at the ends of the first few pews. Candles must be free standing and have glass globes. Floral pieces may be attached to the pews by removable tape, pipe cleaners, ribbon or clips provided by your florist.

For planning purposes, the first row in church is made up of chairs and there are 9 rows of pews behind the first row.

Aisle Runner

Aisle runners date to an era when church aisles were made of dirt, wood or stone. Back then, aisle runners were needed to keep the train of a wedding dress from getting soiled. Our 50 ft. main aisle is tiled and kept clean. Because of the potential slip hazard of a cloth or synthetic material aisle runner laid on a tile floor, we strongly advise AGAINST the use of an aisle runner. The church is not liable should someone trip or fall should you decide to use an aisle runner.

Flowers at the Statue of Mary

If you have a special devotion to the Blessed Mother, flowers may be placed at the statue of Mary. Since our statue is in the back of church, and not easily accessible due to the narrow aisle and fullness of wedding dresses, it is recommended that this sign of devotion be made as part of prayer during the wedding or at the rehearsal.

Unity Candle

The Unity Candle is an optional part of the ceremony. St. Columban can provide the unity candle or you may provide your own.

Gift for the Poor

Because we are all called as Christians to provide for the less fortunate, the bride and groom may wish to make some monetary or material offering (non-perishable food) to the poor as part of the celebration. The gift may be brought forward as part of the Offertory Procession if the wedding is celebrated during a Mass. If the celebration is outside the Mass, the gift is placed on the offerings table in the gathering area of the church. All such gifts are given to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Programs for the Ceremony

If you choose to print a program for your celebration, the celebrant and the music director can assist you in the preparation. You must have the permission of the publisher before printing any copyrighted song (words and/or music). Any questions related to the preparation of a wedding program should be directed to our Music Director, Ms. Mary Bellman.

FEES / COSTS

Church Use by Parishioners

The parish has established a church-usage fee of three hundred dollars (\$300.00). A 50% non-refundable deposit (\$150.00) is due within 30 days of booking a wedding date. The balance is due 60 days before the wedding.

The fee helps cover the costs of hiring a custodian and marriage coordinator and for the several hours necessary to open the facility, set up the sanctuary area for the wedding, return the sanctuary area for Mass, assists with the necessary cleanup, and close the facility when you are finished. This fee also helps cover the cost of utilities, altar candles and other items used in the church.

A parishioner is defined as one where the bride, the groom, or the parents of either have been active members of St. Columban parish for at least six months prior to the request for a wedding date.

Church Use by Non-Parishioners

The church-usage fee for non-parishioners is eight hundred dollars (\$800.00). A 50% non-refundable deposit (\$400.00) is due within 30 days of booking a wedding date. The balance is due 60 days before the wedding.

The bride and groom must be prepared for marriage by either the priest or deacon that will officiate at their wedding ceremony. All required Church paperwork must be delivered to St. Columban Church no later than 30 days prior to the wedding, attention: Mary Beth Meyer.

Celebrant's Stipend

It is the practice of the Catholic Church not to charge for Sacraments. Therefore, there is no required fee (known as a stipend) for the celebrant.

While most couples elect to offer a stipend or a gift for a priest or deacon as thanks for his participation in your wedding, it is always left as an option. No couple should feel forced to offer a stipend. It should always be a gift freely given as a gesture of appreciation.

Etiquette guides state that a stipend is the responsibility of the groom. Normally, a stipend (check, cash or gift card) is placed inside a Thank-You card and signed by the engaged couple. The card is given to the best man the day of wedding. The best man is charged with the responsibility of giving the card to the presider. This normally takes place in the sacristy, prior to the wedding ceremony. If you have any questions about a stipend, please feel free to contact Mary Beth Meyer.

It is expected that you would cover the travel, food and lodging expenses for any celebrant that you bring in from outside the parish.

MISCELLANEOUS

Photographer

An experienced professional photographer will obtain all the photos of your wedding that you desire without getting in your way or the way of the celebrant. This is not the time to ask an inexperienced friend or family member to do you a favor and take pictures. Your photographer should consult with the celebrant to see if he has any restrictions. There is ample time both before and after the celebration to pose for special photographs.

Digital Recording

Digital recording is permitted as long as the recording device is placed on a tripod and remains unattended in one location for the entire liturgy. The operator responsible for recording is not permitted to move around the church. The operator is asked to consult with the wedding coordinator for the best location to set-up the recording device.

Confetti, Rice, Bird Seed

The throwing of confetti, rice, or birdseed is not permitted on church property. It is not good for the environment and the wildlife. It is a pagan custom that does not belong at a Christian celebration.

Congratulations again on your engagement and decision to marry at St. Columban. Any additional questions can be directed to Mary Beth Meyer at 513-683-0105 or mbmeyer@stcolumban.org.