

St. Mary's Chapel Wedding Use Guidelines

We are delighted that you are planning to be married at St. Mary's Spiritual Center & Historic Site. We hope that your wedding may be a joyful and grace-filled expression of your love and vows of life-long fidelity in the Lord:

"Christ abundantly blesses the love that binds you. Through a special Sacrament, he enriches and strengthens those he has already consecrated by Holy Baptism, that they may be faithful to each other for ever and assume all the responsibilities of married life."

(¶ 59, "The Order of Celebrating Matrimony")

This booklet is presented to you in order to help you to reflect on and plan your wedding celebration. (One or both of the individuals seeking to be married in the Catholic Church must be Catholic)

Please be sure to read the booklet in its entirety and be aware that you are responsible for its contents.

The guidelines included in this booklet reflect the procedures and policies of the Roman Catholic Church, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and our own St. Mary's.

Please accept our sincere best wishes and prayers as you prepare for a joyous celebration on your wedding day and lifetime of joy and happiness in your married life.

These plans must be initiated at least six months before the desired date of your wedding. The date, time, and place of your wedding cannot be reserved until you have discussed your plans personally with your Priest or Deacon.

∞ You must arrange for your own Officiant either Priest or Deacon and the must have permission. Delegation or faculties from the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Wedding times at St. Mary's must be scheduled for either a Friday Evening or Saturday.

Preparation and Planning of the Couple

∞ A wedding ceremony in the Catholic Church is the beginning, celebratory day of your lifelong commitment to one another. As such, the Church wants God's best for the two of you and believes you will be helped and empowered in fulfilling your vows through participation in one of the marriage preparation programs listed below and approved by the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Your priest or deacon will help you choose the program which is best suited for you.

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony...

- * Within Mass is most appropriate for two Catholics who are marrying.
- * Without Mass is most appropriate for a Catholic and a non-Catholic who are marrying, since it does not include Holy Communion.

(A couple usually wants to focus on unity between themselves and their families on this special day. Because the Roman Catholic Church does not have a communion open to non-Catholics, the desired focus on unity can be lost and misunderstanding may arise.)

- * Between a Catholic and a Catechumen or Non-Christian entails particulars not found in the other two forms of the rite. This form is only used when one party is a Catechumen or non-Christian.
- * Convalidations of Civilly Married Couples refers to couples who have been married in a civil ceremony and are seeking to have their marriage blessed and recognized in the Catholic Church as a sacramental marriage as well as a civil one. Usually convalidations are conducted as a much simpler and private ceremony because the couple's married life is common knowledge and public. If this is your situation, you will need to speak with the priest or deacon in more detail about this.

Wedding music, a joyful and vital part of wedding celebrations, is another way in which you as a couple can personalize your ceremony.

After your initial meeting with your priest or deacon, and at your earliest convenience, you should make arrangements to hire your own organist and cantor. St. Mary's will provide you with a list of our preferred musicians.

Your wedding is a sacred ceremony and thus secular (non-Christian) music is not permitted in the church.

Although you are given some liberty in choosing Scripture readings and wedding music for your ceremony, there are some things that may not be added to the marriage ceremony, such as:

- * The mixing of colored sands in a clear container to show unity of the bride and groom or of the families.
- * Candle-holders: table-sized, floor.
- * Additional pedestals, pillars, trellises, lattices, arches, strings of electric lights, trees, etc.
- * Wagons, carts, or pet "attendants," etc., in the procession.
- * Any elements scattered upon the altar or in the aisle (petals, confetti, glitter, balloons, etc.).
- * Rice, confetti, popcorn, birdseed, or any other substance may not be thrown outside or inside the church. Birds, doves, butterflies, etc., may not be released.

At some time in the preparation process your priest or deacon will ask the two of you, as they do of all couples, some questions regarding your freedom to marry (e.g., "Are you entering this marriage freely?").

After your initial meeting with the clergy at the parish, and before the wedding, there are documents that need to be on file with the St. Mary's. Upon completion of the wedding these documents will be kept permanently at the Basilica Parish on Cathedral Street.

These should be delivered to the priest or deacon with whom you are working.

Documents You Will Need

∞ Baptismal Certificate—a baptismal certificate issued by the church where you were baptized is required of all Catholics and other Christian denominations. The certificate must be issued and dated no more than six months prior to the wedding ceremony. These records will be retained and included in your marriage file.

∞ Certificate of Marriage Preparation—You will receive a certificate of completion when you complete your marriage preparation program. A copy of this certificate must be retained in your marriage record.

∞ Maryland County Marriage License—The license must be obtained from Baltimore City, this is where the marriage will be registered.

You will need to check on the license fee for Baltimore City.

∞ Decree of annulment or death certificate of former spouse (if previously married)—No marriages may be scheduled if there is a previous marriage which ended in civil divorce. All previous marriages, Catholic or not, must usually be annulled prior to setting a date. The exception would be the death of a former spouse with verification by an official death certificate.

Practical Aspects and Guidelines

∞ Respect of St. Mary's Historic Site

In choosing St. Mary's, you have chosen a place dedicated to Sacred (holy) activities with a long and storied history.

We view our church as the “house” of God and a place of prayer. We ask you and your guests to respect the physical building which is our place of prayer and worship.

* The Church is a smoke-free environment. Smoking is not permitted inside the church, or on the grounds outside.

* Alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited on our property.

- * Food and beverages are not permitted in the church. (Infant needs are accepted.)
- * Attire for adults and children should be appropriate for a place of worship.
- * Foul language, whether spoken or printed on clothing, is unacceptable and disrespectful to our house of worship.
- * Parents should model proper behavior for children present at the wedding and are responsible to ensure their children's proper behavior.
- * Please reserve raucous conversations and/or behavior for somewhere other than in the church.
- * Radios, CD players, electronic games, and other such devices should be left outside the church.
- * Cell phones should be silenced or turned off in the church.
- * After the wedding clean-up: kindly have someone responsible to remove all items that the wedding party may have brought into the church (hangers, tissues, programs, etc.).
- * Between Ash Wednesday and Easter, behavior must be restrained and in keeping with the Lenten season.

The Liturgical Space—The Sanctuary

The existing furnishings are not to be moved or removed for any reason without permission.

You are kindly asked to leave the sanctuary and church in the same order as you find them prior to the ceremony.

Individuals Hired from Outside the Church to help with the Wedding

You have taken great care to find and hire such people as: photographer, videographer, and florists. Please ensure that the people you have hired observe the following guidelines so as not to cause any problem situations during the ceremony.

Florists

- Flower delivery should be through the front doors of the rear door of the Church two hours prior to the wedding.
- Floral displays may not be placed on the altar. They may be placed on the floor in the front, on both sides, or directly in the center in the front of the altar.
- Small bouquets/arrangements may be fastened to the end of pews with ribbon, string, or elastic. NO tape, adhesive, tacks, nails, nor anything that will damage the woodwork may be used.

Flower arrangements in the altar area should be placed so as not to impede the natural traffic flow through the sanctuary or cause a safety hazard. They should not block the view of the altar nor the ambo.

- For safety reasons, aisle runners may NOT be used.
- You must remove your flowers after the wedding.

Photographers & Videographers

- Flash photography and/or extra lighting may only be used prior to and/or after the wedding ceremony. With today's technology in photography equipment, quality photos/videos may be obtained with the natural lighting during the ceremony.
- Flash photography/extra lighting must end when the wedding processional is completed and the wedding party is in place.

- Photography/videography inside the church must be taken discreetly and professionally.
- There is no direct feed output from the sound system of the church for sound. Audio microphones for videographers, if wireless, must not be on a frequency between 554—590 MHz
- Photographers/videographers should be appropriately dressed for the dignity of the occasion and the sacred space.
- The altar area and the steps leading up to the altar area are not to be used for photography/videography.
- Family and friends may also desire to take photos and we ask that they follow these guidelines as well.

Wedding Ceremony Cost at St. Mary's is \$650.00. This does not include the musicians and cantor. You are asked to pay them directly.

* This fee is not for the sacrament itself but involves reasonable operating costs and all aspects of the wedding ceremony at St. Mary's.

It is recommended that St. Mary's receive your full payment at the time of the booking of your wedding to secure the date and time.

Other details to help make your ceremony go smoothly:

* The wedding party should arrive dressed for the ceremony.

Regrettably, there is no space in the church or other buildings for dressing for the wedding.

* Restrooms are available (including a baby-changing station) in the Visitor Center area and adjacent to the Chapel.

A room will be provided for the Bride prior to the ceremony however no changing of clothes is permitted.

* St. Mary's is a facility that can easily be accessed by wheelchair.

* Assisted listening devices are available upon request. Please make your needs known at the rehearsal.

* Questions and/or concerns regarding the ceremony and details surrounding it should be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity by contacting our office.

Parking at our site is limited to 20 vehicles, however there is on-street parking that is not restricted on Saturdays up until 7:00 p.m. There is also a paid lot very close, just across Paca Street.