

Congratulations on your recent engagement!!!

We rejoice with you as you look forward to your new life together, and begin this journey with the Sacrament of Marriage. A wedding is a special day for you, your families, and for the church. In the love that brings together man and woman, we see the love of God at work in you in ways that offer inspiration for today, and hope for the future.

The Rite of Marriage says, *“Married Christians, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and share in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his church, they help each other to attain holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children, and they have their own special gift among the people of God.”*

Process of Preparation –

Every couple is asked to meet at least three times with a priest or deacon of the parish to discuss the Catholic understanding of marriage and to complete any necessary paperwork. You will need to meet with the priest or deacon of the parish before any wedding date can be confirmed.

Every couple is asked to take a premarital inventory called, “Prepare.” This inventory is not a test to determine a couple’s readiness for marriage. It is instead a tool designed to give you a picture of your relationship with both its areas of strength and growth. A fee for the premarital inventory is included in the overall marriage preparation fee.

A mentor couple will be assigned to each engaged couple. These mentor couples have been professionally trained to review the results of the Prepare inventory with engaged couples. They will schedule an appropriate number of meetings based to review the results of the inventory. After taking the online inventory, this is usually two or three meetings. Your mentor couple will contact you to begin this process.

Couples are also asked to attend a pre-marriage retreat. While many opportunities are available we ask that you choose between one of the two listed below. After completing the retreat you will receive a certificate of completion. Once received, please forward the certificate to the priest or deacon working with you, and they will then provide you with a document to qualify you for a discount on your marriage license. See the “Document” section regarding information about the marriage license.

- “Living God’s Love” information and registration at <https://archspm.org/marriage/marriage-preparation/>
- “Catholic Engaged Encounter” information and registration at <https://stpaulminneapolis.engagedencounter.com/>

Additional meetings with the priest or deacon will be scheduled as needed to discuss specific areas or topics concerning your relationship and upcoming marriage.

A wedding coordinator will be assigned to your wedding, and the coordinator will contact you to arrange for a time to discuss planning your wedding ceremony. See additional information that is provided.

You will need to arrange for an approved musician for your wedding. While specifics of music can be arranged later, it will be best for you to confirm a musician soon after setting your wedding date to secure the best possible musicians. The cost for your musician will be arranged directly between you and the musicians. The priest or deacon working with you will provide you with possible names and contact information if needed.

Documents –

Each Catholic party is required to present a recent Certificate of Baptism. A recent Certificate of Baptism is one issued within the last six months from the parish or church where you were baptized. The priest or deacon who is working with you will explain how this document is obtained. A baptized Christian who is not Catholic is required to present any copy of their Certificate of Baptism.

Each party may need to complete a Freedom to Marry form which you will receive from your initial meeting with the priest or deacon. This form is to be completed by an adult who knows the respective party well. Most often this would be a parent or godparent.

In the event of a previous marriage, specific documents are required. The priest or deacon will inform you of these documents.

Finally a valid marriage license from the State of Minnesota is required. The marriage license should be submitted to the parish office one month before the wedding, and is available at any county in the State of Minnesota. This is important as we will have the license filled out prior to your ceremony so only signatures are required from your witnesses. The parish office will mail the completed license to the county, and you will then receive a certified copy in 6-8 weeks.

Interfaith and Interdenominational Marriages –

Marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics require a dispensation from the Archbishop. The priest or deacon working with you will help you to request the dispensation. To obtain the dispensation, the Catholic party will be asked to reaffirm their intent to practice their faith in the Catholic Church, and do their part to share that faith with their children.

Wedding ceremonies in other Christian places of worship also require a dispensation from the Archbishop for the Catholic party. When the dispensation is granted, the presence of a priest or deacon is not required at the ceremony.

Consistency with Catholic faith and teaching –

The Catholic understanding of marriage requires both party's intention to enter into a marriage that is exclusive and life-long. For those of child bearing age, it also requires openness to having children, and a willingness of at least one spouse to bring their children up according to the Catholic faith.

Cohabitation prior to marriage is inconsistent with Catholic teaching. Couples should expect to discuss this with the priest or deacon overseeing their sacramental preparation.

Visiting Celebrants –

In most cases, the priest or deacon involved in your preparation will celebrate your wedding liturgy. However, with the permission of the Pastor, it is possible for another Catholic priest or deacon to celebrate your wedding. If a couple requests a guest celebrant for their wedding, a date will not be firmly set until that individual can commit to his involvement by contacting the Pastor. Any visiting celebrant must follow the guidelines of the Archdiocese and parish. Visiting celebrants from outside the Archdiocese must provide documentation from his diocese the priest or deacon's good standing. Furthermore, the priest or deacon must be civilly registered in the State of Minnesota to officiate at a wedding.

Should the liturgy include Mass?

The Eucharist is the Church's supreme sign of love and unity. When a Catholic man and woman marry, and a priest is available, it is most appropriate that the wedding liturgy be celebrated within the context of Mass.

When a Catholic marries another who is not Catholic, however, or one of the families is not Catholic, it is normally recommended that the wedding liturgy be celebrated without Mass. One of the main reason for this is that intercommunion is not permitted by the Catholic Church, and therefore, an interdenominational/interfaith wedding with Mass might not be the best way to highlight the unity befitting the occasion.

Similar to Mass on Sunday, you can plan on a wedding with Mass to take no more than 60 minutes. Following the same format as Mass, with the exception of the Preparation of the Gifts, Eucharist Prayer, and distribution of Holy Communion, a wedding without Mass will be approximately 40 minutes depending on the amount of music planned.

The Wedding Liturgy –

For Christians, marriage is more than an exchange of promises by two people in a public setting. Rather these vows are set in the context of a worship service of a particular Christian community, exemplified by the coming together of relatives, friends and neighbors to support and pray for a couple on their wedding day. As a sacrament, marriage is a public sign of God's

presence and grace, which is witnessed and celebrated by the Christian community. It is more than a couple's expression of their personal sentiments for each other. Each part of your wedding day has its own setting, its own character and context. The church setting is to be sacred. Everything having to do with the wedding liturgy should manifest this sacred character.

Marriage is an act of worship in which a couple brings something which is intensely personal (their commitment to one another), to the larger community of faith, and invites their witness, support, and most importantly, their prayer. It is this context of prayer which is what the marriage of Christians is all about. The overriding spirit of the wedding liturgy is prayer. The words, readings, gestures and music are simple but profound ways of expressing your faith in God and in each other.

This prayerful time in church is the moment to express your faith in God, and your love for one another, and to celebrate this commitment before God and a community of faith. It is no time to be superficial or showy. Rather, you want to be most sincere and honest in what you say, and in what you do. The music you select should contribute to a mood of participation, prayer, and reflection. The careful selection of prayers and readings should articulate your sincere hope and sound faith to which the people around you can say "Amen." For this reason, you and your wedding party should expect to participate in the sung and spoken prayers with those who will be attending your wedding liturgy.

Wedding Coordinator –

All weddings will have a Wedding Coordinator assigned to them by the parish office. The wedding coordinator will contact the couple to introduce themselves. About four months before the wedding day, the Wedding Coordinator will set-up a meeting to discuss the logistics of the wedding day. The role of the Wedding Coordinator is centered around the events of your wedding day. Besides meeting with couples prior to their wedding day, the Wedding Coordinator will facilitate the rehearsal and be present to open the church on the day of your wedding to be sure that day runs smoothly. The Wedding Coordinator will also assist with the couple's vendors like the photographer, videographer, and florist. The Wedding Coordinator can also review the wedding program prior to the wedding day.

Wedding Day Planning Guide –

When you meet with the priest or deacon to set a date for your wedding, you will be provided with a Wedding Day Planning Guide. The Wedding Day Planning Guide will provide you with a detailed guide for planning the various aspects of your wedding liturgy. The Wedding Day Planning Guide will need to be submitted to the priest or deacon from the parish who is working with you one month prior to the wedding day. The priest or deacon will also share the Wedding Day Planning Guide with the Wedding Coordinator.

Rehearsal –

Typically the rehearsal will take place the day before the wedding. The time will be set-up with the Wedding Coordinator and lasts no more than 60 minutes. It is good to have everyone having a role in the ceremony attend the rehearsal: wedding party, parents, ushers, readers, etc. The couple will want to check with the musician and the celebrant to see if they will attend. Please be sure everyone in your wedding party is on time. The bride and groom should be at the rehearsal 15 minutes before the starting time to discuss any last minute questions with the Wedding Coordinator.

Dressing Rooms –

At your meeting with the Wedding Coordinator, the question of available dressing rooms will be discussed with you. It is important to remember that personal possessions should be removed before the liturgy. All items of value should be kept in a locked automobile. The parish is not responsible for the loss or theft of valuables. In whatever spaces are made available, the space should be reasonably cleaned before leaving the church,

Alcohol and Smoking –

Smoking is not permitted anywhere on church property.

Alcohol is strictly forbidden. Do not drink any alcoholic beverages prior to the rehearsal or the wedding liturgy. Failure to observe this policy may result in the cancellation of the wedding.

Decorations –

Flowers and candles are the traditional ways used to help create the mood of worship and joyful celebration. The church building is beautiful in and of itself, and as a result will not require extravagant decoration. In any decorating, simplicity and dignity should be guiding principles.

No nails, thumbtacks, tape, or wire may be used on furniture or walls. If you choose to use bows on the pews, it is required that they be tied or hang around the top in ways that will not damage the pews.

The church does not provide candles or candelabras. Pew torches are permitted providing a globe surrounds the entire candle. Arrangements for candelabras or pew torches should be made directly with your florist.

Couples are welcome to bring bouquets of flowers. Flowers may be placed at the high altar and/or side altars, however, they should not be placed on the main altar of the church. Placement of flowers or other decorations should not obstruct the pulpit, celebrant's chair, or seating of the wedding couple. In bringing bouquets of flowers, note that existing seasonal arrangements of the parish may not be moved.

Aisle runners are not permitted. Aisle runners were originally used for outdoor weddings to keep the wedding party's dress clean. Since weddings are celebrated indoors, an aisle runner is not necessary. Furthermore, liability issue prevent the use of an aisle runner.

Rice, confetti, or bird seed may not be thrown on church property. Any of these is hazardous to footing and difficult to remove. Please be sure this information is spread among your relatives, friends, and other members of the wedding party. Flower girls may drop artificial pedals, however, someone from the wedding party is asked to clean these up following the ceremony when all have left the church.

Unity Candle –

Having a Unity Candle is a popular practice that is permitted for couples who choose to do so. Typically this would occur after a couple's exchange of vows and rings. Couples choosing to light a Unity Candle are required to provide the larger center candle, and generally also provide the two side candles. Given the time to light a Unity Candle, it is best to accompany this action with instrumental music rather than sung music.

Photography –

No flash pictures may be taken within the church during the wedding liturgy. A flash picture of the processional and recessional, however, may be taken. The photographer may take a timed exposure of the wedding party in the sanctuary provided it is taken from behind the last pew. The photographer may also take pictures from the choir loft as long as it does not interfere with the musician's ability to perform their proper role. No photographers or photographic paraphernalia is permitted near the sanctuary during the wedding liturgy, and should not limit the movement of guests. Pictures should be finished 30 minutes before the starting time. Questions about the parish photography policy can be reviewed with the Wedding Coordinator.

Video Recording –

The video recording of weddings is permitted with the knowledge and approval of the Wedding Coordinator. As with photographers, those recording must position themselves outside the sanctuary space in an inconspicuous spot, and are to remain stationary during the entire wedding liturgy. The parish policy for recording can be reviewed with the Wedding Coordinator.

Church Fees –

The priest or deacon working with you will inform you of our recommended fees that include use of the church for rehearsal and wedding day, and cost of the Prepare inventory. Couples are welcome to make an additional donation to the church in a spirit of thanksgiving as they begin their new life together. Deposits are not required, however, these are to be paid in full one month prior to the wedding day.

Finally –

Though the process outlined here does require some time and effort, it is not wasted time. It is our hope and desire that this process will enhance your relationship and help it grow and blossom in the years ahead.

We welcome this opportunity to talk with you, pray with you, and serve you during this happy and holy time of your lives. We hope that you will always feel at home here, and know that our doors are open to you, now and long into the future.

May God's blessing be with you now, and throughout your life together!

If you have any questions, know that you are always welcome to contact the one parish office for St. John the Baptist in Vermillion, St. Mary in New Trier, and St. Mathias in Hampton at 651.437.9030 and email at parishoffice@stmathias.com.

The parish office is located at St. Mathias, 23315 Northfield Boulevard, Hampton, Minnesota 55031.