



Celebrating the
Sacrament of
Marriage at
St. Mark Catholic
Church



A Prayer for an Engaged Couple

*LORD GOD,
the source of all LOVE,
the WISE PLAN of your providence
has brought this couple together.
As they prepare themselves
for the SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE
and pray for your GRACE,
grant that, strengthened by your BLESSING, they
may GROW in their RESPECT for one another and
CHERISH each other
with a SINCERE LOVE.*

We ask this through CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

The Book of Blessings

As the pastor of St. Mark Catholic Church, I want you to know that I share your joy as you begin making plans for your wedding. What you are preparing for is of greatest importance to both of you as well as to your families and friends.

In choosing to come to the Catholic Church for the celebration of your wedding, you have made a choice to begin and live your marriage in a Christian manner: to see your wedding as more than just a wonderful social event but as something which gets its deepest meaning from our Christian faith. Because of this, you won't be surprised that the Church has some very definite expectations about how your wedding liturgy will be celebrated. These expectations are not arbitrary impositions intended to add to the already considerable challenges of planning for a wedding. They are, rather, the Church's way of doing things; our way of helping you to set the tone for the celebration of a holy event that is of the greatest importance in your lives.

Our parish staff stands ready to help you celebrate your wedding. We are eager to do everything possible to see to it that your wedding will be a beautiful and faith-filled celebration – a powerful and persuasive sign of Jesus' love for His people.

As you read the following policies and procedures, I hope you will keep these things in mind. I look forward with you to the day of your wedding with prayer and great anticipation.

In Jesus and Mary,

Fr. W. R. Harris
Pastor

Policies & Procedures

SELECTION OF A DATE AND TIME

Congratulations on your decision to marry in the Catholic Church. The Church takes great care and concern in the preparation of each couple who is preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage. By establishing a period of a **six-month** time for preparation for Marriage, as well as providing programs, interviews and guidance, the Church seeks to help couples as they begin this lifelong journey.

Weddings are scheduled on Friday evenings at 7:00pm (excluding the First Friday of the month) and on Saturdays no later than 2:00pm. They are not scheduled on Saturday evenings, Sundays, Holy Days and Solemnities, and the Sacred Triduum. Please check with the church BEFORE committing to a date and making any other reservations.

WEDDING REHEARSAL

Rehearsals are usually scheduled on the evening before the wedding and normally take 45minutes – 1 hr. It is recommended that you tell your bridesmaids, groomsmen and other wedding party participants to be in place 15 minutes before your scheduled time for the rehearsal. Be sure to schedule the rehearsal when everyone will be able to make it on time. The best hour is usually around 6:00pm. Many times a dinner will follow the rehearsal.

Who should attend the rehearsal?

The bride and groom of course, plus their parents and all bridesmaids, groomsmen, ushers and the flower girl/ring bearer should be in attendance.

ATTIRE

In choosing your bridal gown, please be aware that if you choose a strapless gown you must wear either a jacket or shawl during the ceremony and during the taking of pictures in the Church. This policy also applies to the bridesmaids. Please respect the sacredness of the ceremony when choosing the bridal attire.

PAPERWORK

1. There are two sets of documents that will need to be completed. The first is the *Pre-Marriage Inventory profile (29.1)* form, which will be completed during an interview with the pastor or wedding coordinator. The second form is the *Freedom to Marry (29.2)*. It is to be completed by someone who has known you most of your life (usually a parent or sibling). This form is essentially the statement of a witness that you are free and competent to marry. These forms need to be filled out before a parish representative from St. Mark or at a Catholic church the person filling out the form lives near. The form is then mailed to St. Mark by the church filling out the form.
2. Within six months of your wedding the Catholic parties need to get a certified updated copy of their original Baptismal Certificate from the parish where they were baptized. Most parishes now require that the request for an updated certificate be made in writing and signed by the baptized person. If your fiancé is not Catholic, but baptized, we need a copy of his/her Baptismal Certificate, too. Some protestant churches do not keep records of baptisms. In that case, a letter from the pastor of that church will suffice.
3. Be sure to let the pastor or coordinator know of **ANY** previous marriages. If either of you have been married before, you will need to present the *Document of Freedom (annulment)* papers to the pastor or coordinator. The annulment process usually requires 12 months for completion. Be sure to let the pastor or coordinator know of **ANY** previous marriages. **NO WEDDING DATE MAY BE SET UNTIL THE DOCUMENT OF FREEDOM HAS BEEN PRESENTED TO THE PARISH.**
4. Couples are required to participate in FOCCUS. FOCCUS, the acronym for *Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study*, is a premarital inventory for marriage preparation given to couples who are being prepared for marriage at St. Mark. It is a communication tool and not a test nor a predictor of marriage. The content covers elements of successful marriages, careers, lifestyle, finances, children, values and ideals of marriage. The completed inventory is returned and given to the couple to assist them in discussing differences. If the couple is using an outside counselor, this inventory will help the counselor formulate questions for discussion.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

You are expected to attend marriage preparation. St. Mark offers *Evenings for the Engaged* once a year. This program consists of 6-8 sessions led by a team of married couples who will share their knowledge of married life with the couples. If we are unable to provide the series of classes you may select to participate in an **Engaged Encounter** weekend (www.ceeseattle.org) or private counseling sessions and provide the parish with the completed documentation.

Natural Family Planning is the preferred practice for all Catholic couples. An introduction is given to all couples prior to their wedding. The information provided is an overview of both theology and practical application. Couples are also given websites and contact names so they can arrange additional training and obtain supplies.

www.foryourmarriage.org is a Catholic website which is designed to provide spiritual guidance and practical information for those preparing for marriage as well as for couples already married.

Obtaining the Marriage License

The earliest you may purchase a wedding license is 60 days prior to the ceremony and no later than 3 days before the wedding day. Both the bride and groom must be present and must be 18 years or older.

PREPARING FOR YOUR WEDDING CEREMONY; THE LITURGY

A Primary concern as you come to the preparation of the Liturgy is how this event will not only be a visible sign of your love for God and for one another, but also a celebration that includes your family, friends and the Parish family in the Liturgy. During the Rite of Marriage, you declare your love to each other before God and the Church. This public declaration, witnessed by a prayerful people that actively participate in the Liturgy, is the fundamental nature of good liturgical celebration. You have an opportunity not only to express the love between yourselves, but also to strengthen the faith of those who come to worship with you.

In preparing for the Marriage Celebration, you will want to read and select Scripture Readings that are provided in the booklet, *Together for Life*.

The Rite of Marriage of the Catholic Church offers two options.

1. “The Rite of Celebrating Marriage during Mass” is used when both the bride and groom are **active and participating Catholics**. This is also referred to as the “Nuptial Mass”, and is modeled after the Sunday Mass. The Rite of Marriage is celebrated after the homily. The bride and groom are the ministers of the Sacrament. The priest is the witness for the Church.
2. When a Catholic marries a person from another faith or who is not baptized, the “**Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass**” is the choice selected. In the positive spirit of ecumenism, great care must be taken to respect the integrity and faith of both people in “interfaith” Marriages. This second form is preferred for interfaith Marriages because it contains elements in which both the bride and groom and their families/friends can fully participate.

You will choose the readings to be read at your wedding from sections B, C, and D in the *Together for Life* booklet. A trained lector from St. Mark will do the readings.

THE SEATING OF GUESTS AND THE PROCESSION

Wedding liturgies usually begin with a full liturgical procession which includes the entire wedding party. We encourage the bride and groom to enter with both of their parents, or family representatives, as a part of this procession. This makes a very strong statement regarding the family unit which differs from the popular custom of the bride on her father's arm alone, a custom that comes from the Middle Ages when marriages were arranged and the bride was viewed in terms of property being exchanged. Since every family situation is different, we recommend that couples give serious thought early on as to whom they will walk with in the wedding procession.

Entrance Procession

Altar Servers (for Mass)
Priest/Presider
Bridesmaids – Groomsmen
Maid/Matron of Honor – Best Man
Groom with parents
Flower Girl
Ring Bearer
Bride with parents

Exit Procession

Bride and Groom
Maid/Matron of Honor – Best Man
Bridesmaids – Groomsmen
Altar servers
Priest/Deacon
Parents
Congregation

CEREMONY

Prelude -Organ/instrumental or vocal solo while seating the family.

Processional Song – Organ/instrumental

Welcoming Salutation by Presider

Opening Prayer

Old Testament Reading B _____

Responsorial Psalm C _____ responsorial psalm sung by a cantor
and the congregation.

New Testament Reading D _____

Alleluia Verse before Gospel

Gospel F _____

Commentary about couple by presider / homily

Introductory Address and Statement of Intent

Rite of Marriage

Exchange of Vows Consent Reception of Consent

Blessing and exchange of Ring(s)

Prayers of the faithful J _____

Mass: ***Presentation of Gifts***

Prayer over the Gifts

Preface

The Our Father

Nuptial blessing

Sign of Peace

Communion vocal solo, instrumental or
congregational song.

Prayer after Communion

Nuptial Blessing

The Lord's Prayer (optional)

Final Blessing

Recessional – Organ/instrumental or congregational song

Postlude – Usually organ/instrumental while everyone exits the Church.

Please let the wedding coordinator know which readings you have chosen. The readings are typed and placed in a binder for the lector to read.

PARTICIPANTS

The Faithful – are the guests that you have invited to the celebration. The faithful take an active part in the celebration and so their role is not to be neglected or thought of as mere spectators.

The Celebrant - the Priest or the Deacon who leads the faithful in prayer to God and presides at the exchange of vows.

The Bride and Groom – As ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage, it is your consent and exchange of vows that forms the focus of this celebration.

“Marriage arises in the covenant of Marriage, or irrevocable consent, which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from the other.”

General Introduction to the Rite of Marriage.

The Maid/Matron of Honor and Best Man –assist the bride and groom and stand as official witnesses to the ceremony. Ordinarily they are family members or close friends who wish to publicly associate themselves with your vows of commitment to each other. They are also active participants in the celebration of the Liturgy and they sign the Marriage License following the celebration.

Flower Girl and Ring Bearer (optional)– must be at least 5 years of age so they are aware of their role and able to fulfill it. There is only one Flower girl and one Ring bearer.

The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion – are lay women and men who assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. St. Mark Extraordinary Ministers are assigned this ministry.

The Servers – function as the cross-bearer and candle-bearers, assist the celebrant as book-bearer and prepare the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Servers are needed for a Nuptial Mass only and are trained and scheduled by St. Mark parish.

The Lector (Reader) –a person selected to proclaim the first and second readings during the Liturgy of the Word. The reader also leads the General Intercessions. St. Mark Parish lectors are assigned this ministry.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

The interior of St. Mark is an awe-inspiring setting for any Liturgy. Very little is needed to enhance the Church for the celebration of Marriage. The following guidelines have been provided to help you as you prepare for the celebration.

- Please note that the **Unity Candle is not** a prescribed element of the Marriage Rite and therefore it is not permitted during the Marriage Liturgy. Floral arrangements are never placed on the Altar. Arrangements are done for our Saturday night and Sunday liturgies and will be in front of the altar and the ambo.
- If bows or small flower decorations are to be used on the pew ends, please notify the florist that tape may not be used to attach them to the pews. They should provide pew clips for this purpose.
- The use of aisle runners, balloons, or any other informal party decorations are not in keeping with the dignity of the Church's Liturgy and may not be used. Aisle runners also pose a risk of injury.
- Please note that decorations in the Church during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Easter may not be changed to accommodate a particular wedding. Church furnishings and fixtures may not be re-arranged without consultation and approval. As it is presently arranged, the sanctuary provides for the flow of the Liturgy and for the greatest visibility.

MUSIC

Please call the St. Mark Pastoral Assistant for music to plan the music for your wedding. All songs and any possible outside vocalists or musicians must be approved by the Pastoral Assistant for Music. St. Mark vocalists and musicians have first right of refusal.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES OR CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

Keeping in mind that this is the sacred Sacrament of Marriage, NO alcoholic beverages or controlled substances are permitted anywhere on the church grounds. Should it be noted that there is drinking of alcohol or substance abuse anywhere on the grounds (in dressing rooms, from the trunk of a car, etc.) prior to the wedding, the presider has the right to cancel the wedding or the wedding party member(s) involved to NOT participate in the wedding ceremony. Fr. Harris will NOT perform the ceremony if he detects alcohol on either the bride or groom.

HOSPITALITY AND DRESSING ROOMS

Sullivan Hall is available for the bride and bridesmaids to gather and prepare prior to the celebration. We are unable to provide changing rooms for the groom and the groomsmen and advise that they arrive at St. Mark already dressed for the celebration. The wedding party is welcome to bring light snacks and water and to make them available in Sullivan Hall. We respectfully request that no food or drink be brought into the vestibule or sanctuary of the Church.

PHOTOGRAPHY FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

To maintain a prayerful atmosphere during the Sacrament of Marriage, we provide the following guidelines:

- St. Mark is available for still photographs 2 hours prior to the celebration and one-half hour following the Marriage unless there is a wedding following later in the day. All photographing must be finished by 3:00pm Saturday afternoon, since the Sacrament of Penance begins at 3:30pm.
- The photography session runs most smoothly if you assign one member from each family to be a “runner” to have people ready for the different pictures. The family and wedding party should not congregate in the Church sanctuary but wait in Sullivan Hall or outside to be called for pictures.
- You are most welcome to take pictures outdoors, weather permitting.
- Flash equipment and floodlights are not permitted for the Marriage Liturgy.
- As soon as the procession has entered the Church, cameras are placed and all pictures are taken out of sight of the people. The photographer may not be in the aisle.
- Roaming video cameras are not permitted.
- Do not stand on pews or other furniture, nor use tape to secure electrical cords, etc, to the pews.
- The photographer and videographer **may not** enter the Sanctuary during the Liturgy.
- Photographers and videographers must dress in attire appropriate to the dignity of the ceremony. It is suggested that women wear a dress, skirt, or pants suit and blouse and that gentlemen wear a jacket, shirt and dress slacks. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

It is your responsibility to make certain that these guidelines are followed by those you have hired to take pictures, and also your family and friends.

WEDDING FEES

The fee specified for your Marriage Liturgy helps defray the cost of the services of the Parish Staff as well as the cost of utilities. Couples often ask whether it is appropriate to make a monetary gift to the Priest who celebrated their Marriage. It is certainly customary and many couples find this a good way to express their thanks, although it is not required.

All fees must be paid in full one week prior to the Marriage celebration.

No parishioner of St. Mark is ever turned away from having his or her Marriage Celebration at St. Mark because of an inability to pay the fees. If you have financial difficulties in meeting the fee plan, please discuss the matter with the Priest.

The payment of fees is not to be understood as either paying for the Sacrament or the renting of the Church for the celebration of the Sacrament. The fees are to offset the rising costs of maintaining the church and to adequately reimburse those ministers who offer their assistance.

Donations:

Parish fee & Church donation: (includes wedding coordinator, FOCCUS inventory, Evenings for the Engaged, NFP training, and completion of all the witness forms, etc.) **	\$400
St. Mark Music Director (bench fee for organist):	\$150
Cantor:	\$150

A separate donation may be made to the Priest/Deacon officiating.

If St. Mark is doing the paperwork, all the documentation and scheduling the preparation classes for a wedding taking place in another Catholic Church, the fee is \$200.

** The cost for an Engaged Encounter weekend or private counseling is covered by the couple.

MARRIAGE POLICY

ST. MARK CATHOLIC CHURCH

Dear Fr. W. R. Harris,

We, the undersigned have received a copy of the Marriage Policy and have read it in its entirety.

We agree to abide by the policies stated within.

We also agree to pay the fee of \$ _____ by _____.

Signature of the Bride

Signature of the Groom

Signature of staff member

Date