

## GUIDELINES FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

### St. Joseph Parish Springfield, Illinois

*Please note that these parish guidelines supplement “The Engaged Couple’s Guide: Preparing for Marriage” from the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Diocesan guidelines address many issues not directly addressed in the following parish guidelines. Both sets of guidelines are to be read together as couples prepare for the sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church. Current Diocesan guidelines can be found at [www.dio.org/familylife](http://www.dio.org/familylife)*

#### **BEFORE THE WEDDING**

1. For your marriage ceremony to take place at St. Joseph Parish, you must meet the following criteria:
  - A. Both parties must be “free to marry” in the Catholic Church. If either party has been married before, in either a civil or religious ceremony, those marriages must have declarations of nullity issued by the Catholic Church *before* a wedding date will be set.
  - B. You are a currently registered and active parishioner of St. Joseph Parish for at least three months OR
  - C. You are currently a registered and active parishioner of another parish or Newman Center AND a child of a currently active and registered parishioner of St. Joseph Parish. Proof of membership in another parish or Newman Center is required at the time of the initial interview.
  - D. A registered and active parishioner implies consistent weekly attendance and sharing one’s gifts with the parish community.
2. You must contact the parish at least 6 months before the date of the wedding. If the marriage preparation work will be provided through another parish or Newman Center, a letter from the Pastor/Chaplain attesting to this is required at the time of the initial interview.
3. No date for a wedding will be scheduled until after the initial interview with the Pastor of St. Joseph Parish.
4. Marriage is not celebrated at St. Joseph Parish during the season of Lent or Advent.
5. Marriages at St. Joseph take place on Friday evenings (with rehearsal at 7 p.m. on Thursday evening) OR Saturday afternoon at 1 p.m. with rehearsal on Friday evening. The sacrament of marriage may also be celebrated during a regularly scheduled weekday or weekend Mass.
6. There are two rites for Marriage in the Catholic Church: during Mass and outside of Mass. Marriage between two Catholics normally takes place during Mass. Marriage between a Catholic and another Christian normally takes place outside of Mass. Marriage between a Catholic and an un-baptized person may only take place outside of Mass.
7. Documents needed for both Catholic and non-Catholic parties:
  - A. Baptism/Confirmation certificates: Must be obtained by the couple (unless these occurred here at St. Joseph Parish). Write or call the church where you were baptized and have the certificates sent to St. Joseph Parish, 1345 N. 6<sup>th</sup> St, Springfield, Illinois 62702 to the attention of the Pastor. The Catholic baptismal certificate must be validated no more than 6 months prior to the wedding.
  - B. Pre-nuptial Questionnaire: Both the bride and groom need two witnesses to attest to their respective baptism and freedom to marry. If witnesses are required, they should know the couple well (parents are the preferred witnesses.)
  - C. Civil Marriage Document: The couple needs to obtain a marriage license from the State of Illinois, Sangamon County. You must bring this no later than at the time of rehearsal for the wedding.

- D. Marriage Preparation Program Certificate – This is required by the diocese for all couples. This involves either an all day program called “Pre-Cana” or an Engaged Encounter Weekend. There are several dates and locations available for this. You will be given information about the dates and times of these sessions.
8. The couple needs to invite two official witnesses for the wedding (the best man and maid or matron of honor.)
  9. For couples who meet the criteria in #1 *above*, the suggested offering for the rehearsal and wedding ceremony is \$200, payable to St. Joseph Church.
  10. St. Joseph Parish does not “rent” the Church for weddings. However, if an exception is made by the Pastor, then couples who belong to another parish normally complete marriage preparation and documentation in their parish. To be married at St. Joseph, non-parishioners need permission/delegation from their pastor in writing. Non-parishioners must arrange for their own clergy (priest or deacon) to conduct their marriage preparation as well as the celebration of the wedding. A priest or deacon from outside of the diocese must also present a letter of suitability from his diocese or religious community.

The fee for use of St. Joseph Church for non-parishioners is \$600. Of this fee \$300 is to be paid at the time the wedding date is set. The balance of the rental fee (\$300) is due 60 days prior to the wedding.

11. The sacrament of Reconciliation offers a new possibility to experience the grace of God. For all Catholics, the sacrament of Reconciliation is highly recommended before receiving the sacrament of Marriage.

#### **ON THE WEDDING DAY:**

1. The church is a sacred place where the people of God gather to worship and invoke His blessing. Therefore, an attitude of respect and reverence is appropriate in the church during the rehearsal, and before, during and after the ceremony. Therefore, food and drinks are not to be brought into the Church. No alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs are allowed on the premises.
2. The bride’s room should be left in the same condition in which it was found.
3. Please limit the number of attendants at your wedding to no more than five for the bride and five for the groom; this does not include ushers. While we understand that you want people to be a part of your special day we also must remember that we are celebrating a sacrament and we do not wish to make a spectacle of it.
4. You may have a ring bearer and/or flower girl, but they are to be no younger than five years old. It can be very frightening to have to be in front of a room of strangers and experience teaches us that this is sometimes too much for extremely young children.
5. Please consult with the Liturgical Art and Environment Committee Chair before making any decisions regarding decorations in the sanctuary. Decorations for the church must be put up and taken down conveniently before and immediately after the ceremony. Decorations that will leave a mark after their use will not be allowed. For safety reasons an aisle runner is not permitted.
6. The Roman Catholic Rite of Marriage will be used for the ceremony. The use of the unity candle is found nowhere in the Roman Catholic rite for the celebration of Marriage and is not to be used during the marriage rites. You may choose to use this custom at your reception.
7. Photographs and videos are permitted. However, the photographers or videographers are to be discreet in their work. They are not allowed in the sanctuary. Pictures may be taken one (1) hours before and after the ceremony until 3 p.m. at which time all photography and post-wedding activities must end in order to prepare for the sacrament of Reconciliation and the Saturday afternoon Mass.
8. The receiving line and reception of guests is to be done at the reception hall and not in the church or vestibule. The same applies also for the signing of a guest book.

9. Throwing of rice, bird seed or other items outside is not allowed; nor is anything non-liturgical to be used inside the Church: balloons, bubbles, etc.

### **MUSIC GUIDELINES:**

Couples must contact our Pastoral Associate for Music Ministry when planning the music; this may be done through the parish office. Payment for the services rendered by the Pastoral Associate for Music Ministry is handled directly by the couple, and is due within two weeks of the wedding. All music and the use of other musicians must be coordinated in conjunction with the Pastoral Associate for Music Ministry.

All couples getting married at St. Joseph Parish need to follow the section on appropriate music in the DIOCESAN GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE. Highlights are listed below, as well as specifics that refer to St. Joseph Parish.

1. The music during the celebration must be sacred, that is, expressing faith. Favorite or popular songs should be reserved for the reception hall.
2. The Pastoral Associate for Music Ministry should be contacted as soon as the wedding day is secure, and before the music is planned—securing the date for the Church does not automatically secure it with musicians.
3. Pre-recorded music of any form cannot be used for wedding ceremonies.

The most important purpose of music in the ceremony is to help people to pray. If you keep this in mind, it will make the music selection process easier.

# **Covenant Agreement with St. Joseph Parish**

- 1) I agree and accept that for a Catholic to be married at St. Joseph Parish he or she must:
  - a) be a registered and practicing member of St. Joseph Parish, or
  - b) be the child of a registered and practicing member of St. Joseph Parish and have a letter of testimony from the pastor of the Catholic Church/Newman Center at which he or she is a registered and practicing member.

The desire to have your wedding in the Catholic Church must not reflect merely the practice or belief of your family, but your own personal faith and desire to deepen in relationship with God in and through the Church by regular attendance at Mass and the celebration of the Sacraments. A wedding is not a personal and private event, but one that affects the whole community. The Church urges all Catholics to be married in the parish of either the bride or groom, that is to say, in the parish in which one or both are registered and practicing members. To be married in any other church, one must begin by contacting the parish at which either or both are registered and practicing members.

- 2) I agree to complete/provide all applicable documents and fees in a timely fashion.  
(See Guidelines)
- 3) I agree to attend all meetings with the pastor and a weekend for the engaged or Pre-Cana session.
- 4) I understand and accept that St. Joseph Parish will not tolerate any alcohol or illegal drugs on the premises, such that:
  - a) *Any* member of the wedding party bringing such substances onto Church property, or arriving intoxicated or impaired for either the wedding rehearsal or the wedding, will be asked to leave immediately.
  - b) Should either the bride or groom arrive intoxicated or impaired on the day of the wedding, the wedding will be cancelled.

Everyone understands that a wedding is a joyous occasion that should be celebrated. A church, however, is a sacred place set apart for the praise and worship of God. Any member of the wedding party, therefore, who conducts him/herself in an inappropriate manner, or who arrives intoxicated or impaired, or who brings any amount of alcohol or illegal drugs onto church property will be obliged to leave before the rehearsal or wedding begins. There will be no exceptions. Because the free and deliberate consent of both the bride and groom is an indispensable element in the celebration of marriage in the Catholic Church, should either the bride or groom arrive intoxicated or impaired, or bring alcohol or drugs onto church property, the wedding will be immediately cancelled.

- 5) I agree to accept and abide by all the policies of St. Joseph Parish regarding the sacred nature of the Church ceremony including the choice of appropriate, religious music, discreet photography, and decorations. (See Guidelines.)
- 6) I understand and accept that willful misrepresentation, or failure to fulfill any of the requirements of this covenant agreement – at any time – will release St. Joseph Parish and its clergy of any obligation to celebrate the wedding.

Please clarify any questions you have before signing this agreement. Some examples of things that would lead to the cancellation of the wedding would include failure to obtain a valid marriage license from the State of Illinois, arriving intoxicated, or misrepresenting one's freedom to marry. If the priest / deacon preparing the couple deems that you have not been forthright in dealing with him or in keeping the terms of this agreement, he has the right to cancel or delay the wedding, or to relegate the wedding to a small private ceremony.

**We have read and accept this Covenant Agreement in full:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bride

\_\_\_\_\_  
Groom

\_\_\_\_\_  
Priest /Deacon

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date