SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

GUIDELINES FOR *Weddings*

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH



MAY GOD BLESS YOUR MARRIAGE
AND YOUR PATH TOGETHER.

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ENGAGEMENT!

May God bless your journey together with love, joy, and faith as you prepare for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Our parish family keeps you both in our prayers.

"What steps do I need to take to get married?"

1. Contact the office

Visit or contact the parish office (706-548-6332) and complete a marriage application. Once the application is completed, return it to the office. The application will be given to one of our priests unless you have indicated a preferred priest on the application. The priest or deacon will contact you within two weeks to schedule an appointment.

This process should begin at least six months before your intended wedding date and before reserving a reception venue or other services.

The parish office will try to answer any questions you may have. If they cannot answer them, please save those questions for your first meeting with the priest or deacon.

2. Initial Meeting with Priest or Deacon

The priest or deacon will conduct the first interview with the engaged couple. During this meeting, all the requirements necessary for celebrating the sacrament will be explained. You should tentatively establish the wedding date and time with him.

Your wedding date may be cancelled if we do not have following documentation **1 month** before the wedding:

- (4) Prenuptial Witness Affidavits
- Baptismal Certificates- recently issued by the Church of baptism (dated no more than 6 months prior to the first interview)
- First Communion and Confirmation Certificates (The certificates do not need to be recently issued.)
- Marriage Prep Course Completed and proof of certificate.

3. Documents That Must Be Completed

You will be given two (2) copies, each, of the **Prenuptial Witness Affidavit**. Both the bride-to-be and the groom-to-be need to have the forms completed by parents, or other relatives or close friends, signed by a priest, or deacon, non-Catholic minister or notary public and returned to the parish office.

Important information: All previous marriages – civic, non-Catholic and Catholic are presumed to be valid by the Catholic Church. A previously married person is free to marry in the Catholic Church if the former spouse has died or if the previous marriage has been granted an annulment. Please be sure to discuss this with your priest or deacon.

If either party was married before, please bring to the initial meeting with Priest or Deacon a copy of the **Annulment Decree** or a copy of the **Death Certificate**.
Catholic parties must obtain a new copy of the **Baptismal Certificate**. This is obtained by requesting a copy from the parish in which you were baptized. It is important to indicate that you are requesting a baptismal certificate "with all notations." Copy of the Baptismal Certificate for a non-Catholic Party is also required but need not be recently issued by the Church of Baptism.

Permission is given for a Catholic to marry a person of another faith tradition when the Catholic party indicates that the Catholic faith is value in his/her own life, and one which he or she intends to hand on to their children. The Catholic party will be asked to promise: "I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ, and with God's help, intend to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church. At the same time, I acknowledge the respect I owe to the conscience of my spouse in marriage. I promise to do all in my power to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics."

Note: Catholics ordinally celebrate their wedding in the parish church of the bride or groom, or where their family is a member. In some special circumstances, such as the wedding of a Catholic and a member of another faith community, permission is given by the Archbishop for the wedding to take place in another church or house of worship. Because marriage is a sacrament of the Church, Catholic weddings rarely take place in secular venues or outdoors.

In all these special cases- all documents must be received **3 months** before the wedding.

4. Church Fees according to their Parishioner Status

To be considered a registered and active parishioner, the individual must have attended Mass at least **three times per month** during the one-year period prior to reserving the wedding date. Attendance is recorded through the use of parish envelopes placed in the collection basket, regardless of donation amount. While online giving is encouraged, attendance can only be verified through physical envelopes.

- **No Fee** for registered parishioners who have attended Mass regularly at least 12 months prior to the first marriage preparation meeting.
- **No Fee** for any registered (for at least two months) parishioner who has participated in the St Joseph Athens OCIA or adult Confirmation class within the last 12 months and has attended Mass regularly for the two months prior to the first marriage preparation meeting.
- **$2,000 Fee** for registered or non-registered people who occasionally attend St Joseph for Mass
- **$4,000 Fee** for non-parishioners with no prior affiliation with St. Joseph.

Deposits and Payments

- A **$500 deposit** is required at the time the wedding date is reserved.
- The deposit will be refunded if all parish guidelines are followed. Failure to comply with any of the guidelines may result in forfeiture of the deposit.

- Couples required to pay the $2,000 or $4,000 church fee must submit full payment at least **1 month prior** to the wedding date. Failure to do so may result in cancellation of the wedding reservation.

5. Reservation Requirements

- To maintain the reserved wedding date, the following must be submitted at least **30 days prior**:
  - Completed marriage registration form (if it has not already been submitted)
  - Baptismal certificates
  - Required affidavits (4)
- For weddings requiring intervention from the Metropolitan Tribunal (including *visums, nihil obstats, permissions,* or *dispensations*), all approvals must be received at least **3 months prior** to the wedding date. Failure to do so may result in cancellation of the reservation.

Visiting Priest/Deacon: If you are working with a priest or deacon outside of our parish, please let us know so that we may furnish him with the appropriate forms to be able to confirm your wedding date/time here at St. Joseph.

6. Marriage Preparation

- Foccus Survey- Pre Martial Inventory
- Marriage Preparation Program

The priest or deacon you are working with will direct you to the programs that best suit your needs. It is required that you take part in one of these programs and present a certificate of participation to the parish office to be placed in the mailbox of the priest or deacon indicated. In addition, we sometimes ask each couple to complete FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, understanding and study), a pre-marital inventory that will provide a basis for future discussion and preparation.

If you are working with a priest or deacon outside of our parish, either for your preparation or as presider, please let us know so that we can provide him and you with all the important information.

6. Additional Information

Marriage License
A civil Marriage License is obtained at any County Probate Court in the state of Georgia. Note: if neither applicants are residents of Georgia, the marriage license must be obtained from the county in which the wedding ceremony will take place. The license fees may vary. You can obtain specifics on Fees and requirements by contacting one of the following offices:

- Oconee Probate Court 706-769-3936
- Athens-Clarke Probate Court 706-613-3320

- Barrow Probate Court 770-307-3045

The Marriage License, along with the return envelope furnished by the County should be turn in to the parish office no later than two weeks prior to the Wedding. After your wedding, we mail your marriage license back to the County of Issuance. To obtain a certified copy of your Civil Marriage Certificate, contact the Probate Court in the county where you received your Marriage License.

The parish office will contact you when your Marriage certificate from the Catholic Church is ready for you to pick up. Note: This is not a legal document.

Ceremony Timing and Attendance:

- Weddings will begin promptly at the scheduled time regardless of late arrivals within the wedding party.
- If the bride, groom, or the two principal witnesses are not present **15 minutes before** the ceremony begins, the celebrant reserves the right to omit the homily.
- If the bride, groom, or the two principal witnesses are not present **5 minutes before** the scheduled start time, the ceremony may be reduced to a wedding outside of Mass.
- If the bride, groom, or the two principal witnesses are not present **15 minutes after** the scheduled start time, the wedding may be canceled.
- Exceptions may be made in the event of catastrophic circumstances such as car accidents or serious medical emergencies involving members of the wedding party.

Music Guidelines:

- Mariachi groups or bands are not permitted inside the church building.
- Choirs or cantors not affiliated with St. Joseph Catholic Church must receive prior approval from the parish office before participating in the wedding ceremony.
- Mariachi groups and bands are permitted in the Plaza after the ceremony has concluded.

Photography and Decorations:

- Photographers may use flash photography and may move throughout the church, except on the steps leading to the sanctuary.
- The throwing or dropping of flower petals, whether real or artificial, is not permitted inside the church.
- Decorations are permitted but limited to:
    - Flower arrangements around the altar
    - Freestanding decorations along the center aisle
- Decorations may not be attached to pews or any church furnishings by tape or any other means.
- The couple is responsible for removing all decorations within **30 minutes** after the wedding unless prior arrangements have been made with the parish office.

Celebration and Photography After the Ceremony:

- Rice or bubbles may be used in the Plaza to celebrate the newly married couple.
- The couple may remain in the sanctuary for up to **30 minutes** after the ceremony for photographs.