

Saint Matthias Parish

Marriage Preparation Information Booklet



Saint Matthias Church
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610-664-0207
www.SaintMatthias.org

Dear Friends,

You have fallen in love and have reached the decision to marry for life, entering into a new part of God's divine plan for human love. We extend to you our prayerful best wishes! We assure you of our desire to assist you in every way as you prepare not simply for your wedding day but for your life together in love until death.

The purpose of this booklet is to help you prepare well for this celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage at Saint Matthias Parish. These pages will provide you with the information you need to prepare for a Catholic marriage, a preparation that should most importantly touch your souls.

As you enter into this preparation, do not become distracted with the myriad details that you must decide. Rather, be focused on these four characteristics for a healthy, holy and fulfilling Catholic marriage –

1. Be willing to make your marriage a priority
2. Be resolute to make the Church's teachings on marriage your own so that you are well-grounded in the faith
3. Seek the maturity that allows you to embrace sacrificial love
4. Remain open to God's plan in your lives.

While we promise you that God is always willing to do His part, He wishes for each of us to invite Him into our lives, into our plans, into our world.

With our prayers for God's blessings,

The Priests of Saint Matthias

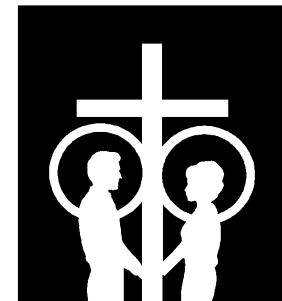
THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Marriage comes from the hand of God in creation. It is a union that He blessed and called “very good.” It was not lost by Original Sin. It was redeemed in the Blood of Christ and is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church through which He makes His love present. The gift of natural marriage then is transformed by the action of Christ in His Church so that spouses can help each other achieve holiness and give witness to God’s love in the world. It is a reflection of Christ’s love for the Church.

In this day and age, there are many diverging ideas about relationships, commitment and the uniqueness of marriage. However, God makes it clear in creation, creating us in His image and likeness, male and female. The complementarity of the sexes is essential to the nature and purpose of marriage. It is not only biological, it is evident also in how men and women think, act, communicate. This complementarity enables a man and a woman to form an intimate, loving and life-giving union. In establishing a “one-flesh” union, marriage creates an intimate communion of life and love, drawing the couple together in unity and allowing them to participate in the procreation power of life according to God’s will.

Marriage is the foundation for the family and a Christian family images the communion within the One, true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The love of spouses for one another and for their children overflows into the world and nurtures society. The family is the fundamental building block of society.

All life is a journey, and marriage is a journey involving human, personal growth as well as growth in holiness. Christ Himself is present in every sacramental marriage and through grace, helps spouses to grow in virtue and strength, in love and sacrifice. Do not overlook the means He provides, especially in frequent use of Confession and reception of Holy Communion. Pray always; ask for everything you need. He is waiting to give you even more than you ask for. Take advantage of what the Church offers now and in the years ahead as you confront the challenges of life and rejoice in the joys of love.



SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

*“From the first day of your life together as husband and wife, pray together. Prayer gives a clean heart, and a clean heart can see and serve God in one another.”
(advice from Saint Mother Theresa to April and Tom Hoopes)*

For a Christian believer, becoming the best possible person you can give to your married partner requires that you live a rich human life in Jesus; that you practice the values that Jesus taught; that you surrender to the workings of His Spirit in love and fidelity.

Prayer, Reading Sacred Scripture and **Sacramental Life** make up the time-tested avenue for the spiritual growth and the formation that helps us become perfect like God is perfect.

Your **Prayer** should be an ever-deepening experience as you approach your marriage. Besides ordinary moments, e.g., prayer to start the day, to end the day, at meals, at Mass, etc., engaged couples should find time, indeed *make* time, to pray together. You should pray for each other, for your future married life, for your needs, your families, etc. Sharing a time of prayer together will express your trust in God and help you grow in trust in each other.

Reading Sacred Scripture is an exceptionally prayerful experience in which the reader listens to God’s Word in a uniquely personal way. Reading the Bible together throughout your period of Marriage preparation will deeply strengthen your relationship to

each other and to God. Engaged couples should make a determined effort to read those passages relating to marriage. You will find many of these in the *Wedding Liturgy Planning Booklet* from Saint Matthias Parish. Pray and discuss the readings carefully as part of your personal pre-nuptial preparation.

The Catholic **Sacramental Life** centers around the celebration of Penance and the Eucharist. *The Sacrament of Reconciliation / Penance* helps you to be a person truly reconciled with Christ and with His people. It is a sacrament necessary to forgive mortal (serious) sins but also one for us to use as we confess venial (less serious) sins and out faults. In this way, we not only grow in God’s mercy but we also experience His healing of the wounds of sins. We grow by His grace in virtue and perfection. *The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (Communion)* joins us to Christ, who enters into our body and soul, to make us one with Him and with others. When we eat His Body and drink His Blood we are strengthened by His power to love the other person freely and completely as we have been loved.

These two sacraments are an essential and integral part of the life and spiritual journey of every Catholic.



APPOINTMENTS

Prior to the Wedding (at least six months prior), you meet with the Parish Priest. This first appointment will be a discussion of several things, including the selection of the day, date and time for the Wedding Ceremony; information about the required Pre-Cana programs offered in our Archdiocese; necessary documentation for your wedding, etc.

When the Pre-Cana (the pre-marital preparation) program has been completed, you must make a second appointment. This should be approximately four months before the wedding date. At this meeting you will present all the necessary documents and will complete the Pre-Nuptial Investigation Form with the priest or deacon.

Other appointments are scheduled as necessary.

PRE-CANA PROGRAM

This is a pre-marital preparation program for engaged couples. There are many options available to fulfill this requirement. These will be discussed at your initial meeting.

Go to phillycatholicmarriageprep.com for more information.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS AND CERTIFICATES

As part of the preparation for a Catholic marriage, the following documents are required. Please bring these documents to your second appointment with the Parish Priest, after your Pre-Cana program has been completed, approximately four months before your wedding date.

1. **Baptismal & Confirmation Certificates** – Catholics must present a recently-issued Baptismal Certificate (*one issued no earlier than about six months prior to the Wedding date*). When calling the Church where you were baptized, tell them that you are getting married and need your Baptismal Certificate. This will direct them to give you the proper certificate. Other baptized Christians must also present their certificate of Baptism. A new or original Confirmation certificate is also needed for those baptized Catholic.
2. **Letter of Freedom to Marry and Witness Forms** – A certificate called a Letter of Freedom to Marry is presented by Catholics who are members of Catholic Parishes (*other than Saint Matthias Parish*). It is obtained from your home Parish Rectory. Additionally, each bride and the groom must have two persons each, who know them personally, complete a **Witness Form**, testifying that they are free to marry. This means two persons for the bride and two for the groom. It may be parents, family members or even long time friends.
3. **Pre-Nuptial Investigation Form** – You will fill out and sign this sworn statement at your second appointment. It is a formal way to know that all Church Law requirements are or will be fulfilled before the wedding.
4. **Pre-Cana Certificate** – Received at the end of your Pre-Cana program and presented to the priest at your second appointment.
5. **Civil Marriage License** – Obtained from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this document must be delivered to Rectory **one week before the wedding**. It is valid for sixty days only and must be valid on the date of your wedding. The license can be obtained from any county courthouse in Pennsylvania.

NUPTIAL MASS

Because the Eucharist feeds and nourishes each Catholic on his or her journey of faith, and because the Eucharist, like Christian marriage, makes God's love visible in the world, the Church urges Catholic couples to marry within Mass. You should ask for a Nuptial Mass only with sincerity and conviction – a conviction that has led you to participate in the Eucharist regularly.

Inter-faith marriages are usually celebrated without a Nuptial Mass.



INTER-FAITH MARRIAGES

Inter-faith marriages are a special concern for the Catholic Church. The ecumenical movement invites us to reflect on what the many Christian Churches believe in common without denying or overlooking the real differences that do exist between Churches. In your married life (and on your Wedding day), you should live your faith, sharing those things your faiths hold in common; where your faiths differ, understanding and loving cooperation will be called for.

In arranging for an Inter-Faith Wedding, it is necessary, by Church Law, that a dispensation (or permission) be obtained from the Archbishop. This dispensation requires that the Catholic party reaffirm his or her Catholic faith, intend to continue living the Catholic faith, and do all in his or her power to raise children in the Catholic faith. The non-Catholic party must know that the Catholic is making these promises. Hopefully, this has been a matter of careful discussion between the couple, prior to seeking a Wedding date. Your priest will be happy to discuss this in detail with you.

In a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized person who is not Catholic, the Rite of Marriage without a Nuptial Mass should be observed. If suitable, and if the Archbishop gives permission, the Rite of Marriage within Mass may be used, except that, according to universal Church Law, Holy Communion is not given to the non-Catholic persons present.

In a marriage between a Catholic and a person who is not baptized, the Rite of Marriage without a Nuptial Mass must be followed.

The non-Catholic party is invited to extend an invitation to his or her minister or rabbi to participate in the Wedding Ceremony. This should be discussed with the priest preparing you for marriage.

TIMES FOR WEDDINGS

Weddings normally are scheduled for Friday evenings or Saturdays. On Saturdays, due to other Parish functions, no Wedding can be scheduled to begin later than 2:00 p.m. Special arrangements may be made for other times during the week. No Weddings are scheduled on Sundays.

TIME ELEMENT

It is very important that the rehearsal and the Wedding begin exactly on time. It is really discourteous to your invited guests, the priest and other liturgical ministers to be late. Priests, musicians and even florists often have multiple engagements to attend to. Starting on time is a matter of charity and justice as well as ordinary good manners.

On the day of the Wedding, the groom and ushers must be at Church 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the Wedding. The bride and the bridesmaids must arrive 15 minutes prior to the scheduled starting time.

VISITING PRIESTS

Many people have Priest friends or relatives whom they would like to include. We are happy to welcome them to Saint Matthias Church. A visiting priest from another diocese needs a "letter of good standing" from his bishop or religious superior. The Parish Priest will normally complete all the paperwork and preliminary arrangements, and the visiting Priest will conduct the Wedding.

PARTICIPANTS

The involvement of family or friends as lectors is encouraged. They must be members of the Catholic Faith in good standing when the Wedding is a Nuptial Mass. One or two participants for the offertory procession are also encouraged. Please be prudent regarding selecting young children to participate as members of the Wedding party..

WEDDING FEES / STIPENDS

Church Offering

An offering of \$350.00 is given to the Church to help defray some of the expenses incurred by the Church for the Wedding. This is not a fee for rental of the Church.

An offering of \$600.00 is asked from a couple who are not currently active members of Saint Matthias Parish.

Parish Wedding Coordinator

The Parish Wedding Coordinator conducts the rehearsal and assists on the day of the wedding. The Wedding Coordinator's fee is \$150.

Offering for Altar Servers

We will be happy to assign two altar servers to serve at your Wedding. We ask that you "tip" each server \$10.00.

Musicians' Fees

Information is provided on the following pages.

MUSIC POLICIES

The Director of Music at Saint Matthias Parish is Berthilla Wiscount, who is responsible for all music and musical programs of the Parish. You are asked to e-mail her at bwiscount@gmail.com **at least 3 months prior to your Wedding date.** She will assist you in planning the music for your Wedding as well as hiring a cantor (singer) and, if you wish, other musicians.

Required Musicians: All Weddings with music at Saint Matthias Parish are required to have an organist and a cantor, who will lead the congregation in song. Ms. Wiscount is under contract to play the organ for all Weddings at Saint Matthias Parish. Since she is under contract, her fee is to be paid even if an outside organist is invited by the couple to play.

Outside Musicians: Options for hiring other instrumentalists will be discussed at your music planning meeting. If there is someone (such as a friend or family member) whom you wish to sing or play an instrument at your wedding, Ms. Wiscount will work with you to have that person participate in some way. Cantors at Weddings are normally Saint Matthias Parish cantors. If, however, you wish to bring in an outside cantor, he or she needs to be someone who cantors at a Catholic Church. Visiting musicians (singers or instrumentalists) must contact Ms. Wiscount at least one month before the Wedding, and are required to have a rehearsal with her. The fee for this additional rehearsal is \$50.00. Parish cantors and instrumentalists obtained through Ms. Wiscount for your Wedding are not subject to this additional fee.

Musical Selections: All music must be of a sacred, religious nature. All musical aspects – including music played before, during or after the Wedding in the Church, as well as all musicians – must be approved by Ms. Wiscount and/or the Pastor. No music is to be played, or outside musicians contracted, unless explicitly approved.

Musicians' Fees: Ms. Wiscount fee includes your planning session, 15 minutes of prelude music, and the Wedding itself. Fees should be paid directly to Ms. Wiscount. For your convenience, Ms. Wiscount will also coordinate the music and disburse musicians' fees for all musicians involved. Please note, musicians do not attend the Wedding rehearsal.

- Ms. Wiscount's fee (organist): \$250.00
- Rehearsal fee with outside musicians: \$50.00 additional*
- Cantor's fee: \$175.00
- Instrumentalists' fees: Fees vary

At Saint Matthias Parish, music at Weddings mirrors the quality and nature of music at Sunday Mass. No exceptions will be made to any of these policies under any circumstances. Should you have any questions, please contact Ms. Wiscount.

COPYRIGHT POLICY

Some couples opt to print a Wedding program or booklet for their guests. This is entirely optional; however, printing of wedding booklets must honor all copyright laws. It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain all legal permissions to reprint any music, lyrics, readings or prayers (all of which are copyrighted).

PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

Pictures by professional photographers and videographers are permitted throughout the entire Wedding Ceremony. **We cannot overemphasize enough the need for reverence, reserve and decorum.** Photographers are never permitted to be in the sanctuary during the Wedding.

Picture-taking in Church after the Wedding may be permitted for a short time only, subject to the next scheduled liturgical event. In any case, no more than 15 minutes of picture taking will be allowed. *The sacred nature of the Church and the presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament must be kept in mind during these photographic sessions. Quiet reverence is to prevail throughout.*

The photographer is to consult with the Priest in the Sacristy prior to the start of the Wedding for any specific instructions.

FLOWERS, PEW DECORATIONS, AND AISLE RUNNER

The purchase of flowers for the Church is a matter for you to decide; they are NOT required. Flowers put on the altar normally stay on the altar following the Wedding as a gift to the Lord and His House.

Bows may be placed on pews, but **no tape or wire is to be used.** Candelabra in the aisle create a fire hazard they are excluded from use in Saint Matthias Church.

The aisle runner sometimes used in the center aisle for Weddings, is supplied by the florist. Its use is not required. **We strongly request it not be used,** since it is a potential safety problem. The Church aisle is 75 feet long.

RICE, CONFETTI, BIRDSEED, FLOWER PETALS, BUBBLES, BALLOONS, BUTTERFLIES, DOVES, SPARKLERS, ETC.

Please advise your family, friends and guests that the throwing of rice, confetti, bird seed, flower petals, the use of bubbles, the releasing of balloons, butterflies, doves, etc. **is absolutely prohibited both inside and outside the Church.**

There are several reasons for this; safety and cleanliness are a prime concern.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Extraneous ceremonies are not to be added to the liturgical wedding ceremony. The sign of unity, the sign of the Sacrament of Marriage, is the Bride and Groom themselves who, through their vows, give themselves to one another in marriage as the ministers of the Sacrament. Additionally, the giving of wedding rings is the only other liturgical sign of their union.

The use of the "Wedding" or "Unity" Candle is not permitted in Church. If a couple wishes to incorporate this, they may do so as part of the grace at the reception. We have a separate sheet of information on this.

The exchange of flowers at the Sign of Peace is not permitted at Saint Matthias Parish.

If the couple has a sincere devotion to Mary, they are encouraged to visit the Blessed Mother's Altar for a time of prayer after the Prayer after Communion before the conclusion of the Wedding. Please inform Ms. Wiscount at your music-planning meeting if you wish to do this.

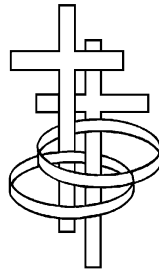
THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION)

Your Wedding is an opportunity for and a time of spiritual growth. You are urged to make arrangements to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) so that your heart may be one with Christ. Also, please encourage all the members of your Wedding party who are Catholic to make arrangements to receive the Sacrament of Confession prior to the time of the rehearsal and Wedding.

THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

The rehearsal is scheduled according to the mutual convenience of the parties and the parish's Wedding Coordinator. Every effort must be made to be prompt and on time.

For the rehearsal, the engaged couple should arrive approximately **10 minutes early** and come to the Church Sacristy to review the Liturgy and to make a final check of necessary documents.



A WORD ON DECORUM AND REVERENCE

Every Church is a very special place. It is a House of God. In the Catholic Church, we proclaim and accept the fact that Jesus Christ is truly, really and fully present in the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle behind the Altar. When we enter a Catholic Church, we are entering into the real presence of Jesus Christ. So the time we spend in Church is different from that at home, or in a large public hall, or at a concert or a sports event. Our dress and conduct needs to reflect this understanding, of course.

To help you and your family and friends to offer the proper respect and reverence in Church as well as to be able to celebrate your wedding with sacred dignity, please share these guidelines with everyone.

Chewing gum is not permitted inside; smoking is not permitted inside or near the vestibules (doorways) of the Church. Alcohol is not permitted on Church property. Alcohol consumption before the wedding, may necessitate the cancellation of the wedding ceremony. Loud talking, shouting or cheering are not permitted inside at any time. A round of applause for the Bride and Groom at the end of the service is acceptable.

AND FINALLY...

After the Wedding, please take time to register in your new Parish soon after you move into your new home. You are no longer on the rolls of your old Parish. Continue to be actively involved in your new Parish as a newly-married couple, filled with the love of Christ.

Should you have any questions on any of the information in this booklet, please do not hesitate to contact one of the Parish Priests. He will be more than happy to assist you.

Congratulations

May God bless you!

The Priests of Saint Matthias Parish



Check List

The following items **MUST** be brought to the Rectory approximately one week before the wedding:

- _____ Civil Marriage License
- _____ Offering for the Church
- _____ "Tip" for the Altar Servers
- _____ Liturgy Planning Form
(last page of the Wedding Liturgy Planning Booklet)

The Musician Fees are paid directly to the Director of Music. The Parish Wedding Coordinator's fee should be paid at the rehearsal.

Please remind
all participants to be
ON TIME
for both the Wedding rehearsal
and the Wedding itself!
Thank You!