

St. Mary's Catholic Church
406 E. Savidge Street
Spring Lake, MI 49456

(616) 842-1702



Congratulations to both of you on your engagement and your decision to enter into the beautiful vocation of married life! To help you with your planning, here are our policies regarding getting married at St. Mary's Parish. The first step is to ***please read these policies carefully so that you fully understand them in advance, and then sign and return them to the parish secretary.*** Then the pastor Fr. Bill Vander Werff will contact you to schedule an initial meeting.

As Catholics, we believe that marriage is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ to give couples who have chosen to make a lifelong commitment to each other the grace to live out this beautiful vocation. The purpose of any marriage is two-fold: for the mutual good of the spouses (the unitive aspect), and for the purpose of having and raising children in a loving and stable home environment (the procreative aspect). As such, couples who desire to receive the Catholic sacrament of marriage must promise to be faithful to their spouse for life and to be open to having children and raising them in the Catholic faith. It is also an expectation of any couples who wish to get married at St. Mary's, whether they are parishioners here or not, that they be practicing their faith (i.e., attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days).

It is possible for a Catholic to marry a baptized, non-Catholic Christian or a non-baptized person. However, in this situation, both parties must agree to respect the beliefs and conscience of the other, and the Catholic party does have to promise to do his or her best to ensure that their children be baptized and raised Catholic.

Scheduling Weddings

Weddings can be reserved a minimum of 6 months and up to a maximum of 16 months in advance from the date of the couple's initial meeting with the pastor. Wedding and rehearsal dates and times will only be reserved on our parish calendar when the deposit is paid (see below).

Please consult with the pastor regarding your wedding date and time. Availability is subject to the parish schedule and liturgical requirements of the Catholic Church. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, St. Mary's Parish Festival Saturday, and the weekends of the Coast Guard Festival. Due to our Mass schedule, the latest time weddings can begin here on Saturdays is 1:00 pm, and all photos must be completed by no later than 3:00 pm.

Fee Policy

The fees for weddings of active, registered parishioners at St. Mary's are as follows:

- Musician – Diane Murray - \$200
- Cantor (TBD) - \$125
- Wedding coordinator – Kathy Reminder \$125

- Altar server - \$25
- Church fee - \$50

The fees to the musician, cantor, and wedding coordinator should be paid by check directly to them and delivered to the parish office by the Monday prior to the date of the wedding, or at least 4 days before the date of the wedding.

In addition to these fees, there are costs for marriage preparation – please see below under Marriage Preparation.

The parish fee of \$50 serves as a deposit and should be paid as soon as possible to reserve the date and time of the wedding on the parish calendar. It includes use of the church and some of the marriage preparation-related costs and paperwork. [An active parishioner is one who attends Mass weekly and has been contributing to the church collection on a weekly basis for at least six months.]

The fees for non-registered couples or for parishioners who are not contributing on a weekly basis to the parish collection are as follows:

- Musician – Diane Murray - \$200
- Cantor (TBD) - \$125
- Wedding coordinator – Kathy Reminder \$125
- Church fee - \$400

The fees to the musician, cantor, and wedding coordinator should be paid by check directly to them and delivered to the parish office by the Monday prior to the date of the wedding, or at least 4 days before the date of the wedding.

In addition to these fees, there are costs for marriage preparation – please see below under Marriage Preparation.

It is expected that couples who are not St. Mary's parishioners be attending Mass weekly at their home parish and complete their marriage preparation at their home parish. They should then arrange with their parish to have their marriage paperwork sent to St. Mary's no less than 6 weeks prior to the wedding.

An initial deposit of \$250 for non-registered individuals or parishioners who are not contributing to the parish on a regular basis is required to reserve the dates for the wedding and rehearsal. It should be paid after the first meeting with the pastor. The balance of the church fee is due when the fees to the musician, cantor, and wedding coordinator are due; i.e., the Monday before the wedding date. Payment must be received in full before the wedding can take place.

Guest Officials

All weddings officiated by non-parish clergy must request and receive delegation by the pastor of St. Mary's. They must observe all diocesan guidelines regarding clergy. If they are not from the Diocese of Grand Rapids, they must obtain a letter of suitability from their bishop or religious superior and have it sent to the Diocese of Grand Rapids (they will be familiar with this requirement). Contact information for the visiting priest is due when the deposit is made. The couple should expect to pay a stipend (not included in the wedding fee) to the visiting priest or deacon who celebrates the wedding. Non-Catholic

clergy may participate in the wedding ceremony, but the Catholic minister must receive the vows and be the primary celebrant.

Liturgical Environment / Decorations

All questions concerning flowers and other decorations should be directed to the parish wedding coordinator; what is permitted will be at her discretion. Advent and Lent are special seasons of the Church and so have greater restrictions for what is permitted, so these are not ideal times to schedule a wedding.

Music

Marriage is a sacrament. By choosing to get married in the church, you are inviting God into this union. Your wedding is an act of worship in which the bride and groom, along with their families and friends, come together to offer thanks and praise to God and to ask for His blessing upon their union. Therefore, it is important that the congregation take an active role in this liturgy.

All music should serve to direct attention to the sacredness of the event and the present of Christ in the holy union of marriage. While hymns should be musically attractive, the music should be chosen primarily for its text, which should be identifiable as prayer.

Therefore, we ask that you keep the following in mind when thinking about the music to have at your wedding:

- 1) There is music that belongs at the reception that does not belong at the wedding liturgy.
- 2) Think about liturgical principles and congregational participation, not other weddings that you have attended.
- 3) We strongly encourage you to use the musicians and singers of St. Mary's. You will save time and have a more coherent, prayerful celebration. If you use musicians from outside the parish, they must follow parish guidelines. A fee of \$200.00 is paid to the parish music director to act as consultant to outside musicians.
- 4) When your wedding will be within the Mass, the responsorial psalm, Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia), Holy Holy Holy and acclamations must be sung. The cantor will lead the congregation with these. When your wedding is a liturgy outside of Mass, the responsorial psalm and the Gospel Acclamation must still be sung.
- 5) For our liturgical celebrations, an organ and piano are available and we have several competent musicians available. Therefore we do not use reproduced music; i.e. playing recorded music.

Photography

Please note the following:

- More than one photographer is permitted before and after the ceremony, but only one during the ceremony itself.
- The photographer(s) must review their plans with our parish wedding coordinator before the ceremony.
- During the ceremony, the photographer should remain at the back of the church behind the congregation or off to the side.
- The only furniture that can be moved for photos is the wedding kneeler.

- No flash photography is permitted during the ceremony.
- Video is permitted as long as the placement of the equipment does not distract or detract from the liturgy and remains in a fixed position.

Liturgical Ritual

All weddings at St. Mary's follow the guidelines set forth in the Catholic Church's *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* and as set by the competent Church authorities. Traditions such as the unity candle are not a normal part of the rite of marriage and should be reserved for the reception or immediately before the ceremony rather than during the ceremony itself. Please refer any questions regarding the liturgy to the pastor or the parish wedding coordinator. All music must be approved liturgical music. Recorded music is not permitted.

Rehearsal

Our wedding coordinator will direct the rehearsal. The date and time should be decided with her well in advance; normally it takes place the evening before the wedding, provided there are no scheduling conflicts. Please make sure that anyone who has a role in the wedding (wedding party, readers, parents) be present for the rehearsal and arrives promptly. Please allow about 30-40 minutes for the rehearsal.

Proper Decorum in Church

No rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals or similar substances may be used in the church building or on church property. Also, please no gum, food, or drink other than water in the church. We also ask that there be no candles or runners in the aisles.

Substance Abuse

Use of alcohol and illegal substances on site is prohibited. Violation of this policy will forfeit deposits and fees paid and terminate the wedding celebration. Anyone found under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be asked to leave the premises; wedding couples under the influence risk invalidation of marriage.

Marriage Preparation

The steps involved in marriage preparation at St. Mary's include:

- Choose your wedding readings from the *Together for Life* booklet which you will receive at your first meeting with the pastor.
- Please contact our parish wedding coordinator Ms. Kathy Reminder at (616) 846-2684 after your date has been reserved to schedule a time to plan your wedding liturgy.
- Watch the *Beloved* series on marriage. This is available online through our parish subscription to FORMED, which is a database of Catholic books, videos, etc. To access it, go to www.stmarysl.formed.org (If you need a code, use: J9XHNY).
- Complete a pre-marriage inventory (FOCCUS): this is basically a survey to help the two of you get to know each other better and think about and discuss topics you may have never addressed before.

- Name of Bride: _____
- Printed name Signature

Email:

Phone number:

St. Mary's Parish - Effective September 17, 2025