

New Life Together
Celebrating Marriages at Saint Mark Catholic Church

**POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF
THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE**

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the parish family of Saint Mark Catholic Church we would like to congratulate you both on your upcoming wedding. The Sacrament of Matrimony is concerned with the sacred covenant of love between two persons. This sacrament witnessed before a believing community is made holy in the self-sacrificing witness of the couple who have proclaimed that henceforth they will “become one.” Please be assured of our prayers and support as you prepare for your Sacrament of Matrimony. We look forward to assisting you in this beautiful Sacrament. The following information will help you to begin the process towards your wedding date. To begin your marriage planning, please call the Administrative Assistant at 910-392-0720 #221 to set your initial meeting with one of the priests.

REQUIREMENTS

The Prenuptial Investigation. Those helping the couple prepare for marriage, usually the priest, will complete a short questionnaire with the couple. This elicits basic background information and ensures that the couple is free to enter into marriage.

Baptismal Certificate. Catholics will need to obtain a baptismal certificate dated within the last six months from your church of original baptism. Baptized Christians are also asked to obtain a baptismal certificate if possible; otherwise we require two affidavits attesting to the baptism. Have a recent Certificate of Baptism from your church of baptism (both parties) sent to:

St. Mark Catholic Church
1011 Eastwood Road
Wilmington, NC 28403
Attn: Vikki Lyons

Marriage Preparation Program. You are required to attend a Marriage Preparation Workshops sponsored by the Diocese of Raleigh. The dates and locations for both the One-Day Workshop and or the Weekend for Engaged Couples can be found on the Diocese of Raleigh Webpage www.dioceseofraleigh.org. Locate “Marriage” in the “How We Serve” dropdown menu, follow the links and then register on line for the workshop that best suits your schedule.

Dispensations/Permission. When one partner is non-Catholic, or the location of the ceremony is not in a church or chapel, or the Officiant is a non-Catholic, the priest will help the couple request the proper dispensations and permissions.

Civil Marriage License. For marriage at St. Mark’s, the couple must obtain a civil marriage license from the New Hanover County Marriage License Department located at 216 N. 2nd Street, Room 2, Wilmington. Office is open M-F from 8:00-4:00. Both the Bride and Groom

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must be present when the license is issued. The following documents must be presented from both the Bride and Groom before a license will be issued:

Effective February 01, 2009, Applicants for Marriage in New Hanover County must provide Picture ID with date of birth, certified copies of birth certificates (if birth certificate is from another country, couple must also provide a certified translation) and an acceptable proof of social security or ITIN number. (Will accept W2, statement from Social Security Administration or pay stub with printed SSAN).

If you have been divorced in the last 60 days you should bring your divorce papers. The marriage license costs \$60 and is good for 60 days.

For widows and widowers, an authentic certificate of death of their departed spouses with whom they were married and a marriage certificate of the previous wedding.

Declaration of Nullity, if previously married and the former spouse is not deceased.

Date and Time of Wedding. The date and time of the rehearsal and wedding will be determined at the first appointment with the priest.

CONVALIDATION

A Catholic who marries another Catholic or non-Catholic in a civil ceremony or a religious ceremony of another faith without receiving the required dispensation or permission from the Bishop should have the union validated in the Church.

In this way, the Catholic partner recognizes that marriage is a Sacrament of the Church; that s/he is returning to the community of the faithful and may rightfully receive Holy Communion. The requirements and procedures for validation follow the usual preparation for marriage.

THE CEREMONY

Since the Second Vatican Council, the options available to the couple for their wedding have been greatly expanded. At the first meeting you will receive the wedding format and a list of readings. During one of the scheduled meetings with the priest the options and reading selections will be discussed.

Saturday weddings are the norm and may be scheduled for 12:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. Other dates and times need to be coordinated with the parish priest.

The music you select for your wedding must be religious in character. Overtly secular music is not permitted. For example, the “Bridal Chorus” from the opera “Lohengrin” by Wagner (also known as “Here Comes the Bride”) has strong secular associations, and as such, is not appropriate for liturgy. Other music selected must be approved by the Music Director. The couple needs to make an appointment with the Music Director to discuss music and any instruments other than the organ or piano which the couple may request. If our Music Director/musicians are not available to play for the wedding, other musicians may be used. Soloists and instrumentalists are welcome with the approval of the Music Director. While it is not required, we encourage the use of a trained cantor or psalmist for the liturgy. If a vocal soloist is scheduled, it is expected that they will sing the Psalm and Gospel Acclamation. Please

New Life Together
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review GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION OF WEDDING MUSIC. The Saint Mark Music Director is Alex Hill, and you may reach him at music@stmarkcatholicchurch.com or 910-392-0720 ext. 232.

Flowers are permitted on either side of the Altar and in the middle. Flowers placed in the church for a wedding remain in the church. You may choose your own flowers and florist, but we encourage you to coordinate with other couples being married on the same day. Pew bows may be used. No other flowers or decorations are used in the church except those bouquets carried by the bridal party. No other paraphernalia is to be used during the wedding ceremony, i.e. candelabra, potted palms, etc. No artificial flowers of any kind are permitted. The altar is the most sacred place in the church for it symbolizes Christ and therefore, must be the dominant and central focus of all decorations. Weddings during Lent and Advent must adhere to the more somber tone of the liturgical season.

We have one “informal” Bride Room for dressing. One additional classroom may be used for gathering and last minute preparations prior to the wedding. Please coordinate the use of rooms with the parish office **prior** to the wedding. If available, additional rooms may be rented.

The photographer is to speak with the priest prior to the ceremony. The discreet taking of candid available light photographs is permitted during the ceremony as well as video taping. Photography may in no way interfere with the ceremony. Pre and post wedding photographs may take no longer than twenty minutes. This time limit is not a problem when proper planning is done by the photographer. The ceremony is not re-enacted for photographs.

Due to space limitations, a “Receiving Line,” in the vestibule of the church is not permitted. We suggest the “Receiving Line” be conducted during the wedding banquet.

Rice, birdseed, and any other grains may not be thrown.

All **active** participants in the wedding should attend the rehearsal.

When both the bride and groom are Catholic, they **should** be married at Mass. If only one party is Catholic then the Wedding Ceremony Outside Mass will normally be celebrated.

The wedding party may choose those to proclaim the readings and the prayers of the faithful. The Officiant always proclaims the Gospel.

New Life Together
Celebrating Marriages at Saint Mark Catholic Church

RECOMMENDED PLANNING SCHEDULE

Six months before the wedding contact the parish and make an appointment to set a date and time for the wedding. You can begin to complete the paperwork at this time.

You must attend a Marriage Preparation Program. It is best to schedule and attend the program as soon as possible. **Please make sure once you have taken the FOCCUS that you let the diocese know that you would like your results emailed directly to St. Mark at secretary3@stmarkcatholicchurch.com.** A marriage preparation couple will be assigned to answer questions and discuss the FOCCUS results.

You will also have your initial meeting with the priest who will explain necessary forms, the sacrament of marriage and provide the couple with a list of readings and wedding ceremony sequence of events.

Catholics must obtain a recent Certificate of Baptism from your church of baptism. It is desirable if non-Catholic Christians can also provide a Certificate (or proof) of Baptism.

Contact the Director of Music for the initial music planning meeting.

Prior to or after your wedding, you will also have the opportunity to attend our parish based Natural Family Planning Program (NFP).

Three months before the wedding contact the parish and make an appointment to discuss the ceremony. Review the FOCCUS with your marriage preparation team.

One month before the wedding contact the parish regarding the finalized plans for your wedding. These plans include readings, music, sequence of events, etc. This is now an opportune time to bring your fees, donations and gifts to the parish. At this point, you do not have anything to worry about concerning the church ceremony. You can use this final month to concern yourself with other details, civil marriage license, reception coordination, etc.

REHEARSAL

You **must** bring the marriage license with you. If you have not already done so, bring your Fees and Donations: pianist fee, instrumentalist fee, cantor fee; donations for the church and altar server(s). A gift may also be given to the priest at this time. Also, please be on time! The rehearsal will normally not exceed 45 minutes. Standard rehearsal times are 5:00 p.m. for a 12:00 p.m. wedding and 6:00 p.m. for a 2 p.m. wedding.

YOUR WEDDING DAY

Relax and enjoy! You have invited guests at a specific time, so please help us to accommodate them by starting on time. Also please be reminded that we may have more than one ceremony on any given Saturday.

New Life Together
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FEES AND DONATIONS

The organist/pianist *fee* is \$150 and the check should be made out to the musician.

The cantor/psalmist *fee* is \$100 and the check should be made out to the musician.

Other instrumentalist *fees* such as flute or cello are normally \$100 and should be made out to the musician.*

*While these musicians are not normally required to attend the rehearsal, you may request that they do so for an additional fee of \$50 per musician.

A *donation* for the use of the church facilities is customary. Donations range from \$250-\$500 and the check should be made out to St. Mark's Catholic Church.

A *gift* should also be given to any Altar Servers that assist in the ceremony.

A *gift* may also be given to the priest.

Please coordinate the use of rooms with the parish office **prior** to the wedding. Should you need additional rooms other than the church, Bridal Room and one classroom, contact the Parish Office at 910-392-0720 ext. 221 to inquire about renting space. The rental fee is \$50 for each additional room.

CONCLUSION

The Sacrament of Matrimony is concerned with the sacred covenant of love between two persons. This sacrament witnessed before a believing community is made holy in the self-sacrificing witness of the couple who have proclaimed that henceforth they will "become one." Please be assured of our prayers and support as you prepare for your Sacrament of Matrimony.

The pastor and parish staff of St. Mark Catholic Church.