

Guidelines for Weddings St. Martin of Tours Parish

Please Read All of These Guidelines First

Congratulations!

We at St. Martin of Tours Catholic parish share your joy in your coming marriage. At the same time, the “to do” checklist can seem gigantic. We would like to help you. These guidelines, are an attempt to relieve some of the planning and checking stress. Please read through all of this material as you begin your preparation. If, at any time, you have any questions or concerns, please contact us. The parish telephone is: **715-745-6681**.

The parish e-mail is: stmartin_cecil@frontiernet.net.

You are beginning a process of formation and reflection that will help you prepare for the permanent commitment you are about to make to each other in the presence of the Church. We recognize that marriage between a man and a woman is a sacred act, in addition to a legal action. It is a sign of a lifelong promise of fidelity, and an act not to be lightly undertaken. In fact, *you* both actually confer the sacrament on each other. The ordained celebrant is merely witnessing your formal consent to be married.

Initial Notification

Couples seeking a Catholic marriage should contact the parish office at least 6 months before the date of the wedding. Upon receipt of the wedding date, we save that date and time in the parish calendar, in “pencil,” not as an already permanent date. ➔ **Please do not order or send out invitations until the assessment phase of your preparation is complete.**

Pre-Requisites

Couples entering into a Catholic marriage must be free, under canon law, to marry each other. If a previous, legally recognized marriage is involved, and the previous spouse is still living, steps may have to be taken through the Diocese of Green Bay to determine the status of the prior marriage. Sometimes this can take a few months. If an *annulment* is required, this can take up to one year. Please note, that if a prior marriage status has to be determined, **this is in no way meant to be a reflection of any sort on the prior marriage.** It is simply something the Church requires of all couples who seek a sacramental marriage.

Catholics who are asking to be married in the Catholic Church must *actively* practice their faith. This means you must:

1. Attend weekly Mass
2. Be a registered member of a Catholic parish
3. Be comfortable with and practice prayer on a regular basis

For those who have not been active in the faith, there must be at least a firm willingness to start practicing the faith and carry on throughout the preparation process. And for those who never really were formed in the faith, or are unbaptized, or are interested in

becoming a Catholic, the parish offers a way for this to take place. Please be assured you need not become a Catholic to marry a Catholic, as long as certain guidelines are met.

Preparation for Marriage

This is the process that helps prepare you both for the commitment you are about to make to each other. This process should start about six months before the planned wedding date.

1. There will be an Initial Assessment with the Pastoral Leader (Deacon Mike). Here is what happens then:
 - This involves meeting with the Parish Director and discussing:
 - a. A bit about yourselves and your desire to marry
 - b. Human relationship
 - c. The Three “C’s” of marriage – commitment, compromise and companionship.
 - d. Church involvement and prayer.
 - At this session, you will also be given an Affidavit Form (B) – two each, to be completed and notarized as indicated on the form.
 - A Parish Marriage Record form will be filled out, as far as possible at that time.
 - If applicable, you will be given a pamphlet from the Shawano County Clerk regarding the legal requirements.
 - You must also obtain and furnish a copy of a Baptismal and Confirmation certificate (if applicable) that has been issued within 6 months of your wedding.
 - If one of you is unbaptized, a *dispensation* will need to be obtained from the Diocese. This will be overseen by the Pastoral Leader.
2. The second session involves both of you taking (separately) a marriage inventory assessment. At or before this session, you will be given a booklet entitled, *Together for Life* and a handout regarding suggested music for the ceremony. After finishing the marriage assessment, it will be scored and graphed.
3. The third session will be a discussion of the results of the marriage assessment, and a “wrap-up” discussion of the elements of a good marriage.
 - Each of you will separately complete a Diocesan Pre-Nuptial Survey Form (A) supplied by the Pastoral Leader.
 - Discuss the assessment results and any remaining issues.
4. The last session will involve:
 - A discussion of the details of the ceremony itself. We will also discuss the wedding vows and their meaning.
 - A Catholic bride or groom is expected to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation before the date of the wedding.
 - A review of all necessary documentation, including Baptismal and Confirmation certificates, St. Martin Parish Marriage Record, the civil license, review of the proposed Wedding program, registration as a parish member (if necessary) and any Letters of Permission or Delegation that may be required. What are these Letters?

- If you are *being married in another Catholic church, but are members here*, **you must obtain a letter from St. Martin's Pastoral Leader granting permission to the other celebrant to preside at your wedding.**
- If you are *being married at St. Martin's, but will live in another parish*, **you must register at that parish as a member and obtain a letter granting us permission to preside at your wedding here.**

➤ Somewhere between the beginning and end of the preparation process, you both must attend (together) a **Marriage Preparation Day** sponsored by the Green Bay Diocese, and obtain a certificate of attendance from the presenters. These days usually take place on a Saturday, and are offered in different locations. We will furnish information on this requirement, or you can go online to the Green Bay Diocese web site.

The Wedding Liturgy

All words, actions, songs and parts of your wedding ceremony should emphasize that you are being married before a community of Christian believers and that it is a *sacred* moment. To maintain the sacredness of the wedding, any non-religious love songs, poems or actions, even though of a special nature, are best done at the rehearsal dinner or the wedding reception, rather than as a part of your ceremony in church. **The details of your wedding ceremony must be approved in advance by Deacon Mike as to weddings taking place at St. Martin's parish.**

A. Wedding or Non-Mass Liturgy

There are two types of wedding liturgies: (1) The Eucharistic Liturgy (the Mass), (2) Marriage outside Mass. Please note:

- If you are not Catholic, your ordained minister is welcome to be a participant in, but not to preside at the liturgy. In planning their wedding, the couple has the opportunity of selecting those prayers, scripture readings, blessings and cultural practices that express their desire for God in their lives and the support of the community.
- If possible, the wedding should not take place during the Liturgical season of Lent.
- Normally, when two Catholics are married, the wedding is celebrated within the Mass. The Mass, however, is not celebrated in mixed religion weddings, or where one is unbaptized in order to respect the sensitivities of the non-Catholic spouse and family. In that instance, a wedding outside Mass is used as the preferred format.
- The civil marriage license will be signed immediately following the liturgy.

B. Wedding Program or Worship Aid

Most couples use some type of wedding program to identify the various participants, the music and any special notes. You will be asked to choose your readings, the prayers of the faithful, and who should bring up the gifts. We can assist you with the preparation and printing of a program or, you may do it yourself. **If you choose to print a program, it must be pre-approved by the Pastoral Leader to insure accuracy.**

C. Dressing Areas

The bride and her attendants may use the religion education rooms on the other side of the main divider between the church and the parish hall to prepare for the ceremony. There are bathrooms and water fountains in that area. The groom and his attendants may use the confessional room and the sacristy to prepare and for waiting before the ceremony.

D. Church Environment

- Flowers, greens, candles and other *appropriate* decorations may be brought into the church for the wedding, the morning of the wedding. Any wrappings, boxes, or debris remaining must be cleaned up *before* the wedding party leaves the church.
- We appreciate any flowers or greens you may want to donate to the parish after the ceremony.
- Flowers are never placed on the altar itself. If you will be having floral arrangements near the altar, the church has flower stands available at no charge.
- Due to fire regulations, no ribbons or rope may be used to block off pews or the aisles during the ceremony. To preserve the church furniture, no staples, wire or tape may be attached to the pews. St. Martin church does not permit lit candles to be attached to the pews.
- It is the responsibility of the wedding party to see that any items placed in the aisles or on the pews are *removed* after the ceremony. If used, bridal runners must be firmly in place and flat on the floor.
- Rice, birdseed, bubbles or live doves may not be used at St. Martin's as a part of a wedding ceremony at church. They create a safety hazard. We ask you to inform your guests that none of these be thrown or used *anywhere*.
- If a Unity Candle is used, it should not be placed so as to block a view of the altar. It should be placed behind and off to one side of the altar. Any candles in the church may NOT be the type that use oil of any sort.

E. Music

Music must be *appropriate* for the sacredness of the occasion. It must be religious, prayerful and fit with the liturgy. We will provide a handout for your use in this regard. Musicians available for your wedding at St. Martin's include:

Pat Wallace – organist	715-745-2649
Colleen Keberlein-Schmitt – organist/vocalist	715-201-0092
Linda Grzeca – organist/vocalist	920-819-3511

You may also arrange for your own musicians as long as they follow the music guidelines for Catholic weddings. Recorded music is *not* allowed as a part of the wedding ceremony.

F. Procession

After all the guests and families are seated, the two basic choices for the procession are as follows:

1. **“Giving away the Bride.”** Women come down the center aisle, men come in from the side and wait at the front of the pews; bride escorted in last by her father.
2. **“Create a new Family.”** Couples come down the aisle together; at the front, the couples separate and stand in a row at the bottom of the steps, leaving room for the bride and groom in the center next to the best man and maid of honor. Groom comes down accompanied by his parents and pauses with them along the side of the first few pews as bride enters with her parents. Both families stand along the first few pews and bride and groom each hug their parents and they are brought together by the parents and proceed to the foot of the steps and head bow (with the other couples lined up along the steps).

In either scenario, the presider and any servers process in first. In either scenario, the bride does not come out from behind the hall door to the rear aisle until all couples have processed down.

The couples move to the front open pews (on either side) and bride and groom move to the custom pew set up in the sanctuary, near the Ambo. This seating is arranged so that you have a special place without having your back to the assembly.

During the vows, the couples will stand in a semi-circle on the steps of the sanctuary facing the congregation. The presider will stand in the center aisle with his back to the people. You will face towards each other during the vows.

G. Miscellaneous Considerations for the Ceremony

- **Ushers.** You will need at least two trustworthy and *mature* ushers to help the ceremony run smoothly. The ushers should plan to attend the rehearsal. They will be asked to help clean up the church after the ceremony as to obvious items.
- **Servers.** If you are having a Nuptial Mass, it is recommended to use two altar servers who are trained Catholic altar servers. It is common practice to remunerate these young men or women for their help, payable on the wedding day before the service begins.
- **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.** At a Mass, offering Communion under both species of bread and wine is preferred. Typically, the priest and deacon distribute Holy Communion. However, if there are a number of guests, lay ministers of communion may be used. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may be friends or relatives, who are Catholic adults and have a basic understanding of how to distribute. We can work with them to assist them.
- **Please Note:** Non-Catholics or Catholics not prepared to receive the Eucharist may either stay in the pews or, come forward with their arms crossed over their chest, indicating they are to only receive a blessing.

- **Financial Considerations.** Your wedding is something that is planned, prepared, costly and practiced. The Green Bay Diocese recommends a church stipend (fee) of \$75, payable to St. Martin Parish. Additional considerations for the celebrant, and musicians are up to you. It is only fitting that you consider a generous donation, considering that this is a once-in-a-lifetime event.
- **Alcohol or Other Contraband.** No Alcohol, Drugs, Weapons or Contraband may be brought onto parish grounds *at any time*, nor may any such thing be used or consumed on parish grounds.
- **Photography or Videotaping.** Photography/videography (referred to here as video recording or just recording), is permitted within specified guidelines. Because matrimony is a sacred ceremony, the following rules will apply to any form of recording of the ceremony. *Note:* the liturgy begins with the processional music and ends with the couple processing out.
 - The recorder must check in with the Celebrant before the ceremony.
 - During the ceremony, no flash pictures may be taken, and no additional equipment to enhance the sanctuary lighting is permitted at that time.
 - The photographer/recorder may *NOT* be in the sanctuary at any time during the liturgy.
 - Any video recording device visible to the guests must be stationary and mounted on a tripod but can be operated by an attendant. It is expected that all recording personnel will be as *inconspicuous* as possible.
 - None of the entering procession may be stopped for individual photos.
 - As the couple process out after the ceremony, flash photographs from outside of the sanctuary are permitted.
 - The picture recording session following the wedding *must* finish no more than 90 minutes after the conclusion of the wedding liturgy. No exceptions can or will be made. We request that the wedding party remain quiet during this time, silent, and that the recorder be as quiet and respectfully reverent as possible.
 - The recorder and wedding couple understand that, if the rules are not respected, the Celebrant has the authority to ask the recorder to leave and photos will not be permitted.
 - Appropriate attire should also be worn by anyone associated with recording and who is visible to any guest.