The Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage

St. Mary Catholic Church
312 Lincoln Avenue
Woodstock, Illinois 60098
(815) 338-3377
www.StMary-Woodstock.org
Dear Engaged Couple,

Congratulations on your engagement! We know that this is such a joyful time for you and your family and friends. It is also a hectic time filled with plans and arrangements, reservations and appointments.

Marriage is one of the seven sacraments given to us by God. You have decided to move into the future by promising, with faith in each other and in God, to marry for life. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “God himself is the author of marriage and the vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution.” It is absolutely vital that you invite God to your wedding and to your marriage.

We have written these wedding policies to assist you in planning one of the most important events in your life. We have written these guidelines down in booklet form so that there are no surprises as to the policies and practices of St. Mary parish, the Diocese of Rockford and the Catholic Church in general. They have been drawn up so that the ceremonies that celebrate your upcoming marriage might proceed smoothly and with dignity.

Please read this booklet carefully and share the regulations with those who participate in your wedding. It is truly our wish that your upcoming marriage is truly a God-centered celebration as marriage is a joyful, sacred event.

We wish you God’s blessings as you begin your life together in Christ.

Fr. Burt Absalon - Pastor
Overview of Wedding Preparation

Call the Parish Office for an initial contact. The parish secretary will schedule your wedding (either 11 am or 2 pm Saturdays) and give you this booklet as well as information listed below:

1. Together for Life by Fr. Joseph M. Champlin to help you plan the wedding ceremony.
2. Instruction on how to register for Gift of Self Seminar.

Six months before the wedding, schedule an appointment with the priest. The exception to this would be if there is a need for an annulment of a previous marriage. Meet with Marriage Preparation Coordinators who will guide you through ‘When Families Marry’ questionnaire, and review results later date with you.

Meet with Parish Accompanist and arrange music program for wedding.

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<tr>
<th>Priests:</th>
<th>Phone numbers:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Burt Absalon (English/Spanish/Tagalog)</td>
<td>815-338-3377</td>
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<td>Hans Rokus</td>
<td>815-338-6239</td>
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<td>Bill Johnston</td>
<td>815-338-3377</td>
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<td>Tom Murray</td>
<td>815-334-0339</td>
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<tr>
<th>Marriage Preparation/ When Families Marry Coordinators:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jon &amp; Cynthia Russell</td>
<td>815-245-8805</td>
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<th>Parish Accompanist:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brian Wrightson</td>
<td>815-338-3377</td>
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<td>Barb Klein</td>
<td>815-338-6557</td>
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<tr>
<th>Diocesan Office of Family Life</th>
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<td>815-399-4300</td>
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Four Months before the Wedding:
All documents required by the Church are due with the exception of the Marriage License.
Baptismal Certificate dated within 6 months
Confirmation Certificate (if confirmed)
Witness Affidavits (Two for each, parents are preferred)
Complete the Prenuptial Questionnaire with the priest or deacon.
Meet with the priest and the Wedding coordinator to begin to plan the ceremony or Mass. The wedding coordinators are:

Wedding Coordinators:
Maria Ayala (Spanish Weddings)  815-382-8022
Sharon Kubat  815-236-8793
Maria Scott (Spanish weddings)  815-219-3740
Carol White  815-337-0530

At that meeting, finalize the date, time for the Wedding Rehearsal, and begin the preparation for the wedding ceremony. Contact the musician and pick music. Dispensations, permissions and approval of the Chancery need to be given if applicable (the priest will mention this if needed)

One month before the Wedding:
Final meeting with the priest and final planning of ceremony.
Go to the County Courthouse and get marriage license.

Before the day of the Rehearsal:
Marriage License is due at the earliest possible date, but not later than the three days before the rehearsal.

Celebrant of your Marriage
One of the priests assigned to St. Mary Church will witness your marriage, as a general rule. However, if you have a close relative or a long-time family friend who is a priest in good standing, he is most welcome to celebrate your marriage.
Basic Requirements

Registration Requirements
In the Roman Catholic tradition, marriages should take place in the home parish of the bride, but for a sufficient reason, it may take place in the parish of the groom. For your wedding to take place in St. Mary Church, Woodstock, at least one of you should be a registered member of the parish. If neither is a member and the priest decides there is sufficient reason to be married here, the priest will help you obtain permission from the pastor of your parish to have your marriage celebrated in St. Mary’s Church.

Age Requirements
Both must be at least 19 years of age in order to be married in any Catholic church in the Diocese of Rockford.

Baptism Requirements (when both parties are baptized)
Both bride and groom must have verification of baptism. For Catholics, an official baptismal certificate (with notations of other sacraments received) from the church of baptism must be presented. This certificate is to be dated within the six-month period prior to the proposed date of marriage. For non-Catholic Christians, a baptismal certificate or a letter of verification of baptism from the Church of baptism should be presented.

Inter-faith Marriage Requirements (one party not baptized)
In the case of marriage between a baptized and a non-baptized person, a dispensation is required from the Bishop. This is easily obtained by the priest. To obtain this dispensation the Catholic party is required to promise fidelity to the Church and share his/her faith with the children. For very serious reasons, permission for the Catholic person to marry in another church, synagogue or mosque may be obtained. When this permission is given by the Bishop of the Diocese, the marriage is recognized for the Catholic spouse.
Preparation Process

Premarital Inventory
In the first meeting with the priest, he will ask you to complete a Prenuptial Questionaire. Premarital Inventory/’When Families Marry’. This is a tool used to help you address questions and concerns you should discuss prior to marriage. This is not a test, but an inventory that will aid in future discussions. The Marriage Preparation Coordinator and a priest will discuss your responses on the Premarital Inventory/’When Families Marry’ with you. At this time, your strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for growth, as an individual and a couple, will be considered.

Formal Preparation Overview
All couples contemplating marriage are asked to attend the Gift of Self Seminar. This day long retreat experience gives the engaged couple the opportunity to dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives together. Each couple is offered the time to examine, deepen and strengthen their relationship with each other and with God. This seminar gives witness and insight into the value and benefits of the Church’s teachings on Marriage and Family Planning. It includes an introduction to effective modern natural methods of family planning. Reservations for your weekend may be made by telephoning the Family Life Office in Rockford at (815) 399-4300. Registration is also available online on the Diocese of Rockford website under Marriage preparation. However, if it is more convenient, an equivalent retreat can be made in another diocese. A fee will be charged by the Family Life Office.

Planning the Wedding

Depending upon the religious backgrounds of both parties, there are two options available for the celebration of Marriage
The Rite of Marriage outside of the context of a Catholic Mass
The Rite of Marriage within the context of a Catholic Mass.
The Rite of Marriage within Mass (both parties are Catholic)
The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “In the Latin Rite the celebration of marriage between two Catholic faithful normally takes place during Holy Mass, because of the connection of all the sacraments with the Paschal mystery of Christ. In the Eucharist the memorial of the New Covenant is realized, the New Covenant in which Christ has united himself for ever to the Church, His beloved bride for whom He gave Himself up. It is therefore fitting that the spouses should seal their consent to give themselves to each other through the offering of their own lives by uniting it to the offering of Christ for His Church made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice, and by receiving the Eucharist so that, communicating in the same Body and the same Blood of Christ, they may form but ‘one body’ in Christ.” (1621)

The wedding Mass is like any ordinary Mass, but contains the actual wedding ceremony within the Mass. This Mass consists of the Liturgy of the Word — a reading from the Old Testament, the Responsorial Psalm, a reading from the New Testament, the Gospel reading, the homily, and the prayers of the faithful. The actual Rite of Marriage takes place following the homily. After the exchange of vows and rings between the bride and groom, the Mass continues with the Liturgy of the Eucharist — the Presentation of the Gifts of bread and wine, the Eucharistic Prayer (where, with the words of consecration, the bread and wine are changed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ), and the distribution of Holy Communion to Catholics, who are able to receive, in attendance. Due to the fact that we are unable to predict how many Catholics will be attending the Mass, the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ will not be distributed to those in attendance.

The Rite of Marriage only (only one party is Catholic)
When only one party is Catholic, the Rite of Marriage consists of the Liturgy of the Word only. This will consist of three readings from Sacred Scripture, a sung psalm, the exchange of vows, the exchange of rings, intercessions and a nuptial blessing.
Marriage Ceremony as Worship

Because marriage can be conducted by the State or by the Church, a couple is making a definite choice in the matter of how they are to be married. A marriage can be a secular and a humanistic event or it can be a time of worship when we invite the blessing of God to be upon us.

When we choose to be married in the Church, we are saying that this is not to be merely a secular event, but rather a religious celebration. We are saying that we desire God’s approval, support, guidance and loving care in, and for our marriage. Consequently, everything we do in the marriage service must include the One from whom we are asking a blessing. In fact, a marriage service is not to be understood as just “our” wedding; it is a time for three to come together—the bride, the groom, and God.

Because of this understanding of weddings by the Church, there are guidelines established by the Catholic Church to preserve the marriage ceremony as an act of worship. This comes as a surprise to many. And yet, we must remember what it is we are doing in a Church wedding—we are thanking God for the love that has been discovered in two people and asking God to continue to bless that love. It is important that we not leave God out of any part of the service.

The selection of proper music is most often the place where we must work the hardest to keep God in the picture. There are many beautiful love songs that focus on the relationship between the couple but say nothing about the God who has given this love to them. Yes, even the music needs to identify the reason we are at the altar and not in the judge’s chamber. Love songs that focus only on the couple are most appropriate for the reception.
Here at St. Mary Parish, we strive to present our wedding ceremonies as an act of worship, and it is important that we do so. Marriages more and more need the blessings of God in our society, and to “water down” the wedding Liturgy and make it merely a secular event is a disservice to the couple. May we never apologize about keeping God’s name in our worship, our music, our marriages, and in all we do.

Liturgical Roles

**Readers:**
You may have one or two readers who will read the first and second readings during the Liturgy of the Word. They should have these readings in advance and be able to articulate them during the wedding in an audible, prayerful way. Experience has shown it is also usually good to ask someone who has either had experience as a reader at Mass or someone experienced in speaking to large groups of people. You may also have a third person read the intercessions.

**Altar Servers:**
The Parish will provide altar servers if needed. Please let the wedding coordinator know if you have altar servers to assist. For Marriages within the context of Mass 3 servers are desired. For a ceremony outside the context of Mass only 1-2 servers are needed.

**Gift Bearers**
When Marriage is celebrated within the context of Mass, you will need to ask 2-3 people to bring forth the gifts of bread and wine.

Liturgical Music Guidelines

**Prelude and Processional Music**
In keeping with Sacred Liturgy which is to follow, classical instrumental or traditional hymns may be played before Mass begins. During the entrance procession, a hymn may be sung by the gathered assembly or an instrumental accompaniment only. Often requested composers include works by Bach, Pachelbel, and Handel.
Respnsorial Psalm
After the First Reading, the Psalm may be sung antiphonally between the cantor and congregation.

Eucharist
Reception of the Blessed Sacrament may be accompanied by any appropriate Liturgical hymn, normally sung by the assembly at our regular weekend Liturgies.

Marian devotion
If the couple chooses to offer their prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a hymn for our Blessed Mother may be sung by the cantor and/or assembly, or may be played instrumentally.

Recessional
Following the Liturgy, a hymn of thanksgiving may be sung, or an instrumental selection may be played.

The couple must meet with the Parish Accompanist to ensure that any music chosen to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony is both prayerful and appropriate. It is the responsibility of the Parish Accompanist to ensure that the Cantor an all musicians are familiar with Roman Catholic Liturgy, and that all music is both reverent and joyous. To this end, all instruments must be acoustic in nature, and no electronic or external amplifying erumpent may be used. Any musicians’ employed by the couple who are not parishioners of St. Mary’s need the express permission of the Parish Accompanist.

Civil Requirements

License
The civil marriage license must be from McHenry County. It is valid the day after issuance and is good for 60 days thereafter. Please bring it to the Conway Parish Center, 312 Lincoln Avenue when you procure it so it can be filled out in advance of the wedding; at the latest, the Wednesday preceding your ceremony. It is recommended that you bring your license to the Parish Center as soon as you receive it.
Persons obtaining a license in McHenry County may NOT use the license to marry in any other county. If there was prior marriage for one or both applicants, ending in divorce, the parties must provide the County Clerk with a certifier copy of the divorce decree or decrees pertaining to such prior marriage or marriages.

**Where to Apply**
Both parties must appear in the office between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday.

Office of McHenry County Clerk
McHenry County Administration Building
667 Ware Road, Room 107
Woodstock, IL 60098

**Fee**
There is a fee for the marriage license. For further information concerning a marriage, call: (815) 334-4242

**Additional Information**

**Bride’s Room**
Our Parish has a Bride’s Room which is located in the nursery, next to the women’s wash room on the first floor of the St. Joseph Center.

**Flowers, Aisle Runner, Unity Candle**
Flower, aisle runners, and the unity candle are generally arranged through a florist. The aisle runner and unity candles (3” in diameter) are optional. Lighted candelabra, bridal arches and flower petals are not allowed in our church. Flowers need not be elaborate. We invite you to consider leaving the flowers in Church following a wedding for the whole parish family to enjoy on the weekend.

**Photography/Video**
Photography and video taping are permitted during the ceremony. No photos or videos are permitted in the sanctuary. It is required that the photographers speak to the wedding coordinator prior to
the ceremony. During the ceremony, in order to respect the integrity of the ritual, we ask that movement be as inconspicuous as possible. All wedding ceremonies, including photography, are limited to 1½ hours. The quiet dignity of the Church must be maintained. The Church must be vacated by 3:30 p.m. Normal weekend parish functions begin at 4:00 p.m.

**Ushers**
Ushers should be present in church at least one-half hour before the wedding. It is most important that ushers, as well as all members of the wedding party, be on time. It is the responsibility of the ushers to straighten and pick up items left in the Church after the wedding ceremony. This would include programs, empty flower and film boxes, clothes/hangers, gift wrapping, and other wedding party belongings.

**Rice/Birdseed/confetti/Balloons/Glitter**
Due to the numerous problems that rice, glitter, birdseed, balloons and confetti create, they may not be used or thrown on Church property. However, bubbles may be used outside the church.

**Appropriate Dress**
The Church is a holy and sacred place. Modesty in dress, as well as proper dress, is a sign of respect. Wedding attire and clothing worn for the rehearsal should be appropriate for a Church setting.

**Alcohol/Smoking**
AT NO TIME, at rehearsal or before/after the wedding, are alcoholic beverages allowed inside or outside the Church. If the bride or groom is found to be drinking prior to the wedding the priest may cancel the wedding that day. Smoking is never allowed in any part of the Church.

**Expenses**
There is a suggested fee of **$150.00 for use of the Church** due at the time of reservation of the date of wedding and **$100 for the priest**. If a deacon celebrates your wedding, he should receive $50.
In addition, there are some requested stipends. We request you give the **wedding coordinator a $125.00** stipend and for the **altar servers $10.00 each**. Financial arrangements for music, as mentioned later in this booklet, are between the wedding party and contracted musicians.

**Rehearsal**
Rehearsals are usually the evening before the wedding. Only the couple and the wedding party are required to attend the rehearsal. Others whom you invite may also attend. Musicians may participate if desire, but it is not necessary. The rehearsal will start on time and will last approximately 1 hour. It is requested that the quiet dignity of the Church be maintain at all times.

**Parking**
The Wedding Party and Guests are encouraged to park in the following vocations:

1. The Church parking lot located behind the St. Mary Elementary School and the Church building. (Access via Lincoln Avenue, west of the School Building.)
2. The Metra Parking Lot on Throop Street. This lot has a sidewalk to Tryon Street where the Church is Located.
3. Parking on Tryon Street in front of the Church is permitted although the signs must be observe.

Parking is not allowed in the lot north of the St. Mary Junior High building on Tryon Street. It is not Church property. The owner will tow the cars violating the no parking rule. Signs are posted.
MARRIAGE PREPARATION POLICY CHECK LIST:

1. Planning Sheet (Together for Life)
   Plans for seating - entrance into church - order of couples
   Parish Wedding Coordinators, Sharon Kubat and Carol White
   assist with rehearsal and the Celebration of Marriage.

2. Special needs - handicapped persons, etc. to be in attendance at wedding.

4. Music - Consultation with Music Director, Brian Wrightson.
   See him for selection and approval of music for wedding in Church.
   Call him at 815-338-3377 an appointment.

Musician & vocalist for Wedding:________________________

4. Florist:______________________________________________

5. Photographer:__________________________________________
   Limousine Service:______________________________________

6. BY THE WEDNESDAY BEFORE THE WEDDING, BRING TO THE PARISH OFFICE:
   *Marriage License____
   *Selection Form for the readings, prayers and blessing for ceremony____
   *fees _____

7. If you have a change of address or phone number at any time after you have first contacted St. Mary Church about your wedding, please call with this information so it can be changed in your records. (WORK INFO. AS WELL AS HOME INFO.)

8. FUTURE HOME/ADDRESS OF COUPLE: (Give to parish office now or with Marriage License.)

9. Mr. & Mrs. ____________________________________________

10. Address:_____________________________________________

11. Phone #_____________________________________________