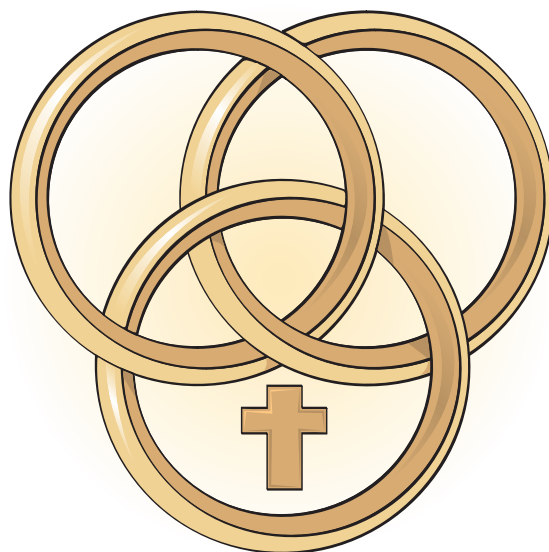


St. Bridget Parish Marriage Policy Handbook



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INTRODUCTION

As your Pastor, I want to first say: “Congratulations!” Sacramental Marriage is vital to our Church and our Society. In this Sacrament, you will pledge to one another and to God your commitment in love and fidelity for the rest of your lives. Sacramental Marriage is a three-way covenant between you, as a couple, and the Lord Jesus. You are called to witness to your faith in one another and in the Lord.

I look forward to witnessing your vows before the Lord, His Church, and your family and friends.

To insure a proper celebration for you and to acquaint you with the norms and guidelines of the diocese and the parish, we have prepared this booklet for you. It explains various procedures to follow, people to contact, some insights into certain “do’s and don’ts” and contains other information that we hope will prove helpful to you in planning your wedding.

With a promise of prayer for you, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ

Monsignor Robert Murphy

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BE MARRIED AT ST. BRIDGET

The person seeking to be married at St. Bridget Parish needs to be registered **SIX MONTHS** prior to contacting the pastor regarding a wedding. The Pastor must be contacted **NINE MONTHS** prior to the anticipated date. Children of registered parishioners, away at school, may also celebrate their wedding at St. Bridget

ARE THERE ANY REASONS WHY A WEDDING MAY BE POSTPONED?

The reasons why a wedding may be postponed include:

- The non-practice of the faith
- Refusal to cooperate and participate in the marriage preparation program
- Living together. (This “public” statement is in direct contradiction to the “public” statement made in a sacramental wedding. In many states, this is recognized as a “Common Law Marriage.”)

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM ALL ABOUT?

The program is about helping a couple take a thorough look at their relationship in relation to the commitment made in sacramental marriage:

1) Initial Meeting with the Pastor

Here you will get an overview of the program. Please come to the meeting with a typed autobiographical sketch of each of you. This should include basic information such as age, addresses, phone number, etc. You should also give a brief autobiographical sketch highlighting any significant events in your life. You will also need (although not at the first meeting) a **NEW** copy of your Baptismal record. This can easily be obtained from the Church of your Baptism and sent directly to Msgr. Murphy. Please note: Canon Law requires a new copy and not a Xeroxed copy of one you might have in your possession.

2) LEAD COUPLE SESSIONS

These six sessions are held in the home of a Parish “Lead Couple.” They will give you a work booklet and exercises for discussion and reflection. The sessions will cover a number of topics including in-laws; children; finances; faith; etc.

3) FAITH QUESTIONS

Although we continue to grow in knowledge of many aspects of our adult lives (Finances; communication; etc...), faith and religion are often ignored. This can lead to doubts and questions. You are encouraged to develop a “Faith chart.” This should have three areas: 1) What I believe about my Faith. 2) What are some “Grey Areas” or areas I’m not sure of about my faith? 3) What are some real doubts about my faith?

Many questions and doubts are interdenominational. This exercise can help both the couple who are Catholic and the couple who are of different faiths.

4) WEDDING PREPARATION

This is the last step in the process. The couple plans the ceremony with the Pastor.

THE WEDDING

The wedding rite is one of the Church's public liturgies and, thus, has certain prescribed liturgical forms. The priest can help explain these to you and show you where your own input and personal preferences fit in.

Interfaith WEDDINGS

The celebration of the Eucharist is not recommended for mixed marriages. This may cause awkwardness and uneasiness by the non-Catholic and the non-Catholic's family and friends. The reception of Holy Communion, which signifies unity of faith and belief, is thus a sign of division as only the Catholic party and Catholics in attendance may receive Holy Communion.

The ceremony includes elements of Catholic worship that both Catholic and non-Catholic may participate prayerfully in. The ceremony includes: 1) The entrance rite and procession. 2) The Penitential Rite. 3) Reading of Scripture. 4) Homily. 5) Exchange of vows. 6) Blessing of Rings. 7) Prayers of the Faithful. 8) Nuptial Blessing. 9) Dismissal and Processional.

WHERE CAN THE WEDDING TAKE PLACE?

The Diocese requires that the celebration of a wedding take place in a Parish Church. This is normally the parish of the Catholic party. The Parish Church is the center of the community that comes together to worship.

Dispensations can be granted to have the wedding take place in another church and witnessed by a minister of another faith. Dispensations are not granted to have the wedding take place outside a Church (Catholic or otherwise) such as a lake or backyard.

WHEN CAN THE WEDDING TAKE PLACE?

Any day of the week except Sunday is acceptable. On Saturdays, no wedding can be scheduled after 2:00 p.m. or before 7:00 p.m. because of Confessions at 4:00 p.m. and the parish Mass at 5:00 p.m.

WHO CAN PRESIDE AT THE CEREMONY?

The pastor is the normal celebrant of the wedding. Another priest, deacon, or a minister of another faith (with dispensation) may also preside.

WHERE CAN THE BRIDAL PARTY DRESS?

The men generally come dressed. They may gather in the Parish Hall prior to the ceremony. The women may use the Cry Room. It connects to the Women's Rest Room. WE WOULD ASK A \$25 DEPOSIT ON THESE ROOMS. THIS WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU WHEN THE ROOM IS PUT IN ORDER AFTER THE CEREMONY.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO TAPING

(THIS PAGE MAY BE PHOTOCOPIED AND GIVEN TO YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER)

- No flash photography during the ceremony. They may use judicious flash photography during the Processional and Recessional ONLY.
- Photographers and those videotaping are not permitted to roam about the Church once the liturgy has begun.
- A video camera can be set up prior to the ceremony in a stationary position.
- Group photos may be taken either before or after the ceremony.
- The priest will not participate in any “staged” shots either before or after the wedding.
- Guests should refrain from taking photographs.
- The photographer should be apprised that the Receiving Line will happen at the Reception and not at Church.
- The overall philosophy is that the attention should be on the common prayer and not on individual taking photographs.

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FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

The decorations around the altar and sanctuary should be simple and in good taste so as to enhance and not detract from the common prayer.

Flowers are never to be placed on the altar but may be placed:

- in front of the altar
- in front of the pulpit

Only “sheathed” candles are permitted with candelabra. These can be obtained from your florist. Altar Servers light these candles as part of their role as acolytes.

Seasonal decorations (such as those for the Christmas or Easter seasons) may not be removed.

Aisle runners are not permitted. The possibility of tripping is very real.

Flower petals (or any substitute) are not allowed to be dropped in the procession. Rice (or any other substitute) is not allowed in the recessional either in or outside of the Church.

No ribbons or decorations may be attached to the pews or any furniture in the church with tape, putty, or any other sticky substance. Wire fasteners or metal clamps may be used if they are padded to protect the finish on the ends from scratching or marring.

CHILDREN

We discourage children less than five years of age from participating in the wedding ceremony as flower girls or ring bearers. Most children of this age are not able to handle the pressure of the situation.

WEDDING PROGRAM

A Wedding program should also include references on where to find specific songs and prayers that will be utilized by the congregation. This is particularly helpful to non-Catholics in attendance. Please include the Responsorial Psalm; the response to the Prayers of the Faithful (“Lord hear our prayer”) as well as a listing of where to find the congregational parts to both prayers and hymns.

THE WEDDING LITURGY

Wedding liturgies follow the liturgical norm: “The active participation of the congregation both in spoken and sung prayer.” This can be aided by:

- Utilizing the wedding program as a “liturgical aid” with notations on prayers and responses.
- Congregational hymns
- Music written specifically for worship

USHERS

Ushers should be told ahead of time how many pews are needed for the immediate families of both the bride and groom. They should seat people starting at the first pew behind the last family pew and work their way back. Ushers are encouraged to seat people as they enter church to prevent a large number being seated at the last moment. If the ushers are to escort the Mothers of the bride and groom, this should be discussed ahead of time. The family should also advise the ushers regarding the recessional. The ushers may either escort the immediate families out or go pew by pew. The latter takes much longer for people to exit.

THE WEDDING MUSIC

Since the wedding liturgy is celebrated in the midst of the community, it is important that the community be active participants in both word and song. The following will help facilitate this:

- Don't try to choose songs on your own without the help of the Parish Music Director. She will share suggestions of music that is not only beautiful but appropriate for Catholic worship.
- The acclamations are, by their very nature, part of congregational prayer. An example would be the "Our Father" which, recited or sung, is a congregational prayer and not a solo.

- Some music, while being familiar, carries with it other connotations that detract from the worship. Movie or rock songs are an example. Even the familiar “wedding march” by Mendelssohn, which was written as a mock on weddings, has been widely satirized and is not utilized in Catholic worship.
- If you utilize a soloist, please choose one familiar with Catholic worship who can also be a cantor. This person will lead the responsorial psalm; gospel acclamation; and communal hymns.
- Please choose your music with the Pastor.

THE WEDDING REHEASAL

This is generally done the night before the wedding. The format is:

- Everyone hears verbally the order of events of the ceremony
- A simple processional and recessional are done once.

It is recommended that only those who have a role in the wedding be in attendance.

The rehearsal generally takes thirty minutes. The rehearsal of the music takes place at another time.

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COMMON PART OF THE WEDDING CEREMONY WITH OR WITHOUT A MASS

- Seating of the Parents (They may choose to accompany bride or groom as an option)
- Priest and servers
- Groomsmen and Bridesmaids come as couples down the aisle.
- Ring bearer and flower girl (optional)
- Bride with her Father. Groom waiting in the middle aisle to greet them.
 - (Other options here are: Bride and Groom coming as a couple down the aisle; groom accompanying his parents down the aisle; bride accompanying her parents down the aisle)
- Greeting; Penitential Rite, and Opening Prayer by Priest
- First Reading from the Old Testament (optional)
- Sung Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading from the New Testament (not optional. Taken from the non-Gospel sections of the New Testament)
- Sung Alleluia
- Gospel Reading and Homily by the Priest
- Exchange of vows and rings
- Unity Candle (optional)
- Prayers of the Faithful (These should be written by the couple)

WITHOUT MASS, THE WEDDING CEREMONY CONCLUDES WITH THE

FOLLOWING:

- The Nuptial Blessing and Dismissal
- Closing hymn and/or recessional music.

WITH MASS, THE WEDDING CEREMONY CONTINUES WITH:

- The Offertory Procession. (Family members can bring up the gifts)
- The Offertory (A congregational hymn can be sung at this time)
- Eucharistic Prayer
- The Sign of Peace. (This may be extended by the Bride and Groom to their immediate families)
- Communion (Both species are given to immediate wedding party only unless other Eucharistic Ministers are available)
- Closing Prayer, Blessing, and Dismissal
- Congregational hymn or recessional music

COSTS

- There is a \$25.00 deposit on the Church and the rooms utilized by the wedding party. This is refunded after the clean up has taken place.
- It is customary to make a donation to the Church; the priest; and the altar servers. This is a free-will offering.
- The fee for the musicians is worked out with them.

In closing, please feel free to contact the pastor or the parish office with any questions you may have concerning these guidelines. These guidelines have been developed as a result of many years of marriage prep, rehearsals, and wedding ceremonies. Congratulations as you prepare for your sacramental marriage and we wish you all the best.