

The Guide to Marriage Planning



Blessed Trinity Parish

www.blessedtrinitycatholic.org

(978) 320-4220

Saint Anne Church
75 King Street
Littleton, MA 01460

Saint Catherine Church
107 North Main Street
Westford, MA 01886



Blessed Trinity Parish

Dear Engaged Couple:

On behalf of the parish staff at Blessed Trinity Parish, please accept our faith-filled congratulations on your engagement. Truly, this is a very exciting time in your lives and that of your family.

Once a couple has announced their intention to get married, they are usually inundated with all sorts of details and arrangements. It is often so easy to get drawn into making wedding day arrangements that the couple loses perspective on what really matters ... your faith-filled and loving presence to each other in marriage. The people who truly love you desire only one thing – that your marriage relationship grow in love and happiness with each passing day. Please allow us to assist you in making your marriage and wedding celebration as joyful as possible for you and your loved ones.

This booklet has been carefully designed to provide you with important information to help you plan a prayerful and memorable Wedding Liturgy and a beginning to your married life together. The more familiar you become with the content of this booklet, the more confident and prepared you will be and thus more relaxed.

Our prayer is that you may forever be instruments of God's redeeming love, joy, strength and wisdom to each other. As one unknown author reminds us, "Two souls never meet except by way of a third, and it is always God."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Joe + Fr. Peter". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Rev. Joseph M. Rossi and Rev. Peter F. Quinn

PREPARING FOR YOUR SPECIAL DAY

Preparing for your marriage goes beyond choosing a date and reserving a place for your reception. It means using this time to delve more deeply into your relationship and approach this momentous day with prayer and reflection. Couples will meet with a pastoral staff member a number of times, as well as arrange to attend an approved marriage preparation program (Transformed in Love) through the Archdiocese of Boston.

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

Your first priority should be to contact our Parish Office. A staff member will discuss some of the wedding details and schedule a **tentative** wedding date. A follow-up letter will be sent to you which will include a marriage registration form.

Once you have reviewed the booklet, we ask that you make an appointment to meet with a pastoral staff member (either a Pastoral Associate, Deacon or Priest). At this appointment they will review with you the process of getting married in our parish. Also at that time you will be asked for a \$500 deposit to confirm your wedding date and time. It has become necessary to ask for a deposit because in the past some couples would schedule a wedding with the church and priest/deacon and change their plans without notifying us. When this happens it prevents another couple from selecting that date. Please know that if you cancel your wedding for any reason (within a reasonable amount of time) we will refund you \$450. We retain \$50 to cover our administrative expenses.

Listed below are expenses that are involved in the wedding (\$1,000 in total):

- \$500 deposit is for the support of the parish and its ministries
- \$200 to the Accompanist for professional services
- \$175 to the Cantor for professional services
- \$100 to the Marriage Coordinator for professional services
- \$25 for the altar server (*cash with personal note of thanks and bring to rehearsal*)

In addition, if the couple so chooses, they are most welcome to offer a gift of gratitude to the priest/deacon who has been working with them in the preparation of their marriage.

If you have any financial difficulties, please speak to either our pastoral associate, deacon or priests who will be more than happy to assist you.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Wedding Times

Because of the clergy shortage and having a very active parish schedule, we are able to celebrate weddings during limited times in a given weekend. Please contact the Parish Office for available dates and times.

If you need to change the date or time of your scheduled wedding, you must contact the parish office IMMEDIATELY.

The Church's Witness of Your Wedding

If you are going to be married by one of our priests or deacons, he will set up appointments to meet with you over a period of time. Usually couples will meet with the pastoral staff member on three to five occasions.

If you are having a Catholic priest or deacon from another parish celebrate your wedding, it is still necessary that you meet with one of our pastoral staff members to coordinate your marriage preparation and to make sure the necessary Church forms are completed.

If your wedding is to be an inter-religious celebration, the pastoral staff member will want to discuss this with you. Ministers, priests and deacons of other denominations are most welcome to be present at wedding liturgies at our church.

Pre-Cana/Preparation Programs

Couples preparing for marriage are required to attend Pre-Cana marriage preparation and instruction beyond your meeting with the priest/deacon. Your pastoral staff member can provide you with the dates and contact persons for an approved program through the Archdiocese of Boston (Transformed in Love). This program meets more than once. Be sure to make arrangements in consultation with the pastoral team member as soon as possible since there are a limited number of openings for each program and they are well attended. We highly recommend the Engaged Encounter Weekend or engaged couple retreats offered at the Espousal Retreat Center in Waltham, MA. These programs provide a wonderful opportunity for a couple to get away and focus on their relationship with each other and their loving God. For more information on the approved programs through the Archdiocese, please check their website: www.bostoncatholic.org/familylife/transformedinlove.

Caryll Houselander has beautifully written about the importance of a couple's relationship to God:

"Do not ask from any human being that which God only can give. I grant you that God gives Himself through human beings, and unites Himself through relationships ... but no one friend can give God to you so perfectly as to satisfy and fill your need for His love."

FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study)

Our pastoral staff uses the FOCCUS program in their marriage preparation sessions with each couple. FOCCUS is a self-diagnostic instrument designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their unique relationship. It is not a test nor meant as a predictor of success or failure in marriage. The pastoral staff member will make arrangements early in your preparation to do the FOCCUS evaluation.

DOCUMENTATION

As a pastoral practice in ministering to couples planning to marry, the Church requires that special marriage forms must be completed at least six months prior to your wedding (see checklist on page 10). Your wedding preparation also involves the following required documentation:

Church Documents

- For Catholics, a recent Baptismal record not more than six months old. You can obtain these records by notifying your church of baptism that you are being married at Blessed Trinity Parish. **Ask them to send a “long form” copy of your Baptismal record with notations on the back to establish your freedom to marry,** c/o the pastoral staff member who is doing the preparation with you here at the Church. These are private documents and are usually sent directly us:

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2 West Street
Westford, MA 01886*

- A copy of your Confirmation certificate (if it is not notated on the baptism record).
- In an inter-religious marriage, the non-Catholic (if baptized) is asked to provide a copy of his/her Baptismal certificate.

Required Civil Documents

- Marriage license – You will need a marriage license from any city/town in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Both of you need to be present when you apply for the license. The license is good for 60 days from the date of issue. There is a three-day waiting period after you complete the application before you can pick up the license. Only one of you needs to be present to pick up the license.
- Out of state priest/deacon – Needs written documentation from the Secretary of State of Massachusetts in order to officiate at the wedding (www.mass.gov/guides/gettingmarriedinmassachusetts/whocanconductmywedding).

After the wedding he must complete the state/legal form and mail it back to the Secretary of State.

THE WORSHIP ENVIRONMENT

Flowers

Any flowers are to be provided by the couple. Seasonal flowers (poinsettias, lilies, or hydrangeas) will be in place during Christmas and Easter depending on how close your date is to either of these holidays. **Seasonal decorations and flowers are not to be moved.** Extra candles are not allowed in either the Sanctuary or the body of the church (i.e., at the end of pews). During Advent and Lenten seasons, the worship space is decorated in a very simple manner reflecting the penitential season of the life of the church.

Runner

For safety reasons aisle runners are not to be used.

Expectation of Ushers

The ushers need your direction as to the role of what an usher is and the responsibility of what is expected of them. So please take the time to instruct them so they understand their role at your wedding. We ask that your ushers follow the direction of our marriage coordinator in setting up the church for the rehearsal and for the wedding itself as we do not have weekend custodial help. Sometimes there may be a liturgy preceding your wedding and your ushers can assist by putting up the kneelers and cleaning up any loose papers. At the conclusion of your wedding they may be asked to put away the chairs and remove any programs from the pews.

Candles

Some couples like to light a unity candle as part of their ceremony. It is the responsibility of the couple to provide this candle. The town fire codes impose a restriction against lit candles in the aisles of the Church.

Therefore, the only candles permitted for the wedding ceremony are the candles near the altar area.

Confetti, Rice, Flower Petals and Bubbles

We kindly request that rice or confetti, dropping of flowers, or blowing bubbles not be used either inside or outside of the church as it creates a safety hazard on the stairs and ground.

MUSIC FOR YOUR WEDDING

Music plays an important role in setting a prayerful and uplifting tone to your wedding celebration. The music ministers at both parishes, under the direction of Kelly Clark, are committed to working with you, to advise and assist you in choosing the music that will best enhance your Nuptial Mass or Ceremony.

After confirming your wedding date and time with the pastoral staff member, please contact Kelly Clark, our Music Director, at 978-320-4205 to reserve the services of our cantor and musicians.

PROCEDURES FOR VISITING MUSICIANS

Cantors

Visiting cantors/singers must be pastoral and liturgical in their cantoring. They should invite and evoke singing from everyone who has gathered for your wedding celebration. They exercise their ministry from the cantor's stand located in the sanctuary at the front of the church. Permission needs to be obtained from the Music Director if visiting cantors/singers are desired for a wedding.

Organists/Pianist/Musicians

If the couple chooses to have an accompanist other than the parish musicians play at their wedding the following guidelines must be observed:

- a. Our Music Director (Kelly Clark) must approve the skills of the visiting organist, in order to protect our parish organ (which is extremely valuable).
- b. If a visiting organist is approved, **our organist will still have to be reimbursed her full fee**. It is necessary for churches to follow this practice so as to always ensuring an organist is available to us.

FINAL WEDDING PREPARATIONS

You will be contacted by the Parish Office about six weeks before your wedding to check in with you, answer any questions you may have, and to receive the remaining fees, offerings and gifts pertaining to your wedding.

It is critical that the marriage coordinator and couple contact each other to finalize details of the wedding and to confirm the day and time of the wedding rehearsal.

At the time of the rehearsal, please bring the following items:

- A valid marriage license. (It is valid for 60 days from the day you receive it.)
- Completed wedding readings/selection form.

Rehearsal

The marriage coordinator will book your rehearsal time and conduct your rehearsal. It is important that you be on time as there may be another rehearsal following yours. The rehearsal takes approximately 45 minutes.

On Your Wedding Day Punctuality is Important

Being on time is critical – it shows respect for your guests and everyone involved. The bride should be in the church at least 15 minutes before the wedding is scheduled. Please make sure you have someone to get you to the church on time, and make sure that your photographer understands this. He/She is not directing this celebration of faith.

Receiving Line

Because of scheduling constraints we may not be able to allow the wedding party to have their receiving line at church. Please be sure to confer with the priest or deacon celebrating your wedding. Other parish liturgies may be scheduled following your wedding.

Ushers

Please have your ushers follow the directions from the marriage coordinator in setting up the worship space in the church before and after the wedding celebration.

CONCISE CHECK LIST OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- _____ Baptismal Certificate – It must be dated no earlier than six months prior to meeting with the priest/deacon. If you were not baptized at one of our parishes, contact your Church of Baptism requesting a current copy of your Baptismal Certificate (long form with noations). In the case of an interfaith marriage, a photocopy of a non-Catholic’s certificate is required.

- _____ Copy of Confirmation record (may be noted on Baptism record)

- _____ Letter/Certificate verifying completion of Marriage (Pre-Cana) Instruction Program

- _____ Completion of required pastoral forms with priest/deacon

- _____ Marriage license from State of Massachusetts obtained at any city/town clerk’s office.

ITEMS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

- _____ Please remove the Photographer/Videographer Guidelines from this booklet and make sure your photographer and/or videographer receives, reads and understands the guidelines printed in this booklet.

INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER

1. Use of camera lights are not allowed during the ceremony.
2. The location of a video camera must be stationary and outside the sanctuary... It can be located in the choir loft. . . .roaming around the church aisles is not permitted.
3. Indoor posed pictures following ceremony are discouraged due to the liturgical schedule of the parish.
4. Photographers/Videographers are expected not to interrupt the procession, Mass, ceremony or recessional for a posed picture. The general rule is that the photographer/videographer, as a professional, should be inconspicuous. The photographer/videographer should not be in the sanctuary.

*Please be sure to pass along these instructions to your photographer and/or videographer, so that he/she understands the guidelines. This will be of great help to these professionals as they are always asking the priest/deacon for guidelines just prior to the beginning of the wedding. Please have him/her sign this instruction sheet, and we ask the couple to bring it to their meeting with the marriage coordinators one month before the wedding.

Signature of photographer/videographer

Sacrament of Marriage – Contact Information

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Pastoral Team

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