

St. Mary's Church, Lee – Marriage Information for Couples Outside the Parish

Your File: Every diocese has slightly different paperwork. We accept the paperwork from each diocese. The person preparing you should be able to guide you through gathering the needed materials. ***The person preparing you will need to get it to the chancery of your diocese at least a month in advance of the wedding.*** Then your chancery will forward it to our chancery out here. Finally our chancery will forward it to us with all the appropriate stamps of approval. The file is kept here at St. Mary's in Lee in perpetuity. Below is a list of what it should contain.

- ❖ The Pre-Marital Investigation: This is an information sheet that is usually filled out at the initial preparation meeting. It contains all your basic information as well as questions pertaining to freedom, capability and intention.
- ❖ Certificates [***For a Catholic:*** A Recent Baptism Certificate with notations (issued within the last 6 months, the notations include: 1st Communion, Confirmation and no notations under Religious Profession or previous Marriage); ***For a Baptized Christian:*** A Copy of your Baptismal Certificate & Birth Certificate; ***for an Unbaptized Person:*** A copy of your Birth Certificate].
- ❖ Proof of Freedom to Marry: This can be established through the notations on your baptismal certificate or by a testimonial letter from your pastor, military chaplain or approved witness.
- ❖ Letter of Permission to get married here at our church, from the Pastor of your Catholic Parish.
- ❖ PMI or FOCUS: Most dioceses have one of these preparation tools. The results should be left in your marriage file after they have been reviewed with you.
- ❖ Certificate of attending Pre-Cana, Engaged Encounter or other wedding preparation program.
- ❖ Appropriate Dispensations or Nihil Obstat. The person preparing you will know if you need any special dispensations or ecclesiastical approvals.

The Celebration: Since you are bringing in your own presider, we are assuming you are planning the liturgy with him. If you need a planning guide please let us know. The new Rite of Marriage has been officially approved with all new prayers and amazing readings for you to choose.

Your Marriage License: Obtaining a Marriage License from the State of Massachusetts is the responsibility of the bride and groom. You can apply for one at any town hall in Massachusetts, but wherever you apply, your State Marriage Record will be kept there. The challenge is timing. There is a three day waiting period from the time you file your intention to the time you can receive your license certificate but then it is only valid for sixty days. Your presider should fill in the license after the wedding and mail it into town hall (he also should make a notation on the Marriage File that he has done so).

The Presider: In order for your presider to officiate he must be a priest/deacon in good standing with the church and licensed by the State of Massachusetts. Your presider needs to request a letter from his diocese stating he is a priest or deacon in good standing. This is usually done when the marriage file is processed through the chancery. If your presider is not from Massachusetts, he must obtain a license permission from the Secretary of the Commonwealth, 1 Ashburton Place, Room 1719, Boston, MA 02108 (617)727-2836 www.sec.state.ma.us/pre. For clergy coming from outside the country the permission is granted by the governor of Massachusetts. If your presider is staying overnight, we usually can offer him hospitality at one of our rectories. Contact Fr. Brian to make arrangements.

Music: Our music director, Sandy Cummings, is contracted to provide music at all weddings. We recommend you contact her as soon as you can in order to reserve her and begin planning the music. If you are planning on bringing in outside musicians make arrangements with Sandy. One thing that comes up frequently is the issue of secular music during the service. The Diocese has set the policy that this is not allowed. ***Sandy Cummings*** – (413)243-0258 | cummings5773@gmail.com

Offerings: The offering for St. Mary's is \$750.00 This should be sent in once you receive this packet to confirm your reservation. In addition, if we are providing the Altar Servers, we ask that you give them a gift of at least \$20.00 for each. The offering for the cantor/organist as well as the presider is to be paid directly to them.

SOME OTHER PRACTICAL INFORMATION

ALTAR SERVERS: We normally schedule 2 altar servers for weddings in Lee. If you are planning on bringing your own, please let us know in advance.

ENVIRONMENT: Flowers and other plants are welcome in the sanctuary and throughout the church. In arranging such things, we ask that no flowers or plants be placed on the altar table itself except around the unity candle or around the altar candles. We have many different stands, vases and sconces which may be helpful in arranging flowers throughout the church. Please have your florist call us if we can help. It is a great gift to the parish if you can leave the flowers for the Sunday Mass, we understand if you are taking them to the reception, but are very grateful if you leave them. Candles are also welcome. Please be mindful of candles interfering with the seating, lectern or altar. If you want a unity candle or a memory candle, we ask that you purchase it yourself to bring to the ceremony and keep afterwards. Bows are often placed on pews. While we have some left over bows from past weddings, it may be best to ask your florist for new ones. We prohibit the use of a white runner/carpet. The danger of someone tripping far outweighs the aesthetic look of white down the main aisle. We do allow flower petals (both real and artificial) to be sprinkled down the main aisle as part of the entrance procession. There is to be no confetti or rice inside or outside the church. If you want to use bird seed or something more environmentally friendly outside the church please talk with the person preparing you.

PHOTOGRAPHY and VIDEOGRAPHY: Both photography and videography are allowed at St. Mary's Church. If you are having both, be sure to let each know the other will be present. Restrictions are few. You must talk with the organist/cantor about gaining access to the choir loft. The sanctuary space is sacred and the couple mostly faces out towards the congregation, therefore access to the sanctuary is very limited. Most photographers and videographers are professionals who have had experience in our church we simply ask them to be attentive to the dignity of the sacrament and the sacred space they are in. It is also a good idea to have them meet with your presider at least 20 minutes prior to the ceremony so he can advise them of his preferences.

PROGRAMS: The printing and use of a program is welcomed. If you need help with content, talk with the person who is guiding you through the preparation process. We recommend that you at least have the person preparing you review the program prior to printing to confirm the ceremony is listed accurately. We ask that you make arrangements to remove all programs from the church after the ceremony.

REHEARSAL: We are assuming your presider is running the rehearsal. If you need someone to run it, please make arrangements with us well in advance. Rehearsals usually last about an hour.

TIMING: Please be mindful of starting on time and any time restrictions (another rehearsal or wedding, confessions, etc.) following the rehearsal as well as the ceremony. Many people can be inconvenienced due to starting late or lingering too long in the church.

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES AFTER THE CEREMONY: The presider should fill in the marriage license from the State and return it to the town hall. After it is processed (about a week) you can request legal Marriage Certificates. When you apply for your marriage license you should receive information for how to request these certificates. Your marriage file will be kept at St. Mary's in Lee. It is recorded in the St. Mary, Mother of the Church Marriage Records which are also kept there. We make every effort to have a church Marriage Certificate for you at your celebration. Additional copies can be requested by calling the rectory (413)243-0275.

Bring to the wedding rehearsal:

- State Marriage License (double check spelling, etc.)
- Memory or Unity Candle (if you are using one in your ceremony)
- Wedding Programs (if you are having them for the ceremony)
- Offering to organist/cantor (if you want the celebrant to give it to them).