

SAINT MARY, OUR LADY OF GRACE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH



THE CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY

515 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET SOUTH  
SAINT PETERSBURG, FLORIDA 33701  
(727) 896-2191 FAX (727) 895-6279  
[WWW.STMARYOLG.ORG](http://WWW.STMARYOLG.ORG)

Dear Engaged Couple,

Welcome to the beautiful and historic church of Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace! Our faith community is committed to making your wedding day memorable and prayerful for all. As with other sacraments, preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage is not a luxury or an option, but a serious responsibility. To help facilitate the planning of this joyous event, we have prepared the following guidelines.

More importantly, please accept the following prayer for engaged couples as our prayer for you.

Abundant blessings,  
The Parishioners and Staff of Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace

### PRAYER FOR ENGAGED COUPLES

*Loving God,  
You have exalted the unbreakable bond of marriage  
so that it became the sacramental sign  
of your Son's union with the Church, His spouse.*

*Help us who are preparing to marry in Christ.  
Grant us pure love and a spirit of generous prayer.  
Bless our marriage and our family,  
and lead us always in your peace and love.*

*We pray that in good times and in bad,  
we will grow in love for each other.  
In our struggles let us rejoice  
that you are near to help us.  
In our needs, let us know  
that you are there to rescue us.  
In our joys, let us see  
that you are the source  
and completion of every happiness.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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# STAGES OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION

## The Initial Contact

All preparations for marriage must begin *at least six months prior to the wedding*. The six month period is a *minimum*, not a maximum period of preparation. The wedding date is tentative until you, and the priest or deacon, determine that you are ready for marriage and that there are no obstacles to your marriage.

Please contact the church's Wedding Coordinator regarding the date and reservation of the Church. A ***non-refundable*** \$250 deposit is required for the date to be reserved on the church calendar.

### Wedding Season, Time and Date

When choosing a date for your wedding, be aware of the Church's liturgical calendar. The parish's celebration of a particular season (Advent, Christmas, Lent, the 50 days of Easter, etc.) will affect the decoration of the worship space. Marriage can be celebrated on any day except Christmas and during the Easter Triduum (which is Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday). Weddings during the Lenten season are discouraged but not prohibited. If a wedding is desired during the Lenten season, please converse with the Wedding Coordinator concerning art and environment limitations.

Weddings at Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace are celebrated on Saturdays at 10:00am, 1:00 pm or 6:00 pm. They may also be scheduled on Friday evenings at 6:00 pm. Rehearsals for weddings that take place on Saturday will be scheduled on Friday evenings, and for Friday weddings, on Thursday evenings.

### Some Common Obstacles

1. Age of Marriage: Diocesan guidelines set the minimum age for marriage at 18, provided the person has also been out of high school for one year.
2. Your Religion: For a couple to be married at Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace, at least one of the parties must be a Catholic in good standing.
3. Previous Marriage: If one of the parties has been married previously, he or she must present either a decree of nullity from a church tribunal or a death certificate from the previous marriage. *A wedding date cannot be finalized until one of these documents is secured. Note that, if an annulment is needed, the process can take at least one year to complete. DO NOT set a wedding date before an annulment is finished.*

## Meeting with the Priest or Deacon

Once you have contacted the Wedding Coordinator, you must make contact with the priest or deacon who will be preparing you for marriage to set up your first meeting. During this first meeting, and in subsequent meetings, the priest or deacon strives to get to know you and discuss your relationship, family backgrounds, religious beliefs and career plans. He outlines the steps in the marriage preparation process and explains their importance. He interviews you separately, relative to your freedom and readiness to marry. He will complete the appropriate paperwork you need to have ready, which includes:

### Basic Church Paperwork Requirements

#### A. New Baptismal Certificate with Notations

This is *not* your original baptismal certificate and must be issued within the year prior to your wedding date. This is required for each baptized person (bride and groom) regardless of your Christian denomination, and needs to be provided within 6 months of your preparation for marriage. To get proof of your Baptism, simply call the parish where the sacrament took place and have them send the record to you. You will need to know the approximate date you were Baptized.

#### B. The "A" and "B" form

The "A" form is a general questionnaire. The "B" form consists of two marriage affidavits that determine your freedom to marry in the Roman Catholic Church.

**C. Marriage Preparation Inventory**

This survey measures the couple's compatibility. The results are confidential and will be discussed only by the couple and their clergy.

**D. Marriage Preparation Program Certification**

A marriage preparation course is required of all couples who marry in this diocese. There are two approved programs offered by the diocese of Saint Petersburg: the JOURNEY TO MATRIMONY weekend program, (the preferred program of the Diocese,) or the PRE-CANA program. Information and registration for either program can be found at [www.dosp.org](http://www.dosp.org), and click on Marriage Preparation tab.

**E. Marriage License**

A marriage license from any county in the State of Florida must be obtained prior to the wedding from the county clerk's office. *Both persons must appear in person with a picture ID such as a driver's license and your Social Security card or a valid passport number or I-94 card.* The license is valid for 60 days upon issuance. The wedding license should be presented to the Church's Wedding Coordinator on or before the wedding rehearsal. The license will be filled out by the priest or deacon presiding at your wedding and then sent back to the County Clerk's Office.

**F. Visiting Celebrant's Letter of Delegation from Pastor of Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace**

You may have a priest or deacon who is NOT from our parish celebrate your wedding. If they work within the Diocese of Saint Petersburg, they must request permission from our pastor, which he will send in letter form. If they do not reside in our diocese we must also receive permission from our diocesan chancery. If you plan on inviting a guest priest or deacon, please inform our Wedding Coordinator, so that the proper Diocesan protocol may be followed. *Visiting clergy are encouraged to respect the policies and procedures of this parish with regard to all aspects of the liturgy and music.*

If a couple plans to be married in a parish other than Saint Mary Our Lady of Grace, pre-marital preparation may be done here at our parish. The necessary documents will be sent to the pastor of the church where the wedding is to take place. Scheduling with the out-of-town pastor is the responsibility of the couple.

## Preparing Your Wedding Liturgy

A Christian wedding liturgy is more than a solemn exchange of vows. It is an act of worship in which we come together to celebrate a sacrament, to offer thanks and praise to God, and to ask God's blessing on the couple's married life. Accordingly, the celebration of the wedding liturgy is not for the wedding party alone. All present should be active participants and witnesses.

Should you choose to hire a WEDDING/EVENT PLANNER for your wedding weekend, please be aware that it is the responsibility of our CHURCH WEDDING COORDINATOR to work with the couple on ALL aspects of the wedding that pertain to the church. Your EVENT PLANNER should be made aware of this requirement as soon as you secure your wedding date.

## Planning Book and Website you will need

During your preparation meetings, the priest or deacon should provide you with a copy of **Together for Life**, which contains the various prayers, readings, vow formulas and blessings used in Catholic weddings. Please look through the various choices together. Also, please visit [www.stmaryolg.org](http://www.stmaryolg.org), and click on the wedding tab. There you will find the **WEDDING LITURGY PREPARATION WORKSHEET** that will allow you to choose your preferred readings, music, and prayers for the wedding. ***Complete this sheet and return it to the Wedding Coordinator/Director of Liturgy and Music no later than 2 months before your wedding.***

## Which Form of Celebration?

Couples who are both Catholic should opt to celebrate their marriage with a full Nuptial Mass, (Shown as **Form 1** on your liturgy worksheet.)

When either the bride or groom is not Catholic, but baptized in a different Christian faith, a wedding ceremony (without communion) rather than a full mass, is celebrated, (Shown as **Form 2**.)

In the case of a marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person, a wedding service, (Shown as **Form 3**.) is celebrated.

## Music in the Wedding Liturgy

Music in the wedding mass or ceremony **MUST** be live, and must be of a sacred nature. The website ([www.stmaryolg.org](http://www.stmaryolg.org), WEDDING MUSIC tab) will assist you in choosing appropriate music. You are not limited to the selections found on that site, as long as your selections are in keeping with the above guideline.

Our Director of Liturgy and Music will be the ordinary musician for your wedding, and the cantor will be one of our professionally-trained singers from the parish. You may use other musicians, but these need to be approved by the Director of Liturgy and Music, and extra fees will apply.

**A Wedding Worship aid/program is STRONGLY encouraged**, and the Director of Liturgy and Music will assist you with the creation and printing of that worship aid. This worship aid not only lists the wedding party, but contains the order of the liturgy, and the music that is to be sung by all.

## Lay Ministers in the Liturgy

You may select up to three people to proclaim the First and Second readings and Universal Prayers at your wedding. If you choose **FORM 1 (Wedding MASS)**, then those who are to read the First and Second Reading **MUST** be Roman Catholic. All readings must be from Scripture, and can be chosen from the ***“Together for Life”*** book.

If you are using **FORM 1 (Wedding MASS)** you may also select two people to bring the gifts of bread and wine to the altar at the Offertory/Preparation of the Gifts time.

The parish will provide an altar server, extraordinary ministers of Communion, or readers that might be needed. If you have family members that are currently serving in any of these ministries in their own parish, please let our Wedding Coordinator know, and they will be welcome to serve in that ministry.

## The Wedding Party

The wedding party **MAY** include children **5 YEARS of AGE and OLDER**. Younger children are often not able to handle the demands of a wedding day in a formal capacity.

The Wedding Party may process in at the beginning of the liturgy in one of four ways:

**OPTION 1:** BOTH bride and groom, accompanied by parents, preceded by bridesmaids, groomsmen and presiding clergy.

**OPTION 2:** BOTH bride and groom, accompanied by parents, preceded by bridesmaids and groomsmen.

**OPTION 3:** BRIDE accompanied by her parents, preceded by bridesmaids and groomsmen.

**OPTION 4:** BRIDE, accompanied by her father, preceded by bridesmaids and groomsmen.

Any other processional styles should be discussed with our Wedding Coordinator.

# The Wedding Rehearsal

Wedding rehearsals are usually scheduled on the evening immediately before your wedding day. The time of the rehearsal will be set by the Church Wedding Coordinator. **Please do not make rehearsal dinner plans before confirming your rehearsal time with the church.**

**All should arrive promptly for your rehearsal.** This is a necessity because of other parish commitments of our priest/deacon and those on staff. Rehearsals usually last about 45 minutes. Your entire wedding party and anyone who is to exercise a role in the wedding liturgy (readers, gift-bearers, etc.) should attend the rehearsal. **We remind you that we are always in the presence of the Lord. All behavior during the rehearsal should be respectful and dignified.**

## On Your Wedding Day

### Ushers and Greeters

Ushers and greeters should arrive at least 60 minutes prior to the start of the wedding. The principal task of the ushers is to make everyone welcome and to seat people together in the church. All guests should be seated as they arrive or at least 15 minutes before the start of the wedding. The parents of the bride and groom will be seated last. Guests arriving late will quietly seat themselves.

### Groom and Groomsmen

The groom and groomsmen should arrive no later than 60 minutes prior to the start of the liturgy, and already be dressed for the wedding. They will meet in the ministry room until the wedding liturgy begins.

### Bride and Bridesmaids

The bride and bridesmaids will arrive to the church dressed, and *should arrive at the church no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the wedding.*

**All personal belongings should be removed immediately following the wedding.** Please ensure that all valuables are secure as the church is not responsible for missing or stolen items.

### Diocesan/Parish Policies

To maintain the dignity of the celebration of this sacrament, the following parish policies will apply *both to the wedding rehearsal and on the day of your wedding.*

- The use of alcohol and tobacco is **strictly prohibited** at any time in the church by persons participating in the rehearsal or in the wedding liturgy (before, during, or after the occasion).

**Any member of the wedding party consuming alcoholic beverages on church property or having the smell of alcohol on their breath will not be allowed to participate in the ceremony and will be asked to leave. Please inform your wedding party of this policy as we certainly would not want anyone to be embarrassed on such a special day.**

- Loud or unruly behavior in or around the church is inappropriate at any time.
- The throwing of rice, confetti, birdseed, balloons or anything else in the church or outside on church property is not permitted. The mess creates safety, maintenance and insurance issues for our parish.
- To facilitate the taking of formal pictures in a timely fashion after the wedding, there will be NO RECEIVING LINE in the church. A receiving line is better placed at the wedding reception site.

## After the Wedding

If you wish to remain a part of Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, you will need to register as a new household with your new name, address and phone number. If one of you is already registered on your own, you will need to update your registration with the parish office (727-896-2191.) If you will not be staying at Saint Mary's, you will need to register in your new parish and inform us of this change.

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## Wedding Fees

When planning your wedding budget, the following should be considered.

*All fees are due no LATER THAN ONE MONTH PRIOR TO THE WEDDING.*

### **CHURCH FEE**

**\$2500.00**

**Church fee includes church musician fees, wedding coordinator, altar server, and our presiding clergy.** Cash, checks (*made out to Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace,*) or credit cards are accepted forms of payment.

**A *non-refundable* deposit of \$250 is required to reserve your wedding date on the church calendar and will be credited to the total church fee.**

### **Optional Stipend to Presiding Clergy**

An extra gift to your clergy can be offered at your discretion. (*Checks should be made payable to the clergy.*)

### **Visiting Clergy**

If you invite visiting clergy to officiate at your wedding, you should pay their expenses. The traditional monetary gift for visiting clergy is your responsibility.

### **Additional Musicians**

We STRONGLY ENCOURAGE you to make use of the professional musicians here at the church, as their fees are included in your church fee.

Should you choose to have ADDITIONAL professional musicians, (i.e. trumpet, strings, flute, additional soloists,) you are responsible for their compensation.

The Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace Parish Choir: the **VOICES OF GRACE** may be secured for an additional fee. Please discuss this option with the Director of Liturgy and Music.

# Guidelines for Wedding Photographers and Videographers

**SAINT MARY, OUR LADY OF GRACE  
515 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET SOUTH,  
SAINT PETERSBURG, FL 33701 (727) 896-2191**

**(Please give this page to your photographer and/or videographer.)**

Saint Mary, Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church is a place where the parish community gathers to worship. Even though you have been hired by the bride and groom to perform a service for them, **the atmosphere of prayer, reverence and respect should be observed in the church at all times.** So that you may effectively provide the couple with the service they desire, we present you with these guidelines to insure that both you and this parish community achieve our desired goals.

## **BEFORE THE LITURGY**

Please set up your equipment no sooner than one hour before the wedding, and not in the sanctuary, which begins at the altar rail. Before setting up tripods, please check-in with the Church Wedding Coordinator, to ensure appropriate placement.

Cameras and/or video cameras are not permitted past the altar rail and photographers and videographers must remain on the floor a comfortable distance away from the bridal party.

Picture taking may take place one hour prior to the ceremony and ending at least 20 minutes before. Flash lighting may be used at this time.

## **DURING THE LITURGY**

Photographers should work unobtrusively at all times in the church, being respectful of the worship service. **Flash pictures are not permitted during the ceremony.** (Flash pictures **may** be taken during the processional and recessional.)

Photographers **MAY** go up the center aisle during the processional and recessional **ONLY**.

Only the lighting in the church should be used during the ceremony.

The balcony may be used for both still and video pictures.

## **AFTER THE LITURGY**

If desired, the bridal party can be brought back into the sanctuary for picture taking. **Photos with clergy should be taken first.** Group and family pictures may be taken on the sanctuary steps. Flash and extra lighting may be used at this time.

**Church photographs MUST be completed 30 minutes after the ceremony.**

Further pictures may be taken on the church grounds.

**We sincerely appreciate your cooperation with these guidelines. THANK YOU!**

# Guidelines for Flowers and Church Decorations

*SAINT MARY, OUR LADY OF GRACE  
515 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET SOUTH,  
SAINT PETERSBURG, FL 33701 (727) 896-2191*

**(Please give this page to your florist.)**

**Those planning the wedding (wedding couple, consultants, parents of the bride and groom, florist, etc.) should work with the Saint Mary's Wedding Coordinator regarding church decorations.** If your florist is not familiar with our church, ask a representative from the florist to make a visit to the church before planning your floral arrangements. We appreciate your help in preserving the dignity of our worship environment. Please observe the following guidelines.

- Any flowers or other decorations **ALREADY** in the sanctuary are not to be moved.
- Our sanctuary is beautifully decorated throughout the year, and flowers **OTHER** than wedding party bouquets and boutonnieres are not really needed. However, cut flower arrangements and potted plants are permitted outside the sanctuary.
- The church will be unlocked **one hour prior** to the wedding for flower delivery.
- Nothing is to be placed inside the sanctuary, that is, past the altar rail.
- Sanctuary furniture, including the candlesticks, remains in place.
- Nothing should be pinned, taped, nailed or tacked to the church furniture.
- Bows or other appropriate pew decorations may **NOT** be free-standing, but may be attached using ribbon, Velcro straps, or elastic cords. Please do not use adhesive tape as the finish on the pews can be ruined. Please do **NOT** use candles, as these are a fire hazard.
- Floral arrangements may stay in the church following the wedding. Please remove all other decorations following the ceremony (i.e. bows).
- The dropping of flower petals, both real or silk, is not permitted, nor can we permit the use of an aisle runner, as these present a tripping/ sliding hazard.

**We sincerely appreciate your cooperation with these guidelines. THANK YOU!**

# Checklist for Marriage Preparation

## ***At LEAST SIX months prior to the wedding:***

- \_\_\_ Contact the Wedding Coordinator for Initial meeting
- \_\_\_ Pay ***non-refundable*** \$250.00 deposit to reserve church for your wedding date
- \_\_\_ Schedule first meeting with preparing priest or deacon
- \_\_\_ Complete Pre-Marital Inventory
- \_\_\_ Acquire a new copy of your baptismal certificate with notations
- \_\_\_ Complete Form B (two affidavits)
- \_\_\_ Schedule a Diocesan marriage preparation program

## ***At LEAST THREE months prior to the wedding:***

- \_\_\_ Complete page 1 of the Wedding Liturgy Planning Worksheet (***found on stmaryolg.org***)
- \_\_\_ Read the **“Together For Life”** book and write selections on page 2, 3, or 4 of the Liturgy Planning Worksheet (***found on stmaryolg.org***)
- \_\_\_ Listen to wedding sound clips (***found on stmaryolg.org***) and write selections on same page
- \_\_\_ Arrange for Worship aid/program to be created/printed at the church, OR submit your self-created worship aid/program to the Director of Liturgy and Music for editing/proofreading

## ***At LEAST ONE month prior to the wedding:***

- \_\_\_ Apply for Marriage License within any county in the State of Florida
- \_\_\_ Present church guidelines to the florist
- \_\_\_ Present church guidelines to the photographer and/or videographer
- \_\_\_ Pay final balance to church

## ***At LEAST TWO WEEKS prior to the wedding:***

- \_\_\_ Inform the wedding party of our parish policies regarding the use of alcohol/tobacco/securing of valuables before and during the wedding ceremony
- \_\_\_ Communicate time and date of rehearsal to wedding party and those participating AND the importance of being on time
- \_\_\_ Inform the parish office of your membership status following the wedding