

Can I get married at St. Mary's?

As you can imagine St. Mary's in Newport receives dozens of wedding requests every year from equally eager couples who wish to get married in our church. Whether it's the location of the church, its historic nature, or its ascetic beauty – many people from across the country seek to be married here at St. Mary's.

And unfortunately, because of the number of requests we get at St. Mary's and at St. Augustin's in Newport (shared Pastor) we cannot accommodate every couple that wants to be married in our church.

Furthermore, those who are living, or are striving to live, an authentic Catholic life and who therefore desire to have a Catholic wedding ceremony should understand that the ascetic beauty or location or historic nature of a specific church is not nearly as important as what happens in front of and on the altar during the wedding ceremony. And this makes any Roman Catholic Church a worthy and beautiful place for a couple to exchange their vows and become one in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Please remember that St. Mary's Church **is not** a venue to be utilized for your destination wedding. It is a church, a sacred place where our Lord dwells and where he bestows his grace upon those who, in this case, come before His altar seeking to become one in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

And furthermore, St. Mary's is also a parish of the Diocese of Providence and as such has regularly attending, contributing, and active parishioners. It is only fair and just that we give these registered and active parishioners of St. Mary's first priority for weddings.

Lastly, when it comes to requesting or inquiring about having your wedding here at St. Mary's, we can only speak to the future bride or groom. Parents, future In-Laws, or other relatives should refrain from emailing or calling the parish.

Couples looking to get married should consider and understand the following guidelines:

- A. Any and all couples looking to be married at St. Mary's must first establish they are in fact free to marry. This is the first and most crucial step that must be completed before booking a date for your wedding.**
- If you and/or your fiancé is divorced – you must receive a declaration of nullity (i.e. an annulment) from the Catholic Church. Note, this process can take up to a year or more to complete.
 - You **cannot** book a date or begin the process of marriage prep until an Annulment is received.
 - Likewise, a Pre-Nuptial Investigation must also be done through your local pastor before a proposed date can be booked.

B. Only registered and active members of St. Mary's Parish are allowed to be married at St. Mary's. (No Exceptions!)

- You must be attending Mass regularly and be contributing to the life of St. Mary's Parish.
- You must be a registered member of St. Mary's for at least 12 months **PRIOR** to your wedding inquiry. (**No exceptions!** - you cannot register with St. Mary's simply for the sake of getting married in the Church.)
- You must also have a residence (personal address) somewhere on Aquidneck Island. (Not a relative's address).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. **What if my relative is a registered and active full time member of St. Mary's – either all year or for several consecutive months of the year?**
2. **What if I am a registered member of St. Mary's, but a part time resident of Newport.**
3. **What if neither my fiancé or I are a registered or active member of St. Mary's parish and have no registered and active family members attending St. Mary's?**
4. **What if one of us is a member of the United States Military and is stationed in Newport?**

1. What if my relative is a registered and active full time member of St. Mary's – either all year or for several consecutive months of the year?

- If you and/or your fiancé's relative is a registered and active member of St. Mary's then we **may** be able to accommodate your wedding request depending on the exact circumstances and under certain **non-negotiable** conditions:

- i. A registered and active parishioner of St. Mary's will always get priority over someone who is linked to St. Mary's via a registered and active family member.
- ii. Secondly, the relative who is an active and registered member of St. Mary's must be an immediate family member (parent, sibling, or grandparent – **No Exceptions!**).
- iii. Regarding relatives who are part-time registered and contributing parishioners of St. Mary's:
 1. The relative must be an active parishioner of St. Mary's for at least 3 consecutive years and for at least 3 months of each year **PRIOR** to wedding inquiry. (i.e. Attending St. Mary's Parish for Mass while vacationing in Newport every year for two weeks or a month does not qualify as being an active, registered member of the parish – they must have a sustained presence here for part of the year. **No Exceptions!**)
 2. The relative must have and provide a personal residential address on Aquidneck Island.
- iv. You (or your fiancé) **must** be an active and registered member of your local parish and provide evidence of your status and regular mass attendance from your local pastor.
- v. All necessary paperwork and marriage prep **must** be done through your local pastor.
 1. Your local pastor **must** provide a letter on parish letter head with the parish seal stating that you are in fact a registered and active member of the parish and that he is taking care of all the necessary marriage prep and paperwork.
- vi. You **must** also provide your own priest for the wedding day. (**No Exceptions!**)
 1. This priest must provide a letter on parish letter head with parish seal stating that he intends to travel to Newport, RI to celebrate your wedding.
 2. Along with that letter he must provide a Letter of Good Standing from his Bishop or Superior. (He'll know what that is and how to obtain it, and this does not replace the one he will need to provide within two months of the actual wedding date.)
- vii. If the priest doing the marriage prep and paperwork is the same priest celebrating the wedding – then one letter (on parish letter head with parish seal) stating everything above and with the Letter of Good Standing attached, will suffice.

2. What if I am a registered member of St. Mary's, but a part time resident of Newport.

- If you are a registered, active, and contributing member of St. Mary's for part of the year, we **may** be able to accommodate your wedding request depending on the exact circumstances and under certain **non-negotiable** conditions:
 - i. You must be an active parishioner of St. Mary's for at least 3 consecutive years and for at least 3 months of each year **PRIOR** to wedding inquiry. (i.e. Attending St. Mary's Parish for Mass while vacationing in Newport every year for two weeks or a month does not qualify as being an active, registered member of the parish – you must have a sustained presence here for part of the year. **No Exceptions!**)
 1. You must have and provide a personal residential address on Aquidneck Island.
 - ii. You must be an active and registered member of the local parish of your second residence and provide evidence of your status and regular mass attendance from that local pastor in the form of a signed letter on parish letter head stating as much and stamped with parish seal. **No Exceptions!**
 - iii. You must consider where you are living approx. 6 to 8 months out from your desired wedding date and have the appropriate local pastor handle all the paperwork and marriage prep.
 - iv. Also if you spend the majority of the year in the non-Newport location, it is strongly encouraged that you provide a priest to celebrate the wedding. (Not necessarily required.)

3. What if neither my fiancé or I are a registered or active member of St. Mary's parish and have no registered and active family members attending St. Mary's?

- a. As stated above, you or your fiancé must be a registered and actively contributing member of St. Mary's Parish for at least 12 months **PRIOR** to your wedding inquiry.
- b. If this is not the case, then unfortunately we will not be able to accept your request to be married here at St. Mary's. (**No Exceptions!**)

4. What if one of us is a member of the United States Military and is stationed in Newport?

- We thank you for your service to our country and we can accommodate your wedding request so long as the following **non-negotiable** conditions are met:
 - i. You (or your fiancé) must be an active and registered member of your local Catholic Parish and must provide evidence of your status and regular mass attendance from that local pastor in the form of a signed letter on parish letter head stating as much and stamped with parish seal.
 - ii. You must have the time 6-8 months prior to desired wedding date to meet with the pastor to complete all necessary paperwork and marriage prep.