

Getting Married at St. Mary's Church

Dear Friends in Christ,

Congratulations on your engagement, and God be praised for the gift of your love for each other - a love which you now ask the Lord Jesus to sanctify by his grace in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Marriage is a universal institution that has been a part of human life from the creation of our race; in fact, as the Nuptial Blessing in the sacred liturgy puts it, marriage is the one blessing that was not forfeited by original sin or washed away in the flood. But more than that, the Lord Jesus raised marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament of the New and Everlasting Covenant, making it one of the seven sacred instruments of our sanctification. By asking to be married in the Catholic Church, you are publicly proclaiming your faith in the Lord Jesus and asking to live as married disciples of Christ for the rest of your lives, and it is to this sacramental and evangelical dimension of marriage that we ask you now to give the most serious attention through prayer, study, and conversation. Our culture is increasingly hostile to the specifically Christian meaning of sacramental marriage, and for this reason, we must take the greatest care to ensure that you are very well prepared to give and receive the rights and duties of Christian matrimony.

There is a great difference between preparing for marriage and planning a wedding, and our policies exist to help you do both of those tasks well. These requirements are designed to help you make mature and well considered decisions as disciples of the Lord Jesus. Our policies are not arbitrary or unduly burdensome, but they will require you to sacrifice some of your time and, perhaps, some of your preconceptions about your wedding liturgy and, more importantly, the nature of your married life. Sacrifice is irksome, but love can make it easy and perfect love can make it a joy. We invite you to renew your love for the Lord Jesus and His Church in the certain conviction that this love will make the sacrifices of marriage a joy for you.

Father Jay Scott Newman
Pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church

Who can be married at St. Mary's Church?

For a couple to be married at St. Mary's, one of two conditions must be met:

Either the bride or groom (or both) must be a registered, active, and regularly contributing member of the parish and must have been so for at least six months before the six month period of marriage preparation begins. To be an active member means attending Mass every Sunday, supporting the parish financially, and verifying Mass attendance through the use of our stewardship envelopes even if you make your contributions by Electronic Fund Transfer, and between first registration in the parish and a wedding at St. Mary's, one full year must elapse.

or

Both the bride and groom must live more than a one hour drive away from Greenville and at least one parent of the bride or groom must be a registered, active, and regularly contributing member of St. Mary's and must have been so for at least six months before the six month period of marriage preparation begins. This means that between the first registration of a parent and the wedding of that parishioner's child, twelve full months must elapse. Moreover, either the bride or groom (or both) must be a registered, active, and regularly contributing member of a parish where they live, and the pastor of that parish must certify that the couple would be eligible for marriage in his parish.

Under normal circumstances, no one else is eligible to be married at St. Mary's. All decisions about eligibility for marriage at St. Mary's are made by the pastor, and no date for a wedding can be reserved until and unless the pastor certifies that the couple is eligible to be married at St. Mary's.

How is the church reserved and a wedding date decided?

To schedule your wedding at St. Mary's, start by contacting T.J. Nielsen, the Director of Christian Formation, at timothy.nielsen@stmarysgvl.org or 864.679.4114. Before a date can be decided, your eligibility to be married at St. Mary's must be verified and you must meet with T.J. Nielsen. Only after all of these steps are completed can the church be reserved and a wedding date accepted, and from the first personal meeting with T. J. Nielsen to the date of the wedding must be at least six full months.

Marriage Preparation

A wedding is a simple ceremony lasting only a few minutes; a marriage is a lifetime commitment of sacrificial love in a sacramental covenant. Planning your wedding and preparing for your marriage are radically different things, and preparing for the marriage is by far the more important. During your first meeting with T.J. Nielsen he will explain the marriage preparation process.

The focus of the preparation process is two-fold: relational and sacramental. Couples engage in a process of learning about one another as well as forming habits and acquiring skills that will help them build strong, healthy, Christ-centered marriages.

Couples also are invited to form a sacramental understanding of marriage as the union of one man and woman in Jesus Christ. The focus during this dimension of preparation helps couples grow together as disciples of the Lord Jesus and to see their covenant as an element of God's Plan of Salvation for the world.

Preparing for the sacrament of Holy Matrimony begins with a vibrant life of Christian discipleship, and that in turn requires attending Mass every Sunday and going to Confession whenever needed. That is why being a registered, active, and regularly contributing member of the parish must have established for at least six months before the six-month period of marriage preparation begins.

When can weddings take place at St. Mary's Church?

Weddings are celebrated on open Saturdays between 10 am and 1 pm, and if the wedding takes place within Mass, the liturgy must begin not later than 12 noon. Evening weddings are permitted only on Fridays between 5 and 7 pm. Mandatory rehearsals are at 5 pm on the day before the wedding.

Those days closed to weddings are: the Fridays and Saturdays of Advent and Lent, the Fridays and Saturdays after Thanksgiving and Christmas, Holy Days of Obligation that fall on Friday or Saturday, All Souls Day when it falls on Friday or Saturday, the Saturday before the First Sunday of Advent, and July 4th when it falls on a Friday or Saturday.

Should the wedding be celebrated inside or outside of Mass?

Almost all weddings at St. Mary's are celebrated outside of Mass, and all weddings here between a Catholic and a non-Catholic must be celebrated outside of Mass. Weddings between two Catholics may be celebrated within the Mass, but only if both parties and all of their immediate families and their wedding parties are in full communion with the Church and actively practicing the faith by attending Sunday Mass. The pastor of St. Mary's determines whether or not each wedding will be celebrated inside or outside of Mass, and unless the pastor has given permission in writing for your wedding to be celebrated within Mass, your wedding will be celebrated outside of Mass.

How much does a wedding cost at St. Mary's?

The fee for a wedding is \$1,000, and \$500 of this amount must be paid when the date for the wedding is reserved in the church calendar. This fee is non-refundable. The remaining \$500 must be paid not less than one month before the wedding.

The \$1,000 fee includes the costs for the marriage preparation program, the use of the parish facilities, and the stipends for all those involved in planning and celebrating the wedding, including the clergy and the organist. No further stipend or gratuity is needed for these persons. Checks should be made payable to St. Mary's Catholic Church.

The wedding fee does not cover the expense of any additional musicians hired by the couple, the cost of the printed wedding program, or the fee for the Natural Family Planning class.

Couples for whom this fee would be a burden and who can demonstrate financial need are welcome to speak with the pastor about a reduction of the fee.

The Bridal Gown and Dresses of Bridal Party

Please remember that your wedding is a sacred and public act of worship taking place in a consecrated place of divine worship. Bearing in mind the reverence and decorum required by the sacred liturgy, the shoulders of all women in the bridal

party must be covered by sleeves or a veil of opaque cloth, and this includes the bride, the bridesmaids, the mothers of both bride and groom, and the program and flower girls. All of your wardrobe selections should reflect the modesty and noble simplicity which the Church expects will characterize every part of the sacred liturgy, and we ask you to understand that because your wedding is a public act of worship, no exceptions to this policy are possible. Any woman in the wedding party who disregards this policy and arrives with uncovered shoulders will be obliged to wear a shawl.

Church Flowers

St. Mary's Church selects and provides the flowers for the sanctuary of the church; the flowers are designed according to the needs of the sacred liturgy, and they must remain in the church after the wedding. These flowers are chosen and paid for by the parish, and the wedding party is not involved in any way in the selection of or payment for these flowers. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Personal Flowers, Corsages, and Boutonnieres

The wedding party is responsible for making all arrangements for personal flowers, corsages, and boutonnieres to be worn or carried by anyone in the wedding. These must be brought to the church by the wedding party or be delivered to the church by your florist not less than two hours before the wedding. If the florist delivers the flowers, they must be left in the "cry room" at the rear of the church, and the flowers must be in a disposable cardboard box that will be thrown away after the wedding. Flowers must be labeled with the name of the person designated to wear or carry them, and your florist should be asked to include two white pins with each corsage and two black pins with each boutonniere. If flowers are delivered in vases, it is your responsibility to remove the vases immediately after the wedding.

No flowers or greenery are permitted in the windows or aisles of the church, and no flowers or flower petals may be dropped inside or outside of the church before, during, or after the wedding or rehearsal. No decorations are permitted outside the church, including on the railings of stairs. Pew markers for the reserved pews of the church are provided by St. Mary's, and aisle runners, rice, bird seed, bubbles, and balloons are not permitted either inside or outside the church at any time.

Who plans the wedding liturgy?

Weddings are public liturgical actions of the Church, and the celebration of weddings is governed by liturgical law. The basic form of the wedding liturgy is given by the Church, and no variation from that form is permitted. Within that basic form, the selection of the Scripture readings and prayers is made by the priest or deacon who will preside at the wedding after consultation with the bride and groom. A list of possible readings is found at the end of this document.

Candles and Liturgical Furnishings

The furnishings for the sacred liturgy are provided by the church; this includes all vestments, books, candles and candlesticks, kneelers, chairs, and other elements as needed. We cannot use family heirlooms in the celebration of the sacred liturgy.

In the sacred liturgy of the Church, candles are always a symbol of the Lord Jesus, but the “Unity Candle” (a recent innovation of American Protestant worship services) represents the bride and groom rather than Christ. The “Unity Candle” is therefore not a part of the wedding liturgy of the Catholic Church, and it may not be used at St. Mary’s for any reason.

Who plans the music?

Arlen Clarke is the choirmaster of St. Mary’s Church, and to plan the music for your wedding, you must start by contacting Arlen at arlen.clarke@stmarysgvl.org. Because the celebration of a wedding is a public liturgical action of the Church, only music which is truly sacred is permitted at weddings, and under the supervision of the pastor, Arlen Clarke makes all decisions about the music allowed at St. Mary’s, including permission to invite visiting vocalists and instrumentalists.

You are also welcome to hire instrumentalists or singers from outside the parish, but you must speak with Arlen Clarke before arranging for any outside musicians, whether hired professionals or volunteers from among family or friends. Fees for outside musicians are the responsibility of the bride and groom, and St. Mary’s does not act in any way as an intermediary for payment of these fees. Payment to all

musicians other than the organist must be made before the wedding, and our wedding coordinators should not be asked to give payment to any musicians during the rehearsal or the wedding.

If you want the schola cantorum or adult choir of St. Mary's Church to sing at your wedding, there is an additional fee of \$1,000 payable to the parish, and if you need only one cantor, Arlen Clarke is also available to sing for a fee of \$150.00 payable to him. To ask for the service of one cantor or the choir, please contact Arlen at 864.901.1250 or arlen.clarke@stmarysgvl.org.

No music by recording or automation is ever permitted for any reason.

Visiting Clergy

The priests and deacons of St. Mary's Church ordinarily preside at all weddings here; exceptions to this norm are rare and are usually made only because a member of the family or a very close friend is a priest or deacon from elsewhere. If you desire to invite a Catholic priest or deacon from outside the parish to preside at your wedding, you must first submit a written request to the pastor of St. Mary's, giving the name, title, postal address, phone number, and email address of the cleric you want to invite. Only the pastor of St. Mary's can grant permission (canonical delegation) for a visiting cleric to preside at a wedding in this parish.

If you desire to invite a non-Catholic clergyman to participate in the wedding liturgy, you must first submit a written request to the pastor of St. Mary's, giving the name, title, postal address, phone number, and email address of the clergyman you want to invite. Non-Catholic clergy are permitted to participate in a Catholic wedding by their presence in the sanctuary, but they cannot preside at the liturgy. This means, among other things, that the Catholic priest or deacon must receive the wedding vows and impart the nuptial blessing.

Military Weddings

Swords and other displays of military honor are not permitted inside the church at St. Mary's. Military honors may take place only after the wedding, either outside the church or at the reception.

Programs

The bridal party is responsible for the design and printing of the wedding program, but the content of your program is determined by whether or not the wedding takes place inside or outside of Mass. Before you begin to plan your program, you must contact Vickie Acosta, Executive Assistant to the Pastor of St. Mary's Church, who has several samples of wedding programs, and you need to review these samples before designing your program. Moreover, Vickie must approve the final draft of your program before it can be printed, so please have the final draft ready for review and approval not less than three weeks prior to the wedding. You can reach Vickie at vickie.acosta@stmarysgvl.org or 864.679.4101.

The program must include clear instructions to your guests not to take photographs or use video cameras during the wedding.

Lectors

At the wedding, the texts of Sacred Scripture must be proclaimed from the ambo, and the person who performs this function is called a lector. Most couples choose one or two persons from among their families and friends to perform this duty. Those whom you select should be good public speakers and must be at the rehearsal to practice the proclamation in the church; all lectors must be Catholics in full communion with the Church.

Guest Registry

Because of severe space limitations, guest registries are not permitted at St. Mary's.

Handicapped Guests

A ramp for handicapped guests is available at the West Entrance to the church, which faces the main church parking lot and circular driveway. Please inform the wedding director of guests with special needs.

Rest Rooms

There are no rest rooms inside St. Mary's Church. Those who need the use of a rest room must exit the church and go into Sacred Heart Hall, which is located to the east of the church across Miller Square.

Bride's Room

There is no Bride's Room inside St. Mary's Church. The bride and her attendants may use a room in Sacred Heart Hall to dress, but they cannot arrive any earlier than ninety minutes before the wedding. To avoid lost and stolen items, the bride is to provide shopping bags for each attendant, and all personal belongings (shoes, clothes, makeup, etc) must be removed from Sacred Heart Hall before the bridal party walks to the church. These items should be taken to a car and locked in the trunk before the wedding begins. The doors inside of Sacred Heart Hall do not lock, and St. Mary's does not accept responsibility for any items which are lost or stolen.

The larger of the two "cry rooms" at the rear of the church may be used as a gathering area for the bridal party, but no one is permitted to dress in that room. Only the bride, her attendants, and her family are permitted in this room.

Attendants in the Wedding

The bride and groom are permitted up to seven attendants each, and the limit of seven includes the bridesmaids and maid of honor, the best man and groomsmen, flower girls and ring bearers, and all honor attendants. Children under the age of six are not permitted to participate in the procession or to stand in the front of the church, and this includes service as flower girls and ring bearers.

Food, Smoking, and Alcohol

No food or drink is permitted in the church or in Sacred Heart Hall before, during, or after the wedding and rehearsal. Smoking and the use of chewing gum are also prohibited on the campus of St. Mary's at all times.

The wedding party is expected to refrain from using any alcoholic beverages before both the rehearsal and the wedding. The priest or deacon celebrating the wedding reserves the right to remove from the church anyone under the influence of alcohol. Please remind everyone in the wedding party to preserve the sacred character of this event by not abusing alcohol.

The Rehearsal

Rehearsals are at 5 pm on the day before the wedding, and the wedding party should arrive at least thirty minutes before the scheduled time so that the actual rehearsal can begin promptly. The rehearsal will last about forty-five minutes.

The priest or deacon who will celebrate the wedding and the wedding directors are in charge of the rehearsal. The bride and groom must both be present and participate in the rehearsal; no proxies or stand-ins are allowed. All bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls, ring bearers, and lectors must be present at the rehearsal to practice the wedding liturgy.

The Marriage License

At the beginning of the rehearsal on the night before the wedding, the bride and groom should bring the South Carolina Marriage License to the sacristy, where the priest or deacon will complete this legal document except for his signature which is added after the wedding. No wedding is permitted at St. Mary's without this document, so please be sure to obtain the license at least one month before the wedding.

Photographs

The requirements for photography at St. Mary's are very strict and may be different from your experience of weddings at other churches, and your careful attention to these requirements during the planning session with your photographer will save a great deal of grief on the wedding day. Your photographer must also speak with our Wedding Director to review these policies.

St. Mary's reserves the right to exclude from working at our church any photographer or videographer who has not abided by these policies in the past. For this reason, you must receive the agreement of the Wedding Director before confirming a contract with your photographer or videographer.

- ✘ No photographs or videos are permitted at the rehearsal. No exceptions.
- ✘ Before the wedding, photographs or videos of the groom, his groomsmen, and his family may be taken outside the church but not inside.
- ✘ Also before the wedding, the bride, her family, and the bridesmaids may be photographed in the cry room by the main entrance but not inside of the church.
- ✘ As the procession begins, the bride may be photographed walking down the aisle from the main door of the church. The photographer or videographer must remain behind the bride and in the rear section of the church.
- ✘ Absolutely no flash photographs are permitted during the wedding liturgy.
- ✘ All photographs or videos taken during the wedding must be taken from the choir loft. No photographer or videographer is permitted to walk through the church during the wedding.
- ✘ At the end of the wedding, the bride and groom may be photographed leaving the main door of the church, but the photographer or videographer must remain in the rear of the church.
- ✘ After the wedding, the photographer or videographer may gather the entire wedding party inside the church on the steps of the sanctuary for pictures. All photographs and videos must be completed within twenty minutes of the end of the wedding.
- ✘ The photographer may arrive at the church one hour before the wedding, but no earlier.
- ✘ If a video is to be made, no microphone for the video will be worn by the priest or deacon who is presiding.

Why are these policies so strict and detailed?

Some of these policies may seem arbitrary or unreasonable on first reading, but we ask for your patience and understanding. Many years of trial and error have shown us what works at St. Mary's and what doesn't, and our policies are written to anticipate many of the most common difficulties that arise today during the planning and celebration of weddings. We know that you want your wedding to be perfect and that you have probably been planning this day in your imagination for many years; we also know that some of the things you may have imagined probably don't coincide with the expectations set forth in these wedding policies. We ask you to remember, though, that while your wedding is an intensely personal moment for you, it is not a private event; rather, it is a public celebration of one of the seven Sacraments given to the Church by the Lord Jesus. For this reason, the parish priests, deacons, and staff have a solemn duty to ensure that the sacred liturgy is celebrated according to the mind of the Church and in conformity with liturgical law. Our policies are written to help you understand what is possible and what is not possible during the short ceremony that begins your lifetime of sacrificial love in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The sacred liturgy of your wedding is above all else an act of divine worship, and our policies are designed to make your wedding a beautiful and memorable encounter with Christ the Lord for you, your family, and your friends. If you have any questions about these policies, please feel free to speak with anyone listed below.

Contact Information

T. J. Nielsen
Director of Christian Formation
864.679.4114
timothy.nielsen@stmarysgvl.org

Cathy Markway
Wedding Director
864.467.1775
cmarkway@bellsouth.net

Arlen Clarke
Wedding Music Director
864.901.1250
arlen.clarke@stmarysgvl.org

Vickie Acosta
Executive Assistant to the Pastor
864.679.4100
vickie.acosta@stmarysgvl.org

Possible Scripture Readings for the Wedding Liturgy

These readings are all taken from the New American Bible, and that is the only translation permitted for use in the sacred liturgy. The lectionary, or book of readings, is placed on the ambo for the use of the lectors, so they should not bring Bibles or photocopies of these readings with them to the wedding. Please review these readings and then discuss them with the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding; the final choice of the readings is reserved to the cleric who will preside.

Old Testament Reading (first in order)

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a

Genesis 2:18-24

Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67

Tobit 7:6-14

Tobit 8:4b-8

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16a; 8:6-7a

Sirach 26:1-4, 13-16

Jeremiah 31:31-32a, 33-34

Psalm (second in order)

Please discuss this matter with Arlen Clarke when you meet with him.

New Testament Reading (third in order)

Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18

Romans 15:1b-3a, 5-7, 13

1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8a

Ephesians 5:2a, 25-32

Philippians 4:4-9

Colossians 3:12-17

Hebrews 13:1-4a, 5-6b

1 Peter 3:1-9
1 John 3:18-24
1 John 4:7-12
Revelation 19:1, 5-9a

Gospel Reading (fourth in order)

Matthew 5:1-12a
Matthew 5:13-16
Matthew 7:21, 24-29
Matthew 19:3-6
Matthew 22:35-40
Mark 10:6-9
John 2:1-11
John 15:9-12
John 17:20-26

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