




MARRIAGE PREPARATION
GUIDELINES


Our Lady Queen of Peace Church
Madison, Wisconsin

Revised November 1, 2023



The following information is provided to answer many of the questions engaged couples have as they prepare for their wedding. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information, please discuss them with one of the parish priests or the Wedding Coordinator assigned to you. We hope the information will be of benefit to you and to your families.

We believe the celebration of marriage at Our Lady Queen of Peace should be a prayerful, exciting, and spirit-filled experience for all involved. We as a parish staff and community of faith, will do our best to provide all we can to fulfill your hopes and dreams, not only of the day, but also in your life together as a married couple.



GENERAL INFORMATION

1. WHAT ARE THE TIMES THAT A WEDDING MAY BE SCHEDULED?

Weddings may be scheduled on Saturdays at a time approved by the presider and no later than 2:00 pm. No Saturday evening weddings are possible because of the regular Mass schedule. Weddings may be scheduled on other days if approved by the presider and when they do not conflict with previous or regular scheduling of the church. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays and Holy Days.

2. HOW DO YOU SELECT A PRIEST FOR YOUR WEDDING?

Because we are a parish family, the usual procedure is to select a priest from our parish to preside at your wedding. Any priest related to either the bride or groom may preside. Any friend who is a priest in good standing may be invited to concelebrate and can preach at your wedding at Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish. The priest you select must agree to perform the wedding and the rehearsal before the wedding can be scheduled. If a priest relative from outside the parish is selected, his name, address, and phone number should be listed along with other information in our scheduling book. **The Pastor must always give delegation to any visiting priest.**

3. DO YOU NEED TO HAVE A MASS?

It is encouraged to celebrate the wedding with the Mass when both parties are practicing Catholics. When a Catholic marries a non-Catholic it is recommended that Mass not be celebrated. The Church provides a book on the Rite of Marriage During Mass, and a Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass.

4. WHAT TYPE OF PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE IS REQUIRED?

The Diocese requires that couples participate in the FOCCUS Inventory (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study), which is conducted by married couples from our parish. In addition, couples are asked to enroll in a marriage prep course and may choose from two options: a Marriage Prep Retreat Weekend or online formation with CatholicMarriagePrep.com. Couples can enroll through the website at madisondiocese.org/mp.

5. DO WE HAVE TO DO ALL THE PREPARATIONS AT OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE PARISH?

As a norm, couples will follow the format as described. At the discretion of the priest, adaptations may be made. If a couple lives in another community, for example, some of the preparation may be completed through another priest or parish. All exceptions should be discussed with the priest.

6. HOW AND WHEN DO YOU SCHEDULE A WEDDING REHEARSAL?

The wedding rehearsal is scheduled as soon as possible by calling the Parish Center office (231-4600). Rehearsals are usually held on Friday evenings. The rehearsal will last no more than one hour. The times available for rehearsals are 4:00 PM, 5:00 PM, 6:00 PM, and 7:00 PM. These times will be assigned on a first requested, first served basis.

7. WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING PERMISSION FOR A CATHOLIC TO MARRY A NON-CATHOLIC?

There is a formal procedure to obtain a dispensation for permission for a Catholic to marry a non-Catholic. The priest handling the ceremony will do the necessary paperwork. The Catholic party is asked to give assurance that he/she will continue to live as a Catholic and that he/she will do all that is possible to baptize and raise the children Catholic. The teachings and practices of the Catholic faith will be discussed with the bride and groom.

8. CAN A MINISTER OF ANOTHER FAITH BE PRESENT FOR THE CEREMONY WHEN CELEBRATED IN A CATHOLIC CHURCH?

Yes. The minister may be present and assist in the Liturgy of the Word and the marriage ceremony. (Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass).

9. MAY A PRIEST GO TO ANOTHER DENOMINATION OF CHURCH TO ASSIST IN A WEDDING CEREMONY?

With permission from the Bishop, the wedding of a Catholic and non-Catholic may be celebrated in other churches. In that case, the minister/rabbi would officiate at the wedding. The priest may be present and assist. The couple still must participate in the required marriage preparation program.

10. WHERE SHOULD THE PEOPLE BE SEATED IN THE CHURCH?

Usually people are seated in the center two sections of the church only. These sections hold a total of 500 people.

11. WHERE MAY THE WEDDING PARTY DRESS FOR THE CEREMONY?

Normally, the groomsmen come to the church dressed in formal attire. The bridesmaids may dress in the Bride's Room located in the back of the church. Like all areas of the church, please leave the Bride's Room clean and clear of all articles and trash after the wedding.

12. HOW SHOULD THE SANCTUARY BE DECORATED?

The Sanctuary area is decorated according to the season of the Church Year. Any wedding decorations must be worked into existing colors and decorations. Flowers can be arranged in front of the altar and ambo, as well as on either side of the altar. Floral arrangements are not placed on the altar itself. If there are two or more weddings on one day, couples may choose to share the cost of the flowers.

13. CAN THERE BE AN AISLE RUNNER?

An aisle runner is strongly discouraged and certainly not needed with a carpeted aisle. An aisle runner on carpet can cause people to trip and fall.

14. CAN YOU WRITE YOUR OWN WEDDING VOWS?

No. Other prayers and blessings may be created. The vows are always proclaimed as written. You should consult with your priest in writing other prayers and blessings so that the essential elements of the rite are included within the marriage rite.

15. CAN WE HAVE A UNITY CANDLE?

It depends on whether you choose a wedding Mass or a wedding ceremony. The focus of the Mass is the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is the ultimate sign of unity. Therefore, a unity candle is only allowed during a wedding ceremony.

16. WHEN MAY PICTURES BE TAKEN?

Pictures may be taken during the ceremony, as long as the photographer remains unobtrusive. Videographers and photographers are not allowed in the Sanctuary or anywhere that would cause interference of the priest, the couple or the congregation. Videographers may NOT plug into the church's sound system. Depending on the schedule of weddings for the day, couples may choose to have the majority of formal pictures taken before the ceremony in order to ensure a speedier exit afterwards. The photographer/videographer should consult with the wedding coordinator prior to the service. The photographer/videographer should not obstruct with equipment, the line of vision of participants, ministers, and musicians.

17. CAN A RECEPTION LINE BE FORMED AFTER THE CEREMONY AND WHERE?

The reception line can be formed immediately after the ceremony in the church gathering space or outside, weather permitting. However, out of time considerations, couples may decide to wait until the reception to greet guests and go immediately to have pictures taken. Some couples prefer to leave immediately after the ceremony and go straight to the reception hall. We recommend that following a wedding ceremony, either a reception line be formed or wedding pictures be taken, but not both because of time constraints.

18. WHAT IS THE CHOICE OF SCRIPTURAL AND NON-SCRIPTURAL READINGS?

All weddings, with or without a Mass, must have scripture readings. A list of possible or suggested scripture readings may be found in the booklets Together for Life or Celebrating Marriage, that will be provided by the Queen of Peace liturgy office.

19. WHO MAY READ THE READINGS?

The Gospel is read by the priest. Anyone may read the other readings: the minister, one of the bridal party, a parent, a friend, a relative. This is a good way to involve someone else in an important way in the wedding.

20. MAY RICE, BIRD SEED, OR FLOWER PETALS BE THROWN?

No. We ask that rice, bird seed and flower petals NOT be thrown either inside or outside the church. They are slippery on the ground or floor and cause people to fall. They also require extra clean-up. Ushers are asked to inform guests of this policy if they should see rice, birdseed being distributed.

21. MUSIC:

The music at the wedding liturgy sets the tone for many levels of experience. It invites a diverse assembly to participate with heart and mind and spirit. Music is not simply a “nice touch” to the liturgy, but indeed draws all into a spirit of celebration. Three principles are offered to assist in selecting music that will involve the assembly:

1. Appropriateness

The music should be sacred and appropriate for a liturgical celebration. No popular music.

2. Look for sacred music that is *familiar* to you and that you think your family and friends might know. The assembly will pray and participate best with music they have sung before.

3. Finally, remember that music *heightens the importance of whatever is spoken*. When deciding what to sing, ask the following questions:

a) Why are we singing this particular piece of music at this time?

b) Is there music that fits with the readings we’ve chosen?

Please contact our Director of Liturgy & Pastoral Music, Caleb Mitchell, as soon as possible after setting the wedding date. He will provide guidance in selecting your music and musicians to ensure a beautiful and inspirational wedding, and to support the flow of the liturgy. No recorded music is allowed during the Mass or ceremony. If you do not use musicians from Queen of Peace, the musicians should also meet with Caleb.

Caleb Mitchell, Director of Liturgy & Pastoral Music, (608) 231-4618, caleb.mitchell@qopc.org

22. WHERE SHOULD THE OTHER MUSICIANS STAND?

Generally, the best place is in the choir area near the altar and organ or piano. Microphones are available in this area. These needs can be discussed with Caleb Mitchell.

23. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE WEDDING COORDINATOR?

To assist in the preparation for the celebration of your wedding, we assign a wedding coordinator to each of the weddings performed at Queen of Peace. After the initial interview with the priest and the scheduling of the dates and times of the wedding, the engaged couple is referred to a wedding coordinator. The wedding coordinator is a liaison between the couple, the priest, and the Dir. of Liturgy & Pastoral Music, assisting the couple with details of their wedding and general areas to consider in planning the liturgy, etc. In addition, the wedding coordinator assists or leads the rehearsal and will also be present prior to, during, and after the wedding.

24. ARE THERE ANY GUIDELINES FOR THE WEDDING PROGRAM?

All final wedding plans must be approved by the presiding priest at least three weeks prior to the wedding. **The wedding program must be approved by the presiding priest and the Director of Liturgy & Pastoral Music BEFORE it gets printed.**

**** FEES ****

The following fee structure is offered for your guidance. If the couple feels it a burden to meet any of the suggested fees, please talk this over with the priest.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

Normal service (preparation, rehearsal and wedding)	\$300
When there is a visiting priest	\$350

MUSICIANS

Pianist/Organist	\$250
Cantor	\$200

PRIEST

While a stipend to the presiding priest is not mandatory, **a customary amount is \$200.**

CHURCH

There is no fee assessed for the use of the church if you are registered parish members.
Non-members are requested to make a minimum donation of \$500.

ALTAR SERVER

An altar server is needed when the wedding includes a Mass. **The server fee is \$20.**
Queen of Peace will provide altar servers as needed.

WEDDING CHECKLIST

Marriage Preparation

- Participation in FOCCUS
- Participation in Marriage Prep Retreat Day offered through the Diocese
<https://madisondiocese.org/mp>
- Provide updated copies of baptismal certificates for groom and bride six months prior to the wedding.
- Confirm all paperwork is done with priest (follow proper guidelines for mixed religion)
- Set rehearsal time (confirm with priest and call the Parish Center to schedule)
- Marriage license (bring with you to rehearsal) <https://clerk.countyofdane.com/Marriage>

Music

- Reserve musicians/vocalists/cantor as soon as possible. Contact the Director of Liturgy & Pastoral Music, Caleb Mitchell, (608) 231-4618 or caleb.mitchell@qopc.org
- Meet with Caleb Mitchell to select appropriate music. A wedding Mass requires that acclamations be sung. The cantor should be experienced. Music must be approved by the presiding priest and the Coordinator of Pastoral Music.

Wedding Mass

Prelude
Processional Music
Gathering Hymn
Psalm
Gospel Acclamation
Preparation Hymn (Offertory)
Eucharistic Acclamations
Communion
Recessional

Wedding Ceremony

Prelude
Processional Music
Gathering Hymn
Psalm
Music during the lighting of
the unity candle
Recessional

Processional/Recessional

- The wedding coordinator will discuss the processional and recessional with you.
(There will be different options from which to choose.)
- How many rows should we reserve for family?
- Is there anyone with a disability for whom we need to make arrangements?
- What decision have you made regarding your receiving line?
- How would you like to be introduced? Mr. and Mrs. ??? etc.

Liturgy

- Please remember that your marriage is being celebrated in a house of prayer. **All ministers (readers, gift bearers, musicians) and members of the wedding party should be appropriately dressed for the Liturgy** (i.e. nothing too short, too tight or low cut).
- Select three scripture readings from the marriage preparation book. You may have different people read the first and second readings (the Gospel is read by the priest). The lectors should come to the rehearsal with copies of the readings.
- Choose the Responsorial Psalm (found in the marriage preparation book or the Gather hymnal) with Caleb Mitchell.
- Prayer of the Faithful selections are also in the marriage preparation book and may be read by one of the lectors or someone different. Couples often write their own prayers, or add a personal one to those suggested. This person should also bring their copy to the rehearsal.
- You will need gift bearers if you are having Mass. Two people are recommended. They do not have to be at the rehearsal.
- A minister of communion is needed for wedding Masses and when there are a number of Catholic guests. They do not have to be at rehearsal.

Wedding Supplies (bring to rehearsal)

- Marriage License
- Programs
- Wedding Guest Book if using (a stand is provided)
- Unity Candle, two tapers and holders if using
- Bows, candles, and other arrangements, etc. if using

Miscellaneous

- Ask someone to be a personal attendant to gather your things after the ceremony.
- Assign someone to pin on the corsages.
- Contact your florist – they should arrive at least one hour before the wedding and prior to photos.
- Remind your family and attendants to be on time. All rehearsals and weddings start on time.

Fees

- Please bring the fees for your musicians, vocalists, server, priest, and wedding coordinator to the rehearsal. Make checks payable to the individual. The fee for the church for non-parish members should also be brought to the rehearsal (this check should be made out to Queen of Peace).