



# Ss. Mary and Joseph Church

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## Policies and Agreement: Celebrating Marriage at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church

We congratulate you on your plans to be married and are committed to doing everything possible to ensure your Catholic wedding is an authentic expression of the vows you will exchange. Before your wedding is scheduled, we want to ensure you are aware of our *Policies for Celebrating Marriage at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church* and agree with them. Our policies are based on Canon Law and those of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Our parish follows these policies for all marriages. We ask that you review them, sign the agreement, and bring it with you to your first meeting with our pastor, Father Tom Donovan, along with a check for the parish wedding fee. Thank you.

### Policies: Celebrating Marriage at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church, Carlinville

#### I. Catholic Marriage is a Sacrament

Marriage is a sacrament of the Catholic Church. Your request to be married at Ss. Mary & Joseph pre-supposes that you are an active, practicing Catholic. An active, practicing Catholic is a person who:

- is a registered member of Ss. Mary & Joseph or another Catholic Church or the child of a registered parishioner while in college or in military service,
- participates in Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation; is confirmed; and receives Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly,
- observes the Precepts of the Church, including required Lenten periods of fast and abstinence,
- strengthens and supports the Church locally and universally through contributions of “time, talent, and treasure”,
- is committed to observing the marriage laws of the Church, including giving religious training to children, and
- in the case of a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic, that the non-Catholic party understands the responsibilities and obligations of the faith professed by the Catholic party.

It is inappropriate to celebrate a Catholic ceremony when the practice of Catholic faith is lacking. If you are not an active, practicing Catholic, there will need to be serious discussion about your intention of being married in the Catholic Church before your wedding can be scheduled at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church.

#### II. Requirements for Marriage at Ss. Mary & Joseph

To be married at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church, you are agreeing to the following:

- An initial meeting with the pastor, to verify that there are no impediments to the marriage according to Church law (most notably, previous marriages which have not been resolved by death of a former spouse or a declaration of nullity).
- completion of a Pre-Marital Inventory and meeting with the pastor to discuss the results of the survey,
- participation and completion of an approved “pre-Cana” program or another approved pre-marital preparation,
- meeting with the parish staff to obtain approval of wedding music and ceremony details,
- completing a Church Wedding Decorating Form, (as needed to plan church decorations, if special decorations beyond the normal décor of the church are desired) and reviewing the form with the pastor,
- completing the Wedding Planning Form and reviewing it with the pastor to finalize plans for the marriage ceremony,
- participating in the wedding rehearsal and ensuring all participants are present and punctual,
- presenting a valid marriage license from the Macoupin County clerk,
- sharing parish policies with florists, photographers, videographers and members of your wedding party,
- completing paperwork and fees as required,
- responding to requests by the pastor and parish staff on a timely basis, and
- reimbursing the parish for any damage or extraordinary cleaning resulting from your wedding.

The norm is that the pastor of Ss. Mary & Joseph will preside at your marriage celebration, but even if another priest/deacon is delegated by the pastor to celebrate your wedding, all policies regarding the use of Ss. Mary & Joseph Church will remain in force.

### III. Residency:

Catholics who live in the parish territorial boundaries or those who live outside the boundaries and are formally registered in the parish may be married at Ss. Mary and Joseph Church.

There are additional requirements if you live away from home (school, military service, or employment) and wish to be married at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church. In this case, you should have parents who are registered and active members of Ss. Mary and Joseph parish. Marriage preparation may take place at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church or in your local Catholic chaplaincy, depending on the availability and convenience of the parties involved. In any case, however, a personal meeting with the pastor of Ss. Mary and Joseph Church and both the prospective bride and groom is necessary to begin marriage preparations.

High school or college graduates who are out of school, who live away from home, and who are employed are normally considered residents of the territorial parish where they live. If you have changed your residence in this way, you will be bound by the marriage preparation of the diocese and parish in which you reside. Your marriage may take place at St. Mary & Joseph only with the written permission of your own pastor where you live. You will normally need to complete the necessary marriage preparation process required in that parish.

### IV. Fees and Honoraria:

The Ss. Mary & Joseph Church charges \$300 to parishioners to cover the many expenses incurred by the church for weddings. (Non-parishioners: \$500) This fee is payable by check to “Ss. Mary & Joseph Church” and should be given to the pastor during your first meeting. This fee will be waived by the pastor in circumstances where there is a demonstrated need, and under no circumstances will anyone be denied the benefits of the Sacrament of Marriage due to an inability to pay this fee.

This fee includes

- materials cost for pre-marriage counseling with the pastor, and the pre-marriage inventory processing costs,
- consultation with parish staff (pastor or music director) for music,
- the parish-provided cantor who proclaims the psalm and leads congregational singing,
- normal and customary custodial services from 12 noon to 4pm, (extra hours for extra-ordinary cleaning are billed at \$50/hr),
- use of church appointments, including musical instruments and church-owned decorations,
- and use of the church for up to two hours before the wedding and approximately one hour after the wedding (under any circumstance never to exceed 3:30 p.m. after Saturday weddings).

These fees do not cover costs of a keyboardist and other musicians, purchased flowers, labor for decorating the church or removing decorations afterwards, photography, a unity candle (if desired), reimbursement for damage or extra cleaning resulting from your wedding, or use of the parish facilities after the wedding for a reception (this may be contracted separately, depending on availability— see our parish secretary, Diane Ahrens in the parish office for more information).

Residential clergy are not allowed to charge for their services, however an honorarium or gratuity may be offered in a separate check made out in his name, or by cash. If the priest or deacon officiating at your wedding is not from the parish or is traveling, it is most appropriate to offer a gratuity of between \$50-200, along with mileage or travel expenses. While a parish priest is usually unable to attend Saturday evening receptions due to obligations in the parish, such as Saturday night Mass, visiting clergy should receive invitations for hospitality while he is in town for the wedding.

There is a presumption that parishioners who are asking to use the church are active and contributing members to the parish through weekly contribution envelopes. If this is not already your practice, please consider starting now.

### V. Respecting our Parish and Catholic Traditions:

As a liturgical event that brings the faith community together, your wedding is very important to the life of our parish. There are many practical matters to keep in mind that pertain to the celebration of your marriage at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church:

- The pastor of Ss. Mary & Joseph Church is the proper minister to assist with marriages in this parish and is responsible under Canon Law (Church law) for all marriages performed in this church. Other Catholic priests or deacons in good standing officiate only with the approval and invitation of the pastor.
- If a Catholic is marrying a non-Catholic, the norm is that the marriage ceremony takes place during a Liturgy of the Word celebration (outside of Mass). This liturgy typically includes an Entrance Procession, Liturgy of the Word, Rite of Marriage and Recessional. A Wedding celebration for two Catholics normally includes the Eucharist (Mass).

## V. Respecting our Parish and Catholic Traditions (con't)

- Parish staff will work with you to plan music for your wedding. We will also will arrange for a parish cantor to proclaim the psalm and lead congregational singing. You are free to hire any outside musicians you would like, but please do not contract with outside musicians until you have spoken with us. The Catholic Church requires that sacred music is used for liturgies, and this rule will be strictly enforced. Favorite secular music may be reserved for use at a reception.
- Flowers and other decorations must follow policies outlined in the parish *Guide for Marriage Preparation & Wedding Planning*.
- Aisle runners are prohibited because they present a safety hazard.
- Throwing rice, birdseed, and/or confetti or releasing balloons is not allowed, as this is also a safety hazard.
- Our church has requirements for photographers and videographers in order to preserve the sanctity of our worship space and your marriage celebration. These requirements are detailed in the parish guide, *Preparing for Marriage and Planning Your Wedding at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church*. Any photographer who does not follow these requirements may be subject to a \$300 studio fee and prohibited from servicing weddings at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church until such fee is paid.

## VI. Seasons for Catholic Celebrations of Marriage and Times at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church

- Outdoor or off-site weddings are not permitted in Church law, except with the explicit permission of the bishop. While you are welcomed to write Bishop Lucas to ask for an exception, please note that he has never been known to grant such permission in the past.
- The Catholic Church discourages, but does not forbid, weddings during Lent and Advent. When a wedding is scheduled on one of these days, there are particular requirements for the liturgy and certain restrictions on church decoration which must be followed. Weddings scheduled on Holy Days of Obligation (Jan 1, Aug 15, Nov 1, Dec 8) or on All Soul's Day (Nov 2) also have particular liturgical requirements which profoundly impact wedding celebrations. Please consult with the pastor before considering any of these dates.
- Because of the many activities are often scheduled on the weekends at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church, only one wedding can comfortably be accommodated each weekend. In addition to Saturday afternoons, Friday evening or Sunday afternoon weddings are possible and might provide greater leisure and flexibility (as well as, perhaps, substantial savings) to the couple. Saturday weddings may be scheduled only at 1 p.m. Couples are welcome to arrive at the church up to two hours before the wedding and to remain in the church for photography until 3:30 p.m. The church must be vacated by 3:30 p.m. because of our Saturday reconciliation and Mass schedule. No exceptions can be made.
- The rehearsal for a Saturday wedding will take place promptly at 6 p.m. the Friday before the wedding. All participants (the wedding party and liturgical ministers) should be on time. The rehearsal will take 30-35 minutes. It is normally not necessary or desirable that musicians be present for the rehearsal.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available after the rehearsal for the wedding party and their families. It is earnestly recommended that couples enter this (or any sacrament) in a state of grace.

## VII. Previous Marriages

If either party has previously attempted marriage, then the Church normally presumes that this previous union is legitimate and binding— even if a civil divorce has been sought and awarded. Unless a former spouse has died or unless the Church has determined that the previous attempt(s) at marriage were “invalid” due to some substantial defect in form or intention, subsequent attempts at marriage in the Church are simply not possible. (“Previous attempts” at marriage include **all** previous attempts at marriage: in a Catholic Church, in a Protestant service, before a Justice of the Peace, in Las Vegas in front of Elvis, jumping out of an airplane, hurry-up before birth of a child or military deployment, etc.)

Before a date can be scheduled for a wedding at Ss. Mary & Joseph Church, it is necessary to demonstrate that the parties involved are ‘free to marry’. If either party has been previously married, it will be necessary to produce documentation (a death certificate of a former spouse or a ‘declaration of nullity’ from the Church) to allow a marriage to be scheduled.

If there has been a previous attempt at marriage, the pastoral staff at Ss. Mary & Joseph are able to assist you in the examination of previous marriage(s) to determine if a ‘declaration of nullity’ is possible. This is a lengthy process (6-18 months or longer) which should be started at the earliest possible opportunity if you are hoping to be married in the Catholic Church in the future near future. By Church law, weddings cannot be scheduled until this documentation is ‘in hand’.

## VIII. Convalidation and Sanation of Merely Civil Marriages

If a couple is married only civilly to each other, it is possible to have the marriage ‘blessed’ by the Church through a *convalidation* (public restatement of vows) or by *sanation* (a documentary procedure which recognizes the marriage in the Church, but without a public ceremony). In this case, the pastor will assist couples in this situation to determine the most appropriate course of action.

IX. Cohabitation (living together before marriage)

Cohabitation is major problem affecting all persons preparing for marriage—a problem that does not get discussed openly or often enough. The Catholic Church does not condone cohabitation. Cohabitation presents very difficult problems for the Church when couples ask to make wedding arrangements, in that it is very difficult to discern whether a cohabiting couple truly have the *freedom* to enter into a *Catholic marriage*, as envisioned by the Church. As a Church, we must be realistic. Many young couples living together present themselves at the parish office with music lists, *The Dress*, and a menu for the reception all planned. Many cohabiting couples want to “make right” that which is, perhaps, “not all right” yet. Many couples cohabit for social or economic reasons. Indeed, if children have already been born to the union, then it is often necessary for the unmarried parents to live together. In any case, unmarried couples are called to live *chastely* until the time of sacramental marriage— with a chastity that is not only physical, but also emotional and spiritual, so that they give a good Christian example to family and friends and the entire Christian community.

The *overwhelming evidence* from sociological research indicates that *all* cohabitating couples (*whether sexually active or not*) who attempt marriage are at a *significant disadvantage* to their non-cohabiting peers, not only for the likelihood of their marriage *lasting for life*, but also for the *total satisfaction* gained out of their marital union. The Church wants to avoid those factors which undermine the permanence and dignity of marriage. According to the discipline of the church, those who live together prior to marriage place themselves outside of the grace of the Church. This means they choose not to be active, practicing Catholics in the fullest sense (reception of the Eucharist is not allowed under these conditions).

For the good of couples presenting themselves for marriage, for the good of the Church, for the avoidance of dishonesty, and for the integrity of the Sacrament of Marriage, we have strived to develop a coherent and workable strategy to deal with this issue. Therefore:

- **Couples who live together before marriage (whether sexually active or not) are urged to separate and live separately (separate addresses) until the Sacrament of Matrimony is received. At all times, pre-marital chastity is appropriate.**
- **Those couples who are unwilling or are unable to separate (especially if they already have children) may be married in the Church, but the most appropriate way to celebrate this marriage would be through a low-key celebration of the Liturgy of the Word and the Exchange of Vows (not a Mass). This celebration should be *low key* for immediate family and necessary witnesses, where elaborate trappings are avoided. This service thus formally recognizes and remedies an informal (and potentially scandalous) arrangement that is already occurring, namely the cohabitation (living together) of the bride and groom. A simple Evening ceremony would be very appropriate in this circumstance.**
- **All couples, but especially cohabiting couples, are reminded of the importance of entering the Sacrament of Marriage in the “State of Grace”. If there are particular problems with sin against the virtues of chastity or temperance or modesty (or for that matter, any other sin), Catholics are urged to bring these to his or her confessor in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.**
- **This rule cannot anticipate the complications of every individual situation, so the pastor will make every effort to accommodate couples who are making a good-faith efforts to honor the laws of the Church in this matter.**

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AGREEMENT:

We have read the Policy for Celebrating Marriage at Ss. Mary and Joseph; are aware of expectations, regulations and fees regarding weddings, and agree to follow them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Groom

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Bride

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

PLEASE BRING THIS SHEET WITH YOU TO YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH THE PASTOR OF SS. MARY & JOSEPH CHURCH, ALONG WITH A CHECK FOR THE PARISH WEDDING FEE. THIS FORM AND THE CHECK WILL NEED TO BE RETURNED BEFORE A WEDDING DATE CAN BE SET. THANK YOU.