

From This Day Forward



A Guide to Marriage Preparation and Your Wedding Day

Church of the Assumption
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Congratulations and prayerful wishes to you from the priests and staff of the Church of the Assumption!

Your wedding is an expression of the community's appreciation and esteem for the Sacrament of Matrimony and the importance of family in the life of the Church.

Please know that the parish will be praying for you as you prepare to begin your life as a married couple.

Be assured that we want to be as helpful as we can in assisting you to plan this very important, beautiful and profoundly religious and spiritual occasion. Weddings require much preparation to ensure all goes well. It is to this end that we have assembled this booklet about getting married at the Church of the Assumption.

I pray that you will have a blessed wedding day and many happy years together!

Sincerely,

Rev. Fr. Cyrus M. Bartolome
Parochial Administrator

THE FIRST DAY OF YOUR MARRIED LIFE

Your wedding ceremony is one of the most important events in your life. It would not be happening without months, maybe even years of preparation. Your ceremony symbolizes the past: how your love has matured to the point of a lifetime commitment. It also symbolizes the future: how this commitment will change your two lives and make you one in responsibility for each other. The two of you “shall become one flesh;” you will establish a partnership for life.

Wedding ceremonies, of one sort or another, are as old as the history of mankind because marriage is part of a loving Creator’s plan and a reality of human life. Such ceremonies give cause for celebration. Twenty-first century Christians are part of this long tradition of celebrating love between a man and a woman. Christians see there is more to celebrate than the love of a man and a woman. We see marriage as a symbol of the union of Christ and His Church. Christians, along with many others who believe in a divine reality, see the union of husband and as wife the presence of God with His people.

The entire wedding ceremony should clearly and honestly express the religious identity of the bride and groom. It is the very occasion of marriage which calls a man and a woman to think about their religion. Marriage, in this case, becomes a time for finding faith.

As a couple soon to be married, you have likely set goals for your new life together and have thought about the best means for achieving those goals. Your wedding day, as the first day of a married lifetime together, should reflect your desire to live forever in love with each other and with God. We will help you make that life a reality.

In the following pages, we shall deal with the more immediate questions of your wedding at the Church of the Assumption: the paperwork, the planning and the preparation.

WHO MAY MARRY AT THE CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

In order to be married at the Church of the Assumption, the bride, groom or their parents must be a registered and contributing member of the parish for a minimum of two years. In the case of a Catholic marrying a person of another faith tradition, the Catholic must be a registered and contributing member of the parish for a minimum of two years. For those not registered at the parish, good reason must be presented as to the rationale for the wedding being held at Assumption Church and proper permission must be granted from the bride’s home parish at best.

NOTIFICATION OF MARRIAGE

Arrangements for marriage are to be made by the prospective bride and groom themselves, not by their parents or other interested parties. The couple is required to meet with one of the parish priests before any date can be set. *Wedding dates cannot be arranged by merely calling the parish office and requesting a particular date be set aside for the wedding.* You are urged to contact Michelle Hankey, our parish Wedding Coordinator, to schedule a meeting as far in advance as possible and a minimum of six months before the proposed date of your wedding. Parents of the bride or groom should not arrange weddings!

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

In some cases, special considerations will have to be made. These include a previous marriage, one party is a non-Catholic, etc. Kindly notify the priest with whom you are working with prior to setting a date for the wedding. Please note that the Catholic Church recognizes a marriage between two non-Catholics. If divorced, they require an annulment in the Catholic Church. In all cases, the parish follows the guidelines established by the Bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, which are based on the 1983 Code of Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church.

SETTING THE WEDDING DATE & TIME

Wedding Ceremony:

Dates for wedding ceremonies are determined by the existing parish schedule. Weddings may be scheduled throughout the year, with the exception of some Saturdays, Holy Days of Obligation and holidays.

Generally, weddings may be scheduled on the weekends according to the following schedule:

Friday - 5:00pm will be the latest time to schedule

Saturday - 11:00am, 1:00pm, 2:00pm or 2:30pm (Please note: Reconciliation is schedule from 4:00pm to 4:45pm followed by 5:00pm Mass)

Wedding Rehearsal:

The rehearsal is usually scheduled the evening before the wedding ceremony at a convenient time for all concerned. All participating in the wedding ceremony should be present and punctual.

PARISH WEDDING COORDINATOR

Our Parish offers the service of a Wedding Coordinator, Michelle Hankey, who will be available to assist you with logistics and details. She will coordinate the rehearsal and assist with details on the wedding day. Michelle is available Monday - Friday and can be reached at 203-227-5161 or at mhankeyassumption@gmail.com.

Outside wedding coordinators are not permitted to be present in the church, at the rehearsal or wedding ceremony.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

(See enclosed yellow form)

Assumption Parish requires every couple desiring to be married to attend a marriage

preparation program. There are two options available that fulfill Diocesan requirements for marriage preparation.

- A Diocesan Marriage Preparation Two-Day program (sometimes called “Pre-Cana”) is held in the Diocese on several dates throughout the year. This program helps couples deepen, understand more clearly, and enrich their relationship.
- Catholic Engaged Encounter is a weekend retreat with other engaged couples with plenty of time alone together to plan for a sacramental marriage. It is designed to give couples planning marriage the opportunity to speak honestly and intentionally about their prospective lives together: their strengths and weaknesses, desires, ambitions, goals, their attitudes about money, sex, children, family and their role in the Church and society. Details can be discussed in your initial meeting with a priest or deacon of the parish.

You are urged encouraged to register early in your marriage preparation for one of these programs as only a limited number of couples can be accommodated per session.

Detailed information on these programs can be obtained on the Office of Faith Formation website, <https://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/faith-formation/home/>, or by calling 203-416-1670.

(If you are registered outside the Diocese, you may attend a Marriage Preparation Program in another Diocese. Please mail your Marriage Preparation certificate/letter as soon as possible.)

PRE-MARITAL INVESTIGATION (PMI)

Approximately 8-10 weeks before the wedding date a Pre-Marital Investigations (PMI) is scheduled with the priest or deacon who is officiating your wedding. This meeting will provide them information about the bride and groom, names of parents, sacramental information, establishing freedom to marry, openness on life issues, acceptance of responsibilities, and commitment to the Sacrament of Matrimony. The permanence of marriage, the desire and openness to have children, and their religion will be discussed. All questions are confidential.

DISPENSATION

In some cases, a dispensation is required for a wedding to take place. The priest or deacon will inform you of the necessity of a dispensation and will assist in securing it.

SACREMENTAL CERTIFICATES

For a Catholic the following documents are required:

- Baptism Certificate
- First Communion Certificate

- Confirmation Certificate

*All certificates must be dated within the past six months

Non-Catholic Christians should submit a Baptismal Certificate.

PERMISSION LETTER

If the Bride is not a member of Assumption Church, she will need a permission letter from her Pastor.

CIVIL REQUIREMENTS

The State of Connecticut requires that you apply for your marriage license at the Town Clerk's Office. In Westport, that is Town Hall:

**Westport Town Hall
110 Myrtle Avenue
Westport, CT 06880
203-341-1110**

- License is valid for 65 days
- Both bride and groom need to appear in person
- Both bride and groom need current valid identification

A church wedding cannot take place without a civil marriage license. The marriage license must be presented to the officiating priest or deacon prior to but no later than the time of the rehearsal.

Each couple is required by law to have two primary witnesses present at the ceremony in the roles of Maid of Honor and Best Man. There are no guidelines as to the number of people you may have in the remainder of your wedding party.

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

Following the wedding ceremony, a certificate will be mailed to you and the marriage will be noted officially in the register of the Parish. The register is kept on permanent file, and copies of the marriage certificate may be obtained at any time by calling the Parish Office. The civil license is returned to the Town Clerk's Office by the priest after the wedding.

BANNS OF MARRIAGE

For three weeks prior to the marriage, your names will appear in the parish bulletin. This will be done automatically through the Parish Office once your marriage date is finalized and recorded on the parish calendar.

GUEST CATHOLIC PRIEST OR DEACON

If you would like to invite other member of the clergy to be present at your wedding ceremony, please feel free to do so. You may want to ask a friend of the family who is a priest or deacon to officiate at your wedding. This is perfectly acceptable. In these cases, be sure to mention it at your first meeting with the parish priest in order to ensure the necessary arrangements can be made. For visiting Catholic clergy, we are required to obtain an official Statement of Suitability for ministry from their bishop or religious superior.

ALTAR SERVERS

Should you have a special request concerning altar servers, e.g. relatives or friends, please mention this to the parish priest or wedding coordinator.

CHURCH FLOWERS

Flower arrangements are ordered by the bridal couple according to their preference of color, design, etc. In accordance with good liturgical practice, flowers may be placed in the following locations:

- On pedestals next to or near the Altar
- In the Narthex (Vestibule) of the Church.

Please discuss flower arrangements with the parish priest and wedding coordinator and provide us the name and phone number of the florist. They should contact Michelle to make an arrangement to access the church. Inform them that the sanctuary is alarmed and the doors are locked. Arrangements should not block the priest's view or the altar or be placed on the altar itself.

Be aware that the church environment reflects the various seasons of the Church Year. Your wedding flowers may highlight your wedding colors, but the church environment must remain in place during your wedding.

Christmas Season: Red Poinsettia adorn the Church Sanctuary

Easter Season: White flowers during most of the seven weeks of Easter

If there are several weddings scheduled on a given day, we can put you in touch with the other wedding party to discuss the possibility of sharing the cost of floral arrangements. You can call the Parish Office or the Wedding Coordinator for the names of the other wedding parties.

Decorations (ribbon bows and/or flowers, etc.) may be placed on the end of the pews using pew clips. The use of wire, nails, tacks or tape are not permitted on the pews or on the woodwork inside or outside the church. Decorations must be removed immediately following the ceremony.

MUSIC

An integral part of planning your wedding ceremony in the church is the music for your wedding celebration. Special consideration is to be given to this matter, as the music greatly enhances the Wedding Liturgy. It is important to consider the spiritual and religious nature of the Sacrament of Matrimony when making your musical selections. At times, serious “musical mistakes” can be made by couples attempting to choose and plan music without consulting the Director of Music and Organist.

Our Parish Director of Music and Organist, Mr. Frank Matto, can be reach at 203-727-1024 or by email fmattoassumption@gmail.com. He will help you make all of the proper choices of musical selections as well as make arrangements for soloists and instrumentalists.

Should you wish to bring in your own musicians, a bench fee for our Parish Director of Music/Organist and Parish Cantor must still be paid. All musical selections will still need to be approved by our Parish Director of Music.

SUMMARY OF FEES

There are no basic fees for sacraments. However, a donation may be made to Assumption Parish as well as an honorarium to the priest or deacon. In addition, there are standard fees associated with the wedding. All fees should be paid prior to the wedding celebration. Please contact Michelle Hankey for more information.

DECORUM

Marriage is a sacred institution wherein a couple is called to celebrate a unifying gift of life and love. The wedding ceremony itself must be a reflection of this sacredness. We as Catholics celebrate this event in the Church to emphasize that the couple now enters into a more public sense of life in the eyes of the Church. Even during the rehearsal for your wedding ceremony, customary Church reverence in both actions and attire should be maintained.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

Photographs and videos may be taken before, during and following the wedding ceremony. Out of respect for yourselves, your guests and the celebration of the ceremony the photographer must speak with the officiating priest prior to the wedding ceremony.

The couple should discuss their plans and the photographer’s plans with their priest and/or wedding coordinator during their initial meeting.

In no way, should the taking of pictures or video be a distraction to the sacredness, reverence or spirit of the wedding ceremony. A good photographer is not seen!

PROHIBITED ITEMS

The throwing of confetti, rice, birdseed or anything else is not permitted. This also applies to flower girls dropping flower petals. Not only is it dangerous and inconsiderate of the people coming to the church following your wedding ceremony, it is a tremendous maintenance problem. In addition, we do not allow aisle runners or a unity candle in the Church.

Please inform your relatives and friends of our policy.

WEDDING PROGRAMS

You may purchase or have printed your own special wedding booklets as souvenirs of your wedding ceremony. Sample programs can be found on pages 26-30.

HANDICAP ACCESSABILITY

There are several handicap parking spaces in the parking lot. The elevator can be found on the lawn side of the Church to take guest inside. Please inform Michelle in advance if your guests require the elevator.

Thank you for your cooperation by observing these guidelines. This will insure a beautiful, reverent celebration.

SAMPLE CEREMONY PROGRAM
(Without Nuptial Mass)

The Wedding Ceremony

Prelude *(may list name of musical pieces)*

Processional *(list name of musical piece/pieces)*

Sign of the Cross

Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Psalm Response *(usually sung)*

Second Reading

Gospel

Homily

Rite of Marriage

Statement of Intent

Exchange of Wedding Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Prayer of the Faithful

Nuptial Blessing

Concluding Rite

Recessional

Note: Musical selections may also be inserted after the Blessing and Exchange of Rings and other points when discussed with Celebrant and Director of Music.

SAMPLE NUPTIAL MASS PROGRAM

The Wedding Ceremony

Prelude *(may list name of musical pieces)*

Processional *(list name of musical piece/pieces)*

Sign of the Cross

Glory to God

Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Psalm Response *(usually sung)*

Second Reading

Gospel

Homily

Rite of Marriage

Statement of Intent

Exchange of Wedding Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Prayer of the Faithful

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Presentation of Gifts *(list name of musical piece)*

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer

Nuptial Blessing

Sign of Peace

Communion (*list name of musical piece*)

Communion Meditation (*list name of musical piece*)

Concluding Rite

Final Blessing

Recessional (*list name of musical piece*)

Note: When listing musical pieces, please also wish to list the name of the composer and/or the name of the soloists or musicians providing the music.