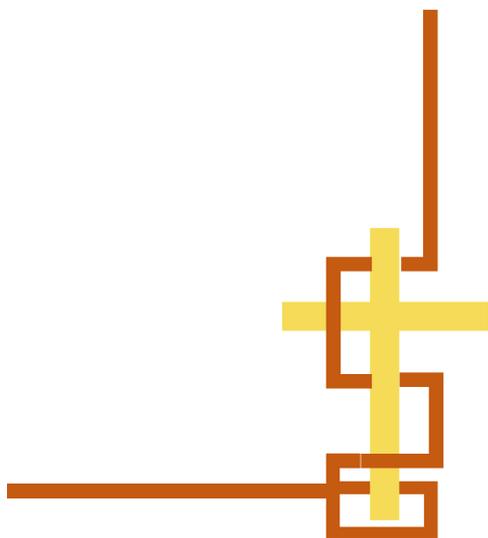


*Planning Your
Catholic Wedding*



*St. Raphael Catholic Church
1376 Snell Isle Blvd. NE
St. Petersburg, FL 33704
727-821-7989*



THE IMPORTANCE AND DIGNITY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish a lifelong partnership between themselves, derives its force and strength from creation, but for the Christian faithful it is also raised up to a higher dignity, since it is numbered among the Sacraments of the new covenant.

A Marriage is established by the conjugal covenant, that is, the irrevocable consent of both spouses, by which they freely give themselves to each other and accept each other. Moreover, this singular union of a man and a woman requires, and the good of the children demands, the complete fidelity of the spouses and the indissoluble unity of the bond.

Through this Sacrament the Holy Spirit brings it about that, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, Christian spouses also strive to nurture and foster their union in equal dignity, mutual giving and the undivided love that flows from the divine font of charity. In this way, uniting divine and human realities, they persevere in good times and in bad, faithful in body and mind, remaining complete strangers to any adultery and divorce.

“How wonderful the bond of the two believers: one in hope, one in vow, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, with no separation of spirit and flesh. Indeed, they are two in one flesh; where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit.”

Taken from *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*

PREPARATION

To schedule a time to meet with a member of clergy, the bride or groom should contact the parish office, 727-821-7989, at least six months prior to a planned date. The wedding date and time will be scheduled between the couple and a member of the clergy.

Couples from outside the parish may contact the parish ten months prior to a planned wedding date. The couple must obtain a letter from their home parish granting permission for marriage at St. Raphael. Their home parish is responsible for all instruction and investigation for the couple. All documents must be received by St. Raphael **30 days** prior to the wedding date.

The bride and groom must be free to marry in the eyes of the State of Florida and in the eyes of the Catholic Church. They must also be sufficiently informed about the meaning of Christian marriage. These requirements are fulfilled by the Pre-Nuptial investigation and Pre-Cana preparation which can include: a written survey, couple meetings and other formats.

- The Celebration of Matrimony **Within Mass** may take place at 11:00am or 2:00pm on Saturday.
- The Celebration of Matrimony **Without Mass** may take place at 2:30pm on Saturday.
- Active parish members have the option of the Celebration of Matrimony **Without Mass** at 6:30pm on Saturday.

Weddings are **not** scheduled at the following times: Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, Christmas Eve, Palm Sunday or during Holy Week, and during the Parish Festival. There may be other times during the year that the parish is closed due to local activity.

CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY

The solemnizing of the vows through the Sacrament of Marriage is the primary purpose of celebrating this liturgy in the House of God. For this reason, all acts, prayers, gestures, and music should be relevant to this solemn aspect.

The Celebration of Matrimony may take one of three forms: Within Mass, Without Mass and between a Catholic and a Non-Christian, therefore discuss which Rite will be used with the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage.

The Church allows the couple to select prayers and readings to be used during the liturgy. The book, "Together for Life", with the approved prayers and readings from which you may make your selections will be provided to you.

If you wish to have a priest or deacon from another Catholic Church officiate, please notify the St. Raphael clergy as soon as possible. The visiting clergy is required to receive permission to perform the Order of Matrimony from the pastor in advance of the wedding date. Visiting clergy are expected to observe the liturgical and practical norms set out by the diocese and St. Raphael parish. If the visiting clergy is from outside the Diocese of St. Petersburg, he must provide a Letter of Good Standing.

In Interfaith Marriages, the non-Catholic party may wish his or her minister to take part in the Celebration of Matrimony, The Church, recognizing the importance of this day in the life of the couple, is happy to extend an invitation to the minister of the non-Catholic party to be a participant. If the couple desires the presence of a non-Catholic minister, it becomes their obligation to invite him, provide his stipend, and ensure the minister contacts the priest or deacon who will conduct the Celebration of Matrimony.

Members of the bridal party, friends or family may act as lectors during the Celebration of Matrimony. The couple should select the lectors in advance of the wedding and provide each a copy of the text of the scripture that will be used.

TRADITIONS

Ritual traditions take root in our lives because they unite us to the past, connect to who we are today and help us express who we want to become, but they may not have a place in the Celebration of Matrimony. For example, lighting the Unity Candle is not part of the ritual at St. Raphael parish.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

A St. Raphael wedding coordinator will contact you about 90 days prior to your wedding date. She will assist the couple in working through the details of the Liturgy by conducting the rehearsal and answering questions and concerns. The coordinator helps ensure the day runs smoothly and ensures that the liturgical and parish practices are maintained. If you have hired a wedding coordinator/event planner for your wedding weekend, please remind them that the rehearsal and church ceremony are the responsibility of the St. Raphael wedding coordinator only.

MUSIC

Music is an important part of the Celebration of Matrimony. Selections should be liturgical in musical form and text. Music of social or theatrical nature is not appropriate.

St. Raphael offers several types of music for your wedding. Couples may choose from traditional or contemporary music. The contact for each group is listed at the back of this booklet. To make an appointment to discuss your wedding music, please contact the musician of your choice **90 days** in advance of your wedding date. Only members of St. Raphael Ministry are permitted to provide music for the Celebration of Matrimony.

DECORATION

The liturgical season during which the wedding takes place will affect the types and limitations of decorations. Candles or candelabra are prohibited both in the sanctuary and on the pews. If pew bows will be used, please advise the florist they must be tied on and not taped.

The church will be open an hour and a half prior to the ceremony for the delivery of flowers.

Safety and damage issues restrict us from allowing aisle runners or flower petals (artificial or real) for the ceremony. Using bubbles, throwing rice, seeds or other such material outside is not permitted.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographer may not take pictures in such a way as to disturb the congregation or the celebrant. The photographer is not allowed on or behind the Altar area (sanctuary). Flash photography is not permitted during the Celebration of Matrimony.

Couples have 30 minutes after the ceremony for pictures to be taken in the church. Once a group has completed their pictures we ask that they leave the church so parishioners arriving for Confession and Mass are not disturbed.

REHEARSAL

Rehearsals are scheduled promptly at 5:00pm on the day before the Celebration of Matrimony and last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The Rehearsal Planning sheet should be completed and returned to the wedding coordinator the Friday before the rehearsal. The marriage license must be brought to the rehearsal. The marriage cannot be celebrated without it.

Only those people directly involved in the ceremony (bride, groom, parents, attendants, ushers, readers) should attend the rehearsal. Members of the rehearsal party are asked to depart the sanctuary immediately after the rehearsal to allow for cleanup.

DECORUM

Behavior and appearance are an important part of the wedding. Please remember that appropriate behavior must be maintained in the church during the **rehearsal** and on the **wedding day**. You are in a church, please be reverent and respectful. Alcohol, smoking, illegal substances, playful behavior or loud conversation is not allowed. Pranks or practical jokes are to be avoided.

The attire of the bridal party may be as formal or as simple as desired. We ask that you use good taste in your manner of dress. Appropriate dress is also requested for the rehearsal.

Non-Catholics are welcome to participate in the Celebration of Matrimony as attendants to the bride and groom. They will be expected to observe the usual Catholic procedure in matters of ceremony.

BRIDAL PARTY

The bridal party should arrive at least 30-45 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.

For gathering and preparation, a room is usually available to the bridal party an hour and a half before the wedding. Please ensure that the room is left clean and orderly. Please do not bring food, snacks or drinks (except water) into the church or bridal party rooms.

The bridal party must return to the sanctuary immediately after the recessional, so pictures may be taken in the allotted time. Please reserve the receiving line and sign-in book for the reception.

The bridal party often includes parents, grandparents and small children. Children 4 years old and under are discouraged from participating with bridal party because they have difficulty handling the rigors of the processional and the ceremony. Please speak to your parish wedding coordinator for other options.

CHECK LIST

- Letter of permission from home parish (Where applicable)
- A Baptism Certificate issued within the last 6 months
- Prenuptial Investigation “A” form completed
- Witnesses for “B” form contacted
- Permission or Dispensation (with non-Catholic)
- Decree of Nullity of previous spouse (Where applicable)
- Death Certificate of previous spouse (Where applicable)
- Attend a Diocesan and Parish Marriage Preparation Program
- Pastor notified of visiting clergy name and address (Where applicable)
- Parish Musician contacted
- Wedding Coordinator contacted
- Clergy notified of choices for the wedding texts one week prior to wedding date. The selection form is available in the back of the “Together for Life” book.
- Photographer notified of Parish procedures
- Florist notified of Parish procedures
- Marriage License obtained
- Fees arranged and paid

All pertinent papers, except marriage license, and fees are due: _____

Date of Rehearsal: _____ Time: _____

Date of Wedding: _____ Time: _____

Priest/Deacon in charge of your wedding: _____

Wedding Coordinator: _____

Music Director is: _____

Revised 3/7/19