



*Weddings at Saint Mary's Church*  
*Simsbury, Connecticut*

This small booklet provides you with information you will need to prepare for your marriage at St. Mary's. As you prepare for your meeting with the priest, please gather the following items.

1. A *recent* copy of your baptismal certificate, dated within the past six months. You may obtain this by calling the parish where you were baptized, telling the priest you are planning to be married, and asking for a new copy of your baptismal certificate.
2. Copies of your First Communion and Confirmation certificates. These do not have to be recent.

You will need to meet with the priest to fill out a premarital investigation form and prepare for the wedding ceremony. In addition to this you will be asked:

1. To attend an Engaged Couples Conference.
2. To complete and discuss a marriage survey inventory.

Eventually, you will need to obtain a wedding license from the Town of Simsbury and be in contact with the Parish Music Director. If you live at a distance and cannot complete your marriage preparation at St. Mary's, you will have to complete all paper work in the parish where you reside. Since this takes extra time, do not delay. St. Mary's Parish cannot give you a wedding date until certain paper work is completed. **Obtaining a venue for a reception does not assure a wedding date at St. Mary's.** Below you will find other information helpful for preparing for you wedding.

**Aisle/Aisle Runner**

The white runner rolled out just before the bridal party approaches the altar is traditional, but optional. Plastic or synthetic runners can generally be purchased from your florist. Many florists have heavy cloth runners that can be rented. The aisle in St. Mary's Church is sixty (60) feet long.

**Altar Servers**

St. Mary's generally can and will provide altar servers for your wedding. It is customary that the servers receive a gratuity for a wedding.

### **Baptismal Certificates**

All Catholics are required to present a copy of his/her baptismal certificate that is less than six months old. First Communion and Confirmation certificates are also required for all Catholics. Non-Catholics will likewise be required to provide proof of baptism (if applicable) and will need to provide two certificates attesting to their freedom to marry. These forms can be obtained from the priest or deacon who is preparing you for your wedding. Non-Baptized individuals will need to provide freedom to marry documentation as above.

### **Best Man**

The Best Man is one of the legal witnesses to your marriage; the other is the Maid of Honor. Two witnesses are necessary; more than two should be seen as a rare exception and for extraordinary reasons, for example, twin sisters or brothers of the bride or groom. A multiplication of witnesses is to be discouraged.

### **Bridesmaids/Ushers/Groomsmen**

Usually there are an equal numbers of bridesmaids and groomsmen, although this isn't in any sense required. In some parts of the country there is a distinction between ushers and groomsmen. This is not the tradition in New England.

### **Booklets**

A number of sources suggest a wedding booklet. This is a matter of personal taste. Before you invest the time and money, ask yourself how many you have ever kept.

### **Confetti, Rice, Birdseed, etc.**

Because of the difficulty in its being removed and in some cases the danger of people slipping or falling, all such are not allowed at St. Mary's.

### **Communion**

The reception of the Eucharist is reserved for Catholics in the state of grace.

Accordingly, while we welcome all who attend your wedding regardless of their faith, we can only give the Eucharist to Catholics.

### **Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist**

In the case of larger celebrations, having an extraordinary minister present to help with the distribution of the Eucharist expedites the rite. Should you have a member of the family or a friend who will be in attendance at your wedding, please mention this to the celebrant. Please remember they must be commissioned for service within the Archdiocese of Hartford.

### **Flowers**

It would seem almost unthinkable to have a wedding without flowers, although they are not strictly necessary. In the event of multiple weddings on the same weekend, brides commonly share the cost. Wedding flowers are normally left in the church for the Sunday liturgy.

### **License**

If you are being married at St. Mary's Church, you must have a marriage license from the Town of Simsbury: No marriage license, no wedding, no exceptions! Please bring the marriage license with you the night of the rehearsal

### **Maid/Matron of Honor**

The Maid of Honor is one of the two official witnesses to your marriage required by church law. Two witnesses are necessary. A multiplication of witnesses is to be discouraged.

### **Meetings with the Priest**

The number of meetings and their purpose are detailed in the booklet "*Common Marriage Policy for the Archdiocese of Hartford*" which will be given to you at your first meeting. This booklet can also be requested in advance.

### **Music**

Since wedding music should enhance the Liturgy rather than detract from it, it should focus on the mystery of marriage as a sacrament that reflects the love between Christ and his Church. Accordingly, while secular music is appropriate for your reception, it is not appropriate for the wedding ceremony.

Wedding music is under the supervision of Mrs. Gena Sullivan, the church organist and Director of Music. She will make suggestions for your wedding music and let you know what is appropriate. Under the agreement with the American Guild of Organists, our Music Director has the "Right of First Refusal." This means that if you engage another organist, you will still have to pay the church organist, even if you do not make use of her services.

Should you choose to have other musicians participate in your wedding, they should work with Mrs. Sullivan and follow these procedures and guidelines of St. Mary's Parish.

1. When the wedding falls within a Mass, the parts of the Mass are to be sung
2. The Responsorial Psalm is sung whether or not there is a Mass
3. While popular, secular music is appropriate for your reception, it is not appropriate for the wedding ceremony
4. Within the ceremony, the music should focus on the mystery of marriage as a sacrament and upon the praise and glory of God
5. The entrance of the wedding party and of the bride form a single rite and so there is only one wedding processional

These guidelines are to be followed, even if you employ guest musicians and your own (celebrant/celebrate). Guest musicians should let Mrs. Sullivan know what music they propose to play or sing, prior to printing programs. The final determination of what is appropriate and what is not will belong to Mrs. Sullivan.

### **Non-Catholic Participation**

While Church law does not make specifications regarding the witnesses to your wedding (Cf. Best Man/Maid of Honor), it is very specific in other cases. Your readers of sacred scripture must be members of the Catholic faith.

Church law does not allow us to offer the Eucharist to those who are not Catholics.

### **Offerings/Fees**

Discuss with the priest what the minimum offering for the church should be. The offering includes the Archdiocesan Marriage Assessment used to offset the costs of running the Office of Family Life and Marriage, the costs associated with administration of the F.A.C.E.T program, a gift to the church for general expenses and a small stipend for the celebrant of your wedding. The fee for the organist and the soloist are paid directly to them. Fees for other musicians or services are on a contractual basis between the couple and the provider of services. The fees and the offering for the church should be given to the organist, soloist and celebrant prior to the wedding rehearsal.

### **Outdoor Weddings**

The Archdiocese of Hartford does not permit outdoor weddings.

### **Pews**

There are nineteen pews on either side of the main aisle. Usually the first (and sometimes the second) are reserved for your attendants. Following that are pews designated for parents, grandparents, godparents or other special people in your lives. Most pews can comfortably seat eight, although the front pew has a supporting roof pillar and should probably only have four comfortably.

### **Pew Decorations**

Small floral pieces or bows on the end of the center aisle pews can add a festive touch to a wedding. They can be attached with special clips available from your florist or elastic bands. Tape of any type is damaging to the finish on the pews and must never be used.

### **Photos/Photographers**

St. Mary's does not as a matter of policy recommend any particular photographer. Probably the best recommendation is that of someone who has used him or her. Ask for references. If time allows, photos can be taken in the church following your ceremony.

### **Pre-Cana/Engaged Encounter Conference**

Each couple to be married within the Archdiocese is required to participate in either a Pre-Cana Conference or an Engaged Encounter weekend. Although this is a decision made by the couple based on their own particular circumstances and preferences, Engaged Encounter weekend is a much more intense experience and without exception all couples who have chosen this option have reported that they were happy they did.

### **Readers**

The wedding ceremony of the Catholic Church has three readings from Sacred Scripture. The responsorial Psalm, which occurs between the first and second reading, is sung:

- An Old Testament reading
- A reading for the Epistles of the New Testament
- A Gospel reading done by a priest or deacon

The Old Testament and the reading for the Epistles are generally proclaimed by family members or friends of the wedding couple. As directed by liturgical norms, these readers must be members of the Catholic faith.

### **Readings**

Please see the section above on “Readers” concerning the place of the reading during the marriage ritual. A booklet entitled “*Together for Life*” will be supplied to you to help you make your choices. This booklet is intended to be an aid or guide; should you have passages of scripture that are particularly meaningful to you and are appropriate to a wedding, please feel free to discuss them with the celebrant of your ceremony.

### **Receiving Line**

A receiving line is a traditional, although now somewhat dated, part of many weddings. If you are planning to have one at the church, please discuss it with your celebrant, as the size of your wedding and subsequent ceremonies might make this impractical. Also, if you are planning a receiving line, please be sure to be far enough away from the steps that trips and falls due to inattention are unlikely.

### **Rehearsal**

Rehearsals can be booked anytime within six month of your celebration. This restriction is to allow couples who might want a Friday evening celebration maximum flexibility. Also, please check with your celebrant to determine the time of your rehearsal (before making rehearsal dinner plans as his availability will significantly impact on the schedule).

### **Rings**

The celebrant should have the rings in order to place them conveniently prior to the ceremony. In recent years a number of couples have had both “dress” and “work” wedding rings. All of these should be blessed, but please inform the celebrant which rings you would like to use for your ceremony.

### **Times of Ceremonies**

The Archdiocese requires that weddings be scheduled so as to allow time between the last wedding and the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation Saturday afternoon. For this reason, here at St. Mary’s, weddings are scheduled on Saturdays at 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM, and 2:00 PM. Friday evenings are at the discretion of the celebrant. Sunday and Holy Day weddings are not allowed in the Archdiocese of Hartford. For weddings outside these hours, please discuss options with your celebrant.

### **Visiting Clergy**

Visiting clergy of any denomination can participate in your celebration. Please discuss this with your celebrant. Should it be your desire to have a family member or friend as your celebrant, please make your wishes known early in your preparation process.

All visiting clergy who are not members of the Archdiocese of Hartford must have a letter of suitability from the Bishop or Religious Superior. This letter is to be sent to the Archdiocese and to the Pastor of St. Mary’s.