



Guidelines for Weddings



St. Louis Catholic Church
Clarksville, Maryland



“Love is patient, love is kind. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” - 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7-8

St. Louis Catholic Church
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We are delighted that you are planning to be married at St. Louis Catholic Church. We hope that your wedding may be a joyful and grace-filled expression of your love and vows of life-long fidelity in the Lord: “Christ abundantly blesses your love. He enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity.” (THE RITE OF MARRIAGE)

We look forward to preparing you for one of the most wonderful experiences of human life: "Celebrating your love in marriage and God's presence in your lives". We want you to know that your wedding will be part of a long tradition of weddings celebrated here. The Church helps you to invest in your marriage through a formal time of preparation and formation.

This booklet is presented to you to help you plan your marriage celebration. The regulations included in this booklet reflect the laws and policies of the Catholic Church, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and St. Louis.

Please accept our sincere best wishes and prayers for a happy married life.

The Clergy and Staff of St. Louis Catholic Church

1. Initial Wedding Arrangements

Initial arrangements for the time, date, and place of your wedding ceremony should be made either before or in conjunction with arrangements for your wedding reception. These plans must be initiated at least **six months** before the desired date of your wedding.

You may request a priest or deacon from our staff, or you may invite a member of the clergy from another Catholic church to preside at a ceremony here at St. Louis. If you invite a priest or deacon from another Catholic church, he will need to send us a letter confirming his acceptance of the wedding ceremony. Note: We cannot reserve a time, date, or location for your wedding until you have discussed your plans personally with a priest or deacon at St. Louis.

You must be a registered parishioner of St. Louis for at least one year before contacting the parish to make arrangements for your wedding.

2. Wedding Location and Time

There are two locations at St. Louis in which your wedding may be celebrated: 1) Main Church or 2) 1889 Chapel.

- The Main Church seats approximately 1,200 people, is air-conditioned, and has rest room facilities and private rooms for the wedding party. (No dressing, however, is allowed in these rooms.) Food and beverages are not permitted in the Church.
- The 1889 Chapel seats approximately 120 people, is air-conditioned, but has no rest room facilities or private rooms for the wedding party. Food and beverages are not permitted in the Chapel.

A non-refundable deposit of \$325 is required to secure the date and time of the wedding.

Wedding celebrations on Saturday in the Main Church or 1889 Chapel may be scheduled only at 11:00 AM or 1:00 PM. No weddings may be scheduled for Saturday evenings.

We do not schedule weddings on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, or national holidays. Weddings on other days may be scheduled as Church and clergy calendars permit.

3. Wedding Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal should be scheduled as soon as possible with the presiding priest or deacon, preferably at the time of your first meeting with him. Those attending the rehearsal generally include the bride and groom, all members of the bridal party, the parents of the couple, and any readers or other active participants in the wedding ceremony. Musicians generally do not attend the wedding rehearsal.

4. Marriage Preparation

As a life-long commitment and a sacred sacrament in our Church, marriage requires a serious level of preparation. The Archdiocese of Baltimore **mandates** all engaged couples to participate in a formal program of preparation arranged through their local parish where there will be opportunities to enter conversations regarding important topics such as why marriage matters, why God created marriage, sexuality, and how to have a sacramental marriage. In addition to the assistance provided by the officiating clergy, St. Louis offers three programs of marriage preparation:

1. **Pre-Cana Preparation** - A priest/deacon and married couples lead gatherings of approximately 12 couples to reflect on such issues as communications, decision-making, intimacy, finances, and spirituality scheduled on consecutive Sundays. Pre-Cana preparation is offered twice each year at St. Louis. This option is arranged through your presiding priest or deacon.
2. **Sponsor Couple** - A process of five sessions with a selected married couple from St. Louis who will meet with the engaged couple personally over a period of several weeks. The setting is friendly and informal, while each engaged couple gets personal attention in reviewing the many facets of married life. This option is arranged through your presiding priest or deacon.
3. **Engaged Encounter** - A retreat offering personal attention and guidance for approximately 20 couples, scheduled from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon on various weekends at retreat houses throughout the Archdiocese. For more information visit <https://baltimore.engagedencounter.com> and check with your presiding priest or deacon.

Other preparatory programs, such as those suited for a second marriage, are also available from the Archdiocese. For more information call the Church office at [\(410\) 531-6040](tel:4105316040). The priest or deacon will discuss these programs with engaged couples and help you make the necessary arrangements for participating in them.

Upon the completion of a marriage preparation program, the engaged couple will receive a certificate, which should be given to the presiding priest or deacon.

5. Wedding Music

All musical arrangements for the wedding ceremony must be made with our Assistant Director of Music, Mrs. Colleen Eberhardt (ceberhardt@stlouisparish.org), ***who should be contacted immediately after your interview with the priest or deacon.*** Mrs. Eberhardt corresponds with couples individually and assists with the selection of appropriate instrumental and vocal music, including the necessary responses and acclamations. She also will assist in selecting soloists or instrumentalists, if desired.

“The function of music is ministerial; it must serve and never dominate. Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith.” (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops). The music must be liturgically appropriate for the celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony. It is the community’s prayer and praise to God for this joyous occasion.

6. The Wedding Liturgy

A engaged couple may choose to be married in either a

- Wedding Ceremony
- Nuptial Mass

The Wedding Ceremony consists of readings from Scripture, a homily, the exchange of vows, and selected prayers and blessings. It may be officiated by a priest or deacon. The Nuptial Mass consists of readings from Scripture, a homily, the exchange of vows, the Eucharistic Prayer, the reception of Communion, and selected prayers and blessings. It may only be officiated by a priest. The priest or deacon will be happy to assist you in selecting an appropriate liturgy.

7. Photography and Videotaping

The recording of any wedding ceremony using photography or videotape must respect the sacred nature of the liturgy and must not be a distraction to the ministers, the bridal party, or the guests. Photographers may take pictures of the wedding but may not enter the sanctuary at any time during the ceremony. Video cameras are permitted only on tripods and only in a stationary position in the church during the ceremony. Extra lights are not allowed.

Photographs may be taken in the Main Church or 1889 Chapel after the ceremony only if there is sufficient time to do so before the next function. Wedding parties will be asked to leave to allow time for subsequent services. The bridal party and the photographers are to maintain a respectful manner, with due regard for the sacred nature of the church, when taking photographs after the ceremony. No sanctuary furniture may be moved for the taking of photographs.

St. Louis has prepared a letter outlining these guidelines to be distributed to your photographer and to anyone making a video recording of the ceremony. Please provide the name/address of your photographer to your presiding priest or deacon.

8. Decorations

Flowers - Flowers beautify the sanctuary of the Main Church and 1889 Chapel as well as enhance the celebration of your wedding. It is customary for the couple to leave the flowers in the Main Church or 1889 Chapel as a gift to the Lord and as a reminder to all parishioners that the Sacrament of Matrimony has recently been celebrated. Please complete the *Additional Wedding Considerations* form at the end of this booklet to communicate your intentions regarding flowers and return it to the Church office **no later than 2 months** before your wedding date.

- *Placement:* Two vases of flowers are sufficient in the sanctuary of the Church or 1889 Chapel. Flowers are to be placed on the flower stands in the main Church, which are part of the Church's permanent furniture, or on the rear altar of the 1889 Chapel. Flowers are not to be placed on the altar of sacrifice, directly in front of the tabernacle, or on the carpeted floors.
- *Delivery of Flowers:* Please have your florist contact the Church office to arrange for a delivery time for the flowers. Remember to specify to the florist whether your wedding is in the Church or 1889 Chapel.
- *Sharing:* When more than one wedding is to be celebrated on a weekend, we encourage couples to contact each other and to share the cost of flowers in the sanctuary. Please ask the priest or deacon to assist you in this regard.

Aisle Runner - We do not recommend an aisle runner. An aisle runner, if you choose to have one, is provided by the florist. If your runner is not disposable, arrange to have it removed promptly after the wedding. Please be aware that runners originated on wooden-floored churches to protect wedding gowns from damage; they can be difficult to walk on when they are laid over tiled floors as in the Main Church. The Main Church aisle is 78 feet long; the 1889 Chapel aisle is 45 feet long.

Candles - Additional or rental candles are not permitted in the sanctuary or aisles of the Main Church or 1889 Chapel.

Pews - Tape and brackets damage the finish on wooden pews. They are not to be used to affix anything onto the pews. Bows can be fastened to the pews with ribbon ties only.

Additional accouterments - No rice, birdseed, confetti, rose petals, or any other item may be thrown inside or outside any building on the parish grounds. Insurance regulations and maintenance problems prohibit this. Balloons may not be released at the Church or 1889 Chapel.

9. Wedding Participants

Readers and Leaders of Prayer - A member of the bridal party, of the family, or any guest may be invited to read from Scripture or to lead in selected prayers at the celebration. The Best Man and Maid (or Matron) of Honor, members of the bridal party, and other participants in the wedding liturgy need not be Catholic. It would be appropriate however, for readers and leaders of prayer to be of the Christian faith. Please consult with the priest or deacon for assistance.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers - Flower girls and ring bearers must be at least six years old. Rose petals may not be dropped in the Main Church or 1889 Chapel.

Altar Servers – Engaged couples may request St. Louis to assign altar servers for the ceremony or they may invite family members or friends who are experienced in serving to do so.

10. Required Documents

Baptismal Certificate - Each Catholic party must obtain a newly issued baptismal certificate (issued within six months of the wedding date) from their church of Baptism. You may obtain a certificate by contacting the church directly. Baptized non-Catholics are asked to provide a photocopy of his or her baptismal certificate.

Marriage License - All engaged couples must obtain a marriage license from the Marriage License Department of the Circuit Court for Howard County. For more information on requirements and fees visit <https://www.courts.state.md.us/clerks/howard/marriage> or call [410-313-5850](tel:410-313-5850). There is a 48-hour waiting period until the license is effective at 6:00 AM on the second calendar day after application was made. (i.e., 48-hour waiting period). The license must be used within 6 months (you must marry within 6 months or the license will be void). No blood tests or witnesses are required in the State of Maryland.

Other Documents - The presiding priest or deacon will assist you in determining whether additional documents are necessary for your marriage.

11. Punctuality

It is very important that the wedding rehearsal and celebration begin promptly on time. Courtesy to your guests, the tight schedules of clergy, and the use of parish facilities for subsequent services demand attention to this matter. Late starting times, for example, will almost certainly limit the ability to take photographs after a ceremony.

12. Offerings

St. Louis has established the following scale as a suggested minimum offering for the wedding celebration, recognizing that offerings are best made in consideration of the size of the wedding, the cost of the reception, and other factors.

Church Offering (make checks payable to St. Louis Catholic Church)	
Deposit due to secure date and time	\$325
Balance due 6 weeks before wedding	\$325

The Church Offering is not a personal stipend for your presiding priest or deacon. A couple may wish to make a personal gift to the presider. Please place the offerings in separate, marked envelopes and give them to the priest or deacon before the rehearsal.

Each Altar Server Stipend (cash)	\$ 10
Music planning fee (for Mass or Ceremony only)	\$ 75
Organist for Mass	\$350
Cantor for Mass	\$250
Organist for Wedding Outside of Mass (ceremony only)	\$300
Cantor for Wedding Outside of Mass (ceremony only)	\$200

Stipends for the organist and cantor are paid directly to them and are due no less than one week prior to the wedding.

ADDITIONAL WEDDING CONSIDERATIONS

Please review the information below and check the appropriate boxes. Please return to the Church office **AT LEAST 2 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING DATE** .

Name of Bride and Groom:

Wedding Date and Time:

Main Church or **1889 Chapel**

Priest or Deacon:

- Flowers will be provided by the family for the Main Church or 1889 Chapel
If yes, will flowers be left in the Main Church or 1889 Chapel? _____
- Flowers will not be provided by the family. St. Louis **cannot guarantee** that flowers will be in the sanctuary for your ceremony.

St. Louis Registration Information - please check the appropriate box.

- I (We) plan to continue as a member(s) of St. Louis Catholic Church
- I (We) have completed a registration form
- I (We) will not continue as a member(s) of St. Louis Catholic Church

Address to mail Marriage certificate:
