

This booklet contains the policies and procedures observed at Saint Kilian Parish and has been prepared to assist you in planning your wedding. While we are confident that your wedding will be a joyful celebration and a source of pride for you and your families, it must also be an expression of faith within a ceremony appropriate for a church setting. It is also our hope that your preparation for the wedding (which lasts a day) will not overshadow your commitment to marriage (which lasts a lifetime).

PART ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION

Days and Times for Weddings: While weddings may take place on any day of the week except Sundays, most are celebrated on Saturday or Friday evenings. The availability of our church is as follows: Fridays (anytime after 4:00 p.m.), Saturdays (at 12:00 noon or at 2:00 p.m.). Exceptions to the above times are not possible. In this way, the churches remain available for use by the most number of people. The time allotted for your wedding is roughly two hours (including gathering before the wedding, the ceremony and pictures afterwards). Please keep this in mind when scheduling photography.

PART TWO: A WEDDING IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Introduction Since the Catholic Church believes that marriage is a commitment made for life, preparation for marriage must not only recognize that commitment but also seek to insure that both parties are capable of making such a commitment.

Pre-Marriage Assessment At least six months before your wedding, you must contact one of the parish priests or the deacon to discuss your intention to marry in the Catholic Church. Please remember, no date or time for a wedding can be confirmed until this meeting takes place. At that meeting, the priest or deacon will conduct the required assessment to confirm your freedom to enter marriage within the Catholic Church. His questions will deal with such matters as previous marriages, age, maturity, knowledge about marriage, intentions, etc..

In order for the priest or deacon to conduct an accurate assessment, please be prepared to discuss any previous marriages. This includes those which took place before a Justice of the Peace or other civil official. Please note, generally the marriages of non-Catholics before civil officials (including Justices of the Peace) are considered valid by the Catholic Church. Thus, these parties are not free to enter marriage again in the Catholic Church without some disposition of that previous marriage (e.g. by death or through a formal process of annulment).

During the assessment process, the priest or deacon may also ask you to complete a pre-marriage inventory to assist in determining one's readiness for marriage within the Church. The assessment process may require more than one meeting. Once the priest or deacon is certain that nothing made known to him would prevent the marriage from taking place within the Catholic Church, he will sign the Initial Assessment Form, place it in the parish records and confirm the day and time of your wedding in the Parish Mass Book. It is only then that formal plans should be made.

Special Circumstances In the course of the pre-marriage assessment, it may become apparent that a particular couple finds themselves in special circumstances. One of these circumstances is a pre-marital pregnancy. Formerly, it was assumed that a pregnancy was ample justification for marriage. Today, however, the divorce rate for such couples is so high that a pregnancy clearly indicates the need for special pastoral sensitivity. In these instances, the priest or deacon may want to meet with the parents of the couple or seek the assistance of an independent evaluation. Once again, the goal is to assist the couple in arriving at a mature decision based upon all the factors involved.

There are several other circumstances which may become apparent during the course of the initial interview. These include: a lack of readiness for marriage as assessed by the priest or deacon; a lack of appreciation for the spiritual and sacramental aspects of marriage; non-practice of the faith; cohabitation (living together); the decision

to permanently exclude children in a marriage; refusal to take part in a pre-marriage program or refusal to participate in the pre-marriage assessment, evaluation or counseling. When one or more of these circumstances is encountered, the issues must be resolved satisfactorily before the an Initial Assessment Form can be signed by the priest or deacon.

Required Documents and Pre-Nuptial Forms Since marriage is a step recognized both by the Church and the state, it necessarily involves the gathering of information. This normally involves the completion of a standard set of forms by the priest or deacon who will be the official witness of your wedding.

If you are a Catholic, baptized or confirmed in a parish other than Saint Kilian, we must have a recent baptism and confirmation certificate (dated no more than six months before the wedding is to take place). The couple is responsible for obtaining such certificates (by phoning or writing the parish where you were baptized) All documents submitted will remain on file in the Parish Center as a permanent record. If you were baptized in a faith community other than Catholic, you too will need a copy of your baptismal certificate. A certificate of whatever age will suffice. It will be returned to you after the appropriate information is copied and recorded.

Often couples of different faith backgrounds decide to marry. There should be time devoted to discussing how each partner will contribute to the spiritual growth of the other and any children who might be born in their marriage. Among the forms to be completed before marriage in the Catholic Church, is one signed by the Catholic partner marrying a non-Catholic. This form confirms the intention of the Catholic "...to continue practicing the Catholic faith and to do all in my power to share that faith with our children by having them baptized and raised as Catholics."

In instances where one or both of the parties to be married is under the age of 21, there may be a need to interview a parent or guardian to corroborate the statements which were made regarding maturity and readiness for marriage.

Marriage Instructions

The specific preparation for Marriage in the Catholic Church involves a program of listening and discussion. The stated policy of the Diocese of Pittsburgh requires that engaged couples participate in a pre-marriage program best suited to their needs. The content of these programs centers on the areas of sacramentality, spirituality, communication, financial responsibility, family life, responsible parenthood, sexuality and continuing formation within marriage. There are a variety of ways in which this may be accomplished. Among these are the following:

Parish weekends for the engaged: A local program is sponsored by Saint Kilian Parish whereby married couples along with a priest from the parish treat various topics dealing with married life. This program is conducted on a weekend beginning on Friday evening (usually concluding by 9:00 p.m.) and continuing on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 Noon. Couples must attend both days. Included with the presentations is the opportunity for questions and discussion. This program is usually held three times a year, in January, April and October. It is necessary to register for this program by calling the Parish Center at 724-625-1665 (or registering online at saintkilian.org)

Butler Deanery Program: This program is offered periodically within Butler County utilizing various formats. Please phone the Parish Center for information.

Engaged Encounter Weekends: A program whereby married couples along with a priest present various topics dealing with married life. This program consists of an entire weekend, from Friday evening at 8:00 p.m. until Sunday afternoon at 5:00 p.m. conducted at various sites in the Diocese. Engaged Encounter weekends are held several times each month. Please contact the Parish Center for dates and a contact through whom arrangements may be made.

Diocesan Pre-Cana Lecture Series: A lecture series that is held at St. Mary of Mercy Church (corner of the Boulevard of the Allies and Stanwix Street, downtown Pittsburgh). This program consists of four 2 hour presentations on either Tuesday or Thursday evenings. A parish priest must fill out an application form before you can attend these classes.

In addition, any other recognized program sponsored by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, another diocese, parish, deanery or campus ministry will suffice provided that the participants receive a certificate of participation and successful completion of the program.

Invitations

When invitations are printed, please utilize the name and address of the church as follows: Saint Kilian Church, Clark and Cherry Streets, Mars, Pennsylvania.” Please include directions to the church with your invitations. One version of such directions may be obtained by visiting the parish website at: saintkilian.org.

"Marriage Banns"

The "banns" of marriage are no longer required by Church law. Saint Kilian Parish announces weddings in the parish bulletin two weeks before they are scheduled as well as listing the wedding in the liturgy schedule the weekend before it is scheduled to take place.

PART THREE: THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Sacraments are always celebrations of the entire Body of Christ. Therefore, your wedding liturgy has special meaning for the entire parish community and should be celebrated with the joyful dignity that this implies. It is a time of prayer, promise, joy and hope. This special celebration should be carefully planned with the mutual cooperation of the priest or deacon and the couple.

Your wedding will take place within the context of a ceremony which includes: questions regarding intent, the marriage vows and the blessing and exchange of rings.

Traditionally, the wedding ceremony of two Catholics takes place within the context of the Eucharist (Mass). However, the Eucharist is not something that should be taken lightly or assumed as a “nice background for our wedding vows.” If the couple to be married are not active in their Catholic faith, serious questions need to be asked. If they do not regularly attend Mass each weekend, then how important do they consider the Mass in their lives? Why would they expect to celebrate their wedding in the context of Mass when they celebrate nothing else in that context?

Therefore, at Saint Kilian Parish, if a couple expects to celebrate their marriage vows in the context of Mass, they should be prepared to demonstrate that the Mass is important to them by their regular attendance at Mass long before their wedding takes place.

If this is not the case, then they too will likely celebrate their vows in the context of a wedding ceremony. This includes readings from Sacred Scripture, the wedding ceremony (vows and exchange of rings), prayers, the optional rites of the “unity candle” and presenting flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as the sign of peace, the Lord’s prayer and special blessings.

Scripture readings may be chosen by the couple in consultation with the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage. Readers may be chosen from family or friends to read the first two Scriptural passages. Any person who is doing a reading in church should be a good speaker, familiar with Catholic liturgy and feel comfortable in a church building. Remember, this is the proclamation of the Word of God.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist (MASS)

Every wedding in the Catholic Church is celebrated with the Liturgy of the Word and the actual wedding ceremony. Two Catholics who marry must be married within the context of the Eucharist (Mass). If one of those to be married is not a Catholic, the couple may request that the Mass be celebrated at the wedding, but it is an option. It is important for these couples to seriously consider this matter. There are compelling reasons why an interfaith couple may not choose to request the Mass. Among these are: so that non-Catholic family and friends may fully follow and participate in the celebration of marriage, that the symbols be those of unity and not disunity when non-Catholics are not permitted to receive Communion, and that the Eucharist not be celebrated amid a group of people many of whom lack an understanding of its meaning or faith in what is taking place.

The Entrance Procession In recent years, several options have emerged for this aspect of the wedding. There can be an entrance procession similar to that seen at Sunday Mass whereby the congregation is asked to stand and sing an entrance song while the wedding party and ministers enter, usually in pairs (including the parents and bride and groom). Some brides are escorted down the aisle by their fathers (and/or their mothers). At some weddings, the attendants are escorted down the entire aisle, at others they walk alone and are met by the groomsmen at the front of the church. In any case, the couple's preference regarding the entrance should be discussed with the priest or deacon presiding at the wedding.

A Symbolic Offering For the Poor Another wedding custom is for the bride and groom to present symbolic gifts for the poor. This custom usually takes the form of a basket of canned goods or non-perishable items being carried with the bread and wine at the offertory procession (at Mass) or other appropriate time within a ceremony. This custom is encouraged as a sign that the bride and groom recognize that their wedding is taking place within a wider community about whose needs they and this parish are rightly concerned. You may consult the parish priests regarding the availability of baskets for this purpose.

Offertory Procession If the Mass is celebrated at your wedding, you may choose to ask some family members or friends to bring to the altar the bread and the wine. This may include as few as two and as many as four people.

Exchange of Peace Before the Lord's prayer (at the Liturgy of the Word or at Mass) a sign of peace is exchanged. At that time, some couples choose to present flowers at that time to their parents (and grandparents).

Flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary An ancient Catholic wedding custom is the presentation of flowers at a statue of the Virgin Mary shortly before the conclusion of the ceremony. The bride may perform this gesture accompanied by her new husband, her maid (matron) of honor, her mother or the mothers of the bride and the groom.

Guest Celebrants Some couples ask a priest or deacon (relative or friend) other than ones assigned to this parish to be the official witness at their wedding. When initial contact is made with the parish, please indicate your intention to do so. That priest will then be contacted by Saint Kilian Parish. The guest priest or deacon, then, is expected to handle all the details of the wedding, including completing the Initial Assessment Form, obtaining the required documents, completing the other required forms, insuring that the couple is properly instructed, conducting the rehearsal and the wedding and submitting the papers to the parish following the wedding.

Photography You are welcome to have a photographer take pictures and/or make a videotape of the wedding provided that there are no distractions during the liturgy. Taking pictures in the sacristy (before the ceremony) or in the sanctuary (during the ceremony) is not permitted. The operative principal is that the church is first and foremost a house of prayer and not a photography studio. Included with this booklet is a set of guidelines to be given to any photographer or videographer you might include in your wedding plans.

Music at the Wedding Ceremony Music is an important part of the celebration of marriage. It should not, however, overshadow the essential element of the commitment of the bride and groom to each other. Please contact the Parish Center for the names of musicians who are able to provide the music for your wedding. If you choose to obtain someone else, please insure that they contact the parish so that we can be assured that the musician(s) is capable of providing the appropriate music for a Catholic wedding and is familiar with the ceremony and the parish's musical instruments.

Flowers Flowers have traditionally been a part of the wedding ceremony. They are, however, optional. If you choose to have flowers purchased for use at your wedding, arrangements should be made with the florist of your choice. If more than one wedding is scheduled for your date (and church), you may arrange with the other couple(s) to purchase flowers together. Please inform the florist that no arrangements may be placed on the altar of sacrifice. Flower stands should be obtained through the florist. It is customary to leave flowers in the church following the wedding as a gift to the people of the parish.

Crash A "crash" (a long white strip of cloth or plastic) is sometimes unrolled at weddings immediately before the wedding party proceeds down the aisle. While this has become a custom in some places, it is completely optional. It is our strong preference here at Saint Kilian Parish that a crash not be utilized. We have found that the carpet in the church tends to make the crash rip and tear almost every time. Not only is this unsightly and a nuisance but it is also a hazard especially for elderly guests. If you insist on a crash, the church aisle is 60 feet long.

Unity Candle The use of a "unity candle" (a set of three candles) has become popular within the wedding liturgy. Two of these candles are lit before the ceremony and the center candle is lit by the bride and groom following the vows. The symbolism is that two candles (representing the baptism of the bride and groom) are now joined into one. If you choose to utilize this rite, please bring the three candle set to the church at the rehearsal.

Post-Wedding Customs Please ask those attending your wedding not to throw rice, confetti, birdseed, rose petals or anything else in the church or anywhere on church property. In addition to being a safety hazard, it is a superstition ill befitting the celebration of Christian marriage. In addition, the parish does not have sufficient maintenance personnel for this extra cleaning on weekends and without it the churches are not fit for use for other weddings or the parish Masses.

Receiving Lines Receiving lines are better placed at the location of the reception than at the back of church. Nonetheless, if you choose to have a receiving line at the church, please note that this limits your time for pictures since other weddings or parish Masses are likely scheduled following your wedding and you must leave the church in time for preparations for these celebrations.

Additional Aspects If you would like to include any other features in your wedding, they must be discussed with the priest or deacon beforehand.

Fees and Suggested Offerings Fees (e.g. for the services of the organist) and offerings are discussed on a separate sheet.

Altar Servers Altar servers will be provided by the church unless the couple has a specific choice. An offering given to the altar servers is usually handled by the best man sometime before the beginning of the ceremony.

Rehearsal Usually a rehearsal is conducted the evening before the wedding. The time is set after consultation with the priest or deacon who is to be the official witness for the ceremony, and after considering the parish schedule and the time of any other rehearsals already scheduled for that evening. It is the couple's responsibility

to insure that the wedding party is on time for the rehearsal. The marriage license, offerings for the parish, servers, and organist (unless otherwise arranged) should be brought to the rehearsal and given to the priest or deacon.

Confessions The bride, groom and wedding party may wish to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) before the wedding. Please arrange for a time to do so well before the rehearsal because there is usually little time to celebrate this sacrament appropriately after the rehearsal.

Reception of the Eucharist It is the directive of the Catholic Church that only Catholics may approach the table of the Lord to receive Holy Communion. If Mass is being celebrated as part of your wedding ceremony, please make this directive known to non-Catholics who may be attending.

Wedding Party Ushers for the wedding (usually the groomsmen) should arrive at the church no later than 45 minutes before the scheduled time for wedding. They should be prepared to seat or otherwise assist guests. The groom and best man should go directly to the sacristy. Please do not bring any food or beverages into the church. No consumption of alcoholic beverages by any member of the wedding party on parish property will be tolerated either at the rehearsal or wedding. Any violation of this policy or any public display of intoxication may result in the priest or deacon not being able to conduct the ceremony.

Seating of Guests Because the church is a house of prayer, talking and conduct in the vestibule and the church proper should be in keeping with the sacred character of surroundings. Ushers should promptly escort guests to their seats. The mother of the groom and then the mother of the bride should be seated a few minutes before the wedding is scheduled to begin. This should not be delayed to seat those who arrive late (they may seat themselves after the entrance of the wedding party). In fairness to others who are to use the church after you, weddings must begin at the scheduled time.

Marriage License A Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Marriage License is required for any marriage taking place in Saint Kilian Parish. This license may be obtained from any county license bureau within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

PART FOUR :PARISH LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER THE WEDDING

Catholics relate to Christ's universal Church as members of a parish. Such membership is important for many reasons. If you are not currently a member of a parish, please formally register in one as soon as possible. Following the wedding, it is also important to formally register in the Catholic parish nearest to your new home.

Saint Kilian Parish strives to be of support to its newly married parishioners in various ways. You will also find ample information on the parish website and in the vestibule of the church on parish activities. You are valuable to the life of Saint Kilian Parish. Please become a part of all that occurs here. If the parish priests or parish staff can be of assistance to you in any way after your wedding, please do not hesitate to contact us at the Parish Center (724-625-1665).