

## St. Maria Goretti Parish

# MARRIAGE PREPARATION GUIDELINES

Rev. January 27, 2015

Answering your questions about:

The Sacrament of Marriage

Requesting a Wedding Date

Preparing for Marriage

Working with a Wedding Coordinator

Planning your Liturgy

Using the Church Facility

Fees for Service

## Preface

We believe that the celebration of Marriage at St. Maria Goretti Parish should be: prayerful, an expression of faith in God and each other, and a spirit-filled experience for all involved. We, as a parish, will do everything possible to help you celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage.

The following information is provided to answer many of the questions engaged couples have as they prepare for their wedding. If you have questions or concerns after you read these guidelines, please discuss them with the Parish Office. We hope this information will benefit you and your families.

## Sacrament of Marriage

Marriage is a Sacrament. It should also be one of the greatest sources of strength, hope and encouragement in one's life. Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at St. Maria Goretti Parish means that Marriage is a sacred and holy event, a wonderful relationship with God.

In order to provide strong support and care for you as you enter the sacred state of marriage, the Catholic Dioceses of Wisconsin and the parish of St. Maria Goretti have prepared these guidelines for marriage in our parish. These guidelines are not written to make it difficult for you to marry at St. Maria Goretti. Rather, they have been written to help you more deeply realize the serious and sacred, yet joyful and life-giving nature of the Sacrament of Marriage.

In asking to be married in the Catholic Church, you are seeking a particular sort of marriage in a particular spirit. You are promising to share in Christ's vision of marriage which is "for better, for worse, until death." This vision calls for continual growth and adjustment in both marriage partners. It is a vision which calls you to be faithful both to the person to whom you vow on your wedding day, and to the person your spouse becomes as he or she grows and changes on the journey of life. This vision calls you to be open to the transmission of life through your future children and through the ways that you nurture healthy life in Church and society.

## Setting a Wedding Date

Due to the large number of requests for weddings at St. Maria Goretti, it is impossible for one priest to officiate all the requests.

The following standards have been set for the consideration of setting a marriage date at St. Maria Goretti Parish:

One or both of you must be a registered, active parish member of **St. Maria Goretti Parish for at least one year prior to requesting a wedding**. If you are an active member of another Catholic Church, a Letter of Delegation/Permission from your parish priest needs to be sent to the Pastor of St. Maria Goretti Church with your request to be married here.

As soon as you have decided that you want to be married at St. Maria Goretti Parish, please call the parish secretary at 271-7421 and ask for the "Questionnaire for Process of Requesting of a Wedding Date." Please fill out the questionnaire and return it to the Parish Secretary at St. Maria Goretti. Once the questionnaire is received, you will be contacted to set a wedding date. A letter of confirmation will be sent to you.

You will be notified at least six months prior to your wedding date as to the celebrant of your wedding. There are presently two priest and two deacons at St. Maria Goretti Parish. If you have a family member or friend who is a priest or deacon, and you would like him to officiate, please request that with the "Questionnaire for Process of Requesting of a Wedding Date."

Priority for the wedding date request will be given in the following order:

Parish members of St. Maria Goretti Parish who are \*active.

- a. \*Active parish members shall be defined as registered parish members, providing financial support of St. Maria Goretti Church. Active parish members also volunteer their time on behalf of the church, and accept responsibility when requested. A vital part of being an active parish member includes the completion of the "time and talent" survey, which indicates where an individual may be best suited to serve the St. Maria Goretti Parish community. Volunteer activities which indicate a desire to serve the parish community shall include (but not be limited to): serving on committees and councils, liturgical ministry, lector, choir, ushering, teaching religious education, parish festival, and seasonal clean-up of the church facilities.
- b. Individuals who have parents or grandparents who are \*active members of St. Maria Goretti Parish.
- c. Priority will be given to parishioners in order of parish registration date.

### **\*\*\*Also please note as you are thinking about your wedding date request:**

On the Church's universal calendar, there are significant days of celebration in regards to Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and prominent saints that are classified as Solemnities. This means that the prescribed Masses (both the Scriptures and the prayer texts) for these significant days are the only ones that may be used in a Mass. So, if you do request a date for your wedding within a Mass that falls on a Solemnity, you will **not** be able to select your own Scriptures. The scriptures and the priest's Mass prayers will have to be the prescribed ones for the Solemnity.

The Solemnities of the Church's universal calendar that might coincide with requested wedding dates are: January 1, March 19, March 25, June 24, June 29, August 15, November 1, December 8 and the Saturday within the Octave of Easter. Also, on November 2, the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, only Masses for All Souls' Day are allowed.

\*\*\*However on these dates, if you do not have a Mass for your wedding, you are allowed to pick your own Scriptures.

## Preparing for Marriage

### 1. What are we to do to prepare for our marriage once we have a confirmed wedding date?

There are several parts to formal preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Madison:

- 1) The couple meets with the priest or deacon celebrating their marriage to establish readiness for marriage and complete paperwork. This needs to be done 6 months prior to the wedding date.
- 2) The couple meets with a married couple in the parish to work through the FOCCUS program. This should be completed no later than 4 months prior to the wedding date.
- 3) The couple participates in two Marriage Preparation retreats conducted by the Diocesan Office of Family Ministry at various locations and dates throughout the year. Schedules are available from church pamphlet rack, the parish secretary, your wedding coordinator, or at [www.madisondiocese.org/mp](http://www.madisondiocese.org/mp) (click on Family Ministry, the Marriage Prep).
- 4) The couple attends a Parish seminar on Liturgical Planning of Weddings.

### 2. Is all of our preparation done through the parish?

Couples will usually follow the steps described above, but at the discretion of the priest, adaptations may be made. If a couple lives in another community, for example, some of the preparation may be completed with another priest or within another parish. All exceptions should be discussed with the priest. If some of the process is completed in another parish, a written letter to the Pastor of St. Maria Goretti should be submitted in writing from the Pastor of the parish who helped with the preparation.

### 3. What do we do if one partner is not Catholic?

There is a formal procedure for obtaining a dispensation, or permission, for a Catholic to marry a non-Catholic. The priest handling the ceremony will assist with the necessary paperwork. The Catholic partner is asked to give assurance that s/he will continue to live as a Catholic and do everything possible to ensure that the children are baptized and raised Catholic. The teachings and practices of the Catholic faith will be discussed with the couple.

## Working with a Wedding Coordinator

### 1. How are we assigned a wedding coordinator?

Each couple celebrating their wedding at St. Maria Goretti Parish is required to work with a wedding coordinator from the parish. The wedding coordinator is assigned to the couple when a date for the wedding has been approved. For weddings with a large number of attendants and/or guests, an assistant will also be required the day of the wedding.

### 2. What is the role of the wedding coordinator?

The Wedding Coordinator assists the priest/deacon in preparing a couple for their wedding ceremony. She/he will contact the couple and arrange to meet them at church to discuss procedures for the ceremony, the rehearsal and any details about wedding arrangements. The Wedding Coordinator provides valuable assistance to the priest/deacon by being available to answer questions at any time. It is the Coordinator's job to ensure that all aspects of the wedding ceremony follow liturgical norms, that the nuptial rite is both spiritual and memorable, and that everything goes as smoothly as possible. She/he coordinates details throughout the rehearsal and is present at the church before, during and after the wedding. Once you have been assigned a Wedding Coordinator, please direct all wedding ceremony arrangements and questions to her/him.

## Using the Church Facility

### 1. At what time of day are weddings scheduled?

Weddings scheduled on a Friday eve or Saturday are held at 2 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. This timing is strictly adhered to in order to accommodate any morning funerals that may arise at the church and in light of the regularly scheduled 5:15 p.m. Saturday liturgy at St. Maria Goretti. A time frame for use of the church follows:

<i>Time of Saturday Wedding</i>	<i>Church Available</i>
2:00 p.m.	12:00 pm to 4:00 p.m.

A Friday evening wedding, or one on another day of the week, may be scheduled as long as it does not conflict with any regularly scheduled event in the church. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays or Holy Days.

### 2. How and when are rehearsals scheduled?

A wedding rehearsal is scheduled 6 months prior to the wedding with the Parish Secretary and Wedding Coordinator. Rehearsals for Saturday weddings are usually held on Friday evenings, but can be held at other times if necessary. Rehearsals are one hour in length. Friday evening rehearsals are usually at 5 p.m., 6 p.m., or 7 p.m. Please call the Parish Secretary, who will confer with the celebrant of your wedding, to reserve the church and arrange the time for your rehearsal.

### 3. What type of decorations may be used in the church?

The church itself is appointed and decorated for the celebration of the liturgy and specifically for the liturgical seasons throughout the year. The atmosphere and environment of the liturgical season should be maintained with the wedding liturgy.

*Flowers, when used, should be arranged tastefully and, as much as possible, be distributed throughout the whole worship space, not just by the altar. All decorations must enhance the liturgy, not hinder nor overpower it. Flowers **should not** be placed directly on or in front of the altar. Any wedding decorations must be worked into existing colors and decorations in the church and special consideration should be given to the seasons of the Church year.*

*Sanctuary fixtures and furniture are not to be moved to facilitate decorating.*

### 4. Where are the musicians to be located?

Generally, the musicians are to be in the choir loft. The organ, piano, microphones, and music stands are kept there. A song leader, cantor or instrumentalists may be positioned at the lectern to the right of the altar.

### 5. When may pictures be taken in the church?

Pictures may be taken during the ceremony as long as the photographer remains unobtrusive. Videographers and photographers are not allowed in the sanctuary or anywhere that would cause interference with the priest, couple or congregation. Furthermore, any visual recording equipment must be kept out of the line of vision of participants, ministers and musicians. The photographer and videographer should consult with the wedding coordinator prior to the ceremony. Picture-taking before the ceremony is encouraged. Photographers must finish their work 45 minutes before the next scheduled Mass or event in the church.

### 6. May rice or seeds be thrown outside/inside the church?

No. We ask that nothing be thrown in or around the church. Rice and birdseed are slippery on the ground or floor and could cause people to fall. Confetti or other materials are difficult to clean up before Mass on the weekends. Your ushers are asked to inform guests of this policy should they see guests distributing material to be thrown.

## Planning Your Liturgy

A Wedding Coordinator and the Director of Music/Director of Liturgy will assist you in the preparation of the wedding liturgy. You will be requested to attend a seminar on planning your wedding liturgy sponsored by either St. Maria Goretti Parish or the Diocese of Madison. Those dates will be made available to you once a wedding date has been confirmed.

### 1. Do we need to have a Mass?

No, it is not necessary even when both parties are Catholic but it is encouraged. The Sacrament of Marriage may be celebrated with or without a Mass. When a Catholic partner marries a non-Catholic, it is the norm of the church that a Mass not be celebrated out of respect for the non-Catholic party (who would not be receiving Communion).

### 2. How do we select a celebrant for our ceremony?

Because we are a parish family, it is the usual practice for a priest or deacon from our parish to preside at the wedding. If this is not possible, any priest or deacon in good standing may be selected to witness the wedding and conduct a rehearsal. If a priest/deacon from outside the parish is selected, the pastor must give delegation, and the visiting priest's/deacon's name, address and phone number should be recorded with the "Questionnaire for the Request of a Wedding Date." If the priest/deacon is from outside the Diocese of Madison, we will need a "letter of suitability" from their diocese.

### 3. Is it possible for a minister of another faith to be present for the wedding ceremony?

Yes. The minister may be present and assist in the Liturgy of the Word, as well as the marriage rite.

### 4. How do we choose readings for our wedding?

This will be discussed at the seminar on Liturgical Planning for Weddings. However, if you want to start choosing readings, a list of possible or suggested scripture readings may be found in the booklet *Together for Life*, available from your wedding coordinator, although any scripture passage may be appropriate. All weddings must contain readings from scripture, whether a Mass is held or not.

### 5. How do we choose the music and musicians?

This will be discussed at the Planning your Wedding Liturgy seminar. Music helps to gather everyone into the spirit of prayer and celebration. Music invites a diverse assembly to participate with heart, mind, voice, and spirit. The music selected is to help your guests actively enter into the prayer for and with you, rather than only being spectators in the pews. The music at a wedding liturgy is more than the processional and a vocal soloist. Therefore, we do help in putting together an order of worship with the music so all can participate.

Three principles are offered to assist in selecting music that will involve the assembly:

**Appropriateness:** The music should be appropriate for a liturgical celebration. Songs from popular musicals and artists (i.e. *West Side Story*, Bette Midler, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Here Comes the Bride*, *The Wedding March*) should be saved for the reception or your gathering to open wedding gifts.

**Familiarity:** The assembly will pray and sing best with music they have sung before. Look for music, then, that is familiar to you and that you think your family and friends might know.

**Enhancement of Worship:** Finally, remember music enhances a celebration, but it is not to override the liturgical actions and symbols.

Any music specifically written by friends or family for the wedding ceremony must be God-centered. A recording such music and lyrics must be submitted to your Wedding Coordinator and forwarded to the SMG Director of Liturgy.

To ensure beautiful and inspirational music to support the flow of the liturgy, we recommend that you select an organist or pianist who is very familiar with Catholic liturgy. Please contact an organist/pianist as soon as possible after the wedding date is confirmed (a listing is available from your Wedding Coordinator or the Parish Office). Soloists from the parish are also available. A song leader or cantor is needed for leading congregational singing. Electronic music (e.g. CDs, MP3 recordings, electric guitars) is not to be used in a wedding liturgy.

The bride and groom may select other musicians if they wish, but the musicians must be familiar with Catholic liturgy. While musicians are not required to attend the wedding rehearsal, it may be helpful for them to do so. Please discuss this with them.

#### 6. May we write our own vows?

No. The vows are always proclaimed as written in the wedding ritual.

#### 7. What about a Unity Candle?

A unity candle is not part of the official marriage rite. The marriage rite consists of your statement of intention, exchange of vows, blessing and exchange of rings, and the nuptial blessing. *These are the symbols of the sacrament of marriage.* All focus and care of doing these symbols well (i.e. loud and clear) is what is needed to communicate your oneness as husband and wife.

The unity candle is **not permitted** when the marriage rite is celebrated within the Mass. (This is a policy of the Diocese of Madison.) This is because the Eucharist is the Church's primary and most excellent sign of unity with Christ and with one another. Thus the sacramental unity manifested in the marriage rite is further manifested and enhanced by the sacramental unity of the Mass.

If you like, a unity candle works well after the wedding as a reminder of what took place at the wedding liturgy in the church. You may want to light such a candle at the reception as a meal prayer, signifying your intent of keeping faith and prayer as part of your marriage. Also, the unity candle works well in your home on each anniversary, recalling the prayerful moments of pronouncing your vows. At the lighting of the unity candle on each anniversary, you could renew your vows to each other and ask Christ's presence to guide you as you continue to grow in faith and love. (A sample prayer for the lighting of the unity candle at your reception and on each of your anniversaries is on the back page.)

#### 8. Special Notes:

- **Reception lines following the ceremony in the church are discouraged because the church is a sacred place. Whenever possible, we encourage the reception line to be held at the reception.**
- We do not allow the use of an aisle runner for safety reasons.
- **Any evident use of alcoholic beverages by members of the wedding party, especially on church premises including the parking lot, will be grounds for stopping the wedding. Be aware that consumption of alcohol before the wedding by bride or groom could result in annulling a sacramental marriage!**
- No pets allowed in the wedding ceremony or on the church premises.
- The church does not have the proper facilities to provide group childcare during the wedding ceremony. Therefore, the gathering space in the back of church is not to be used for group childcare service.

## Fees for Service

Wedding Coordinator ..... \$225

Musicians – establish their own fees  
Fees paid directly to musicians

Servers.....\$20

Priest or Deacon

While a stipend is not mandatory it  
is left to the discretion of the  
couple.



### *Praying with the Unity Candle*

*(as a meal prayer at your reception, on each anniversary)*

*Loving God, our Creator,  
We bless you and praise your name,  
You who made us in your image and likeness.  
We light this candle which will be forever  
a symbol of what we committed to each  
other at our wedding ceremony.*

*In the beginning you made man and woman,  
So that they might enter a communion of life  
and love.*

*Look with kindness on our marriage;  
Grace us with all that we need to continue in  
fidelity to each other,  
To grow in love amid the joys and struggles  
of our life together.*

*We praise and thank you, God, for your  
faithfulness to us.  
Grant us all that we need in our marriage.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*