

MOTHER OF SORROWS PARISH
4202 Old William Penn Highway
Murrysville, PA 15668
(724) 733-8870

MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

Marriage is a holy bond and a union between a free and capable man and woman made for life in the presence of God and two witnesses. For two validly baptized Christians, it is also a sacrament of Jesus Christ, a special sign through which Christ gives grace to enrich family life.

Marriage is both a religious and a civil ceremony, which affects the church and society as well as the spouses and their children. Therefore, the Catholic Church has an obligation to assist its members to a proper, holy and adequate preparation and celebration of this vocation.

Current regulations concerning marriage in the Diocese of Greensburg and our parish are listed below.

- 1) You must speak to a priest or deacon before any date is set or any arrangements are made concerning the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, whether it be a Nuptial Mass or a Nuptial Ceremony.
- 2) Visit Deacon Dan Frescura at Mother of Sorrows parish office building at least one year in advance. At this time you will:
 - a) Ascertain your freedom to marry
 - b) Establish a tentative date, time, and place for the actual wedding. (NOTE: **NO DEFINITE DATE CAN BE CONFIRMED UNTIL ALL REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN MET**)
- 3) Complete the FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study) instrument.
- 4) The Catholic party must present a recent baptismal certificate (**dated no more than six months prior to the wedding**) from the church of baptism. In the case of a mixed marriage (people of different religions) the non-Catholic party should also submit a baptismal certificate, if available.
Please note: Marriages between a Roman Catholic and a non-Catholic are to be celebrated with a Nuptial Ceremony and not a Nuptial Mass.
- 5) The couple is required to participate in an acceptable marriage preparation program, such as: the Sponsor Couple Program, the Engaged Encounter weekend, Marriage Preparation classes, or other approved program. This should be completed far in advance of the wedding. If the Sponsor Couple program is used, you must contact Deacon Dan to set up the initial meeting with the sponsor couple.
- 6) The bride and the groom will be required to sign a statement of intention. (MA form)
- 7) Each of you must have two witnesses (four witnesses total) who have known you very well since the age of 16 sign an affidavit that you are free and willing to enter Christian Marriage (parents are preferred). (MB form)
- 8) When a Catholic wishes to marry a person of a different religion, the Catholic party is asked to sign a statement reaffirming your intent to remain Catholic and to do all in your power to share the faith with your children by having them baptized and reared Catholic. The priest or deacon then writes to the Bishop's office to obtain dispensation or permission (ME form).

- 9) Weddings at Mother of Sorrows Parish are usually celebrated on Saturdays at 2:30 p.m. Please realize that this time is arranged so as not to interfere with other Sacraments or parish functions. Due to our Mass and Confession schedule, all preparations, photographs, etc. should take place no earlier than 2:00 p.m. and should be completed before 4:00 p.m. Because of the penitential nature of Lent, we do not encourage the celebration of marriage during the Lenten season. If the marriage is to be held during Lent, the celebration should be subdued.
- 10) The Pennsylvania Civil Marriage License is valid for only sixty days and should be obtained from a courthouse (in the state of Pennsylvania) within the time period prior to the wedding. The license must be brought to the priest or deacon at least a week before the wedding date.
- 11) It is not necessary to place a deposit on the wedding. All monetary offerings should be brought to the rehearsal and clearly marked.
- 12) The basic offering for the wedding is \$500.00. This amount covers the Mass stipend, church offering and the Music Director. Please write two checks and bring them with you on the wedding day.
 - The first check should be made payable to “**Mother of Sorrows Parish.**” In the amount of \$300.00 and given to the priest or deacon.
 - The second check should be made payable to “Will Smith” the music director in the amount of \$200.00 and given to him.
- 13) Our Director of Music, Will Smith, will coordinate ALL music for weddings. Please email him wsmith@dioceseofgreensburg.org. Arrangements for a soloist, instrumentalists, etc. are extra and should be discussed with the music director and the priest in plenty of time prior to the ceremony. All church regulations on liturgical music must be followed. Will Smith will also assist with any program you may want to use. **A draft copy of the program is to be approved by Will Smith prior to printing and distribution.**
- 14) It is strongly recommended that a cantor of professional caliber be present for the Nuptial Mass. The Music Director can provide a quality cantor from our parish if the need arises. A gift for the cantor is \$100.00. Please refer to the music guide for details. The gift for the cantor is \$100.00.
- 15) \$30.00 is for the servers. There should be two envelopes labeled “Server” containing \$15.00 each. (These gifts should be in cash.)
- 16) If both parties are Catholic, the wedding is to be celebrated with a Nuptial Mass. If your marriage is of mixed religion, it is celebrated in a Nuptial Ceremony, that is, without a Mass but with the Liturgy of the Word, vows, prayers and the Nuptial Blessing.
- 17) Arrange the scripture readings and ceremonies with the priest or deacon, using the booklet “TOGETHER FOR LIFE.” This booklet will be given to you on your first visit. Complete the selection sheet in the back of the book and give it to the priest or deacon when you meet with him one month prior to the wedding.

OTHER INFORMATION

- 1) Choose a day and time for rehearsal. This is usually done at 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. on the eve of the wedding. **REMINDER: The church is a sacred place. Attire and conduct should always respect the fact that Mother of Sorrows is a “House of Prayer.” Discuss church etiquette with your wedding party if necessary.**

- 2) We advise the Catholic members of the wedding party to receive the Sacrament of Penance prior to the wedding.
- 3) If a flower girl and ring bearer are used, they should be old enough to fulfill their roles without being coaxed, bribed, etc. Flowers are not to be strewn in the church.
- 4) No alcoholic beverages are permitted anywhere on the church property.
- 5) No rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, etc. are permitted either inside or outside the church. We also highly discourage the release of balloons, live birds, butterflies, etc.
- 6) Floral presentations may be given to the mothers of the couple and flowers may be placed before the statue of the Blessed Mother. However these are not essential to the Marriage ceremony itself.
- 7) The lighting of a Unity Candle is forbidden in the church. If you feel it is necessary we recommend it to be used at the reception.
- 8) Flowers are to remain in the church for the Sunday Masses. No tape is to be used on the pews. Pew hooks will be made available on request. You are responsible for their return immediately following the ceremony. **Florists must check the parish schedule during office hours, Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. before decorating or bringing flowers, etc. to the church.**
- 9) The use of a floor crash (aisle runner) is not necessary and is highly discouraged.
- 10) Photographs are permitted before, during, and after the ceremony. However, no flash pictures are permitted during the ceremony. **Your photographer and/or videographer should consult with the priest no later than 20 minutes before the ceremony.** Because of photographs and time constraints the receiving line will be held at the reception hall and not at the end of the wedding. Please inform your photographer that no one is allowed in the sanctuary and not to take pictures from in front of the tabernacle.
- 11) A lector or lectors for the first two readings may be chosen. They must be practicing Catholics and should be present for the rehearsal.
- 12) We do not permit any candles attached to the pews or in the aisles. Also not permitted are garden arches, gazebos, additional candelabra, etc.
- 13) Gowns selected for the wedding should be chosen with the virtue of Christian modesty in mind.
- 14) In most cases, due to pastoral responsibilities, we are unable to attend the rehearsal dinner and reception. Please accept our regrets.
- 15) Please submit your new address and phone number to the church office prior to the wedding. If you are moving out of the area, you should register at the nearest Catholic parish as soon as possible.

If you have any questions regarding these guidelines or your marriage preparation plans, please E-mail Deacon Dan Frescura - dfrescura@dioceseofgreensburg.org