Holy Cross Catholic Church
Wedding Policy and Procedures

Revised: 11/6/2026

Holy Cross Catholic Church
144 Wears Valley Road, Pigeon Forge, TN 37863, USA
(865) 429-5587
www.holycrosscatholicchurchtn.org

Wedding Policy and Procedures

The clergy, staff, and parishioners of Holy Cross Catholic Church rejoice with you in your engagement to one another, and we will walk with you as you approach one of the most important days in your life, the beginning of the Sacred Covenant of Christian Marriage.

In asking to be married in the Catholic Church, you are publicly proclaiming your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and asking to live as disciples of Christ in the Sacrament of Marriage. The sacred liturgy of your wedding, which begins your married life by the solemn exchange of marital consent, is above all else an act of worship, and we will help you prepare both for that happy day and for the lifetime of marriage that follows your nuptial liturgy.

We understand that you are concerned to have every detail of your wedding carefully planned and well executed, and we will work with you to ensure that the sacred liturgy is a beautiful and memorable event for you and your families and friends. We ask you to remember that your wedding, although an intensely personal moment for you, is not a private event; rather, it is a public celebration of one of the seven Sacraments given to the Church by the Lord Jesus. For this reason, we must take care to ensure that the sacred liturgy is celebrated according to the mind of the Church and in conformity with liturgical law and local custom.

Marriage is a Sacrament

- A Sacrament is a visible sign, instituted by Christ, to "give grace"; they are "helps" for the Christian life.
- Marriage is a Sacrament between a man and a woman that makes present to the Church the Mystery of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom joined to His Bride, The Church.
- Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is primarily, then, a religious event as opposed to principally a social occasion.
- To be married in the Catholic Church at least one party in the marriage must be a practicing Catholic and ordinarily should be a registered member of Holy Cross parish or a registered member of another parish.
- Marriage preparation should be done in accordance with the guidelines established by the Diocese of Knoxville which can be found online at www.dioknox.org/marriage.

Necessary Documents

- Recently-issued Certificate of Baptism with notations (within last 6 months) for the Catholic party(s). It is your responsibility to obtain a Baptismal Certificate that has been issued within the past (6) months. It is needed for each Catholic party being married.
- Pre-Nuptial Investigation (done with the priest or deacon)
- Affidavit of Free Status "freedom to marry"
- Marriage License at rehearsal
- "Picture of Love" or "Engaged Encounter" retreat for engaged couples

NOTE: *The Civil Marriage License must be presented to the priest at the rehearsal, if not before. Arrangements need to be made so that the proper ecclesiastical paperwork is present in the parish office in the hands of the Parish Secretary two weeks prior to the wedding. If the paperwork is not in hand, the wedding is subject to cancellation.*

Reserving a Wedding Date/Time

In order to ensure that the couple planning to get married is aware of and has approved all preparations and changes, all arrangements are to be made by the bride or groom personally. The staff and clergy will not deal with any third party in making reservations or in planning a wedding. It is important that those making an adult commitment also handle the details of the wedding personally.

Arrangements for your wedding should be made with the Parish Office at least four (4) months prior to the desired date.

The date and time of your wedding will be established and confirmed only after having completed the pre-nuptial investigation with one of the clergy of Holy Cross, and having assigned a member of the clergy to witness the marriage. If the marriage preparation is taking place outside Holy Cross parish, the results of the pre-nuptial investigation done by a priest or deacon in another parish should be reported to Holy Cross in writing as soon as possible so that the date may be confirmed. There is also a fee due at the time of scheduling to request the date (see the section on Fees below). Once all the required information and the fee have been received by the parish office, a letter will be mailed to you giving written confirmation of your wedding date and time. This letter will include reminders of the other items that you will need to arrange before your wedding.
Please note that your wedding is not reserved at Holy Cross until you receive this letter.

Church Data

Center aisle – 60 feet x 5 feet
Number of pews - 33
Seating capacity – 258 (not including balcony)

When Can Weddings Take Place at Holy Cross?

Ordinarily weddings are not celebrated during Lent and Holy Week due to the penitential character of these seasons in the Catholic Church. Only in extraordinary cases may weddings be scheduled during Lent. The public celebration of the sacraments in Lent should be characterized by a certain restraint.

> *"Those who seek to be married during Lent should be advised to take account of the penitential season and thus accept a limitation of outward signs of solemnity and festivity (Cf. Roman Ritual (henceforth RR), Rite of Marriage, no. 32."*
> *In practice this means that, whenever possible, marriages during Lent should be discouraged. At Lenten celebration of marriage, flowers could be used in moderation, but removed after the celebration) (Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year no. 92)*

What Must Be Done Before the Wedding?

A wedding is a simple ceremony lasting only a few minutes; a marriage is a lifetime commitment of sacrificial love in a solemn and sacramental covenant. Wedding preparation and marriage preparation are two different things, and preparing for the marriage is by far the more important.

The Church requires all engaged couples to attend an approved pre-marriage counseling program. We expect couples to participate in marriage preparation not simply because it is a "requirement" or a "hoop" to jump through, but because it is important for their life together. Our sole desire is that couples become married in Christ and stay married until death. Everything the Church does and asks is towards this end.

For parishioners of Holy Cross, you are invited to participate in our parish preparation program. Couples who live out of town/non-parishioners must make arrangements for approved pre-marriage counseling in their local area. Proper documentation of completion is required. Information should be available through your parish. For marriages prepared outside the Diocese of Knoxville, the marriage packet must be mailed 2 months prior to the scheduled wedding date.

The Wedding Ceremony Itself

By asking to have your wedding in a Catholic Church, you are choosing a Catholic wedding. The basic form of the wedding liturgy, then, is given by the Church, and no variation from that form is possible.

A Nuptial Mass should be celebrated if both the bride and groom are Catholic or if one is Catholic and both parties desire it. When one of the parties is not Catholic, the Marriage Rite Outside of Mass is usually performed. Mass usually lasts about forty-five minutes to an hour. Without Mass, the ceremony lasts about thirty minutes.

Within that basic form, the bride and groom may select the first and second readings and the Gospel from the set of readings given by the Church, readings which come from Sacred Scripture. No other readings are permitted.

Though sometimes used in other places (even some Catholic parishes), the "Unity Candle/Wedding Unity Sand" is not a part of the wedding liturgy or tradition of the Catholic Church, and its use is not

permitted at Holy Cross. There are no exceptions to this policy. In harmony with Catholic tradition, the bride may leave a flower/bouquet in front of the Blessed Virgin Mary, asking the intercession of Our Lady as did the couple at the wedding feast of Cana (see St. John 2:1-11).

Candles, Liturgical Furnishings, etc.

The furnishings for the sacred liturgy are provided by the church; this includes all vestments, books, candles and candlesticks, kneelers, chairs, and other elements as needed.

Who Will Officiate at Your Wedding?

The Pastor of Holy Cross is responsible for every sacramental celebration that takes place in this parish. He may delegate this to other Catholic priests or deacons who hold the necessary faculties.

If you are a member of another parish and are using Holy Cross facilities, your priest or deacon may be invited to officiate at your wedding. Visiting clergy must obtain the required delegation from the Pastor, providing proof from his diocesan chancery (if he is not from the Diocese of Knoxville) that he is a priest or deacon in good standing. Delegation will only be granted when all of the required paperwork, permissions, and dispensations have been completed and sent to the Holy Cross Parish Office. Also, the visiting clergy must abide by Holy Cross wedding policies and only celebrate the liturgy according to the approved Catholic form. A letter will be mailed to him from the parish office, granting permission and specifying Holy Cross's wedding policies.

If you desire to invite a non-Catholic clergyman to participate in the wedding liturgy, you must submit a written request to the Pastor, giving the name, title, and address of the clergyman you want to invite. Non-Catholic clergy are permitted to participate in a Catholic wedding by their presence, but they cannot preside at the liturgy. The Catholic priest or deacon must read the Gospel, preach the homily, receive the wedding vows, and impart the Nuptial Blessing. The ritual of the Roman Catholic Church is always used, and the form of the celebration will always be the wedding outside of Mass when non-Catholic clergy are present.

Planning the Music For Your Wedding

All music and musician contracting for wedding liturgies at Holy Cross is coordinated through the Music Coordinator(s), in consultation with the bride and groom only.

Holy Cross's musicians are available to play for weddings at Holy Cross. The fees for Holy Cross musicians and a single cantor are not included as part of the Use of Church fee. Please consult the Music Coordinator with questions.

By the Pastor's directive, all music (besides the clergy parts) must be played/sung from the choir loft. Also, Church rubrics do not permit pre-recorded vocal or instrumental music to be played in the church.

A form is provided for your music selections. Please complete this form in consultation with the Music Coordinator and the musicians <u>at least one month prior to the wedding.</u>

How Much Does a Wedding Cost at Holy Cross?

Use of the Church Active parishioner	$500	This fee applies if you are currently an active, registered and contributing member of Holy Cross parish
Use of the Church Non-parishioner	$1000	This fee applies if you are not an active, registered member of Holy Cross parish or have only recently registered at the parish.

Clergy	No Fee	Customarily a gift is made.
Music Coordinator & Cantor	$100	Kent and Christine Voisin 865-771-4929 kentandchris@comcast.net *If any outside musicians are included, an additional $75 fee may be assessed for additional parish staff presence and coordination time*
Altar Servers	$25	After your wedding liturgy details are planned with the Wedding Liaison and Music Coordinator, a Holy Cross altar server will be assigned if needed (e.g., for Masses with incense) A gift to the server is appreciated.
Refundable Cleaning Deposit	$100	If the Church is left clean and in good order, this deposit will be returned. If not, Holy Cross will arrange cleaning service after the wedding.

The Use of the Church fee is due at the time of scheduling. Your wedding date and time cannot be reserved until this payment is received. If the wedding is canceled, a full refund is possible.

To pay Wedding fees, please make a check out to "Holy Cross Catholic Church" with the memo "Wedding of (Groom Last Name)-(Bride Last Name), (Date of Wedding)". Please make out a separate check for the Refundable Cleaning Deposit. We will distribute the fees to the proper allocated individual.

Why Do I have to Pay to Use a Church?

The money it takes to run Holy Cross day-to-day comes from the pockets of our contributing, hard-working parishioners. Holy Cross, while it is a beautiful church, does not maintain itself. Parishioners are asked to pay a nominal fee for their use of the church and to defray the costs of staff support for the wedding (organist, liaison, administrative, and cleaning staff). Non-parishioners are asked to pay a higher fee. The fee asked of non-parishioners is not about making money. We are a small parish, and our families and their contributions make it possible for the parish to exist at all. It would be unfair for the large number of non-parishioners who come for weddings to expect the parishioners of the parish to provide a place free of charge. Therefore, for people who are not contributing parishioners and want to use the church, we ask a larger fee to help make up the cost of keeping the building maintained, air conditioned/heated, and open.

Also, many people spend thousands of dollars on a reception, dresses, tuxes, etc., but don't want to budget for the church. This is unfair to the parishioners who are here every Sunday giving to the offertory.

Holy Cross Wedding Liaison

Holy Cross's wedding liaisons provide many important, vital functions before, during, and after the wedding. They serve to help the bride and groom and are responsible for implementing the policies and customs of Holy Cross. They will consult with the clergy, help with the rehearsal, give directions for the procession and placement of the wedding party, and ensure that the altar furnishings, candles, flowers and lights are properly set. The liaisons may be available to meet with the

photographer prior to the wedding, if desired. This cost is included as part of the fee for the use of the church.

Due to the unique nature of Catholic liturgy, a professional wedding director or wedding planner will not function in the role of wedding director or coordinator at either the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony.

The Witnesses – Best Man & Maid/Matron of Honor

While the entire assembly is a witness to your wedding, three individuals have a special role in the sacred liturgy for the Church. The Priest/Deacon acts as the Church's official witness. In addition, the roles usually call the best man and maid or matron of honor to fulfill the Church's requirement as the two other witnesses who formally attest to the fact that the wedding took place. They need not be Catholic or even baptized.

Decorum

Holy Cross is consecrated for worship of God, consequently, at all times proper reverence and respect must be maintained. Loud talking and unnecessary noise which might disturb the prayer of others is always to be avoided. Modesty in dress and comportment is to be observed. Additionally, receiving lines are appropriate at the reception, not at the church.

Food, Smoking, Alcohol, Cell Phones, etc.

No food or drink is permitted in Holy Cross before, during, or after the wedding and rehearsal. The use of chewing gum or tobacco is also prohibited in Holy Cross at all times.

The wedding party is expected to refrain from using any alcoholic beverages before both the rehearsal and the wedding. The wedding liaison has permission from the Pastor to remove from the church anyone under the influence of alcohol, including the bride or groom which would therefore postpone the wedding. Please remind everyone in the wedding party to preserve the sacred character of this event.

All cell phones must be turned off so that they may not disturb the sacred liturgy.

No rice, birdseed, confetti, bubbles, or glitter are to be used in the church, in front of the church, or on the sidewalk outside the church. These objects can be hazardous underfoot and/or difficult to clean up.

Lectors/Readers

At the wedding, the texts of Sacred Scripture must be proclaimed from the ambo, and the person who performs this function is called a lector. The lectors are practicing Catholics who preferably perform this ministry in their home parishes. Those whom you select should be good public speakers and must be at the rehearsal to practice the proclamation in the church. The Lectors read the First and Second readings.

Gift Bearers (Nuptial Mass Only)

Two people from the assembly may be invited to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine at a Nuptial Mass.

Decorations

Decoration of the church is the couple's responsibility. Bows for the pews may be used only if they are on a rubber band or plastic "pew clip." The use of adhesive tape, tacks or wires is not permitted. Glitter of any sort is prohibited.

If candelabra are used, a plastic sheet under the candelabra is required to prevent any accidents.

If you wish to use the kneelers for your wedding, someone from the church will set them up.

An aisle canvas, if desired, must be rented by the wedding party directly from the florist.

Availability of the church for decoration is always dependent on pastoral needs of the parish such as funerals and devotions.

Flowers

Couples may choose a florist and choose arrangements freely within the appropriate season and size specifications of Holy Cross. The flowers may remain near the altar after the wedding as a gift to God. Flower arrangements may be placed on both sides of the altar, and in the vestibule. All other areas must be approved by the wedding liaison.

Holy Cross does not coordinate altar flowers or flowers for the bridal party. However, flower delivery must be coordinated with the parish office in advance, to coordinate with other activities in the parish. Please be sure to provide the name and telephone number of your florist so that we may contact him/her if necessary. Flower arrangements may not be coordinated with any individual or parishioner, but must be outsourced from a florist with an active business license.

Understanding that there may already be other flowers in Holy Cross sanctuary prior to the wedding, it is not permissible for those flowers to be removed. They may be set behind the altar during the wedding, if desired, but the bridal party must ensure that they are correctly placed back on the altar.

Due to liability and insurance, it is not permissible for anyone other than parish staff to use a ladder to hang or place anything outside or inside on Holy Cross property.

Wedding Rehearsal

The rehearsal is normally scheduled the day before the wedding at 4pm. Regular church liturgy and devotional activities as well as the parish staff schedule require that rehearsals begin promptly at the scheduled time. This is a simple courtesy to all involved. Couples are cautioned to instruct the wedding party of proper church behavior and decorum. Normally the clergy that will officiate will conduct rehearsals in the church. Please refrain from alcohol consumption before the rehearsal. All of the people who will be in the wedding such as lectors, groomsmen, bridesmaids etc. should be at the rehearsal.

NOTE: *The Civil Marriage License must be presented to the priest at the rehearsal, if not before. Arrangements need to be made so that the proper ecclesiastical paperwork is present in the parish*

office in the hands of the Parish Secretary two weeks prior to the wedding. If the paperwork is not in hand, the wedding is subject to cancellation.

Dressing for the Wedding

Due to limited facilities, everyone must arrive dressed for the wedding. We are not able to provide an appropriate place for the wedding party to dress. If changing rooms are required, private arrangements should be made with one of the neighboring inns or hotels. The groom, groomsmen, ushers, and greeters should arrive at the church at least one hour prior to the ceremony. The bride and her attendants should arrive shortly before the start of the wedding and be directed by the wedding liaison to a waiting area until the wedding begins.
It is essential to begin the liturgy on time due to the schedule of confessions, Mass, and other commitments at Holy Cross.

The Marriage License

Please obtain the wedding license and give it to the priest or deacon at the rehearsal. It will be signed immediately following your wedding liturgy. No wedding is permitted at Holy Cross without this document. A wedding cannot be celebrated without this civil license, and the wedding rehearsal will not proceed without this license.

Photographs

To protect the sacred character of your wedding liturgy, the requirements for photography at Holy Cross may be different from your experience of other weddings. Your photographer must speak with our wedding liaison to review these policies prior to the wedding. Holy Cross reserves the right to exclude from working at our church any photographer who has not abided by these policies in the past. Absolutely no flash photography or external lighting is permitted during the wedding liturgy, as this detracts from the sacred action.

If a video is to be made, all the above restrictions also apply. The videographer should consult the wedding liaison prior to setting up cameras.

Receptions and Rehearsal Dinners

The Holy Cross Catholic Church exists to proclaim Jesus Christ by offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, administering the sacraments, and supporting parish life, and serving the diverse communities who meet under one roof. As such, the parish must accommodate a full schedule of ministries and events that support the parish life and serve the broader community. Because of this prime purpose, Holy Cross is not available to be scheduled as a “venue” for private parties, including wedding receptions, rehearsal dinners, or other private events, that would interfere with the primary activities of the parish.