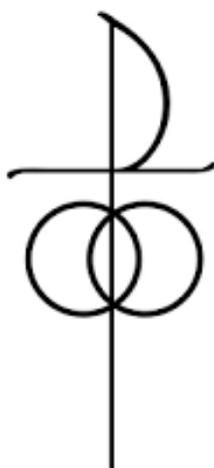


**PREPARING FOR THE
SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE
AND CELEBRATING YOUR WEDDING
AT ST. CATHERINE'S**

*with special considerations for weddings
which take place according to COVID-19 protocols*



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Congratulations!

As you begin this journey of preparing to receive the Sacrament of Marriage, we congratulate you, and will be happy to assist you in this process. You are to be commended for taking the step of marrying *sacramentally*, and not just civilly. This is a beautiful witness to everyone that, for disciples of Jesus Christ, Marriage is intended to be a sacrament, and not merely a civil contract.

There are so many logistical preparations connected with a wedding, but the most important preparation of all is your *spiritual, interior* preparation, because **your wedding celebration will last for a day, but your marriage will last for a lifetime.**

Who may marry at St. Catherine of Siena Parish?

It is the custom of the Catholic Church that marriages take place in the parish church of either the bride or the groom. Anyone who is not registered in the parish must discuss, with the Pastor, the reasons why they wish to be married at St. Catherine's. If permission is granted, a letter of permission must be obtained from the Pastor of the parish of which the Catholic party is a member.

Planning the Marriage

Arrangements for the Marriage are to be made by the couple themselves. Parents may make the first contact with St. Catherine's if the bride or groom live out of town, but from then on, the couple themselves must communicate personally with one of the parish priests before any date is finalized or other arrangements are made. Normally, notification for Marriage at St. Catherine's is to be given at least eight months in advance.

Scheduling the Wedding

Times for wedding ceremonies are determined by the parish schedule. Weddings may be scheduled as follows:

Thursday or Friday evening Weddings:	5:30 p.m.
Saturday Weddings:	11:00 a.m., 1:30 p.m., or 5:30 p.m.

** Note that weddings may not take place on a Holy Day or on the eve of a Holy Day, nor may weddings take place from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday.*

Marriage Preparation Program

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport requires a marriage preparation program for each couple married in the Diocese. The couple must register online at <https://formationreimagined.org/marriage-prep-reimagined/>

If either the bride or the groom lives out of town, and the marriage is to be celebrated at St. Catherine's, they must attend the Pre-Marital Instruction required by the Diocese in which either lives. Please consult the website of that archdiocese or diocese for more information.

Paperwork

Marriage involves a public contract in the eyes of both the Church and civil government. Certain documentation is therefore required.

1. **Sacramental Certification** – (Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation)

Catholics: A newly issued Baptismal certificate is required (no older than six months at the time it is presented to the priest). This means that a certificate kept among family documents, perhaps from the date of Baptism itself, would not be sufficient. The Catholic party should also present documentation of their First Communion and Confirmation.

Non-Catholic Christians: Certification of Baptism must be presented. There is no such time limit as that placed on the Baptismal Certificate of the Catholic party. However, you must present a letter from a trustworthy witness, usually a parent, stating your marital status.

2. **Pre-Matrimonial Investigation (PMI)**

This is an affidavit signed by both parties to the marriage, giving basic information for Church records on the eligibility of both parties, as well as their awareness and acceptance of the Catholic understanding of marriage.

3. **Dispensations**

Dispensations are required for the marriage of a Catholic to a non-Catholic, whether or not the non-Catholic is Christian. To receive a dispensation for marriage to a non-Catholic, the Catholic must pledge to do all he or she is capable of, while respecting the conscience of the partner, to ensure the Baptism and Catholic upbringing of children. No pledge is required of the non-Catholic.

4. Civil Requirements

A couple planning marriage in the State of Connecticut *must* obtain a Marriage License from the Town Clerk's office, located in the Trumbull Town Hall. The license is valid for 65 days from the date of the application. The Trumbull Town Clerk may be reached at (203) 452-5037.

5. Marriage Records

Marriage records are kept in the Church Archives and in the office of the Town Clerk. A religious marriage certificate will be sent to the couple, and certification of marriage is available from the Town Clerk a few days after the ceremony.

Banns of Marriage

This is a traditional way of publicizing a marriage. The names of the bride and groom are published in the parish bulletin for the last three consecutive weekends before the marriage takes place

Who may witness the Marriage?

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Bride and Groom themselves celebrate the Sacrament, and the priest or deacon is the principal witness of the Church. Couples are invited to ask any of the parish clergy to officiate at their wedding ceremony. Priests or deacons from another parish, or who are friends or relatives of the Bride or Groom, are welcome to officiate at weddings here. The couple should communicate this request to the pastor early in the preparations. Should this be the case, the following are necessary:

- We ask that the priest send us a letter confirming his willingness to officiate at your wedding.
- The priest is asked to be present for the wedding rehearsal.
- The priest is asked to officiate at weddings in full accordance with the ROMAN MISSAL, THIRD EDITION, and with all liturgical norms of the Church.
- If the priest is from a diocese or religious community outside the Diocese of Bridgeport, it is necessary that his diocese or religious superior send to the Office of the Vicar General of the Diocese of Bridgeport a document called a Testimonial of Ministerial Suitability. Any of our parish clergy would be happy to assist you with this process.

During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, we ask that no clergy from outside the State of Connecticut take part in wedding liturgies at St. Catherine's.

The Best Man and the Maid or Matron of Honor are the principal lay witnesses to the marriage vows. They do not need to be Catholics.

Reading selections and ceremony preparation

The priest helping you prepare your marriage will also help plan your ceremony. Ample time should be set aside for this important event, so as to prepare the wedding ceremony without haste. *Together for Life*, a very helpful booklet, will be given to the couple to help them in choosing scripture readings for their ceremony.

Liturgical Music at Weddings

The music for your celebration should be carefully chosen, keeping in mind the solemnity of the occasion and the Church's guidelines for music in the sacred liturgy. The music must be suitable for use in the Catholic Church, and sung liturgical music must invite the participation of all present, and not merely entertain. Therefore, no secular music may be used.

Please contact the Director of Music at least *three months* before the wedding to arrange a music planning session. The Director of Music or his designee will be the organist for your wedding. The stipend the organist receives helps to support his livelihood, so organists from outside the parish are generally not permitted, except under extraordinary circumstances. In the event an outside organist is used, a bench fee of \$300.00 must be paid to the Director of Music, and the couple must still arrange a meeting for approval of all music and outside musicians.

A parish cantor is required for wedding liturgies in order to lead the assembly in those parts of the Liturgy that call for communal singing, and to serve as vocal soloist for selected solo vocal literature. Cantors from other parishes may be permitted with the approval of the Director of Music. In this case, cantors must be practicing Catholics, have proper vocal training as well as experience with the Catholic liturgy. If the couple wishes to have a friend or relative sing for their wedding, and the singer possesses the requisite vocal training but not the necessary experience as a cantor, a parish cantor would still be required, but the invited singer may perform a prelude vocal solo and one piece during the wedding liturgy.

While the organ will be the primary instrument at your wedding, instrumentalists such as harp, strings, flute or trumpet can enhance the music for your wedding liturgy. These instruments may be incorporated into your wedding as an addition to, but not in lieu of the organ. Please do not hire any outside musicians before meeting with the Director of Music. It is strongly preferred that couples use professional instrumentalists affiliated with our parish music program, as they perform regularly here and know the requirements of the liturgy as well as our musical customary. All instrumentalists are subject to final approval of the Director of Music. Please note that the logistics surrounding multiple musicians such as arranging music, mailings, phone calls, e-mails and extra rehearsal time may incur extra stipends for all musicians involved.

Many couples choose to make programs or worship aids for their guests, especially for those with many non-Catholic attendees. We encourage you to make a program for your wedding which will list the order of ceremony and the wedding party. Sample programs are available upon request, and programs can be done through a professional printing company, on your own, or through the music office, for an additional fee. Our Director of Music and Organist, **Dr. Bill Atwood**, can be reached at (203) 377-3133 ext. 24 or by e-mail at: WilliamAtwood@stcatherinetrumbull.com

Wedding Coordinator

The Wedding Coordinator for the Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena is **Mrs. Lane Whitmoyer**. She is a member of our parish, and will coordinate the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. On the day of your wedding, she will organize and manage all aspects of the ceremony. **Please contact her as far in advance as possible** to notify her of your wedding, and to ask any questions you may have. She may be reached at lane.bodwhit@gmail.com

Altar Servers

The parish schedules one or two altar servers for each wedding. If the couple has relatives or friends who are altar servers at another parish, and whom they wish to serve the Mass, they should discuss this with the priest.

The Wedding Party

Though the members of the wedding party need not be Catholic, it is expected that all will be respectful of the spirit of a Catholic wedding ceremony. There must be a Best Man and a Maid or Matron of Honor. There are no church requirements about other members of the wedding party. Children may be part of the wedding party as Ring Bearers or Flower Girls, but, for everyone's sake, we strongly recommend that they be of sufficient maturity as not to distract anyone's attention from the liturgy.

Ecumenical Weddings

Non-Catholic clergy are welcome to attend and take part in ecumenical weddings at Saint Catherine's, at the discretion of the celebrant. In some cases, the couple may wish to seek a dispensation from the form of a Catholic marriage. In that case, the priest may take part in a wedding ceremony in a non-Catholic place of worship, with the non-Catholic clergy as the principal officiant and the priest also taking part.

During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, we ask that no clergy from outside the State of Connecticut take part in wedding liturgies at St. Catherine's.

Conduct of the Wedding Party and Guests

Because your wedding will take place in a church, which is a House of God (as distinct from a gathering hall or an event space) it is the expectation of the Church that all guests will maintain a respectful and reverent attitude in church, one that is appropriate for prayer and recollection. Ushers should do their best to see that this is respected. Likewise, the Bridal Party is asked to maintain an attitude of attention and reverence during the entire ceremony.

There can be **no smoking** in the vestibule, sacristy, or main body of the church. There can be **no consumption of alcoholic beverages** in the church building or on church grounds, either before or after the ceremony. **This policy must be strictly observed, and anyone in violation of this conduct will be asked to leave the premises.**

Length of the Ceremony

A common question of many couples is the length of the ceremony. A ceremony which takes place outside of Mass normally lasts about 45 minutes. A ceremony performed within Mass normally lasts about an hour and fifteen minutes.

Florists and Flowers

If there are other weddings scheduled on the same day, the couple may want to consult with the other couple to share the cost of flowers. We would suggest two arrangements: one for each side of the altar. **Pedestals** are available in the sacristy for florists to use. Please inform your florist that **no adhesive tape, duct tape, or wire** may be used on the pews, since these would damage the wood and/or its finish. Florists are also asked to decorate no earlier than an hour before the ceremony. For reasons of safety, aisle runners are not allowed in our church.

Pew torches, which add a festive and elegant touch, are available upon request. This is complimentary, and will be a gift from our Parish to you, should you choose this option.

Unity Candle

Although sometimes seen at weddings, the "Unity Candle" is actually not a part of the Catholic marriage ritual. Therefore, if a Unity Candle lighting is to take place, it must take place outside of the ceremony, using the Unity Candle provided by the Parish. Store-bought Unity Candles are not permitted.

Photographers

It is important to have good pictorial records of great occasions. Based on our experience, it is necessary that all of us ensure that the photographer conduct himself or herself with the utmost respect for the dignity and sacredness of the Sacrament which is taking place.

All photographers for weddings at Saint Catherine's must be certified professionals, and they must keep a respectful distance from the couple during the ceremony.

Our Wedding Coordinator, Lane Whitmoyer, will review our procedure with the still photographer and the videographer prior to the ceremony. The procedures outlined by our wedding coordinator must be followed.

Confetti, Rice and Balloons

The throwing of confetti, rice, or birdseed, and the releasing of balloons are not permitted, since these would litter the church and parish grounds and, in some cases, present a potential tripping hazard for guests and parishioners.

Special considerations due to COVID-19 protocols

Number of Attendees

As of June, 2020, state and diocesan guidelines allow for only **100 persons or fewer** in church for any public Mass or liturgy. This number includes clergy, musicians, and altar servers. Also, please be aware of State laws regarding quarantine protocols for visitors from out of state. We ask that any visitors from states which are experiencing high levels of COVID-19 refrain from attending wedding liturgies here, for the health and safety of all.

Masks

As long as all Phase-II protocols are followed for the Mass or ceremony, **neither the bride and groom nor the celebrant are required to wear masks**. However, the celebrant will stand six feet apart from the couple during the reception of the Consent and the blessing and exchange of rings. **It is necessary for everyone else attending the wedding, including the members of the wedding party, to wear a face mask for the entire Mass or liturgy.**

Couples should be sure to include the face-mask requirement policy information with the wedding invitation. Couples are encouraged to provide a limited supply of face-masks at the church in the event guests arrive without one OR to provide ceremony favor handouts (similar to party favors) of face-masks and individual-sized hand sanitizer.

Readers and Gift Bearers

During ordinary, non-pandemic times, some designated family members or friends of the couple customarily participate in the Liturgy by proclaiming the Readings and/or by bringing up the gifts of bread and wine to be used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Due to COVID-19 protocols, we regret that it is not possible to extend this option at the present time. The readings will be proclaimed by the priest or deacon celebrant. The procession with offertory gifts will be omitted, and the Sign of Peace will be omitted as well.

The reception of Holy Communion

Because of the transmissibility of COVID-19, because of differing comfort levels with the reception of Holy Communion, and for the health and safety of our clergy, we ordinarily will not distribute Holy Communion at wedding Masses celebrated according to COVID-19 protocols, except to the Bride and Groom themselves. An announcement in this regard will be made at the appropriate time, and all will be invited to spend that time in quiet reflection.

Livestreaming

We have the capability to livestream the wedding for anyone who is not able to attend in person. If you would like the wedding to be livestreamed, let us know, and we will give your family the access instructions to pass along to anyone you'd like.

Fees and Stipends

The following fees support the livelihood of those providing these services, so these fees are standard:

- Organist \$ 300.00 (Base)
- Cantor/Soloist \$ 200.00
- Wedding Coordinator \$ 150.00

There is, of course, no fee for a Sacrament. The following are suggested stipends, which the couple may wish to offer to the parish, for use towards utilities and other operational expenses, and for the Altar Server(s):

- Church \$ 350.00
- Altar Server(s) \$ 20.00 each

Please do not hesitate to ask any questions of the priest or deacon with whom you are working as you prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage.

Our whole Parish will be praying for you as you approach the unique and wonderful day of your Wedding.

God bless you!