

St. Gertrude Parish | Marriage Guidelines

Initial appointment

Preparation for your marriage begins by contacting Father James Loew, OSB, for an appointment at least six months before the proposed marriage date. During this interview, the whole preparation process will be explained; your initial questions will be answered; the freedom of both parties to enter into marriage will be determined; and an appointment will be scheduled for the couple to complete the FOCCUS program.

Marriage preparation

It is a requirement of the Diocese of Greensburg and the Roman Catholic Church that every couple preparing for marriage must receive proper preparation and instruction prior to the marriage. This requirement may be fulfilled by attending an "Engaged Encounter Weekend," or by enrolling in the "Couple-to-Couple Marriage Program."

In addition to one of the above, there will be appointments with the priest to discuss other aspects of your marriage, to complete the necessary pre-marriage forms and to plan the marriage liturgy.

Times scheduled for marriage liturgy

Marriages are usually celebrated on Saturdays. The marriage liturgy may begin no later than 1:00 p.m., and the church must be vacated no later than 3:00 p.m. The pastor's obligation for confessions and vigil Masses begins at 3:15 p.m. *Weddings are not permitted during Lent.*

Marriage within Mass or outside of Mass

Each couple has the choice of being married within Mass or outside of Mass. Marriage within Mass is the celebration of Mass, like on Sundays, with the rite of marriage taking place after the homily; the celebration culminates in holy Communion, receiving the body and blood of Christ.

Marriage outside of Mass consists of the introductory rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the rite of marriage, the blessing and dismissal. Marriage outside of Mass does not include the Liturgy of the Eucharist or holy Communion.

Couples from different Christian churches or religious backgrounds entering into an interfaith marriage must remember that if their marriage is celebrated within Mass, only those who are Catholic may receive holy Communion. Those who are not Catholic, including the other spouse, cannot receive holy Communion.

Baptismal record

All baptized persons contemplating marriage must present copies of their baptismal record. The baptism certificate of a party who is not Catholic may be the original or a recent copy. The Catholic party's baptism certificate must be a recent copy, dated within six months of the proposed marriage date.

If you were baptized at St. Gertrude Parish, the necessary information is recorded here and the priest will gather the information himself. If you were baptized elsewhere, you will have to contact the church of baptism and request that a baptism certificate be sent to St. Gertrude Parish.

Participation of other Catholic priests

Other Catholic priests who may be friends or relatives of the couple are most welcome to participate in the marriage liturgy. They may celebrate, or concelebrate with the pastor, the marriage Mass, or the rite of marriage if a Mass is not celebrated.

If you wish to invite another Catholic priest to participate, please inform Father James, as soon as possible, and he will discuss with you the details and proper procedure for inviting the priest.

Interfaith marriage in other churches

For a valid marriage, a Catholic is required to be married in the presence of a priest and two witnesses.

In the case of an interfaith marriage and with sufficiently good reasons, the Catholic bishop may grant a dispensation that allows a Catholic to enter into a valid marriage that is celebrated in a non-Catholic church without a priest present.

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All other requirements of the Catholic Church must be followed and met. The required marriage preparation must be completed. The necessary forms and some additional information and forms must also be filled out and submitted to the bishop. Once the dispensation is granted, the marriage may be celebrated in the non-Catholic church.

Music

Couples must meet with the music minister to choose the music program for the marriage liturgy. This helps eliminate "last minute" scheduling problems. Only approved sacred liturgical songs are appropriate before, during and after the celebration in church. Other music should be reserved for the reception.

If you desire a vocalist, the organist must meet with this vocalist several weeks in advance of the marriage in the event more than one rehearsal is required. The same applies to instrumentalists who are required to rehearse with the organist. The offering for the organists is stated later in this policy.

Altar servers

Father James does not use altar servers at weddings. If you have a relative whom you would like to serve at your wedding, please discuss this with Father James.

The priest

The priest may accept an offering from the couple. The bishop has designated a stipend for officiating at a marriage in the Diocese of Greensburg. Please refer to the section on fees later in this policy.

Reserving the church

When the priest assisting the couple is satisfied that the couple has fulfilled all requirements of the Parish Marriage Policy, the couple's pending date of marriage will be recorded in the parish Mass book.

Decorations and appointments

Floral and artistic decorations are to enhance, not hinder, the celebration of the sacrament. Liturgical guidelines for decorating will be followed.

1. **Flowers:** Floral arrangements are a gift to the church and remain there after the wedding.
2. **Pew Bows:** If pew bows are desired, they are to be provided by the couple; many florists provide these bows. The bows are to be attached to the pews by use of rubber bands and **not** by use of tape or wire.
3. **Candles:** The use of candles, other than the altar candles, in the sanctuary (altar area) or in the nave (pew area where guests are seated) **is not** permitted.
4. **Additional Furniture:** The use of any furniture, props, etc., other than chairs and kneelers provided by the parish **is not** permitted. Space is limited and movement **must not** be obstructed.

Presentation of flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary

If you choose this option for your wedding, it will take place prior to the final blessing and dismissal. The bride and groom, together, place the flowers before the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Presentation of roses to parents

This presentation may take place during the exchange of the sign of peace.

License

A civil license is required for marriage in Pennsylvania. It is the couple's responsibility to acquire this license. *You must bring this license to the rehearsal.*

Rehearsal

Rehearsals are normally scheduled for the evening before the wedding, but they may be held on some other day before the wedding. Check with the priest to schedule the rehearsal. Rehearsals last approximately 45 minutes if all involved in the wedding are on time.

Please be prompt. The possession and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages on church property **are not** permitted.

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The organist and soloist need not attend the rehearsal.

Photographs

The taking of pictures in the church during the ceremony is permitted by a professional photographer. The photographer is to contact the priest before the wedding ceremony.

The church is not a photographic studio; therefore, we ask for reverence and decorum during the taking of posed pictures, before and after the ceremony. The photos must be completed by 3:00 p.m.

No photographers are permitted in the sanctuary.

Video cameras

Video cameras are permitted. Those taking the videos must see the priest prior to the ceremony.

The crash

The use of a crash or aisle runner is not required. If the couple chooses this option they must provide it, and the couple must make arrangements to remove it. *Dimensions: 22 yards or 66 feet.*

Throwing of rice, bird seed, confetti, etc.

Due to the hunger in the world, the mess incurred, the cleanup involved and the potential hazard presented, the throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, etc., is prohibited in, around and on church grounds.

Balloons

The practice of releasing balloons outdoors after the ceremony is not encouraged. Balloons are made of elastic materials that may become litter and/or a threat to wildlife. Tanks of helium gas are not permitted on church property.

Registration in the parish after marriage

After your marriage, it is important for you to register as members of a Catholic church in the area in which you will be residing. Please contact the parish office if you will be living in our area after you marriage so that we can properly register you as members of St. Gertrude Parish.

If you will be living elsewhere, please register as members of the parish there as soon as possible. Regardless of where you will be living, please practice your faith in our Lord Jesus by practicing the corporal works of mercy, praying, attending Mass and receiving the sacraments.

Fees

1. Priest's stipend

- a. A check for \$250 should be made payable to the priest who presides at the wedding. This stipend amount is set forth by the Diocese of Greensburg. This may be given directly to him at any time prior to the wedding ceremony.

2. Organists & vocalists

- a. The stipend for the organist is \$100 and the vocalist also receives \$100.
- b. Visiting vocalists and instrumentalists are privately contracted and they are the responsibility of the couple being married.