

The Sacrament of Matrimony

Marriage Preparation Guidelines



St. Lucy and St. Monica Parishes

254 Merrimack St.

Methuen, MA 01844

978-683-1193

Congratulations

The pastor, deacons, staff, and community of St. Lucy and St. Monica Parishes in Methuen congratulate you on your engagement. We are very happy to help make your wedding a joyful and spiritual day for you and your families. Perhaps most importantly, we wish to offer our best to you so that you may witness the Sacrament of Matrimony for many years to come.

This publication is presented to aid you with the process of marriage preparation and to acquaint you with our parish policies.

Marriage Preparation

There are some logical steps to follow in order to be married in the Catholic Church. Your wedding is, above all, a sacramental encounter “where the two become one flesh” through the power of God and the gift of yourselves to one another.

The parishes of the Archdiocese of Boston require a six-month period of notification and preparation (at a minimum). In accord with Archdiocesan Policy, a DATE for the wedding CANNOT be reserved “over the phone.” An in-person meeting must take place before a wedding can be scheduled.

Marriage Preparation ordinarily entails three meetings in the parish with the priest or deacon and

the Wedding Rehearsal. In addition, you must attend a Marriage Preparation workshop at a time suitable to your schedule but before our second meeting.

First Meeting

At your first meeting with the priest or deacon you can anticipate the following:

1. Introduction, information and expectations

It will be a time for introductions and the exchange of basic contact information. The priest/deacon will learn what brought you to this day, and you will become familiar with the Church's vision of marriage and the steps one takes to receive this wonderful sacrament.

2. Preliminary Interrogatory

The Preliminary Interrogatory, commonly called "the Green Sheet" is a document that you will complete in the company of the priest or deacon. Essentially, the Preliminary Interrogatory is an affidavit, taken under oath that ascertains your freedom to marry in the Catholic Church.

3. Scheduling

After your freedom to marry has been established, we can then select the date of your wedding. Weddings are scheduled with several factors in mind, such as the times of *other parish liturgies and the availability of clergy*. Sunday weddings are not normally scheduled due to the pastoral demands of the clergy such as Sunday Mass, Baptismal catechesis and celebrations,

religious education and youth ministry involvement. With these thoughts in mind, the following times are available for your Wedding:

Weekdays	no earlier than 4:00pm
Saturdays	11:00am-1:30pm or 5:30-7:00pm

4. Your spirituality and your faith

Before determining the format of the wedding, we should consider the following questions:

- What is your relationship to the Sunday Eucharist?
- Have you been away from the parish life of prayer?
- Have you committed yourself to returning?
- How often do you avail yourself of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Are both of you from the same religious tradition?

5. Liturgical Considerations

We are able to celebrate the Nuptial Mass during Ordinary Time. However, during the season of Advent, Lent, Easter, and particular Holy Days, certain liturgical restrictions will apply. The priest or deacon will clarify this for couples as necessary. It is important to consider in what liturgical setting your guests are most inclined to pray with and for you?

There are essentially two formats: the Nuptial Ceremony or the Nuptial Mass. Typically, the Nuptial Mass is reserved to those couples and families who share the Roman Catholic faith. For those couples

entering into a mixed marriage, the Nuptial Ceremony is the preferred option.

The Nuptial Mass

Introductory Rite
Liturgy of the Word
Rite of Marriage
Liturgy of the Eucharist
Concluding Rite

Ceremony

Introductory Rite
Liturgy of the Word
Rite of Marriage
Concluding Rite

In addition, weddings between a Catholic and a person of another faith may be celebrated either at St. Lucy or St. Monica Parish or in the house of worship of the other party; both the Catholic and non-Catholic clergy may be present. However, the following situations require special permission or dispensation:

- A Catholic marrying another Christian in the Catholic Church
- A Catholic marrying another Christian with the non-Catholic clergy officiating (in the other party's church)
- A Catholic marrying a non-Baptized person in the Catholic Church
- A Catholic marrying a non-Baptized person in another setting

"Dispensation" is a precise relaxation from a particular Church Law.

Considerations for the Second Meeting

1. Sacramental Documentation

In choosing to be married in the Catholic Church, every person must arrange that a Certificate of Baptism (commonly called the “long form”) be sent from their parish of Baptism to the parish office of St. Lucy and St. Monica. For Catholics similar certification of Confirmation must also be obtained. This is usually on the “long form,” but please contact the parish of your Confirmation if it is not. If the parish is now closed, or you are uncertain where you received a sacrament, please contact the Archdiocese of Boston Archive Department directly at archive@rcab.org. Non-Catholic Christians are asked to present a document verifying the fact of their Baptism only.

2. Music

As soon as your wedding date is set, you must contact the Music Director, who has final approval of all music for the wedding. Only approved vocalists and musicians would be permitted to participate.

3. Marriage Preparation

You are required to attend a Marriage Preparation Program (aka Pre-Cana). Many couples find marriage prep to be interesting, helpful and enjoyable. There are options in terms of the format, style, structure and location of various programs, but all accomplish the same end: preparing the engaged couple for living the Sacrament of Matrimony. It is particular law for the Archdiocese of Boston that you successfully complete an approved marriage preparation program.

Option 1: Transformed in Love: Building Your Catholic Marriage - Since we do not offer a program on site, this is the preferred course for couples getting married at St. Lucy and St. Monica parishes. Developed by the Archdiocese, it is offered at various locations and parishes around the Boston area.

Option 2: Engaged Encounter Weekend - This is a Friday evening to Sunday afternoon experience, usually offered at a retreat house.

Option 3: An Archdiocesan-approved program – listed by Archdiocese Marriage Ministries and offered at another parish or site within the Archdiocese.

Various formats, dates and times are available to match your schedule. The information is available at: <https://www.bostoncatholic.org/familylife/transformedinelove>

Upon completion of any of these programs you will be presented with a certificate of completion, which must be submitted to the priest or deacon for the Marriage Archives.

4. Marriage License

Massachusetts requires you to obtain a Marriage License in order to be married anywhere in the Commonwealth, irrespective of whether the ceremony is civil or religious. Please note the following:

- You can apply for a Marriage License at *any* Massachusetts city or town clerk's office
- A Marriage License is only valid for the 60 days prior to the wedding, so it is not necessary to have in hand by our second meeting!

- The bride and groom must both appear in person at the clerk's office
- A blood test for a Marriage License is no longer required in Massachusetts
- After you file the application, there is a three day waiting period
- You can NOT be married in Massachusetts without a Marriage License

Please present the Marriage License to the Wedding Coordinator at the rehearsal.

Check List to accomplish prior to the Second Meeting:

- Sacramental Documentation for bride
- Sacramental Documentation for groom
- Have spoken to the Music Director
- Have completed a Marriage Preparation Program

Second Meeting

At the second meeting we will confirm receipt of all required Sacramental documentation. More importantly it is a wonderful occasion to discuss your experience of the Marriage Preparation program. Finally, you will receive a publication called *Together for Life* by Fr. Joseph Champlin to help plan your wedding day. Please bear in mind that liturgy invites choice, but not alteration: the Nuptial Liturgy is the prescribed ritual of the Roman Catholic Church.

Third Meeting

The task of this meeting is to review selections for the Nuptial Liturgy chosen from *Together for Life*. By your filling out the guide found in that booklet, the celebrant will have everything he needs to guide you through your wedding day. Please bear in mind that the Nuptial Liturgy invites choice, but not alteration: the Nuptial Liturgy is the prescribed ritual of the Roman Catholic Church.

Additional Information

1. Sacrament of Reconciliation

Because Matrimony is one of the seven sacraments, Catholics should be in the state of grace when they prepare to witness their vows. Catholics should partake of the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly, and special focus should be placed on the receiving that Sacrament in the days immediately preceding their wedding. Your friendship built on chastity will bring great blessings in your future marriage and is in conformity with the teachings of the Church. We

remind you that engaged chastity is not the same as married chastity.

2. Visiting Clergy

Ordinarily, a priest or deacon of the parish will preside at your wedding. However, priests or deacons who are relatives or friends of the couple are most welcome to preside. To that end:

- A visiting priest or deacon must submit, by telephone to the pastor, a request to preside at a wedding at St. Lucy or St. Monica Parish. This request serves to verify that the priest or deacon is “in good standing” with their respective diocese or religious community. Requests must be made in a timely manner.
- A priest or deacon who resides in another state or country would need to receive special authorization from the Massachusetts Secretary of State to officiate at a wedding. Further information can be obtained at www.mass.gov or call the Secretary of Commonwealth office at (617) 727-2836 to obtain those guidelines. The priest or deacon will assist visiting clergy with this requirement.
- Even if a visiting priest or deacon is to preside at the wedding, ALL paperwork for the wedding will be processed by the St. Lucy and St. Monica staff. As well, all fees remain the same.

3. Rehearsals

The rehearsal will be scheduled by the Parish Wedding Coordinator once the wedding date is set. Rehearsals are generally scheduled two evenings prior to the wedding day and are conducted by the Parish Wedding Coordinator. The coordinator will contact you approximately three months prior to the wedding date to arrange a mutually suitable time at the church and will be present at your Wedding Liturgy to assist with the overall orchestration of the event.

4. Rituals

Rituals not found in the Rite of Marriage are not allowed (e.g. unity candles).

5. Flowers

Floral decorations are your responsibility and must be in keeping with the liturgical season (for example: flowers are not permitted during Lent).

- It is customary that wedding flowers remain in the church so as to adorn the sanctuary for all liturgical celebrations during the weekend. Please limit yourself to two arrangements unless you have made plans to take the additional ones with you. Aisle bows may only be secured to the pew with rubber bands or pew clip; no tape (of any description) is to be used.
- You are free to choose your own florist.

6. Photographers and Videographers

Photographers and videographers are to introduce themselves to the wedding coordinator NO LATER THAN 15 MINUTES before the scheduled start time of the wedding. The coordinator will indicate acceptable

locations/placement so as not to detract from the sacred nature of the ceremony. Photographer and/or videographer are not allowed in the sanctuary of the church.

7. Worship Aid/Wedding Program

If you plan to compose and publish a program booklet (aka a worship aid), please be certain that it is reviewed by the priest or deacon prior to printing. This is to ensure that information concerning the liturgy is correct and music copy rights are noted. We would be happy to provide you with a sample program.

8. Involvement of Children

It has been our experience that children under the age of 5 who serve as ring bearers or flower girls are easily distracted and intimidated by large gatherings of people. For this reason, children under 5 are discouraged from having a role in the Nuptial Liturgy.

9. Parking and Safety Concerns

Please inform your guests to park only in designated parking spaces. Also in the interests of safety:

- No rice, confetti, bird seed, or aisle runners
- No alcoholic beverages should be consumed prior to the wedding ceremony or on Church or Town property.
- No additional candles or open flames are allowed in the church.
- The address for St. Lucy Church is 254 Merrimack St., Methuen, MA 01844
- The address for St. Monica Church is 212 Lawrence St., Methuen, MA 01844

Names, Numbers, and Some Final Notes

Parish Clergy

Fr. Ron Coyne, Administrator
Fr. Michael Harvey, Parochial Vicar
Deacon John Pierce
Deacon John Kobrenski

Music Director

Brink Bush
brinkbush@gmail.com or (978) 522-0321

Wedding Coordinators

Annette Autiello (St. Lucy)
Sharon Walsh (St. Monica)

Church Offering for a Wedding \$1,000

Checks made payable to St. Lucy or St. Monica Parish

At the REHEARSAL, please be certain that you are PROMPT, and that you present the following items to the Wedding Coordinator:

- Marriage License
- Together for Life* Selection Sheet
- Church Offering
- Altar Server Offering (\$20/ea)
- Vendor Information Sheet

WEDDING DAY

On the WEDDING DAY, please be certain that you are PROMPT. Weekends are the most heavily-scheduled times at the parish for all liturgies and other events which are central to parish life. Please honor your verbal commitment to start the wedding liturgy at the designated time.

Depending upon scheduling of the liturgies and availability of the clergy, an alteration of your wedding liturgy MAY have to be enacted if you are late. For example, a Nuptial Mass may become a Nuptial ceremony; a nuptial ceremony may be reduced to Introductory Rite—a simple proclamation of the Gospel and the Rite of Marriage. In the interest of fairness to all parties concerned, as well as out of respect for your guests, PLEASE BE PUNCTUAL FOR YOUR WEDDING.

Photographers, videographers and limousine service personal are externs to the wedding; they are not orchestrating the liturgy. Please remind them of their appropriate role.

Kindly complete this form and submit it to the
Wedding Coordinator at the time of your rehearsal.

Identification of Vendors/Service Providers

For the sake of enhanced communication, please
identify the following vendor/services that you will be
utilizing for your wedding.

Florist: _____

Telephone: _____

Transportation: _____

Telephone: _____

Photographer: _____

Telephone: _____

Videographer: _____

Telephone: _____

Musicians: _____

Telephone: _____

Other Externs: _____

Telephone: _____

