

# Saint Bartholomew Church Marriage Guidelines

These guidelines have been established to help you plan your wedding celebration. The regulations presented reflect the laws and policies of the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Portland, and St. Bartholomew Parish.

## Should We Schedule a Meeting With the Pastor or Deacon?

Yes. Once you have made the decision to marry, the pastor, or the deacon, will want to meet with you to learn more about you and your relationship with each other. They will ask you such things as how the two of you came to meet each other, your personal and family background, and your future plans together. This interview allows the three of you to talk about the issues and experiences of your relationship and your experience of God's presence in that relationship.

## What Is a Pre-Marital Questionnaire?

Before a wedding date can be finalized, you will be required to complete a pre-marital questionnaire to insure that both of you are free to marry in the Catholic Church. Issues of a prior divorce, a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, or the request of a Catholic to be married in a non-Catholic church will be fully discussed.

## Do We Need Special Documents?

The pastor or the deacon who is preparing you for marriage will explain the need for the following documents:

- *Baptismal Certificate* (issued within the last six months; this is sometimes also required of a non-Catholic if he/she was baptized)
- *Permission for Mixed Religion* (when a Catholic marries a non-Catholic)
- *Permission for Disparity of Cult* (Catholic marrying an unbaptised person)
- *Dispensation From Place* (for a wedding in a non-Catholic setting)
- *Dispensation From Canonical Form* (when the minister is non-Catholic)
- *Annulment Documents* (if a prior marriage ended in divorce, a copy of the Formal Decree of Nullity is required.)
- *State of Maine Marriage License* **Please Note: It is illegal for a minister to perform a wedding ceremony without this document in their possession. Please bring the license to the rehearsal.**

### **Who Can Be Married at St. Bartholomew Parish?**

Registered parishioners, and the sons and daughters of registered parishioners, are welcome to marry at St. Bartholomew Parish. This recognizes the fact that the Catholic Church has a long tradition of celebrating the sacraments within one's own community of faith. However, there can be exceptions to this policy, so couples with no parish affiliation, who wish to be married at St. Bartholomew's, or couples who are seeking to marry here for other reasons, should contact the pastor for permission.

### **Can Non-Catholics Be Married at St. Bartholomew Parish?**

A non-Catholic, who is marrying a Catholic, is welcome to marry at St. Bartholomew Parish.

### **Can Someone Who Is Divorced Be Married At St. Bartholomew Parish?**

The Catholic Church regards marriage as a permanent commitment. However, because there are exceptions and extenuating circumstances in this area, please advise the pastor, or the deacon, of your status when you first meet to arrange for your wedding ceremony.

### **Should Our Wedding Include a Mass?**

It is ordinarily presumed that marriages between two Catholics that are in a position to celebrate and receive the Eucharist will take place in the context of the Mass, although various reasons can suggest not having a Mass. Since the marriage ceremony should be a sign of all that unites the bridal couple, when one member of the couple is not a Catholic, and would therefore be unable to receive Communion, the marriage is not celebrated at Mass but with a Liturgy of the Word.

### **Who Officiates at Weddings at St. Bartholomew Parish?**

The pastor or the deacon is the primary individuals who officiate at weddings within our parish.

### **Are Visiting Clergy Welcome at St. Bartholomew Parish?**

A priest or deacon, who may be a friend or relative of the couple, is welcome to ask for delegation to conduct a wedding at St. Bartholomew Parish. This includes a non-Catholic minister when one of the parties is not Catholic.

### **Will the Pastor or the Deacon Attend the Reception?**

Time constraints often prevent the pastor or the deacon from attending the reception. However, if you would like them to do so, simply extend an invitation and they will check their schedule.

### **Are We Expected to Go to Mass While We Are Preparing for Our Wedding?**

Yes! It is our expectation that regular church attendance is already a part of your life. And since you are asking to be married in the Catholic Church, it is important for you to participate in the life of the faith community that will witness your exchange of vows.

### **Are We Required to Attend a Marriage Preparation Program?**

Yes. Since marriage in the Catholic Church is a sacrament, and a commitment for life, one of the ways we value and honor it is by taking the time to help couples prepare. Several options are available and the pastor or deacon will explain them to you. Normally, marriage preparation consists of a series of evening meetings, a weekend retreat, or an all day workshop.

### **How Do We Pick a Date and Time for Our Wedding?**

The dates and times for weddings are available on a first-come, first-served basis and must be scheduled at least six months in advance. A Friday evening wedding is typically scheduled for 6 P.M. or 7 P.M. A Saturday wedding is typically scheduled between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. (a two hour interval is required between the end of one wedding and the beginning of the next ). Weddings may be scheduled as the parish and clergy calendars permit.

### **What Offerings Are Required For a Wedding?**

- **First Offering:** The first offering is to our parish, to support the mission and the ministry of the parish, and to defray the expenses of your wedding (heating, lighting, preparation, janitorial services, etc.). The church offering is \$300. (Make this check payable to St. Bartholomew Parish).

**PLEASE NOTE:** A 50% **non-refundable** deposit on the church offering must be paid at the time a wedding date is reserved. The balance of the church offering must be paid no later than one month in advance of your wedding.

- **Second Offering:** The second offering is for the musicians you have chosen and they are to be paid according to their own schedule of fees. It is expected that these fees will be paid no later than the day of your wedding.
- **Third Offering:** It has been the custom to make a separate offering directly to the pastor or deacon who presided at your wedding, because he did not receive anything from the offering made to the parish (“First Offering” above). While you may wish to offer him a monetary gift in thanks for his help, this is not necessary.

### **Can the Parish Hall Be Rented?**

Yes. For a wedding rehearsal dinner, or reception, our parish hall comfortably seats approximately 100 people, with space left for dancing. For fees and insurance regulations pertaining to the use of the hall, please contact our parish secretary.

### **What Is the Seating Capacity of St. Bartholomew Church?**

We can accommodate approximately 500 people in the main church, and 60 people in our chapel.

### **How Long Will We Have Access to the Church?**

Because of additional weddings and liturgies in the Church, each wedding party is given the use of the church for three hours. In addition to the wedding ceremony itself, this allows access to the church for an hour before and an hour after the wedding.

### **When Will Our Wedding Rehearsal Be Scheduled?**

The rehearsal is usually held on the evening before the wedding and is typically 30 to 45 minutes in length. Those attending the rehearsal generally include the bride and groom, all members of the wedding party, the parents of the couple, and any readers or other active participants in the wedding ceremony. Musicians generally do not attend the rehearsal.

### **How important is punctuality?**

It is very important that the wedding rehearsal and celebration begin promptly on time. Courtesy to your guests, the tight schedule of clergy, and the use of parish facilities for subsequent services demand attention to this matter. Late starting times, for example, will almost certainly limit the ability to take photographs after the ceremony, and may only allow time for a Liturgy of the Word service instead of a complete Mass.

### **Does the church have a “bride’s room”?**

Yes. The bride’s room is located in the far right corner, as you enter the building. We ask that you remove all personal belongings (and boxes and papers) from this room immediately after your wedding in order to make it available for the next wedding party. Please ask one of your attendants or ushers to attend to this detail.

### **Do Our Wedding Party Members Need to Be Catholic?**

No. The Best Man and Maid (or Matron) of Honor, members of the bridal party, and other participants in the wedding liturgy do not have to be Catholic. People chosen to offer scripture readings, however, should be of the Christian faith. And young children, chosen to be flower girls or ring bearers, should be of a sufficient age to function in this capacity.

### **Who Will Plan Our Wedding Liturgy?**

It is your responsibility to help with the planning of your wedding liturgy. The care and effort you put into this, especially in choosing readings and music, and the way you choose to involve your family and friends, will speak volumes about who you are as a couple, and how much your faith means to you. The pastor or the deacon, of course, will be pleased to assist you in the selection of prayers, readings, and music for your wedding.

### **Should We Include a Unity Candle in Our Celebration?**

Although it is not an official part of the Catholic wedding ceremony, we recognize that many couples like to include a unity candle as part of the ceremony. Candles such as these can be purchased at most religious goods stores, and even at some card and gift stores.

### **Are There Any Restrictions on the Types of Music We Can Use?**

The music for a wedding should reflect the religious nature of marriage. As in any Liturgy, the music helps to draw people into prayer and helps those gathered to offer praise to God. All music during the Liturgy must be of a prayerful nature. Secular songs are rarely permitted. The purpose of the service is not entertainment, but prayer. The music should point to the presence of God in the joining of your lives. Our parish's music director will be happy to assist you in selection of music for your wedding ceremony.

### **Does the Parish Have An Organist?**

Yes. Our parish's music director would be happy to assist you with the music for your wedding. Her name is Irene Kecskemethy and you can contact her by calling 893-0329.

### **Can We Use A Musician Other Than A Parish Musician?**

Yes, as long as they will be respectful of the investment we have in instruments and sound systems. And, of course, they will need to be cooperative with the pastor or deacon who can explain the proper role of music in the wedding.

### **Can We Include Flowers In Our Ceremony?**

Yes. Flower bouquets are typically positioned at either side, or in front of the altar. Please note that it is customary to leave at least some of the flowers from your wedding at the altar at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony in order to provide the entire parish community with the opportunity to share in the celebration of your marriage. Please inquire as to the possibility of sharing flower expenses with other couples who may have a wedding on the same day.

### **Can We Photograph Or Videotape Our Wedding?**

Yes. However, the recording of any wedding ceremony through the use of photography or videotape must respect the sacred nature of the liturgy and must not be a distraction to the minister, the bridal party, or the guests. Photographers may take pictures of the wedding, but they may not enter the sanctuary at any time during the ceremony. To the extent possible, video cameras should be positioned on a tripod and in a stationary position within the church. We recognize that the camera may have to be moved to video the procession. Photographs may be taken in the church after the ceremony, but only if there is sufficient time to do so before the next scheduled function.

### **Can We Utilize Aisle Runners and Pew Bows?**

Yes. If you decide to utilize an aisle runner, the length of our center aisle is 52 feet long. No adhesive/masking tape or fasteners, or tacks or nails, are allowed within the church. Elastic bands, poster putty, or craft wires work best in attaching pew bows. Any decorating or flower arranging should be completed one hour prior to the start of the ceremony.

### **Can Rice or Seeds Be Thrown After The Ceremony?**

Absolutely not! Because of maintenance considerations, no flower petals, rice, bird seed, or confetti is to be thrown either inside or outside of the church. You will be held accountable for the actions of your guests.

### **Does the Church Have An Alcohol Or Smoking Policy?**

Yes. Bringing alcoholic beverages into the church during a rehearsal, or before, during, or after a wedding ceremony is completely inconsistent with the sacred character of the celebration. Even champagne in the bride's room, as traditional as it may be for some families, is never permitted. With respect to smoking, please inform your guests that St. Bartholomew Church is a completely smoke-free building.

### **Can We Help With the Clean-Up After the Wedding?**

Yes. Please ask someone within your circle of friends to be responsible for removing bows, empty boxes (including those in the bride's room), and programs, that may have been left in the pews, at the conclusion of the ceremony.

### **What If We Change Our Minds?**

If you change your mind about the date or time of your wedding, contact the parish office immediately. Contact us as well if you should make the decision not to get married at all.