

*“Therefore what God has joined together,  
Let no one separate”*



## **Celebrating Your Marriage Planning and Preparing**

**Saint Mary Church  
26 Dodgingtown Road  
Bethel, CT 06801  
(203)744-5777  
[Stmarybethel.org](http://Stmarybethel.org)**

# CELEBRATING YOUR MARRIAGE

## PLANNING AND PREPARING

### CONGRATULATIONS:

Together you have decided to begin a great journey of love. St. Mary Parish rejoices with you, your families and friends on your decision to be married. The contents of this pamphlet have been designed to help you prepare for the celebration of your wedding. Please feel free to call on us at any time if you have any questions. After you are married and settled in your new home, we urge you to seek out the parish where you live. Introduce yourselves to the staff of the parish, register as parishioners there, and most importantly, be active in your parish. Our prayers and best wishes are with you on this journey!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Father Corey Piccinino".

Rev. Corey Piccinino  
And the Parish Staff

## PREPARATION

*Many people will be involved with your preparation for this happy occasion. Each will have something important to offer. All are motivated by a single desire, that you will be happy together for the rest of your lives.*

**Marriage Preparation Workshop:** In addition to meeting with one of the priests or deacons, all engaged couples are required by diocesan law to attend a marriage preparation workshop - sometimes called Pre-Cana. If possible, this should be done at least six months before the wedding. Schedules are available on-line at [www.bridgeportdiocese.com/familylife](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.com/familylife). Also, Encounter Weekends are available sponsored by our Diocese and, occasionally, pre-marriage workshops are available on a parish basis. These programs are worthwhile in your preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Call and make a second appointment with a priest or deacon of the parish after you have been to a Marriage Preparation Workshop to further discuss your forthcoming marriage. Please bring to this meeting a copy of your Baptismal, First Communion and Confirmation certificates if these sacraments were not received at St. Mary Church. An updated original newly issued annotated Baptismal certificate must be issued within the past 6 months and will indicate all the sacraments you have received up to the date of issue. No photocopies can be accepted for Catholic records. If one party is a Baptized Christian but not a Catholic, then a photocopy of Baptism record is required, giving the date, place and denomination. If your address changes during the time of your engagement, please notify the parish office so that you will receive all updated information.

**License:** Before applying for your marriage license, you must call the Town Hall in Bethel for an appointment and bring a photo ID when you apply. The license must be obtained in Bethel and should be left at the Rectory as soon as you receive it. The license lasts for *only 65 days*; be sure to leave yourself enough time. The phone number at the Bethel Town Hall for marriage license appointments is (203) 794-8506. The marriage license must be brought to the rectory prior to the day of the wedding rehearsal.

**Reconciliation:** As a matter of personal and sacramental integrity, Catholics must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) within a week before getting married. Any priest can hear your confession. We encourage all Catholics in the bridal party to receive Holy Communion at the Nuptial Mass and we encourage all to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before this time.

### ***If a Nuptial Mass is requested:***

- a. Both parties must be “practicing Catholics in good standing.” This means that both the bride and groom are Catholic who actually attend Mass regularly on Sundays. Also, “practicing Catholic in good standing” cannot be living together before marriage.
- b. The request for a Mass must come from the couple themselves, not family members.

The Church provides no guidelines for how couples (or the rest of the wedding party) dress for weddings. Common sense is a good guide when it comes to wedding attire. On the one hand, you want your outward appearance to be a sign of your inner dignity, and the beauty of the love you share as a couple. On the other hand, you want to avoid dressing in a way that distracts from the liturgy. Remember — this is a sacrament, and we come together to worship God. Your attire should reflect this.

No animals are allowed in the Nuptial Mass, Nuptial Ceremony or in the Church.

## **THE WEDDING CELEBRATION**

*In preparing for your wedding celebration, we would encourage you to realize the importance of the spiritual preparation for it. It is very important that you do not let the material preparation for your wedding overshadow the spiritual in order that you are able to begin your new life of marriage in the proper way. Spend some time in planning your ceremony, picking out the readings and music, choosing the prayers, etc. We priests are more than willing to help.*

- Procession:**
- A. Groomsmen and Bridesmaids process in a single file followed by Bride and her escort( s)

**or**

  - B. Groomsmen and Bridesmaids process as couples followed by Bride and her escort( s)

A list of matched couples and the names of who will be escorting Mothers and other special guests is due before the day of the rehearsal. Groom and Best Man should arrive one half hour before the Nuptial Mass/Nuptial Ceremony and go to the Sacristy. They process to the Altar with the celebrant.

The Bridesmaids will sit on the farthest left set of benches and will stay there through the entire Nuptial Mass/Nuptial ceremony. The Groomsmen will sit on the farthest right set of benches and will stay there through the entire Nuptial Mass/Nuptial ceremony.

The Bride and Groom, Maid of Honor and Best Man will either kneel or stand throughout the Nuptial Mass/Nuptial Ceremony. Chairs will be used only if there is a medical reason.

During a Nuptial Mass the Bride and Groom will kiss during the Sign of Peace and offer the Sign of Peace to Parents/Grandparents only. (There is no Sign of Peace in a Nuptial Ceremony)

- Unity Candle**  
*(if used):*
- A. Parents light the side candles when they process into the Church and then take their seat.

**or**

  - B. Side candles are lit before the Nuptial Mass/Nuptial ceremony begins. Bride and Groom light the Unity Candle after the exchange of rings.

The Unity Candle is placed on a side table and never on the Altar.

**Liturgy/Readings:** Since the celebration of marriage is an event for the whole church, and especially for the parish community, the liturgical celebration will express the faith of the Catholic Church and the local customs of the parish. In preparing for your nuptial liturgy, you will work with the priest to choose readings and prayers that are appropriate for the wedding liturgy. The choice of prayers, readings, exchange of consent, exchange of rings, nuptial and the homily all express this same faith. Usually one of the parish priests is available to preside at your wedding. Visiting priests and deacons are also welcome. Please ask them to contact us. Visiting clergy from outside the Diocese of Bridgeport need a letter of good standing sent to the Diocese and St. Mary Parish.

Those who proclaim the Scriptures or Prayer of the Faithful should not add any editorial comments, best wishes or the like while they are reading.

**Music:** Any music chosen for the wedding should express the faith of the church in the mystery that is being celebrated. It should be appropriate for a liturgical celebration. Our Music Director and organist, Mr. Michael Ferrari, will be present and will assist you in choosing music which will enhance your wedding liturgy. Please call him as soon as you have a secure date and time for your wedding with the parish. The fee for the organist is \$300 and the fee for the singer is \$250 (this includes a meeting and the ceremony). We ask that the fee for the organist and the singer be sent directly to them two weeks before the ceremony. Please contact Michael for the list of cantors and at which masses the cantors can be heard. Also, a trumpet player is available if you should like to have one for the ceremony. If you wish to engage additional musicians, please contact Mr. Ferrari as soon as possible to make these arrangements. The fee for other instrumentalists is \$200. Only religious music may be played/sung during a Nuptial Mass/Nuptial Ceremony. If you are having a Nuptial Mass, you must have a cantor. If you have a friend or relative that you want to sing a song at your wedding, that person must meet with our music director prior to the wedding date to practice. They, however, may not be the cantor at the wedding.

**Michael Ferrari, Music Director/Organist**  
**(860) 424-7608**

**Flowers:** Flowers are taken care of by you and the florist of your choice. Ordinarily, two bouquets are placed in the Sanctuary. If there is another wedding on the same day, you may wish to share the cost of flowers for the Church. Our aisle is 60 feet long. Any flowers placed in the Sanctuary for a nuptial ceremony should remain there for the weekend. Please advise your florist that NO flowers are to be placed on the altar. At certain times of the year, the church is specially decorated and no more flowers would be needed, i.e. Christmas and Easter. Runners are not allowed. If decorations are to be placed on the benches, tape of any kind is not allowed.

**Confetti, Rice, Flower Petals, etc.:** Please advise the bridal party that throwing of flower petals or any other items are not allowed. We are aware that it is difficult controlling the rest of the guests, but you can make this known to the bridal party and to your families.

**Photography/Videography:** You are welcome to have a professional photographer and professional videographer at your wedding. We ask that you inform your photographer/videographer of the following:

- a. Photographers/Videographers may not enter the sanctuary and may not block the view of the parents of the couple.
- b. As the bridal party comes down the aisle, please do not stand in the aisle or in front of the first pews.
- c. Please do not hold up the bride as she leaves the limousine as this frequently makes her late in beginning the procession.
- d. No bright lights from video cameras and as little movement as possible.
- e. Please have your photographer/videographer ***contact the priest celebrating the wedding before the actual ceremony begins.***

**Rehearsal:** Please be on time for your rehearsal and remember to wear proper dress for Church.

**Alcohol:** The consuming of champagne or other alcoholic beverages inside or outside of the church is not appropriate and not permitted.

**Offerings:** The sacraments will never be refused because of fees. However, it is customary to make a donation to help with the upkeep of the Church. We suggest an offering of \$500 to the parish, with the check made out to St. Mary Church. (Fees for the organist and soloist are previously mentioned above.) Most couples make an additional offering to the individual priest/deacon celebrating your wedding — you may give it to him directly at the rehearsal or the day of the wedding. A \$50 fee (we shall supply the name) is due for the Wedding Coordinator prior to the day of the rehearsal.

**Wedding Time:** We ask that the celebration start on time. Being late is not only rude to your guests and others involved with your celebration, but can cause problems with the services scheduled after your wedding. This is particularly important if your ceremony is at 3:00pm on Saturday as we have 4:00pm Confessions and a 5:30pm Mass that evening.

***There are no exceptions to these directives.***

***ENJOY***

This is a great day for you and we promise to do all we can to make it special!

## **Nuptial Mass – Order for the Program**

- Prelude
- Processional
- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading
- Gospel
- Exchange of Vows
- Blessing and Exchange of Rings
- Prayer of the Faithful
- Preparation of the Gifts
- Eucharistic Acclamations
- Lord's Prayer
- Communion Hymn
- Final Blessing
- Recessional

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## **Wedding Ceremony – Order for the Program**

- Prelude
- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading
- Gospel
- Exchange of Vows
- Blessing and Exchange of Rings
- Hymn
- Prayer of the Faithful
- Final Blessing
- Recessional

# Nuptial Ceremony

Escort for mother of the groom: \_\_\_\_\_

Escort for mother of the bride: \_\_\_\_\_

Procession: Option "A" \_\_\_\_\_ Option "B" \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete chart below:

If Unity Candle is used: Option "A" \_\_\_\_\_ Option "B" \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Reading Reader: \_\_\_\_\_ Citation: \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Reader: \_\_\_\_\_ Citation: \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer of the Faithful Reader (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Groomsmen**

## **Bridesmaids**

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## **Children:**

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## **Best Man:**

## **Maid/Matron of Honor:**

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## **PREPARATION CHECKLIST**

### ***9-12 Months before Wedding:***

- ~ Meet with priest or deacon

### ***6-9 Months before Wedding:***

- ~ Complete the Marriage Preparation Program with the Diocese

### ***4-6 Months before the Wedding:***

- ~ Meet with priest the second time, bringing your newly issued Baptism certificates and your Pre-Cana Certificate

### ***1-2 Months before the Wedding:***

- ~ Meet with the priest the third time to discuss the ceremony, bringing your Marriage License and the Nuptial Ceremony Sheet

### ***Week before the Wedding:***

- ~ Attend Reconciliation

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## **NOTES**