



**Your Wedding at the**  
*Church of Saint Francis of Assisi*

## The Sacrament of Marriage

Congratulations! You have reached a point in your lives where you wish to commit yourselves to each other before God in the sacrament of marriage. We rejoice with you and want your wedding day to be truly special – the foundation of your life together.

### General Information

#### ***How do we begin?***

Wedding arrangements begin with a phone call to the Church of Saint Francis of Assisi at 212-736-8500. You will be directed to a member of our Pastoral Staff who will assist you. At least one of the parties must be a baptized Catholic, and an active, registered parishioner of Saint Francis of Assisi, or has a significant connection to Saint Francis Church.

#### ***When do we set the date?***

During your initial conversation, provided there are no special circumstances that come to light, a date and time of the ceremony will be arranged. There is at least a six-month preparation time required for marriage.

#### ***What are the times available for weddings?***

Times for weddings are as follows: Fridays at 2:30 PM and 6:30 PM; Saturdays at 12:00 Noon, 2:00 PM and 6:30 PM; Sundays at 2:00 PM.

#### ***Who will answer our questions about the wedding itself?***

The questions which deal specifically with the wedding liturgy itself, i.e., the choice of readings, whether or not to have a “full Mass” or a “ceremony”, etc., will be answered by the Priest/Deacon who will witness your marriage. The planning of music for your wedding will be assisted by our Director of Music.

#### ***What if we are planning to be married elsewhere?***

For those couples being married in a Catholic Church outside the Archdiocese of New York, we are happy to assist you with your marriage preparation. (1)

We will refer you to the marriage preparation program of the Archdiocese of New York, (2) complete the Pre-Nuptial Inquiry, and (3) collect the required documents from you and forward them with the Pre-Nuptial Inquiry to the Archdiocese of New York for their approval and forwarding to the diocesan office where you are to be married. Please refer to the accompanying schedule of stipends for marriage preparation for ceremonies held outside the Archdiocese of New York.



### Required Documents

Since marriage celebrates the unbreakable commitment between a man and a woman who are free to make this mature decision in the community of believers, certain documents are required to establish your sacramental status within the Church, your freedom from any previous unions, as well as sworn statements attesting to your clear understanding of the nature and responsibilities of Marriage. When a Catholic prepares to marry someone from another faith tradition, a specific document or “dispensation” is also required. The following items are required documents.



### ***Baptismal Certificate***

A newly issued copy of your baptismal certificate is required for those who are Catholic and non-Catholic. This can be obtained by contacting the church where you were baptized and requesting a new certificate.

### ***Permissions and Dispensations***

In the case of an "Ecumenical Marriage" (the union of a Catholic and a person baptized in another Christian faith), a Permission for Mixed Marriage form must be completed by the priest/deacon and either signed or witnessed by the parties. In the case of an "Inter-religious Marriage" (the marriage of a Catholic and a person that has not been baptized in another religious tradition), a Petition for Dispensation from Disparity of Worship must be completed by the priest/deacon.

### ***Marriage Preparation Program Certificate***

The Archdiocese of New York requires all couples to participate in a Marriage Preparation Program sponsored by the Family Life Office. At the end of the program you will receive a certificate which will be included among the necessary documents. Please go to <http://flrl.org/MarriagePreparation.htm> for more information, and to register for a marriage preparation program.

### ***Civil License***

The City of New York requires a current civil marriage license. More information is available at <http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/marriage/faq.shtml>.

### ***Visiting Clergy***

You are welcome to invite a visiting priest or deacon to celebrate your wedding liturgy. However, if he is from outside New York City, he must register with the City Clerk's office beforehand. More information is available at:

[http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/marriage/officiant\\_reg.shtml#clergy](http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/marriage/officiant_reg.shtml#clergy).



### ***Pre-Nuptial Inquiry***

This takes place with the priest/deacon and is for the purpose of determining your freedom and appropriate intentions in your preparation for marriage.

## **Wedding Preparation**

### ***Wedding Rehearsal***

An important part of the preparation for the wedding celebration is the wedding rehearsal. The rehearsal is scheduled with the priest/deacon prior to the wedding. It is essential that all members of the wedding party be present for this rehearsal as well as any individuals whom you have selected to proclaim the scripture readings during your wedding. Out of respect for the priest/deacon, as well as any other rehearsal that may be planned, please make sure that your entire wedding party arrives on time. Your rehearsal time is limited to one hour. The priest/deacon will schedule your rehearsal at a convenient time.

### ***Environment***

The most important thing on the day of your wedding is your spiritual readiness to begin the task of deepening your bonds of love within the context of a truly Christian relationship. Celebrating this moment of decision far outweighs concerns over pictures, flowers or decorations. Couples often have questions regarding the use of these enhancements to the liturgical environment. Therefore, we provide the following guidelines.

## **Flowers**

Floral arrangements enhance the beauty of any environment and we welcome your creativity in this area. Please be mindful of the fact that as a sacramental celebration, the principal goal of liturgical environment is to help convey the mysteries of God's saving love, and not merely to decorate space. The following guidelines should be followed:

- The Church environment is decorated according to our liturgical calendar. There are certain colors used during the different seasons which will be prominent and which may influence your decision as to arrangements.
- Flower arrangements are usually placed to either side of the tabernacle (see photo below), or in front of the large pillars on either side of the sanctuary.
- None of the Church decorations or furniture may be moved for a wedding. Please be respectful while working in the sanctuary area.
- Flowers or bows may be tied on the end of the pews with rubber bands or plastic clips. No tape of any kind is to be used. No swaging of ribbons on pews.
- Candles may never be used on the pews. No candelabras on the altar or aisles.
- The flowers are considered a gift to the church and are not to be removed after the ceremony.
- Flower petals, birdseed, rice or doves are not permitted.

In the event of multiple weddings on the same day, couples may contact each other and the florist to share expenses. We highly recommend that couples share these expenses whenever possible. Please check with the priest/deacon for names and phone numbers of other wedding couples.

## **Photography and Video**

We want to make sure that your wedding is a day that you remember and a day that you can view again. A Catholic wedding ceremony or Mass is primarily a celebration of a couple's love in union with our worship of God as an act of thanksgiving for this love. Therefore, we must make sure that while we catch this moment on film, we keep the primary emphasis in focus.

## **The Liturgy of Marriage**

The liturgy of marriage is a moment of joy and celebration. In our Catholic tradition, we hold that the couples themselves minister this sacrament or the vows to one another. While it is necessary that an official witness of the Church preside over the celebration (normally, a priest or deacon), the active involvement of the couple in every aspect of planning the celebration is essential.

This planning should always keep in mind that the ceremony is first and foremost a moment of prayer for all who are present. All aspects of the celebration should reflect the noble simplicity befitting Christian worship.



## **Planning**

Together with the priest/deacon who will be presiding at your liturgy, you will have a part in planning your ceremony. He will provide you with a copy of the wedding booklet, *Together for Life*, along with a liturgy planning sheet. During your final meeting with him, you will discuss the specific readings from Scripture and liturgical options that you have chosen. He will help answer

any further questions you may have regarding the ceremony at that time. You will also need to schedule a meeting with the Director of Music regarding music (see below).

### ***Should you celebrate your marriage in the context of a Mass or a non-Eucharistic ceremony?***

When a wedding is celebrated at Mass, the Rite of Marriage takes place after the Liturgy of the Word and the homily. The Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows. When a wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, it is celebrated within the context of a Liturgy of the Word in which the Rite of Marriage takes place after the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful. This Rite concludes with prayers and blessings. You should make your decision in consultation with the priest/deacon who is assisting in the preparation of your wedding. You will want to consider the following points:



What is our relationship to the Sunday Eucharist? Are we faithful to the Church's Sunday prayer? Have we been away from the community's prayer? Have we committed ourselves to returning? In light of your answers to the above questions, is Mass or a Liturgy of the Word the better context for the celebration of our marriage?

If one of you is from another faith tradition and therefore unable to share Holy Communion and the wedding is celebrated during Mass, you may want to consider what this means. Do you want to include something in this celebra-

tion in which only one of you will be able to take part? Who will your guests be? Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them be with you and pray with you at your wedding?

### ***Ministers of the Celebration***

In addition to you (who as a couple are the ministers of the sacrament or vows of Marriage) and the priest/deacon, others will have important ministerial roles in your wedding celebration. Members of your wedding party, particularly ushers, will greet the invited guests in a spirit of hospitality and welcome. Our parish musicians will provide a musical setting that respects the dignity of this moment and that will support sung prayer by all. Beyond these ministries, we ask you to consider individuals who might function in the following special roles in your wedding:

#### ***Lectors***

Whether your celebration takes place in the context of a Mass or a non-Eucharistic ceremony, the proclamation of God's Word in the Scriptures is an integral part of the wedding celebration. You may select one or two individuals, depending on the number of readings you select, to proclaim God's Word to the community gathered. Please be mindful of choosing persons who will be comfortable speaking and reading in public.

#### ***Gift-bearers***

For those who choose to celebrate the Nuptial Mass, it will be necessary to invite two people from the assembly to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine, which will be placed upon the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.



### ***Eucharistic Ministers***

The fullest and most desirable form of participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist is the sharing of the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ, for as the Memorial Acclamation proclaims: "When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory." Therefore, it is highly recommended that each couple who celebrates a Nuptial Mass make every effort to make this available. You may wish to consult with family and friends to see if any two of your guests are currently commissioned as Eucharistic Ministers in their parishes.

### ***Other Elements***

Signs, symbols and gestures are intrinsic to worship, but an overabundance of them tends to become superfluous and redundant. The primary symbols of your marriage covenant are the exchange of vows and rings, and if a Nuptial Mass is celebrated, this includes the sharing of the one bread and the one cup as a sign of unity and love. Together with these essential signs and symbols, others of a secondary nature are sometimes selected.

- A Unity Candle may be chosen.
- Flowers offered to Mary, the Mother of God are done as a gesture of prayer and petition that normally takes place toward the end of the wedding celebration. These are presented by the couple, never the bride alone.
- The Veil and Cord or Arras and Lasso are used in Filipino and Hispanic cultures to symbolize mutual support and unity in love.

In deciding whether to include additional elements in the ritual of marriage, couples should be aware that where liturgy is concerned, "less is often more." That is, focusing on doing the key elements well and with care will be much more satisfactory for both the couple and the assembly than trying to do too many things at once. Please feel free to discuss these elements carefully with the priest/deacon before making a decision.

### ***Liturgy Booklet***

Couples often like to provide a printed program for the guests. It can be as extensive as you prefer – from a simple folder with just a basic outline of the liturgy along with the names of the various participants, to a more detailed program with spoken and sung responses, hymns and songs, etc. If you would like assistance, please contact our Director of Liturgy, Fr. Timothy Shreenan, O.F.M. at [tshreenan@stfrancisnyc.org](mailto:tshreenan@stfrancisnyc.org).

## **Music**

We hope this will provide useful information for couples planning their instrumental wedding music selections. There are many choices of music available, and each wedding is customized to the couple. Instrumental music for wedding ceremonies basically includes the following:

1. Preludes are played as the guests arrive, and serve to set the tone while people gather.
2. Processional pieces are played while mothers are being seated and while the bridal party and the bride are processing up the aisle.
3. Recessional music is played while the bridal party exit.



4. Postludes conclude the ceremony as the guests move from their pews to the door.

### ***Instruments***

In addition to our beautiful pipe organ and grand piano, we are happy to contract additional professional musicians for your wedding if that is your desire. Acoustic instruments to consider would be trumpet, flute, violin, cello, guitar, harp, oboe, and ensembles such as trios and quartets. Ensembles are also available and can be heard at the 5:00 and 6:15 Sunday Masses. Ensembles include piano, drums, bass, and additional options to suit your taste.



### ***Contact***

Our Director of Music Ministries, Meredith Augustin, can be reached at 212-736-8500, Ext. 327. She will be happy to meet with you and discuss your options.

## **Schedule of Offerings & Stipends**

The following paragraphs offer information on offerings and stipends for a marriage being celebrated at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi. Unless otherwise noted, they should be payable to "Church of St. Francis of Assisi".

### ***Facility and Preparation Offering***

The offering for marriage preparation and the use of St. Francis of Assisi Church for your wedding is \$1500.00. The fees for musicians (organist/pianist and cantor, plus any other instrumentalists or singers) are arranged by the Director of Music Ministries.

### ***Processing Fee***

If you are celebrating your marriage elsewhere, there is a \$300.00 Archdiocesan processing fee, made payable in two checks: \$200 to Church of St. Francis of Assisi, and \$100 to Archdiocese of New York.

### ***Individual Stipends***

At your discretion, an offering may be given to the priest/deacon.

For the musicians, please write individual checks payable to the instrumentalist, singer, and organist. All checks should be submitted 30 days in advance. These payments are non-refundable.

*We are grateful to David Compton and Barbara Gallo, who were married at St. Francis of Assisi in November 2009, for the use of their wedding photos in this brochure.*

*Photography by Agaton Strom.*



**CHURCH OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI**

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