



St. Mark's Catholic Church

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GUIDELINES



FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

Edition November 2023

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Dear Newly Engaged,

Congratulations! You have made a decision, one of the very most important decisions of your life. We at St. Mark's Parish are happy for you and will try to help you prepare for your wedding. While a wedding celebration lasts only a day, marriage is a lifetime. It is a covenant relationship which must be freely entered into with the ideals of fidelity, perpetuity, openness to the possibility of children, maturity, and the capacity to live out the vocation of marriage.

The Catholic Church is a community of Christian believers and you have asked this community to witness your marriage and celebrate with you. We believe that Marriage is one of the seven Sacraments instituted by Christ Himself; a visible sign of God's invisible loving presence. This special Sacrament will give the couple the necessary graces to deepen and enrich their love in the relationship of Christian marriage. Today there is more emphasis on the lifelong graces of marriage and on the couple's response to those graces. Sacramental marriage is not just a one-time magic shot to see couples through life. Rather it is a lifelong blessing as couples will continually reaffirm their "yes" to each other. When they cooperate with God's graces in marriage, they acknowledge, draw upon and witness to the power and presence of Christ in their lives.

Since the laws of any community reflect what it believes, the marriage laws of the Catholic Church were compiled over the past 2,000 years, not to make it difficult to get married, but to help couples prepare for this lifetime union of love. As you begin your preparation for marriage, the Church is here to assist you in every way possible so that you will utilize these next few months to grow in your relationship with each other as well as with Christ and the Church. Our pastor will be most happy to help you in any way.

Your wedding is one of the most important events in your life. The following guidelines are meant to aid you in your preparations and set out for you the requirements of the Church and Parish for your wedding celebration. Please feel free to discuss any questions, problems or concerns with the Pastor.

We hope that the guidelines for Catholic Marriage in the parish of St. Mark's will be helpful to you as you prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage.

Your Christian community of St. Mark's offers you our prayers and support for a fruitful and blessed married life.

***God Bless,
Fr. Tad Walczyk, Pastor***

1. MARRIAGE POLICY AT ST. MARK

i. Church law dictated that the normal place for marriage is the parish of the bride or groom. Consequently, St. Mark restricts weddings to:

- a) **Parishioners who live within the parish boundaries**
- b) **Registered parishioners who live outside the boundaries and attend Mass at St. Mark's every Sunday.**

ii. The Catholic party or parties **must be a registered member of the Parish for at least 6 months** prior to the initial interview with the pastor. They must also be going to Mass every week and participating in the other Sacraments and life of the Church. According to Church Canon Law, the following may be cause for delay of marriage: A) *Insufficient faith, or an unwillingness to practice the faith (c. 1086.2).* B) *A substantial lack of appreciation for the SPIRITUAL and religious meaning of marriage (can.1095; 1101.2).* C) *Refusal of the parties to take part in the prescribed marriage preparation program or to refuse to participate in any pre-marriage assessment, evaluation, or counseling.*

2. BOOKING DATES FOR MARRIAGE

A couple wishing to be married at St. Mark's or within the Archdiocese of Toronto must contact the parish priest **AT LEAST ONE YEAR** in advance of the planned wedding date. This will allow sufficient time for a couple to attend the required marriage preparation classes. **No wedding date can be set before the initial interview with the pastor.**

i. CALL US: Telephone the Parish Office during regular business hours at (905)640-6954 and ask to make an appointment with the priest to discuss your possible marriage.

ii. FIRST MEETING: At the first meeting, the priest wants to know both of you first of all, and help plan for a joyous and meaningful event, a Christian wedding that begins a life-long marriage within our Christian community. If a marriage in this church is possible at this time, the priest will likely agree to set a date for the wedding **and you will receive a Wedding Package.** *Note: If either party has been previously married, a date may not be set until the Bishop's Office has been consulted.*

iii. MORE MEETINGS...? The priest will probably request one or two more meetings with both of you. At one of these, the pre-nuptial investigation is conducted, to fulfill the church and civil law requirements before Matrimony. The priest may also wish to discuss your feelings about the marriage course you've completed, and he'll be glad to answer any questions you have. For Catholics, updated baptismal certificates, issued within six months of the date of wedding, must be obtained and provided to the parish prior to the marriage. Furthermore, the couple will need to obtain a Marriage Licence from the Government of Ontario.

iv. IN THE WEEKS BEFORE THE WEDDING: If details such as the wedding rehearsal time, the organist, flowers, readings at the ceremony, the procession, etc. have not been planned, you may meet the priest to finalize these in the weeks before the wedding, at which time you should aim to have your marriage license ready for delivery to the church for further processing.

3. TIMES FOR MARRIAGE

Weddings may be scheduled on Saturday afternoons between 1:00 and 3:00pm. Weddings may be scheduled from Monday to Friday at times which do not conflict with other parish activities. Weddings are forbidden on Sundays in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

4. MARRIAGE INSTRUCTION

No marriage may be celebrated until the couple has completed a Catholic marriage preparation course. Information will be provided on course location options. Please discuss your options with the priest.

5. PRIEST FOR MARRIAGE

The priest with whom the arrangements are made at St. Mark's Parish will normally preside at the wedding. Visiting priests are always welcome to concelebrate. A close relative may officiate with proper permission and delegation from the parish priest.

6. DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

i. BAPTISM CERTIFICATE: Every Catholic being married must provide the parish with a **newly issued certificate** of Baptism (issued within 6 months of the date of the wedding). Please contact your church of Baptism immediately after your first appointment. A Non-Catholic Christian, if baptized, should also provide proof of Baptism.

ii. MARRIAGE LICENCE: The couple must obtain a Marriage License prior to wedding date. The licence can be obtained from the Government of Ontario. Please bring it to the parish office at least TWO WEEKS before the wedding.

iii. WITNESSES: Required by the Government & the Church. Witnesses must be at least 18 years old. A non-Catholic may, of course, be chosen to be one of the official witnesses.

iv. CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION: Proof of completion of marriage preparation course is required.

v. PREVIOUS MARRIAGE: If the previous marriage existed, the following documents are required; i) an authentic certificate or satisfactory proof of death of spouse, ii) an official declaration of nullity from the proper Catholic Marriage Tribunal.

N.B.: IN THE EVENT OF A PRIOR MARRIAGE, NO DATE FOR MARRIAGE CAN BE GIVEN UNTIL FREEDOM TO MARRY HAS BEEN DOCUMENTED AND APPROVED BY THE ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE.

vi. PARENTAL CONSULTATION: Parents (or guardians) must be consulted if one of the persons to be married is under 21 years of age.

7. SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

i. It is earnestly recommended that the couple prepare themselves for marriage spiritually through prayer, scriptural meditation, regular participation at Sunday Mass and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession).

All Catholics are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before their wedding day. If you wish, the priest will offer the Sacrament after the rehearsal since there may be people who would like the opportunity to go to Confession before the marriage ceremony.

ii. Holy Communion: According to the laws of the Church, Communion is not allowed for the non-Catholic bride or groom & all non-Catholic members of their families (1Col. 11:27-29). It's important that the couple explain this to those non-Catholic members of the wedding party and family members.

"It is a consequence of the sad divisions in Christianity that we cannot extend to those not of the Catholic faith a general invitation to receive communion. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness in faith, life, and worship of the community. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we must all pray". (National Council of Catholic Bishops).

8. INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

Marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic or an unbaptized person is normally celebrated with an "Interfaith Ceremony", that is, without the Mass. This allows both parties to participate fully in the Marriage Rites along with their family and friends.

9. PLANNING THE LITURGY

A wedding is the beginning of sacramental married life. The couple is encouraged to make their marriage celebration personal by planning the ceremony with the presiding priest.

i. SCRIPTURE: The couple may choose the scripture readings to be proclaimed at their wedding from a selection provided by the Church.

ii. LECTORS: The couple may choose a mature person to proclaim the first and second readings from scripture. The reader must be a baptized Christian to proclaim the readings clearly and devoutly.

iii. ALTAR SERVERS: The parish will provide altar servers for a wedding celebration. We ask you to make a donation of \$20 to each of the two servers. You can either bring the money to the rehearsal or the best man can give this directly to the altar servers in the evening or the day of the wedding before the celebration begins.

iv. MUSIC: All music used at a wedding must be a SACRED MUSIC. It is the responsibility of the couple to contact one of the parish musicians and to pay their stipend. If approved, visiting musicians must have their repertoire approved by the priest and the parish musician. Pre-recorded music is not allowed.

Parish musicians:

- Alfred & Liza Cadawas
Alfred (musician): 416-726-6659 cell email: alfred.cadawas@gmail.com
Liza (cantor): 416-419-1989 cell email: liza.cadawas@gmail.com
- Damian Comito (cantor): 905-640-8063 home email: comitodamian@gmail.com
- Leon de Souza (pianist): 416-704-6465 cell email: hyacinthleon@gmail.com
- Medina Family & Matthew Crespo
Kyle Medina (musician): 647-518-2785 cell email: adrian.kylem@gmail.com
Matthew Crespo (cantor): 416-391-7098 cell email: 1999mjc@gmail.com
Charmaine Medina (cantor) 647-554-6617 cell email: cgaylem@gmail.com

v. FLOWERS: Flowers for the wedding are the sole responsibility of the couple. Florists should contact the parish office (905-640-6954) before delivering flowers. We encourage you to leave one or two floral arrangements in the church after the wedding for the glory of God.

NO FLOWERS ARE PERMITTED IN THE CHURCH DURING THE SEASON OF LENT.

vi. PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO: The couple makes their own arrangements for the

photographer and/or videographer. Please consult the **GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHY** and show them to your photographer and/or videographer. Please also, advise any photographers to introduce themselves to the priest in good time before the beginning of the celebration.

vii. REHEARSAL: Rehearsal time is arranged with the presiding priest. Because of other Church activities especially during the school year period, the Rehearsal will likely have to begin around 6:00 pm or earlier. During July & August, there is more scope to begin a little later around 6:30 pm. Best days would be Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. Everyone involved in the wedding ceremony should try to attend.

viii. PROMPTNESS: Common courtesy and consideration for others demand that the wedding couple arrive in good time for the **REHEARSAL** and for the **WEDDING** itself. If a wedding begins more than 10-15 minutes late it will be shortened accordingly if needed.

PLEASE NOTE: The Bride and her attendants are expected to arrive at Church no later than **15 MINUTES BEFORE THE CEREMONY IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN.** The bridal party may gather in the parish hall or in the foyer.

ix. CLEAN UP: It is your responsibility to leave the church as clean as you found it. We suggest that you ask one of your ushers to accept as part of their role to walk around and pick up any papers, flower boxes, discarded film supplies, Kleenex, etc. and help in the general clean-up of the bride's room & vestibule, as well as the church. This is really important at any wedding we have, but especially when we have to get ready to celebrate the Saturday evening Parish Mass at St. Mark's Church.

10. FURTHER DETAILS

i. PARISH HALL: The parish hall at St. Mark's might be available to our parishioners. Please talk to Fr. Tad about it, if interested.

ii. PARKING: Please try to VACATE the lot at a reasonable time so that others may make use of the space. Do not block the driveway at any time as it is a "Fire Route" and the police might ticket you.

iii. CONFETTI: The use of confetti or rice is **FORBIDDEN** both inside the church and on church property. Please help keep the premises clean and attractive.

iv. SUGGESTED WEDDING OFFERING TO THE CHURCH:

It is customary on the occasion of a wedding for the couple to make an offering in thanksgiving to God for His blessings and providential care in their lives and also for the upkeep and maintenance of church buildings, and the running of the Parish. Your offering does not go to the priest for his personal use.

In principal and out of a spirit of faith and thanksgiving, the couple should prayerfully consider tithing one tenth of the anticipated cost of the wedding to God's church or even some smaller percentage of the total cost. Should you decide otherwise, then by way of offering more specific guidelines, we would suggest the following.

A) For persons who are living in the parish boundaries and are registered parishioners who have been attending and have been actively supporting St. Mark's Parish by using the Parish Offertory Envelopes or the Pre-Authorized Giving Program for at least one year prior to contacting the parish for a marriage request.

- Suggested offering \$500.00

- OR-

B) For persons who have not been attending and supporting the church or those living outside the parish boundaries but planning to move to Stouffville. In this later case, the couple is asked to make a deposit of \$500 at the time of the first marriage interview with the priest when they book their wedding date. If the marriage is cancelled, a deposit refund will be permitted less \$50 for time spent on the paperwork if only the first meeting has taken place or a deduction of \$100 if there have been two meetings.

- Suggested offering \$1,000.00

The recommended offering for the Validation of a Civil Marriage is \$250.00

REMEMBER: THE PARISH COMMUNITY CANNOT LIVE BY PRAYERS ALONE (MICHAEL 1:1)
PLEASE NOTE: THE BOTTOM LINE. If money is a problem and you are a parishioner, DON'T WORRY! Speak to the Pastor and given your circumstances be generous and make an offering within your means in thanksgiving to God for His blessing in your life and love for His Church.

We appreciate your kind support of the church and expression of gratitude to God. Couples may make their cheque payable to St. Mark's Church.

You may drop off your offering to the Church either when you are dropping off your marriage license to the office, the week before the wedding, or alternatively, on the evening of the wedding rehearsal.

v. CHANGE OF NAME: A woman may assume her husband's name at the time of

marriage. It is her responsibility to change her ID with the Government of Ontario. A man could take his wife's name also.

vi. WEDDING PLANNER: If you hire a wedding planner, please make sure the planner is aware of all the information provided to you in this package and to confirm with the church any extraordinary items contemplated for the actual ceremony for approval.

11. CONCLUSION

The way in which the marriage ceremony is celebrated is of great concern to both the couple and the Church community. To ensure that the ceremony accurately reflects the values of both, the Rite of Christian Marriage invites couples to participate directly with their parish priest in the planning of their marriage ceremony. Through this mutual planning the actual marriage ceremony can become as meaningful and beautiful as it should be. If you have any questions concerning the above guidelines, please do not hesitate to contact the pastor or parish staff.

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GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS FOR WEDDINGS

1. Photographers and Videographers are welcome to record the celebration of Weddings in the Church. However, their presence must not interfere with the ceremony, nor should their activity cause the bride to arrive late or the wedding to begin late.
2. The Photographer and/or Videographer should arrive at least half an hour early and must present their business card to the Priest or Parish Marriage Co-ordinator (if applicable) before the wedding begins. The business card may also be brought to the rehearsal.
3. In all cases, the use of additional or accessory lighting is prohibited.
 - a. In the case of photographers, this means **no flashes.**
 - b. In the case of videographers, this means **no additional lights.**
4. No photographer is permitted to be in the sanctuary nor walk across the sanctuary during the ceremony. No photographic equipment may be used in the sanctuary.
5. In the case of videographers, the person making the video may not walk about with the recorder during the ceremony. The video camera will have to be set up, as on a tripod, at a point where the best recording can be made but not in the sanctuary.
6. There are appropriate times for close ups and times when pictures can be taken at a distance without a flash or light. Please confirm these times with the Priest or Parish Marriage Co-ordinator.
7. The wedding party should leave the church property at least thirty minutes before the next wedding (if one is scheduled). Please do not uncork champagne at the entrance of the church, nor spend excessive time taking pictures there after the wedding.
8. Please provide a copy of these instructions to your photographer and videographer. Please ensure that they speak with the Priest or Parish Marriage Co-ordinator before the ceremony so that these guidelines are clearly understood. We also recommend that you encourage your photographer and videographer to dress appropriately for the ceremony in the church.
9. If your Wedding Planner has input with your photographer or videographer, please provide them with these guidelines.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION CLASSES

Marriage Preparation- JOY FILLED MARRIAGE

We are so happy your love has brought you to this beautiful time in your life. To help you enter into marriage, as a vocation, **it is a requirement** of the Archdiocese of Toronto that couples complete an approved marriage preparation program called Joy Filled Marriage. This course covers not only the sacramentality and theology of marriage but also the practical life skills necessary to live out the rich Catholic vision of marriage. Below is a course preview. At the end of the course, couples will need to submit a certificate of completion.

There are several courses of instruction conducted each year in the Archdiocese of Toronto. You will be responsible for making your own arrangements with one of the following:

[Catholic Family Services](#) 1155 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON, M4T 1W2 | Website: <https://www.cfstoronto.com/> Tel: 416-921-1163

[Queen of the Apostles Renewal Center](#) 1617 Blythe Road
Mississauga, Ontario L5H 2C3 Email: office@qoa.ca Tel: 905-278-5229

COURSE PREVIEW

. COURSE BENEFITS

The Joy-filled marriage invites participants to:

- See the significance of their call to married life
- Appreciate what the Catholic Church teaches about marriage, and why
- Embrace the gift of grace that makes a lifelong, joy-filled marriage possible
- Learn the sound principles upon which successful marriages are built
- Discover more about themselves and each other
- Recognize topics of importance in their relationship, identify shared goals, and set concrete plans to build a joy-filled marriage

There is also a marriage preparation course offered on-line.

[Pre-Cana: Living Our Faith in Love](#)
<https://themarriagegroup.com/courses/pre-cana/>