

# WEDDINGS AT ST MARY'S IN ASPEN

## INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your engagement. This document is a help to organizing a wedding ceremony at St. Mary in Aspen.

## SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING

To schedule your wedding, you must first enroll in a Catholic Marriage Preparation program at your own local parish. After enrollment in that program, we can schedule the wedding.

- For local couples, you can schedule your wedding after your initial meeting with Fr. Joe to begin the marriage preparation program. The Archdiocese of Denver mandates that this meeting take place at least eight months prior to the wedding, to allow ample time for discernment and preparation.
- For non-local couples, we can schedule your wedding after we receive confirmation directly from your home parish (via email, letter, or phone call) that you are enrolled in their marriage preparation program. Your local pastor will also need to give you permission to hold your marriage outside of your own local parish. Your marriage cannot be celebrated here without that documentation.
- For couples who are long-distance, military, foreign, moving, or have other special circumstances, the marriage preparation program must still be completed. There are various ways of accommodating these circumstances.

The parish that prepares the couple for marriage will keep a file tracking your progress through the program. If your parish is outside of the Archdiocese of Denver, that file will be sent to the Archdiocese of Denver Tribunal, and then forwarded to St. Mary's. If your parish of preparation is in the Archdiocese of Denver, that file should be forwarded directly from your parish to St. Mary's. (And of course, if you're prepared locally, we keep your file here.)

## FORM OF WEDDING

Usually, when both the bride and groom are Catholic, the wedding will take place during a Mass. If one of the couple is non-Catholic or non-Christian, the wedding will take place with a liturgy of the word (the first half of the Mass with readings, etc.) instead of a full Mass. This is so that we can emphasize the parts of our faith that we share with non-Catholics.

## TIME OF WEDDING

Saturday weddings can be scheduled during the morning hours or in the afternoon until 3:00 pm. Weekday weddings can be scheduled at a wide variety of times depending on the parish activities.

## THE PRIEST OR DEACON FOR YOUR WEDDING

Please schedule a Catholic bishop, priest, or deacon as celebrant of the wedding. Fr. Joe or Deacon Phil are the local clergy at St. Mary's and will do their best to be available for your wedding. If the celebrant is from outside the [Archdiocese of Denver](#), he will need to provide a letter of good standing from his local diocese or religious order. If a priest is traveling, there is sometimes the possibility of accommodation at the rectory guest room. In some dioceses it is considered appropriate to give a small stipend/gift to the celebrant. St. Mary Parish does not cover the cost of travel for clergy outside of the parish, so please also consider reimbursing the priest's or deacon's mileage and other travel expenses.

## MARRIAGE LICENSE

Prior to your marriage you must obtain a Colorado Marriage License from the office of the County Clerk. Please bring the license with you to the rehearsal. For couples who are convalidating a civil marriage, no marriage license is necessary.<sup>1</sup> For foreign couples or local couples who need to obtain the civil marriage license through their embassy/consulate, please communicate this with the church as soon as possible so we know what arrangements to make for the civil marriage

The couple, the witnesses, and the celebrant will sign the marriage license immediately after the religious ceremony, usually in the sacristy or in the small room in front of the elevator. The church will then deliver the marriage license to the county on the first weekday after the wedding.

## FEES

St. Mary's has no fees for weddings. An offering of some kind, however, is greatly appreciated. Checks can be made out to "St. Mary in Aspen." We are a small parish in a resort town, and we rely heavily on the generous support of both locals and visitors to maintain a Catholic presence in downtown Aspen.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: in the Archdiocese of Denver, we usually require six months after a civil marriage before a convalidation is allowed. Special circumstances are allowed for foreign couples.

## THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

You will be provided with a book, *Together for Life*, from which you may choose readings, prayers, and blessings that will be used during your wedding.

## REHEARSAL

A rehearsal date and time should be arranged with Fr. Joe, Deacon Phil, or another parish staff member. The wedding party should observe proper decorum during rehearsal and ceremony. No chewing of gum, eating, or drinking should occur in the church.

## ALCOHOL & DRUGS

As Catholics, we have no qualms with throwing back a few cold ones. However, the excessive consumption of alcohol or the use of any drugs before or during the rehearsal and/or wedding ceremony by guests, witnesses, or the couple can result in the postponement or cancellation of the ceremony. For the couple getting married, any alcohol consumption at all is strictly forbidden before the ceremony, as they must be in their right mind to pronounce valid wedding vows. Without an event permit from the county, possession or consumption of alcohol on church property is strictly prohibited.

## MINISTERS OF THE WEDDING LITURGY

The celebrant - A Catholic bishop, priest, or deacon. The clergy represents the church and blesses the union. If the wedding is a Mass, the celebrant must be a priest or bishop (not a deacon). If the wedding is a liturgy of the word, the wedding can be done by a bishop, priest, or deacon.

Lector(s) - A lector proclaims the readings. One or two people adept at reading in public may be chosen. The couple should provide the lectors with copies of the readings beforehand so they can rehearse. The lector may also read the prayers of the faithful. If there is no cantor, the lector reads the responsorial psalm.

Ushers - Ushers greet guests at the door, hand them a worship program, if used, and can assist them to find their seats. Ushers are encouraged to seat people towards the front of the church.

Altar Servers - if there are guests who regularly serve at their home parish and are well trained, mature servers, they are welcome to altar serve at the wedding. Servers should plan on coming to the rehearsal if possible.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDING

Photographers and videographers are asked to remain behind the communion rail and to cause as little distraction from the ceremony as possible. When scheduling photographers for before or after the ceremony, please be aware that confessions begin in the church at 4:30pm and Mass at 5:30pm on Saturdays. If a couple would like to livestream the wedding they are to bring their own equipment and may have to use a cellular hotspot for an internet connection.

## MUSIC

Only Catholic liturgical music is to be used in the church. The couple is responsible for selecting and contracting musicians, however, the musicians must be well versed in appropriate Catholic liturgical music and able to follow the norms of the Roman Catholic liturgy. Popular songs or secular songs are great for the reception, but are not to be played in the church. Be aware that musicians all have their own policies and fees and you should discuss these with the musicians themselves.

We highly recommend contracting Kevin Kaukl, St. Mary's music director, to organize and perform the wedding music. Please be aware that when contracting Kevin for a wedding, he does not play as a church employee, but rather he is privately contracted through the couple; i.e. he should be paid directly by the couple, and not through the church.

## COMMUNICATION WITH THE PARISH

Wedding coordinators, parents, and other relatives sometimes help the couple with preparation for the wedding. For the sake of clarity, all communication with the parish with regards to the ceremony must involve the couple directly. Wedding coordinators, parents, or other relatives may be present or assist with this communication, but all decisions must be made and communicated with the couple themselves.

## ATTIRE

All wedding attire should be in accord with what is appropriate for a reverent ceremony.

## DOWNSTAIRS CLASSROOMS

Can be made available for use before or after the wedding. Under no circumstances should you attempt to move the classroom walls without assistance from parish staff.

## DECORATIONS AND FLOWERS

Appropriate places for decorations include the area around the tabernacle, the pulpit, the pews, and the seating area for the bride and groom. Flowers/decorations may not be placed on the altar that is to be used for Mass.

## SET UP AND CLEAN UP

The window of availability for decorating and clearing out decorations can sometimes be narrow. Please confirm with the parish that there are no other weddings or other events before or after your ceremony so you can schedule appropriately. The church needs to be clean for Saturday evening and Sunday morning masses, and church staff is not available after weddings to do this. Please arrange for the clean-up of the church and any classrooms you may have used.

## RICE, BIRD SEED, FIREWORKS, CONFETTI, ETC.

Strictly forbidden on church grounds. And yes, there is a story behind every rule.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A SIMPLE WEDDING?

Oftentimes couples avoid or postpone marriage because of the cost of the ceremony and reception. If you desire to receive the sacrament of matrimony in the Church, it is possible to do a simple marriage ceremony without music that includes just the couple, a witness, and the priest/deacon at no cost whatsoever. This is also an option for couples who are already civilly married (for at least six months) and would like to be married also in the church. Please do not let the cost or complication of organizing a ceremony prevent you from receiving the sacrament.

## MY FIANCÉ AND I ARE LIVING TOGETHER. CAN WE GET MARRIED IN THE CHURCH?

Of course. Be prepared for some frank and serious discussions during the marriage preparation program about what marriage in the Church means and how to prepare well for the reception of a Catholic Sacrament.

## MY FIANCÉ IS NOT CATHOLIC.

This is not uncommon. Before the marriage can take place, you must ask your local bishop for permission to marry a non-Catholic. The Archbishop always grants this permission, provided the Catholic promises to do all that is possible to remain in the Church and to raise children in the faith. When a Catholic marries another Christian or non-Christian we encourage the wedding celebration without the Mass. Why? Non-Catholic Christians cannot receive holy communion, and we want to emphasize things that unite us in a Christian wedding.

## CAN WE BE MARRIED OUTSIDE A CHURCH BUILDING?

A Catholic Marriage is a sacrament and a public declaration of vows before the whole Church community. As such, it is to be done publicly at a Catholic place of worship.

## I AM ALREADY CIVILLY MARRIED OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. CAN I BE MARRIED IN THE CHURCH?

Of course. For Catholics, marriage is both a civil and a religious reality. For Catholics who are already married civilly, but not sacramentally, the wedding is sometimes called a "convalidation." You do not need to obtain a wedding license for this ceremony.

## I, OR MY FIANCÉ, HAVE BEEN MARRIED BEFORE AND ARE NOW DIVORCED. CAN WE GET MARRIED IN THE CHURCH?

The marriage law of the Church is admittedly complicated. Please come and talk to your priest or deacon about your circumstances. Some situations can be taken care of very easily while others may require a process of discernment to understand the current status of the previous marriage bond. Please be aware that these will need to be taken care of before we can schedule a date for the wedding.