



Dear Engaged Couple:

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage! We are delighted you have chosen to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony at St. Patrick Church. Preparation begins with your first meeting with a priest or deacon, where you'll discuss your readiness to marry in the Catholic Church. This booklet walks you through that preparation, from your first meeting to your wedding day.

This information is also available online at stpatrick-lakeforest.org/marriage.

We look forward to helping you plan a beautiful Sacrament of Matrimony, and we hope this season of preparation brings real joy as you look ahead to your life together.

Blessings,

The St. Patrick Catholic Church Marriage Ministry Team

Questions anytime? Contact our Ministry Office at (847) 234-1401 or Deacon John Morris at jbmorris@stpatrick-lakeforest.org.

1. Getting Started: Your Wedding Date

- **Meet with a priest or deacon:** Call the parish office at (847) 234-1401 at least six months before your desired date to schedule your first meeting. We recommend waiting to book your reception venue until after this meeting.
- **Previous marriages:** Both of you must be free to marry in the Catholic Church. If either of you was married before (in any faith, civilly, or otherwise) and that former spouse is still living, you will likely need a Declaration of Nullity (annulment) before a date can be reserved. Your priest or deacon will guide you through this process, which can take a few months or longer.
- **Nuptial Mass or ceremony:** At least one of you must be Catholic. Depending on your circumstances, your wedding will take one of three forms: within a Nuptial Mass (two Catholics), outside of Mass (a Catholic and a baptized Christian), or without Mass (a Catholic and a non-baptized person). Your priest or deacon will help determine which applies to you; see the Order of the Liturgy later in this booklet.
- **Days and times:** Weddings are usually held Saturday afternoons, no later than 3:00 PM, in either our main church (seating 700) or our historic old church (seating 195); other days can sometimes be arranged. The church is available to you one hour before your ceremony. Confirm your ceremony date and time with the parish before booking your reception. Rehearsals are typically held the afternoon or evening before, depending on availability.

2. Preparing for Marriage

- **Initial meeting:** Your priest or deacon will get to know you as a couple, answer your questions, and outline the preparation process ahead.
- **Marriage preparation program (Pre-Cana):** The Archdiocese of Chicago requires you to attend a Pre-Cana conference as soon as possible after your first meeting. A trained married couple leads discussion in small and large groups using a workbook, giving you a chance to reflect together and with other couples. There is a fee, and advance registration is required. Schedule and registration: pvm.archchicago.org — [Marriage Preparation Courses](#) (or call 312-534-8201).
- **Premarital inventory (FOCCUS):** FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study) is an online questionnaire — not a test — that surfaces topics worth discussing: family background, finances, communication, in-laws, and more. There is a fee, paid at online registration. Afterward, a trained married-couple facilitator meets with you "two-on-two" at St. Patrick to talk through your results; our Marriage Ministry team will contact you to schedule this.

3. Required Documents

- **Prenuptial investigation:** Completed with your priest or deacon at your first meeting, this opens your confidential wedding file, which is kept in a locked file in the parish office and is accessible only to your priest/deacon and your FOCCUS facilitator couple.
- **Baptism certificate:** A newly issued certificate (dated within the last six months, no photocopies) from the parish where you were baptized. Non-Catholics who were baptized should also provide a certificate, or a letter from their current pastor or minister if one isn't available. Ask your home parish to mail it directly to your priest or deacon at St. Patrick Church, 991 S. Waukegan Road, Lake Forest, IL 60045 — a small fee may apply.
- **Affidavits:** Two witness affidavits are typically required, completed in person at the parish where each witness resides, with a priest or deacon. Parents, siblings, or close friends who have known you a long time make good witnesses. Forms are available from your priest or deacon.
- **Marriage license:** Couples marrying in Lake County must obtain an Illinois marriage license in person (both of you) from the County Clerk's Office, 18 N. County St., Room 101, Waukegan, IL

60085. The license is valid for 60 days and cannot be obtained the day of your wedding — without it, your priest or deacon cannot witness the marriage. Bring it to the parish office one month before your wedding. License details, hours, and requirements: countyclerk.lakecountyil.gov — [Marriage Licenses](#).

4. Planning Your Wedding Liturgy

You and your fiancé(e) plan the liturgy together, with help from your priest or deacon, our Music Director, and a Marriage Ministry team member. Your choices are a meaningful way to share your faith with everyone gathered to pray with you.

- **Your planning guide:** You'll receive the "United in Christ" booklet, which walks you through the Rite of Marriage step by step, including all approved readings and prayer options.
- **Meeting with your priest or deacon:** Once your Marriage Preparation programs are complete, you'll schedule a final meeting to discuss the spirituality of Matrimony, plan the liturgy, and address any questions from your preparation classes. He remains available to you throughout.
- **Meeting with the Marriage Ministry team:** Every couple can consult our team on the practical details of liturgy, rehearsal, and ceremony. Our office will connect you with a team contact once your wedding is scheduled. Outside wedding planners are welcome at the rehearsal and wedding but do not have a formal role in the church.
- **Family and friends in the liturgy:** The congregation participates in spoken and sung parts throughout. Family or close friends with a good reading voice may serve as lectors and gift presenters. The parish provides Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC's) or we can train Catholic family/friends in good standing.
- **Scripture readings:** Choose three readings — one each from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospels (non-scriptural readings can't substitute). At least one must speak explicitly of marriage; these are marked with an asterisk in "United in Christ." Or refer to For Your Marriage website: <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/readings/>

Optional Traditions

A few beautiful customs can be added to your ceremony if you'd like — just let your priest or deacon know:

- **Unity Candle:** A popular custom, though not part of the official Rite. You provide the candles and bring them to the rehearsal; a team member sets them up near the altar. It can also be done at your reception instead.
- **Arras, Lazo, and veil placement:** Optional traditions in the revised Rite of Matrimony symbolizing the couple's indissoluble union.
- **Flowers to mothers:** A small flower or posy may be given to each mother during the Sign of Peace.
- **Blessed Mother meditation:** The couple kneels before a statue of Mary at the liturgy's conclusion, often praying a Hail Mary and placing flowers, while a Marian hymn (such as Ave Maria) is played.

5. Rehearsal & Ceremony Policies

Rehearsal

Held the afternoon or evening before your wedding and lasting about an hour, led by a Marriage Ministry team member. Please invite only those directly involved: parents, stepparents, grandparents, and your full bridal party (attendants, ushers, lectors, Extraordinary Ministers, flower girls, ring bearers, gift bearers). A responsible adult should accompany any children in the party. Outside wedding planners

may attend but may not direct the rehearsal. Musicians typically don't attend rehearsal; if family members are performing, they should schedule their own time with the Music Director. Please bring: worship aids, ring pillow, flower petals/basket, and any unity candle, Arras, Lazo, or veil you're using.

Bride's and Groom's Rooms

The Community Room near the Parish Ministry Office serves as the Bride's Room (unlocked — please don't leave valuables) and must be restored afterward for Sunday's Children's Liturgy of the Word; please assign someone to collect all personal items before you leave. The Groom and groomsmen may use the church's vesting sacristy to gather before the procession.

Records

The parish office files your signed license with the Lake County Clerk and gives a ceremonial wedding certificate (suitable for framing) to the Bride's mother or Maid of Honor after the ceremony.

Church & Ceremony Etiquette

- Dress and behave respectfully — no gum, profanity, or hats, and please keep children from running through the church.
- Food, drink, and gum are not allowed in the worship space; only sealed, store-bought water is permitted in the Bride's and Groom's rooms.
- Silence cell phones and other devices inside the church.
- Alcohol is not permitted anywhere on church property before, during, or after the rehearsal or ceremony; the officiant will decline to proceed if the bride, groom, or bridal party appear to be under the influence.
- Smoking is not permitted in any church building or on the grounds.
- Seasonal banners, altar cloths, and decorations may not be removed or rearranged.
- Flowers aren't placed on the altar itself — up to two arrangements beside it or one in front, no taller than the altar, in leak-proof containers. Pew decorations shouldn't damage pew wood. Your florist can provide the aisle runner (new church aisle: 53 ft; old church aisle: 42 ft). Live candles and hurricane holders aren't allowed in the aisle for fire safety — battery candles are fine.
- Flower petals, confetti, rice, birdseed, and released balloons are not permitted (cleanup and safety concerns); bubbles are a welcome alternative.

Photography & Videography

Please make sure your photographer and videographer connect with the priest before the wedding day and dress professionally. A Marriage Ministry team member will go over equipment placement in advance.

- No flash photography or artificial lighting during the ceremony.
- During the entry procession only, photographers may stand in the front aisle near the sanctuary; once the liturgy begins, photos are taken from the middle and side aisles only, with minimal movement.
- The main aisle must stay clear during the readings, Sign of Peace, and Communion.
- The Sanctuary and Tabernacle area are off-limits to photographers and videographers at all times. No photos during the consecration or distribution of Communion — the most sacred moments of the Mass. Videographers may film from the center or side-back aisles without moving.
- Altar photos may begin right after the Recessional — start with the priest, deacon, and altar servers, and keep a reverent tone; a pre-planned shot list helps things move smoothly.
- All photography in the main church must wrap by 4:00 PM on Saturdays so our team can prepare for the 5:00 PM Mass.

6. Fees & Stipends

- **Wedding fee:** \$700, payable to St. Patrick Church, which covers parish expenses (staff, custodial services, utilities, and materials). If this presents a financial hardship, please speak with your priest or deacon about other arrangements.
- **Stipends:** A suggested \$200 stipend for the presiding priest or deacon, plus a smaller thank-you for any Marriage Ministry team member who assisted.
- **Music:** Contact our Music Director, Maristella Lee, at least six weeks before your wedding to plan and approve music selections; she'll discuss fees with you. Outside musicians require an additional planning fee. Reach her at (847) 234-1401 or mlee@stpatrick-lakeforest.org.
- **Altar servers:** Provided by the parish unless you request someone else. It's customary for the best man to tip servers (\$10 each suggested).

7. Order of the Liturgy

As you read "United in Christ" together, choose the options that best reflect your relationship with each other and with God — these choices will stay with you throughout your married life. The order below covers both a Nuptial Mass and a ceremony outside of Mass; the two differ only in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, noted below.

Part of the Liturgy	What Happens
Introductory Rites	Entrance procession; greeting by the priest/deacon; (if using) mothers light the Unity Candle side candles; opening prayer — Gloria included only within Mass.
Liturgy of the Word	Old Testament reading, Responsorial Psalm, New Testament reading, Gospel Acclamation, Gospel, and Homily — https://www.foryourmarriage.org/readings/). The Creed is typically omitted.
Rite of Matrimony	Questions before the Consent, the Consent, Reception of the Consent, and the Blessing and Giving of Rings, plus the optional Unity Candle lighting and Universal Prayer/Prayer of the Faithful.
Liturgy of the Eucharist	Within a Nuptial Mass only: Preparation of the Gifts (2–4 presenters), Eucharistic Prayer, Lord's Prayer, Nuptial Blessing, Sign of Peace (optional flowers to mothers), Holy Communion.
Outside of Mass	In place of the Eucharist: the Lord's Prayer, Nuptial Blessing, and Sign of Peace (optional flowers to mothers) follow directly after the Rite of Matrimony.
Conclusion	Optional Blessed Mother visitation (Ave Maria or Marian hymn),

Part of the Liturgy	What Happens
	Solemn Blessing, introduction of the couple, and the Recessional

8. Marriage Preparation Checklist

Timing	What to Do
6–12 months before	Call (847) 234-1401 to meet with a priest or deacon and reserve your wedding date.
6+ months before	Request baptismal certificates by mail (must be dated within 6 months of the wedding). Complete the FOCCUS inventory online. Register for and attend Pre-Cana through the Archdiocese. Send your completion certificate to your priest or deacon. Begin reviewing scripture options in "United in Christ."
4+ months before	After completing FOCCUS and Pre-Cana, schedule your second meeting with your priest or deacon. Choose up to three readers for your Old Testament, New Testament, and Universal Prayer readings.
2 months before	Obtain your marriage license from the Lake County Clerk in Waukegan and bring it to the parish office. Email photography and florist guidelines to your vendors.
1 month before	Finalize and print your worship aid/program. Submit your license if not already turned in. Send or drop off your wedding and music fees.

Questions along the way? Deacon John Morris and your assigned Marriage Ministry team member are always happy to help.

Blessing for an Engaged Couple

*May God, who in His gentle plan draws you
together in love for one another,
strengthen your hearts
so that you will keep faith with each other.*

*May you grow in your respect for one another
and cherish each other
with a sincere love,
and come to the happiness of celebrating
the Sacrament of Marriage.*

*May Almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*