



*Celebrating the
Sacrament of Marriage
in the
Diocese of Phoenix
and
St. Mary's Basilica*

231 North Third Street Phoenix, AZ 85004

Office: 602-354-2100 Fax: 602-354-2060 www.saintmarysbasilica.org



Dear Friends,

Congratulations and welcome to the Basilica,

St. Mary's Basilica, named The Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is the oldest Catholic parish in Phoenix and was the only Catholic parish in Phoenix until 1924. It holds a unique place in the history of the Church in the diocese, and it is indeed, a beautiful place to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage.

On September 2, 1985, His Holiness Pope John Paul II solemnly proclaimed the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be a Minor Basilica. At that time, for historical, cultural, artistic, and spiritual reasons, St. Mary's became the 32nd basilica in the United States. While on his American Visit, His Holiness John Paul II visited St. Mary's knelt in prayer in the center aisle and also spoke to the crowd from the balcony on September 14, 1987.

In the following pages you will find all the information you will need to begin your marriage preparation and plan your wedding at St. Mary's Basilica. We look forward to assisting you on your journey to your call to live this sacramental life.

Peace and all good,

Fr. Vincent J. Mesi, OFM

Rector, St. Mary's Basilica, Phoenix



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*Roman Catholic Diocese
of Phoenix
Wedding Policy*



Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix

Wedding Policy Step by Step

In an effort to better prepare couples for marriage, the Diocese of Phoenix has updated their Marriage Preparation Policy, which came into effect on January 1, 2010. Under the new guidelines, the preparation time before marriage will be 9 months and the couple will need to complete 12 extra hours of classes. The completion of these steps provides you with the necessary preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony in the Diocese of Phoenix.

Step One

Meet with your pastor or delegate

View “Covenant of Love” Video

Fill out the Prenuptial Inquiry Form with the pastor or delegate

This form asks questions regarding yourself, your freedom to marry and your intentions. You are each interviewed alone, so that you may answer freely. Under no circumstances will this form be shown to the other.

Step Two

Take the FOCCUS Pre-Marital Inventory

A series of questions designed to assess each of your habits, expectations and values. It provides a personalized profile of your relationship’s strengths and weaknesses. This is an important starting place for couple discussion and a map of the areas that may need affirmation, attention or problem solving.

Review the results of the FOCCUS

May take 2 to 3 sessions with the priest or his delegate.

Set Wedding Date and Time

For St. Mary’s Basilica a deposit of \$250 to secure your desired date and time.

Choose your presider

Let us know if you would like one of our priests or if you will be using an outside presider.

Set the Rehearsal date and time



Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix

Wedding Policy Step by Step Continued

Step Three

Attend a Married Life Skills Class

You will be given multiple classes to choose from. These classes are designed to fine tune practical skills such as conflict resolution, decision making, financial management and communication. At the end of the session you will be given a certificate of completion which you will turn in to the pastor or delegate.

Provide a witness for the Affidavit of Free Status

You will provide one (1 for each person) Life Witness to testify to your freedom to marry. This person should preferably be a parent, older sibling or close family member.

Step Four

Attend God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage

This class is based on Pope John Paul, II "Theology of the Body". It is designed to inform you not only what the church teaches about marriage and sexuality but why the church teaches it. This is also your introduction to Natural Family Planning.

Step Five

Take the Full Course of Natural Family Planning.

This class consists of 4 sessions and will ensure you have the tools to plan your family effectively and in accord with God's plan for marriage. This takes most of your 9 month prep.

Steps Six and Seven

Planning the Wedding Liturgy with the Priest

As the ministers of the sacrament of marriage, you, will have the opportunity to select your prayers, readings and other liturgical aspects of the ceremony. You will receive a book called "Together for Life" which will have all of the options needed for the planning.

Planning the Music

After you have planned the liturgy you will meet with the Music Director and select your music for the ceremony. This should be done after you have made your reading selections.



Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix
Wedding Policy Step by Step Continued

Required Documents to be submitted by the couple

Baptismal Certificates

A recently issued Certificate of Baptism with notations. (dated within the last 6 months. Please do not give us a copy of your original Baptismal certificate) If you are a non-catholic and have been baptized in your religion, if at all possible, we will also need a copy of that baptismal certificate.

Marriage License

This should be attained in the county you will be married in. For example: if you will be getting married in Flagstaff you will need to attain a Marriage in License in Coconino County, not Maricopa County. The license should be given to the pastor or delegate at least 1 month prior to the wedding date.

Other Required Documents to be submitted by the couple
(only if applicable)

Nullity Decree (Annulment Letter)

If one or both of the parties were previously married to another person and has divorced, they are not free to marry. They will need to get that marriage annulled by the church. If an annulment is needed, the couple is forbidden to set a wedding date until the previous marriage is annulled. (This also applies to a non-catholic party)

Death Certificate

If you were previously married and your former spouse is deceased, we will need a copy of the death certificate to prove your freedom to marry.

Convalidation

If at least one of you are a baptized Catholic and are currently civilly married or married in a non-Catholic Church, and seeking to have your marriage validated in the Catholic Church, we will need a photocopy of your marriage license or certificate.

Dispensations (a “relaxation” of an ecclesiastical law for a just cause).

Mixed-Marriage: a dispensation that allows a baptized Catholic to marry a person baptized in another religion.

Disparity of Cult: a dispensation that allows a baptized Catholic to marry a non-baptized person.



*Celebrating the
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St. Mary's Basilica Wedding Policy





Marriage is a Sacrament

In the Roman Catholic tradition, marriage is recognized as a Sacrament, one of seven offered in the Church. Sacraments are instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, dispensing divine life to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. In the case of marriage, the outward signs are the couple united, the vows, rings and other symbols and prayers that ritualize the couple's commitment.

Marriage is a vocational sacrament, meaning that, along with holy orders (priesthood), it is a sacrament that celebrates a life choice. A person makes that choice as she/he discerns God's call to live life in a particular way. Vocation is also understood to be a choice of work and in that sense, the work of the couple is to faithfully love one another and to put forth the fruits of their love in service to family and the Church.

A marriage in the Church is important for both the couple and the Church community. During the wedding liturgy, the couple celebrates the consecration of their love and commitment in a joyful ceremony in the presence of family and friends. At the same time, the Church celebrates a powerful, evangelical opportunity that strengthens and builds up the worshipping community, reminding all gathered of Christ's abiding presence and love for the Church. Liturgy is always public prayer and the wedding is celebrated as a liturgy. Therefore, it is never really *my* wedding but a Church celebration.

Setting the Date

The date and time of the wedding can be set following the first review of the FOCCUS Pre-Marital Inventory. Weddings are celebrated on available Saturdays at either 12:00 pm or 2:30 pm, there are no Saturday evening weddings. The maximum of one and a half hours is set aside for your use of the church. (this includes the ceremony and pictures)

It is absolutely imperative that all individuals connected with the Rite of Marriage arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the liturgy. This includes the bride, groom, wedding party, parents, readers, Eucharistic Ministers, cross bearer and anyone else involved in the Wedding Liturgy.

If your wedding is scheduled at **Noon**, you and your wedding party should not arrive inside the Church until 11:00AM but no later than **11:30 AM**. You must vacate the Church by **1:30 PM**.

If your wedding is scheduled at **2:30 PM**, you and your wedding party should not arrive inside the Church until 1:30PM but no later than **2:00 PM**. You must vacate the Church by **4:00 PM**.

Weddings can be celebrated on other days of the week depending on the availability of the Church and of the priest.

Weddings at the Basilica are not celebrated during the seasons of Lent and Advent.



Planning the Wedding Liturgy

Prayerful planning and selection of scripture readings, prayers, music, art and environment are integral to the celebration of marriage.

The marriage of two Catholics takes place at a Nuptial Mass, wherein the couple receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion.

The marriage between a Catholic and a Baptized Christian of a different tradition is celebrated outside Mass which includes scripture readings, exchange of vows, and the Nuptial Blessing. The wedding of couples of different Christian religions do not take place during a Nuptial Mass because at the time of communion, one would not be able to receive. The marriage between a Catholic and a Non-Baptized person may not take place within the celebration of the Mass.

Scripture and prayer selections should be turned into the wedding coordinator no later than one month (30 days) prior to the wedding date. The wedding coordinator should be advised of any changes made to the selection form after it has been turned in with in one week of the wedding date.

More than forty years ago, the Roman Catholic Church began a major reform of the liturgy and sacraments of the Church. In the case of the sacrament of marriage, the Church's understanding of marriage was redefined in light of the contemporary Christian experience and emerging research in scripture and sacramental theology.

In 1969, the Roman Catholic Church promulgated a revised Rite of Marriage. This is the Rite that we use today.

In keeping with the Rite of Marriage, St. Mary's Basilica offers three forms for the bride and groom to begin the wedding.

1. The bride and groom walk down the aisle together, for it is the bride and groom, as the primary ministers of the sacrament, who confer the sacrament of marriage on one another.
2. The bride and groom are escorted by both parents.
3. The bride and groom, witnesses/family members are already in place before the liturgy begins.

The form most fitting with the Catholic Marriage Rite is the bride and groom walking down the aisle together.

It is frequently depicted in film and at weddings in other churches that the bride enters the church escorted by her father. It is important to note that this is an outdated custom dating back to medieval times when marriages were arranged very much like a business deal.



Planning the Wedding Liturgy Cont.

Some rituals associated with the wedding ceremony, such as the bride and groom not seeing one another before the ceremony, the bride's father walking her down the aisle to the tune of "Here Comes The Bride," or the bride wearing a veil over her face no longer make sense according to the current Catholic understanding of bride and groom as equal partners. Indeed, these practices originate from outdated understandings of women as showpieces and property, even though they are commonly seen in film and television or at another's wedding. Rituals or symbols that compete with those that are essential are discouraged. On the other hand, couples may wish to express themselves within their culture, so it is important to make choices that enhance what is essential and let go of what duplicates or detracts from the essential.

The wedding procession, if there is to be one, is to look like the procession at Sunday Mass. It is led by the cross, followed by the lector (s), followed by the priest. The wedding party in pairs is next, followed by the bride and groom, with or without their parents. *There is never a break in spacing for the entrance of the groom or the bride.*

The groom and the bride step into the procession immediately following their witnesses. The wedding party is seated in the front section of the church, behind the bride's and groom's immediate families. The bride and groom may choose to sit with their families, or they may be seated in the sanctuary with their witnesses.

The wedding procession is usually accompanied by an instrumental hymn. Once everyone is in place, a Gathering Hymn is sung by all. **Please note there is only ONE Processional Song for everyone in the wedding party, no special music for the bride.** Once the entrance hymn has ended the presider leads the Sign of the Cross and greets all present, which is the traditional beginning of Catholic liturgy.

Planning the Wedding Liturgy - Music

As you select your wedding music, the emphasis must be on liturgical music – music which derives its context from scriptural sources and, by its very nature, enhances the sacramental union of the couple in Christ. The church wedding is a sacred rite invoking the blessing of God on the union of bride and groom. The music and texts selected must express the praise of God, God's steadfast love in Christ as the foundation and model for marriage, or the asking of God's presence and blessing.



Planning the Wedding Liturgy – Music Cont.

For these reasons, secular music is not permitted. Secular music, such as Broadway musicals or popular songs dealing with love, is used more effectively outside the religious celebration (e.g., a reception or rehearsal party). **Recorded music is not permitted.** Since there is no special procession for the bride, there is no separate presentational music for the bride.

The Director of Music at St. Mary's Basilica will serve as Organist and/or principal musician at all weddings.

At St. Mary's Basilica it is our policy that a staff cantor be engaged for each wedding. Within the wedding liturgy there are many moments for sung prayer. These individuals are highly trained, not only in the techniques of singing, but also in the art of leading congregational song. In addition, they are versed in the standard musical repertoire for Catholic weddings, are comfortable with the particular acoustical properties of the church building, and are familiar with the liturgical norms of the parish.

Family members or friends who are musicians may be invited to participate in your wedding. Approval must be given by the Director of Music *in advance*. Generally, guest musicians will be limited to one or two solo songs and must arrange a rehearsal with the director of music. A staff cantor will be required to lead the remainder of the liturgical music.

Instrumentalists who are accompanying the liturgy can be used within the liturgy but, instrumentalists who's purpose is pure performance are more appropriate outside the liturgy. The St. Mary's Basilica Music Ministry maintains professional relationships with many of the finest musicians in the Phoenix area, and it is from this pool that wedding instrumentalists are taken.

Occasionally couples wish to engage the services of a Vocal Quartet or the Basilica Choir for their wedding ceremony. When this is desired, the Director of Music will secure and rehearse the necessary personnel, and will conduct them during the wedding liturgy. Please note that additional fees will apply.

It is important that your family and friends be invited to participate fully at your wedding liturgy. A wedding program will be prepared and designed based on the scriptural and musical selections you choose. Samples of wedding programs are available upon request.



The Wedding Liturgy – The Ceremony

The Church recognizes that each of you is a unique individual and, together thus form a unique couple. Consequently, it hopes you will actively plan and participate in a nuptial ceremony which will be distinctly your own, while still following a pattern standard for all Catholic weddings.

We will be giving you “Together for Life” and a basic outline for the service. This is a rich resource of Scripture readings, prayers, vows, blessings and other alternatives from which you can select those that personally seem most appropriate and attractive. They are arranged according to the order of the ceremony.

At this time, the following individuals should be identified:

*The Readers

*Persons responsible for bringing forward the gifts during the Mass

* Eucharistic Ministers

Everyone in the wedding party and those involved with the liturgy are to arrive at the church at least 30 minutes prior to the wedding. It is extremely important that we begin on time. If we start late, this of course, will use up your picture time or if you are the Noon wedding you will be running into the next wedding couple’s time in the Basilica. If we do start too late, then we run the risk of not being able to have a Mass and only the Rite of Marriage (if this applies).

You will be asked to pick one of the following options. This is not to be changed at the wedding rehearsal or day of the wedding! We will be planning for this format, just as you should be planning with your family and friends.

Procession Example

The Cross Bearer

The Readers

The Presider and or Deacon

The Wedding Party

The Flower Girl and Ring Bearer

Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor

The Bride and Groom

or

The Groom escorted by *both* parents

The Bride escorted by *both* parents

Please inform the Wedding Coordinator if you would like to add Padrinos and/or other important people to the procession.



Cultural and Ritual Aspects

There are many rituals involved in a wedding, including those rituals that are part of courtship, engagement, rehearsal, wedding day, reception and honeymoon. Rituals are culturally based and are celebrated according to one's family and cultural traditions. For a Catholic wedding, the essential and most important rituals are those that are required by the Church. According to Catholic sacramental theology, the most important aspect of the rite of marriage is the mutual consent given at the time of the exchange of vows and rings.

No other part of the wedding must eclipse this most holy of rituals that defines the sacrament. Indeed, marriage is the only sacrament in the Church not conferred through the hands of the ordained. The sacrament of marriage is witnessed by the priest or deacon but conferred through the consent of the couple. And so, the bride and the groom are the presiders of the sacrament at their wedding. Their unity is a symbol of Christ's love for the Church. Everything they do should be done as a couple, emphasizing their unity. For this reason, couples of different Christian religions are not able to have a Nuptial Mass because at the time of communion, one would not be able to receive.

Other cultural or religious traditions such as flowers given to the Blessed Mother, the placing of a veil around the couple, the giving of arras and the Lazo are permitted but they should be looked at in light of the circumstances of each couple. The question to keep in mind is, does this ritual action have special meaning for us, or are we doing it because we think people expect us to do so?

The "Unity Candle" is not permitted during any ceremony. We recommend this practice for the reception. The unity candle is not part of the rite of marriage in the Catholic Church and never has been. Your unity is shown publicly in the sacrament on your wedding day.

The Basilica Church

The Basilica is first and foremost a sacred building designed to accommodate prayer and worship. Although weddings are joyful celebrations, the Church is not intended to be a public hall and because we are a popular Church, at any given time, people are entering the Church to pray, consequently, at all times proper reverence and respect must be maintained. Loud talking, unnecessary noise which might disturb the prayer of others is always to be avoided.

St. Mary's Basilica does not have a "dressing room." The entire wedding party must arrive at the church already dressed for the wedding.



The Basilica Church Cont.

Attire—What may be proper and tasteful attire in the secular world may not be appropriate for a wedding that takes place in the “House of God.” The key question to ask yourself is, “Would I and the members of the wedding party be comfortable meeting Jesus wearing this?” Should the bride choose to wear a “modesty veil” over her face, it must be lifted before she walks into the sanctuary. In our culture, it is inappropriate for men to wear hats inside the church. In addition, weapons of any kind (including military weapons) are not permitted.

Transportation and Parking- If you wish, you may drive to the designated city approved drop off point before your wedding begins. Please inform your driver that the vehicle should then be moved to the parish parking lot during the ceremony. After the ceremony has ended and your pictures have been taken, you can meet your car in the same place. Your guests are welcome to park in the Basilica parking garage at 5th St. and Monroe or behind the church on 3rd St. and Van Buren. Guest parking is only available during the wedding.

The throwing or releasing of anything, such as bubbles, rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals, doves, etc is not permitted. This not only creates difficulty for maintenance and clean-up, but it is potentially dangerous. Couples are cautioned to inform those attending the wedding that this is not allowed anywhere on the church grounds. Candy, any type of food, or other memorial gifts may not be distributed to the guests inside or outside of the church.

The safety of everyone entering and leaving the church is of paramount importance to all. Because of liability and the historic character of the Basilica, please abide by the following policies at all times:

- * No reception line after the ceremony*
- * No food or drink of any kind may be brought into the Basilica.*
- * Smoking and gum chewing is not permitted.*
- * We cannot accommodate aisle runners, door hangers or pew bows.*
- * We do not allow bubbles, rice, birdseed, rose petals or anything else to be thrown or dropped on the ground inside or outside the church.*
- *Candy, any type of food, or other memorial gifts may not be distributed to the guests inside or outside of the church.*
- *The use of alcohol in or around the Basilica by the bride and groom and any of the wedding party will result in immediate cancellation of the wedding.*



Flowers and Decorations

The couple assumes responsibility for providing three live flower arrangements for the Church with the understanding that those arrangements will remain in the Church for the Saturday Vigil Mass and for all Sunday Masses. These arrangements should be at least 36" wide and 36" high. Flower arrangements should arrive in the church one hour before the wedding so that the wedding coordinator can inform the florist of their placement. No existing Basilica decorations, flowers or furnishings may ever be moved.

During the Christmas and Easter seasons the church is already festively decorated with flowers, plants and seasonal symbols. Couples who schedule weddings during these seasons will be asked to donate a sum of \$250 to replace and restore the seasonal arrangements.

Photography and Video Technician

During the celebration of Marriage, stationary video equipment may be set up at the designated areas.

Under no circumstances is any photography or video technician permitted in the sanctuary, nor are roving cameras permitted during the celebration of Marriage.

Flash photography is permitted only during the signing of the license and after the ceremony. Pictures are allowed during the ceremony without flash.

Please read and give a copy of our Photography and Video Technician Policy to your vendor.

Communication

Always and everywhere, arrangements and details are discussed exclusively with the couple. Outside wedding consultants, parents, siblings are advised to refrain from interference and refer all matters to the couple preparing for marriage. This will ensure that we have continuity and no misunderstandings.

It is the couple's responsibility to communicate to family, such as parents and siblings, what our policies are especially in regards to the procession. It is in every one's best interest that there be no "surprises" to explain and deal with at the rehearsal.

Refusal to abide by the Basilica Policy and Procedures will result in the cancelation of the wedding.



Wedding Rehearsals

Rehearsals are scheduled for the night before the wedding according to church availability. Regular Basilica liturgy and devotional activities as well as parish staff schedule require that rehearsals begin promptly at the scheduled time. This is also a simple courtesy to all involved. All those who are involved with the Rite of Marriage must be present 1/2 an hour prior to start of the rehearsal (example: if you are scheduled for a 5:00 pm rehearsal, all involved are asked to be present by 4:30 pm) Tardiness will result in an inadequate rehearsal or cancellation of the rehearsal altogether. Couples are cautioned to instruct the wedding party of proper church behavior and decorum.

All aspects of your wedding ceremony will be overseen by our parish wedding coordinator. We do not allow outside wedding consultants to participate in the church aspects of your wedding.

All of the people who will be in the wedding such as lectors, groomsmen, bridesmaids etc. must be at the rehearsal.

It is the responsibility of the couple to inform their wedding party and all involved with the Rite of Marriage of time schedules.

Fees and Stipend's

Please note that the parish receives many requests from couples wanting to be married in the Basilica. This presents a special pastoral concern in that the Church is not intended to be solely a wedding chapel. Therefore, we take special precautions to ensure that those who are members of the parish receive top priority to arrange for their sacramental celebrations.

Because sacraments are community celebrations, they are normally celebrated in the Church where a person is registered and attending. Those seeking to be married here who are not registered parishioners must receive special permission from their home parish pastor to be married here. Permission may be granted based on affiliation to the Basilica through previous sacramental celebrations, family ties or based on other appropriate circumstances.

Church Fees are charged on the level of parish participation.

1. *Registered parishioners of St. Mary's Basilica who are financially supportive and active in the parish, or their children:* **\$1000.00**
2. *Non parishioners:* **\$2000.00**



Fees and Stipend's Cont.

To secure a date and time, a non refundable deposit of \$250.00 has to be paid. This can be done once the couple has had their first FOCCUS review, familiarized themselves with the Basilica's policies and signed the agreement. The balance of monies due to the Basilica needs to be paid 60 days prior to the wedding date.

If you will not be getting married at St. Mary's, and will be getting married at another parish in or out of state , and only doing your preparation with us the fee is \$250.00.

In addition to the Basilica fee, couples are responsible for the following fees and stipends:

Stipend to the Priest/Deacon	\$250.00
Wedding Coordinator	\$200.00
Organist/Music Director	\$185.00
Cantor	\$150.00
Choral Ensemble	By Negotiation

Something to keep in mind...how much is being spent on dresses, limos, reception, etc? Some portion of what is being spent on all the peripheral matters should be dedicated to the Lord who has provided all that we have and all that we are.

Contact Information

Marriage Preparation Information

Camela Fishgold – Marriage Preparation and Nullity Minister
602-354-2062 camela@saintmarysbasilica.org

Jerome Doris – Parish Manager
602-354-2069 jdoris@saintmarysbasilica.org

Music Ministry Information

Gordon Stevenson – Music Director
602-354-2061 gstevenson@saintmarysbasilica.org

St. Mary's Basilica Priests

Fr. Vincent J. Mesi, OFM – Pastor
602-354-2072 vmesi@saintmarysbasilica.org

Fr. Micah Muhlen, OFM – Parochial Vicar
602-354-2070 mmuhlen@saintmarysbasilica.org