

**The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony
WEDDINGS AT ST. PAUL'S
SOME COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Rev. August 2014

Congratulations on your engagement!

A wedding celebration while it is an exciting event involves a preparation process that is filled with details and sometimes some tense moments as well. We encourage you to enter into this preparation process with an attentive but not too fastidious attitude. The process should be as enjoyable as the event itself. The Parish of St. Paul wants to help you navigate some of the many wedding day details. The following is meant not to overwhelm you but to provide answers to the questions most commonly asked by couples planning to be married at St. Paul's.

Where do we start?

The best and only place to start is with **one of the priests** assigned either to the Parish or Harvard Catholic Center. Please contact the Parish Office (617-491-8400) and ask to speak to one of the priests in order to arrange for an initial visit. All matters pertaining to a wedding at the Parish get addressed only after this initial contact. It is not appropriate for a third party to make this contact – future bride or groom should call directly.

When do we start?

The initial contact with the priest should take place, if possible, a year before the wedding, and, at a minimum, six months before. You will need this time to reserve the church and to participate in a marriage preparation process as described below.

Who is eligible to be married at St. Paul's?

You can be married at St. Paul's if either one of the couple is:

- * a Roman Catholic residing within the environs of the parish;
- * a registered parishioner of St. Paul's;
- * a Roman Catholic affiliated with Harvard University as a student, alumnus/a, or a member of a faculty or staff;
- * a Roman Catholic affiliated with St. Paul's Choir School as an alumnus, or a member of a faculty or staff;

* a catechumen or a candidate in the process of entering the Catholic Church through St. Paul's.

*If you do not fall into any of the above categories, please feel free to make inquiry about eligibility with **one of the priests**.

Parishioners of other Catholic churches, including Harvard alumni/ae, faculty or staff, will ultimately need a letter of permission from their local pastor.

What if one of us has been married before?

Generally, the only reliable source of advice in this regard is a priest. Often people in this situation receive bad advice when they turn to Catholics who may not be familiar with current pastoral practice. While it is true that sometimes a full annulment process is required, in many cases a simplified version can be employed. Whatever the case, the priest will work with you to see what is possible.

What is the marriage preparation process?

Marriage preparation is a process used by the Church to help couples understand more fully what they are undertaking and to give them some tools with which to do it. St. Paul's adheres to the requirements for Marriage Preparation as set forth by the Archdiocese of Boston which includes:

- a minimum of three (3) meetings with a priest,
- participation in a Diocesan approved Pre-Cana workshop for engaged couples at the Parish (or a similar program elsewhere),
- consultation with the Parish Music Director,
- and rehearsal arrangements with the wedding coordinator.

Both the bride and the groom are expected to participate in the preparation process.

Why does the Catholic Church require marriage preparation?

The marriage of man and woman is not only an institution that is basic to the

well-being and health of society but is also in the Catholic Church a sacrament. A Christian married life, enhanced by love in grace, is a principal means of a couple's sanctification. It is also a dynamic sign to the world of the special relationship that exists between Christ and His bride, the Church. As the Second Vatican Council said: "by the joys and sacrifices of their vocation and through their future love, married people will become witnesses of the mystery of that love which the Lord revealed to the world by his dying and rising up to life again." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 52.) Because of the sacred quality of marriage and of the promises exchanged, engaged couples are encouraged to take time to prepare themselves for their special vocation and to reflect together on the profound meaning of their future life together. At your Baptism the Church promised to accompany you through all the great moments of your life. This is one way that we honor that commitment. We are eager as Church to affirm and strengthen you in your love for each other.

What documents are required to be married at St. Paul's?

If you are a Catholic or a baptized Christian, you will need a RECENT copy, that is one issued within the last six months, of a **FULL baptismal certificate and a Confirmation record**, if you were confirmed. These documents are obtained from the parishes where these events originally took place. These documents must be sent directly to the priest who is preparing you for marriage.

You will also need **a marriage license**. It can be obtained from any city or town hall in Massachusetts. Once obtained, following a three day waiting period, a marriage license is valid for 60 days from the date of filing and may be used in any Massachusetts city or town.

When may our wedding be celebrated at St. Paul's?

Weddings must be scheduled around the normal cycle of the liturgy at St. Paul's.

Saturday: 10:00AM- 3:00 PM

Sunday: after 1:30 PM

Weddings are possible on other days of the week. There are also liturgical seasons of the year, such as Advent and Lent, when the tone of the liturgy is subdued, and many Catholics feel that a wedding is not appropriate. In addition, the schedule of liturgies at St. Paul's during Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday) impossible for weddings.

Of course, the fact that the church is available at a certain time does not

mean that your celebrant will be available at that time. The celebrant's availability should be scheduled with him personally.

What if we want to be married in another setting?

In this diocese, if both the bride and groom are Catholics, special permission is required to be married anywhere other than in a Catholic parish church. (Memorial Church in Harvard Yard, as a University Chapel, is regarded, for these purposes, as an extension of St. Paul's and does not require special permission.) Permission is usually granted for a Catholic to marry a baptized Christian of another denomination in the non-Catholic person's church. Because marriage is a sacrament, two Christians are not normally permitted to marry in a private home, a secular chapel, a function hall or outdoors. Catholics who marry non-Christians may receive permission to marry in settings other than a religious building.

Can we be married by a priest/deacon who is not at St. Paul's?

In Catholic theology, marriage arises from the consent exchanged by the couple. For two Catholics, this consent is usually witnessed and blessed by a priest or deacon. Priests other than those stationed at St. Paul's are welcome to preside at St. Paul's with the permission of the Pastor and will need to be granted a letter of delegation from the Pastor of St. Paul's. When a priest or deacon is not a citizen of Massachusetts, permission must also be obtained from the Secretary of State of the Commonwealth; otherwise your marriage is not legal as a matter of secular law.

Will St. Paul's priests travel to other churches?

You will need to work this out with the individual priest. Often priests will make every effort to accommodate your needs, but busy weekend schedules at St. Paul's sometimes make this difficult.

Is the ceremony a mass, or are there other options?

You must decide, in conversation with your priest, the best ceremony for your marriage. The norm is that when two Catholics who are active in the faith marry, the Eucharist (Mass) is celebrated. In this case, the Eucharist will be celebrated much like a Sunday Mass. When people are not regularly part of the sacramental life of the Church, they may reach a different decision. In this case, the couple may decide to have a liturgy that does not include the celebration of the Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion. However, these matters should be decided only after having first discussed the issue with the priest.

Usually, when a Catholic marries a Christian from another tradition, the Eucharist is not celebrated, since Catholics do not practice "open" communion. If only one partner receives Holy Communion, what should be the sacrament of unity actually functions to highlight a lack of unity in a core element of the faith. Since the Sacrament of Marriage arises in relationship to Baptism, not the Eucharist, it is wise not to have a Mass in this case. This is even more important when a Catholic marries a non-Christian or non-believer, since that partner is unable to participate in the Eucharist. A basic principle of hospitality is to provide a liturgy your guests will also be able to enter into and celebrate along with you. Again, you should talk to your priest about your particular situation.

How many people have to be involved in the ceremony?

A Catholic wedding ceremony is an ecclesial event in which you proclaim your Intentions before the community; it may, however, be conducted with as few as five people, the bride and groom, two witnesses (the "best man" and the "maid of honor"), and a priest or deacon. If you are planning a very small ceremony (fewer than twenty people), you might want to consider having it in the parish center chapel.

Who can be witnesses?

Virtually anyone fourteen years of age or older can be a witness. Many people choose siblings or close friends. Parents can be witnesses. Witnesses need not be Catholics.

Are church weddings expensive?

St. Paul's is committed to help you work within your means. Simplicity is a great value, and you are encouraged to think carefully about what you can afford. So much of what is associated with weddings -- expensive clothes, limousines, flowers, photographs, and parties -- is really not central to the day. If you want to keep things simple, the parish is ready to offer you practical advice. Some of the most beautiful weddings at the parish have been among the simplest.

Are there any fees for our wedding at St. Paul's?

Since the parish incurs expenses in the process of both preparing and celebrating weddings, it is necessary for the parish to have established fees. However, finances should never be a factor in trying to decide whether one

should be married in the church or not. The priest celebrating your wedding will be happy to discuss the various fees associated with weddings at St. Paul's when you meet.

Associated Fees that will be discussed include:

-An offering to the church. This fee reserves a specific date and time for your wedding and covers associated costs for the parish associated with your wedding. It will be returned in the case of a cancelled wedding.

-A customary stipend showing your appreciation should be offered to the priest-celebrant.

-Associated music fees that the music director will discuss with you. This will include the organist, cantor, additional musicians or the use of the Choir of St. Paul's.

-The parish requires a wedding coordinator who will conduct your rehearsal and who will be present on the day of the wedding ceremony to attend to the needs not only of the wedding party, but to your guests and others involved in the ceremony such as your photographer or guest priest/presider.

What about Music for the wedding ceremony?

Sacred music is an integral part of the liturgy. It should be understood as a form of prayer. Since the celebration of marriage is an act of worship, the music played or sung should support and enhance this act of worship for all those who participate in it – both the wedding party and the entire assembly. The music chosen should thus express the inner faith experience.

Mr. John Robinson, parish music director, is responsible for wedding music at St. Paul's. As an experienced musician, the director is a valuable resource in selecting wedding music. The director will be pleased to meet with you for this purpose. The director is also a good resource for obtaining a cantor or other instrumentalists. It is the parish music director who approves final choices of music and musicians.

The Choir of St. Paul's (boys and men) is resident choir at St. Paul's and can be engaged to sing at weddings during the school year. Arrangements should be made well in advance by calling John Robinson, Music Director at St. Paul's Choir School at 617-868-8658, ext. 319

What about photography?

The following simple rules should be followed:

- Photographers should not interfere with the movement of either the procession or recession.

-While the ceremony is taking place, photographers may not enter the sanctuary, stand on the cantor's podium, walk between the sanctuary and where the congregation is seated or otherwise interfere with the guests' view of the ceremony.

-Photographers may position themselves in the choir loft.

-With the permission of the priest celebrant, photographers may take posed pictures after the ceremony as long as it does not interfere with another scheduled church event.

-If you have engaged a professional photographer, he or she must speak to the celebrant before the service to ensure that these ground rules are understood.

-Cameras and/or video recorders may not be mounted to interfere with the liturgy, the musicians or your guests' view of the ceremony.

-We would suggest that you forward to your photographer a copy of these guidelines. This helps with communication and eliminates misunderstandings.

What about flowers?

In choosing and placing flowers, you should consider the nature of the space in which the flowers will be placed. White flowers do not stand out well against the veined white marble of the main altar. Strong colors are visually effective.

The placement of flowers should not obscure the guests' view of the ceremony or interfere with the movements of the wedding party and presider. They should enhance, not obscure, the primary foci (altar, lectern). Hence, flowers should not be placed in front of the altar. The best place for flowers are on pedestals on either side of the altar or on the high altar itself.

Please note: there are certain seasons of the year, such as Christmas and the seven weeks of the Easter Season, when there are many flowers in the sanctuary as part of the liturgical décor. At these times, it may not be necessary

for you to purchase any flowers at all, and in fact adding your own may be superfluous but a donation is expected in consideration of the nature of donations by parishioners for departed loved ones. Parish floral arrangements are not to be removed to accommodate wedding celebrations.

Pew decoration and ribbons are allowed. They should be wired or tied but not taped.

If you bring flowers to the church, we would appreciate it if you can leave them in the church after the ceremony as thanksgiving offering to God. They help to beautify the church for subsequent liturgical celebrations.

You should ask if another wedding is taking place on the same day. In such a case, you may wish to make plans with the other couple for the purchase and arrangement of flowers.

A good resource on all these matters is the wedding coordinator who is very familiar with the space.

What about a wedding runner, rice or flower petals?

A wedding runner in the church aisle, the throwing of rice or flower petals is expressly forbidden at St. Paul's. A runner and the throwing of rice can cause harm to the wedding party and guests as well as require clean-up services that the church does not provide.

Is there disabled accessibility to the church?

Yes. If one enters the church via the Parish Center, 29 Mt. Auburn Street, one has street access to an elevator and a ramp that leads directly into the church building.

Is there parking at St. Paul's?

Reserved parking for a wedding can be arranged with the Broadway Garage, located on Felton Street, approximately 0.4 miles from the church (a 10 minute walk). This garage is a Harvard University facility, and it is the closest garage. Detailed information on how to reserve this garage for your wedding event can be found by going to the following site:

www.uos.harvard.edu/transportation/par_spe.shtml

We hope that this guide of questions and answers is helpful to you and answers some of the concerns that might arise as you prepare for your wedding day. If you have other questions or need clarifications, please feel free to ask. We are here to help.

The Clergy and Staff of St. Paul's