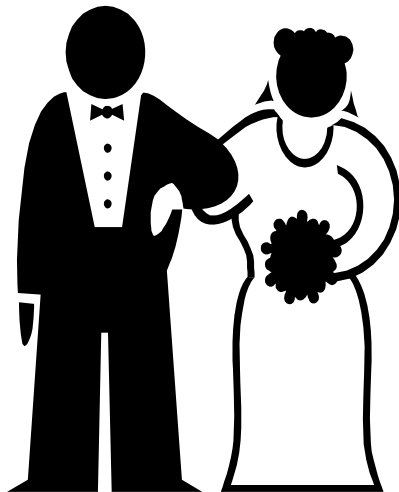


*Our Lady of Peace Bay  
City*

*Marriage Guidelines and  
Policies*



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Rev. Patrick J. Jankowiak, Pastor

## **Dear Friends:**

Congratulations! In deciding to marry you have made perhaps the greatest decision of your life. We are sincerely happy for you. Now you are seeking to celebrate your marriage in the Catholic Church at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish. For us this means that you have decided to make Jesus Christ the center of your marriage and to live your marriage in accordance with a life of faith.

We are excited about helping you prepare for a marriage that has Jesus as a living and active partner. Discuss the various options in the liturgy with each other, pray over the Scripture readings, be sensitive to one another's tastes, and be open to new ways of doing things. Preparing your wedding liturgy is not difficult; it simply takes time and attention.

These guidelines and policies have been drawn up to help promote the sanctity of marriage and the importance of the Sacrament of Marriage. Please read them to assist the important work we will be doing together.

## **WEDDINGS AT OUR LADY OF PEACE:**

### **The Marriage Preparation Process**

The love of man and woman is a deeply human reality. It is wonderful, life-giving and satisfying for you as a couple. But the energy of your love includes and fosters a wide circle of relationships in addition to the two of you. Since you are created by God, in God's image, and are God's gift to each other, your love is meant to be a reflection of God's own love, alive in you and destined to make our world a better place. Your love will have an impact on your families, your friends, your children, and on people as yet unknown to you. It is God's love coming into the world **through you**. For these reasons we consider Marriage to be a sacred reality, a sacrament.

Because we believe so strongly in marriage as a life-long vocation of love, the Bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States mandated a required period of marriage preparation in 1981. The purpose of this formation period is for the "personal, spiritual and liturgical preparation of the couple" seeking to celebrate the Sacrament of

Marriage. This requirement expresses a deep concern for the happiness and fulfillment of individual couples as well as a serious concern for the important role which marriage plays in the life of the church and society. Here's how the process works...

### **1. Initial Meeting with the Pastor**

a. The first step is to make an appointment with the Pastor. This must be done at least **six (6) months prior to any anticipated date of marriage**. Most couples today begin their planning a year or more before the wedding. Since this is the beginning of the process, other arrangements, such as the hall or band or caterer, **should not be finalized** prior to setting the date with the Pastor. The initial interview will touch on the following areas:

#### 1) Parish Membership and Participation

Ordinarily, at least one member of the parties requesting marriage would be an active member of Our Lady of Peace Parish, actively practicing the Faith and parish stewardship (through gifts of time, talent, and treasure).

#### **2) Faith Life**

Since the Catholic Church views marriage as one of seven sacraments that help Catholics encounter God and draw strength from God throughout the journey of their lives, to what extent are you practicing and living your lives as Catholics, and do you intend to continue living and practicing your faith in the future?

#### **3) Pre-Marriage information**

The Pastor will fill out a pre-marriage form that includes all the necessary information for the parish marriage register, the date and time of the wedding, and the assurance that both parties are free to marry in the church.

#### **2. Pre-Marital Inventory**

The Pastor has been trained as a PREPARE/ENRICH counselor. Through the use of a *Pre-Marital Inventory* you will be guided through an evaluation of your preparedness for marriage by focusing on areas such as communication, spirituality, sexuality, finances, and others. The results of this *Pre-Marital Inventory* will be shared with you over two sessions and discussion of any areas of concern. A processing fee of \$35 is required for this inventory and will be addressed in a later section on stipends and fees.

#### **3. Pre-Marital Inventory**

Session One of feedback and review of the *Pre-Marital Inventory* will focus on discussion/exercises of strengths and growth areas; and communication.

#### **4. Pre-Marital Inventory**

Session Two of feedback and review of the *Pre-Marital Inventory* will focus on discussion/exercises on conflict resolution; and a couple and family map.

#### **\*Couple-to-Couple; Pre-Cana Conference; Engaged Encounter**

In addition, all couples are required to participate in one: Couple-to-Couple meetings with a specially chosen sponsor couple; or a day with other couples at a Pre-Cana

Conference; or an Engaged Encounter. The Pastor will discuss these options with you and provide further information.

## **5. Planning the Marriage celebration**

Whether your wedding takes the form of a liturgy with Mass or a liturgy without Mass you will take an active role in the discussion and planning of the spiritual and sacramental dimensions of your marriage celebration. While we must follow the Catholic norms for marriage, there is still room for designing a wedding ceremony or Mass that is a beautiful and unique expression of each couple, through this planning you will be responsible for setting the tone and spirit for your marriage celebration.

## **6. Marriage Rehearsal**

The final plan of the wedding will be reviewed in detail with a walk-through in the church. This is an important part of the whole celebration as it allows for prayer, information, “staging”, and questions and answers. All those who will be a part of the marriage celebration are expected to attend: the bride and groom, the wedding party, parents, lectors, ushers, etc. this allows everyone to become comfortable with what to expect at the marriage celebration.

## **7. Marriage Celebration**

Congratulations! This is your wedding day and with careful planning and preparation will be one of the most joyful and memorable days of your life. Remember, we have not been planning for only a celebration or a day but for an entire lifetime. May God bless you today and all the days of your lives!

### **Planning Your Marriage Celebration**

In addition to the Guidelines and Policies for marriage, this booklet contains a planning sheet and suggested Scripture readings. Our belief is that the minister of the Sacrament of Marriage is **not** the priest, but the **couple themselves**. You make the sacrament happen by your exchange of vows. Therefore, it is appropriate that you plan your marriage ceremony with assistance and guidance. You are invited to choose the religious songs and Scriptural readings to express the depth of your relationship and commitment to God and to each other. Because the Sacrament of Marriage is an act of public worship, your guests should be encouraged to take an active role in the music and prayers.

The marriage celebration should include those ministers need to serve the liturgical celebration this includes: Greeters, Musicians (soloist, cantors, or instrumentalists), Lectors (readers), and Ministers of the Eucharist (if there is a Mass).

When celebrating our faith, certain actions are most appropriate and need to be stressed. Other customs may be inappropriate for a church service and must be avoided. With this in mind, the following guidelines are presented:

**Liturgy** – A marriage between two baptized Catholics usually takes place within the context of the Mass. If one of the partners is not a Catholic, a marriage ceremony without Eucharist (Communion) is more appropriate.

**Place** – By Diocesan policy, all Catholic marriage ceremonies **must** take place in a church building. If a Catholic is marrying a person of another faith, it is possible to get permission for the wedding to take place in the church of the non-Catholic person in the presence of his/her minister; with the appropriate permission and preparation, such a marriage is recorded in our marriage register and is considered a valid Catholic marriage.

Times – **Saturday marriage celebrations may be anytime before and not later than 1 PM; Friday afternoon and evening weddings may also be scheduled. Generally only one wedding can be scheduled on a Friday afternoon/evening or a Saturday. Marriage celebrations can also take place within the context of any regularly scheduled parish Mass. If this option is chosen, the Gospel reading would be that of the particular week’s celebration. This is a great way to celebrate your marriage with the entire faith community.**

**Music** – Music serves to unify the people gathered and to enhance the community’s prayer and faith. All musical selections must be appropriately suited for liturgical ceremony. Favorite tunes (“our song”) may not be appropriate in the liturgy but can be used at the reception. The Parish Music Director will assist you in selecting appropriate music and will approve all musical selections and arrangements. You should schedule an appointment with the Music Director after your second meeting with the Pastor.

**Musicians** – You should make arrangements with the Parish Music Director to play at your marriage celebration, as an experienced liturgical musician, they are familiar with the details of our liturgies and our instruments. **All musician fees for soloists, cantors, and instrumentalists are to be negotiated directly with the Parish Music Director.**

Since our organ and piano are professional instruments, only our professional liturgical accompanists may perform at Our Lady of Peace Parish. Visiting musicians may be allowed only in **exceptional** circumstances, providing that they are professional musicians and are fully acquainted with Catholic liturgy, and must be approved by the Pastor or the Parish Music Director. Our worship is meant to be a “live” experience, therefore, all music must be performed live; pre-recorded music including CD’s or tapes are inappropriate and will not be used.

You must also select a cantor or song leader, the Parish Music Director can assist you in choosing this person. Upon consultation with the Parish Music Director you may contract with other musicians (soloists or other live instrumentalists such as strings, flute, etc.). Upon approval, you will be responsible for contacting these musicians and agreeing to their fees.

**Other Liturgical Ministers** – You are encouraged to invite your family and friends to act as liturgical ministers, especially as Lectors (readers) and Ministers of the Eucharist (Communion; if a wedding Mass is planned). Ministers of the Eucharist must be active Catholics, who participate at Mass and Communion regularly. Please make sure that anyone you invite to serve as a liturgical minister is comfortable and well suited for the ministry they will perform. If you are both practicing Catholics, you may choose to act as Ministers of the Eucharist for your marriage celebration.

**Scripture Readings** – You will select the Scripture readings to be used at your marriage celebration. Since this is part of the Liturgy of the Word, non-scriptural readings **may not** be used as a substitute for the readings. A non-scriptural selection such as a poem or reflection may be planned for another appropriate location in the liturgy or at the reception.

**Attendants** – **Please use restraint and common sense in choosing the number of attendants for your wedding. The Catholic Church, as well as the State of Michigan, only requires two witnesses for the ceremony. You may choose to have additional attendants but more than four or five couples become very cumbersome since we have limited space available. Too many attendants often upstage the bride and groom. The focus of attention should be on you and your exchange of vows and rings. Ring bearers and flower girls can be another distraction especially if they are too young, ideally they should be at least 5 years old.**

**Decorating the Church** – **Our Church decorates very simply and with elegance. This keeps the focus on the couple and their commitment. In planning floral arrangements care should be taken to respect the existing church environment. In certain liturgical seasons, like Advent/Christmas or Lent/Easter, very little may be done to alter the existing environment. One or two arrangements of fresh flowers in front of the lectern (ambo) or to the right (south) side of the altar are permitted; artificial plants, trees, or floral arches are not permitted.**

**The use of candelabra, pew candles, or the throwing of flower petals is not permitted. If pew bows are used, they should be attached to the pews by the use of plastic clips, string, ribbons, or rubber bands.**

**The Unity Candle** – **The use of the Unity Candle is optional. When used, the Unity Candle will be placed on a table in front of the altar. The Unity Candle is not an official part of the Catholic liturgy and is not required. If the couple choose to use this additional symbol of unity, the couple is required to provide their own candle arrangement and/or to light the Unity Candle with your baptismal candles.**

**Incidentals** – **Birdseed, rice, confetti, balloons, rose petals, or an aisle runner are not permitted due to insurance restrictions. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted anywhere on the premises, including the parking areas.**

**Bride's Dressing Area** – A bride's dressing area is available in the Church basement/hall. The wedding party is responsible for valuables left in the room. You are responsible for the removal of boxes, plastic wraps, clothes hangers, and all materials connected with use of the church facility. Please designate a person to pick up and clean up the area and any items left in the Church after your ceremony. The church building will have to be ready for three more weekend liturgies after your wedding!

**Rehearsal** – A rehearsal will be scheduled with the Pastor. It is usually held the evening before the marriage celebration but the time is flexible. All persons involved in the wedding must be at the rehearsal. If the marriage license has not been presented to the Pastor previously, it should be given at the rehearsal.

Photography/Videography – **Please ask your photographer or videographer to talk to the priest before the ceremony. Pictures may be taken before and after the ceremony providing there is no interference with other church functions. Because the church is not a “studio” but sacred space the church furnishings must be left undisturbed. In the event of other Church functions either before or after your service time arrangements may be necessary, we thank you for honoring them. Video cameras must be stationary and are placed at specific locations. Please ask.**

**Program/Worship aid** – A well designed printed program, or order of service, can greatly enhance the assembly's participation in the liturgy. A simple, well-designed program can also be an attractive reminder of your wedding. The program should include the music that the assembly will be asked to sing as well as an outline of the liturgy. It is not necessary to print the text of the Scripture readings. Any copyrighted material may not be printed without the permission of the publishers or copyright holder. Most music publishers give permission to make copies of their material for one-time events, such as a wedding, free of charge or for a minimal fee. Acknowledgement of the permission to copy and the copyright owner's name must appear in the booklet. The Parish Music Director can assist you with this. The following request should be included in the program:

*“We hope you will join in the prayers and singing to make our wedding a joyous and spirit-filled celebration.  
We ask that NO pictures be taken during the celebration.”*

Before printing the program, make sure to have the final copy proofread and approved by the Pastor or the Parish Music Director. You may leave it at the Parish Office and we will return it to you after the program has been proofed.