Preparing For Marriage at Divine Mercy Parish

Guidelines for Planning Your Wedding



DIVINE MERCY
PARISH

ST. MARIA GORETTI CATHOLIC CHURCH, MADISON | ST. ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH, VERONA | ST. WILLIAM CATHOLIC CHURCH, PAOLI

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Marriage Preparation Timeline

Step 1 Contact Us

- Email (marriage@divinemercymadison.org) or call our Marriage Prep Office (608-268-2982)
- Read Preparing for Marriage at Divine Mercy Parish and complete the Marriage Request Form

Step 2 Meet with your priest

- Establish your freedom to marry in the Catholic Church (see page 4)
- Initiate the process of obtaining your sacramental records (see page 4)
- Learn about marriage preparation (see page 5)

Step 3 Begin marriage preparation

- Choose a Mentor Couple for Witness to Love (see page 5)
- Connect with your assigned Coordinator Couple to complete your premarital inventory (see page 5)
- Meet with your Coordinator Couple and your Mentor Couple for your Witness to Love Coaching Session (see page 5)
- Register for a Natural Family Planning course (see page 5)

Step 4 Witness to Love

- Meet with your Mentor Couple for six sessions (including one with your priest)
- Complete your Witness to Love Scavenger Hunt (a list of activities to do with your Mentor Couple)
- Attend an online Witness to Love retreat (see page 5)

Step 5 Final preparations for your wedding

- Meet with your priest to begin planning your wedding liturgy (see pages 7—10)
- Choose your readings, liturgical ministers and music (with the Director of Music) (see pages 7—10)
- Complete your liturgy plan
- Schedule your wedding rehearsal (see page 6)
- Obtain your marriage license (see page 11)
- Make final payments
- Plan to go to confession prior to your wedding day

Welcome and Initial Steps

We are pleased that you have chosen to celebrate your wedding in our Parish. We welcome the opportunity to work with you as you prepare for your wedding and for your lives together.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

To be married at Divine Mercy Parish, one of the engaged couple must be a practicing Catholic. We encourage couples to be married in their own parish community if possible. Our hope is that one or both of you is a parish member, or that it is your intention to become a member. Exceptions may be made for couples whose parents are members or who have grown up at one of the churches in our parish.

We recognize the importance of a sacramental marriage within our faith community, understanding that to mean that parish members not only attend Mass, but also contribute to our parish community by sharing their time, talent, and treasure.

MARRIAGE REQUEST FORM

To begin the process, we ask that you complete the Marriage Request Form. (Please complete this form even if you intend to be married at another Catholic Church.) Once this form is received, we will help you collect the necessary documents to ensure that you are free to marry according to the norms of the Catholic Church.

INITIAL MEETING AND FREEDOM TO MARRY

To begin marriage preparation, we will schedule a meeting with a priest to discuss the marriage preparation process and to establish your freedom to marry in the Church. At this meeting, you may complete your Prenuptial Investigation. After your freedom to marry has been established, we will confirm your wedding date on our parish calendar or notify the church where your wedding will take place.

SACRAMENTAL RECORDS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

For Catholics Catholics are asked to provide a recently issued baptismal certificate. (The original copy is not sufficient.) This certificate must be sent directly from the church of your baptism to our Marriage Prep office. Please ask for notations, including marriage.

We can assist you (with your permission) in obtaining these records. In the event that there are absolutely no baptismal documents available, we can help you obtain an Affidavit of Baptism.

One of you is a non-Catholic Marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic party require a dispensation or permission from our diocesan bishop. We will take care of obtaining this documentation in which the Catholic person makes the necessary promises: to maintain the practice of the Catholic Faith, and to have all children born of the marriage baptized and raised as Catholics.

Non-Catholic Christians are asked to bring any information or documentation they have regarding the date and place of their baptism - including an original baptismal certificate if available.

Civilly married couples We will gladly assist you in the necessary steps you'll need to take to be sacramentally married in the Church.

Previously married If either of you has been married previously, we will ask you to present written evidence that the previous spouse has died or a decree of nullity stating that you are now free to marry according to the norms of the Catholic Church. We will help you determine whether a petition for a declaration of nullity of the previous marriage needs to be submitted.

Please have all records sent directly from your church of baptism to:

Divine Mercy Parish
5313 Flad Avenue,
Madison, WI 53711
Attn: Marriage Prep

Marriage Preparation

Premarital Inventory, Witness to Love, NFP

MARRIAGE PREP COORDINATOR COUPLE (MPCC)

We will assign one of our Marriage Prep Coordinator Couples to help you begin your preparation. This trained, volunteer couple will facilitate your Premarital Inventory and lead your Witness to Love Coaching Session.

PREMARITAL INVENTORY

Your MPCC will help you complete a premarital inventory which consists of a series of questions designed to assess each of your habits, expectations, and values. It will provide you with a personalized profile of your relationship's strengths and weaknesses. The inventory is an important starting place for couple discussion and a map of the areas that may need affirmation, attention, or problem-solving.

WITNESS TO LOVE

Most engaged couples will complete our parish-based marriage preparation program—Witness to Love— during which you will choose a mentor couple from the parish to accompany you on a path of formation and relationship building as a couple and as members of our parish family.

CHOOSING A WITNESS TO LOVE MENTOR COUPLE

You 'll be asked to choose a Mentor Couple from our parish who will accompany you in the Witness to Love pro-gram. This couple should be someone who you are both comfortable with, and who will hold you accountable, challenge you, and inspire you. They will need no special training – their job is to accompany you during your engagement period, much like a sponsor. We would like them to meet with you about six times to go over the material in the Witness to Love workbook, attend a (online) half-day retreat with you, and, most important, be a support for you as you prepare for marriage.

We ask that this couple meet the following criteria:

- Be married in the Catholic Church for at least five years.
- Attend church regularly (in our Parish)
- Have a marriage you admire!

For more information on Witness to Love , please visit: witnesstolove.org/getting-married/engaged-couples. Here, also, is a short video which describes what to expect at your first session: vimeo.com/181947322/5fd7ee6736. Once you have chosen a couple, please let us know whom you have chosen. (The couple will need to be approved by the parish.)

Once you have an approved mentor couple, we will set up a meeting (we call it a "Coaching Session") with the two of you and your mentor couple. At this meeting (which usually takes place in the home of the mentor couple), we will provide you with the materials and information you'll need to begin Witness to Love.

After your Coaching Session, we will send access to the online videos as well as your Scavenger Hunt. The Scavenger Hunt is a list of activities that you and your Mentor Couple will complete together (attend Mass and Adoration, go on a double date, etc.)

You and your Mentor Couple will also meet for six sessions—one session for each chapter in your workbook. Your Chapter Five session will include your priest. Please let us know when you are ready to schedule this session.

WITNESS TO LOVE RETREAT

Prior to your Chapter Five meeting, you and your Mentor Couple are asked to attend an online retreat. Please register for your retreat here: madisondiocese.org/wtlretreat

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP)

Register for a Natural Family Planning Class. The Diocese of Madison has instructors available in a variety of methods. A full schedule and registration information can be found online at madisondiocese.org/mp.

Wedding Date and Fees

SCHEDULING A WEDDING DATE IN OUR PARISH

After we've established your freedom to marry in the Church, we'll confirm your wedding date on the parish calendar.

Weddings are typically scheduled on Saturday (before 3pm at SMG and St. William, before 2pm at St. Andrew) or on Friday afternoon/evening (at 2 pm or later) according to availability on the parish calendar.

Wedding rehearsals are generally scheduled on the evening prior to the wedding. For Saturday weddings, rehearsals may be scheduled at 3 pm or later. On the first Friday of each month at SMG, rehearsals may not be scheduled later than 5:30 pm. This may impact a rehearsal scheduled for a wedding on the first Saturday of the month.

For Friday weddings at SMG, there is limited church availability for a Thursday evening rehearsal. We will work with you to set a rehearsal time.

Confession will be made available immediately following the wedding rehearsal to all those in attendance.

IF YOUR WEDDING WILL TAKE PLACE AT ANOTHER PARISH

If you are being married at another Catholic Church we welcome you to prepare for marriage in our parish if at least one of you is a member of our parish and/or you plan to be members after you are married.

We will ask you to put us in touch with the church where your wedding will take place to make sure that all of their requirements will be met.

FEES

NUPTIAL MASS OR CEREMONY (Divine Mercy Parish)

A nonrefundable deposit of $250 is due when your wedding date is confirmed. Your balance is due one week prior to your wedding. A detailed invoice will be sent one month in advance.

Approximate cost - $1170

Marriage prep materials	$150
Wedding fee	$250
Music	$650 (includes organ & cantor, additional musicians can be arranged for an added fee)
Priest stipend	$100 suggested, stipend is at your discretion
Server(s)	$ 20 each

Non parishioners

– An additional facilities use fee of $750 will be added for non parishioners.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION ONLY (if your wedding will take place at another parish)

Marriage prep materials	$150

Planning Your Wedding Liturgy

WEDDING LITURGY PLANNING

Your wedding liturgy is a witness to those present that you are entering into a sacred and holy union — an external sign of inward grace — a Sacrament. Therefore, all aspects of the liturgy call for careful planning that will contribute to its sacredness. Your wedding is an invitation to your family and friends to share your faith, your love and your prayer.

Everyone present should be led by the dignity and beauty of the liturgy to a deeper understanding of your commitment to Christian marriage.

Your priest will assist you in planning your wedding liturgy. We will provide you with planning materials in order to guide your planning along with a planning worksheet to be filled out with your selections. We have included some general planning guidelines below.

WEDDING MASS & PRESIDER

When two Catholics are to be married, the Rite of Marriage within Mass is normally used. For the marriage of a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, the Rite of Marriage within Mass may be used. In either case, the Rite of Marriage outside Mass can be used. For the marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person, the Rite of Marriage for that particular circumstance is always used.

Ordinarily, the presider for your wedding liturgy will be clergy (a priest or, in the case of the Rite of Marriage outside Mass, a priest or deacon) who is currently assigned to Divine Mercy Parish. If you have a Catholic clergy member who is a relative or friend that you would like to invite, know that you are welcome to do so. Please let us know as soon as possible if this is the case. He will need to send a letter of suitability to the Diocese of Madison and to Divine Mercy Parish. Approval for this officiant will not be given until the letter is received. The officiant must be present at the wedding rehearsal.

LITURGICAL PROCESSION

The entrance procession for your wedding liturgy takes as its model the liturgical procession that begins every Mass—led by the cross and servers and followed by other ministers. It should include the bride and the groom and may include bridesmaids, groomsmen and other attendants. Attendants may process in pairs or individually (i.e. no sets of three or more). If attendants process in pairs, these pairs must be couples of opposite gender. In the sanctuary, bridesmaids will stand with the bride and groomsmen with the groom.

You may choose to include your parents (both of the bride and the groom) in the procession. Children may be included, but additions such as wagons, signs, pets or any other "props" are not appropriate to a liturgical procession.

The wedding party (bride, groom, witnesses, attendants) should be dressed appropriately for church. Hats, or any attire that appears as a costume are not allowed.

READINGS

It is customary for the bride and groom to choose one reading from the Old Testament, a psalm, a reading from the New Testament, and a Gospel reading. It is also customary for the bride and groom to invite one or two people to proclaim the readings. The presider will read the Gospel. He will also deliver a homily that is based on the readings to help those present better understand the Word of God in the context of the celebration of your marriage.

In the packet of planning materials that you will receive, you will find a resource called Together for Life which includes choices for your readings.

THE ORDER OF MATRIMONY

The Celebration of Matrimony consists of the consent (your exchange of vows and reception of these vows), the blessing and giving of rings, and the nuptial blessing. These are the symbols of the Sacrament of Marriage. These are the signs of unity whose source is Jesus Christ. Therefore, other symbolic items, such as a unity candle, are not permitted, so as not to overshadow the symbols already so powerfully present in the Rite.

The vows that are used for your wedding are prescribed in the Rite of Marriage (there are two versions that may be used). No other vows may be used since "The Church holds the exchange of consent (vows) between the spouses to be the indispensable element that 'makes the marriage."

MUSIC

The Role of Music

Music is an integral part of the wedding celebration. It is not merely a background decoration nor a matter of sentimental attachment. Rather, it is a form of prayer that expresses the joy of all present and the sanctity of the vows being made. For this reason, our Parish provides specific guidelines to ensure that the music chosen reflects the dignity and holiness of the Sacrament.

Please review these guidelines carefully as you begin planning your wedding music with our Director of Sacred Music.

Liturgical Norms

The "regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 22 §1). The choice of music for the wedding is governed by the universal law of the Church, liturgical books, and instructions of the Apostolic See.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) includes these principles relevant to the choice of music for the wedding liturgy:

The liturgy requires full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful. (14)

The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value. (112) The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. (114)

Order of Celebrating Matrimony

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony (OCM) is the proper liturgical book governing the Rite of Marriage. It encourages the use of music in these places:

Introductory Rites

Liturgy of the Word (especially the Responsorial Psalm, which is an integral part thereof)

Rite of Marriage

Eucharistic celebration (when a Nuptial Mass is celebrated)

The marriage of two Catholics is normally celebrated with a Nuptial Mass. Music for the Mass must be performed in accordance with the structure of the liturgy, with particular attention to the Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, and the setting for the Ordinary (Holy, Lamb of God, etc.) When the simple Rite of Marriage is celebrated (without Mass), the musical program is arranged in consultation with the Director of Sacred Music.

Parish Guidelines

Music used at weddings must reflect the Church's understanding of the sacramental nature of Matrimony and sustain the prayer of the Church. Liturgical requirements always take precedence over personal musical preferences, since the celebration of Marriage is a public act of the Church and not a private event.

Role of the Director of Sacred Music

The Director of Sacred Music is responsible for implementing these guidelines so that the music used at parish weddings highlights the festive character of the liturgy, fosters the full participation of the congregation, and reflects the dignity of the Sacrament.

The Director of Sacred Music coordinates all musical arrangements for wedding liturgies. In accord with these guidelines, the Director of Sacred Music exercises liturgical and musical discretion regarding the approval of repertoire and all matters related to music in the wedding liturgy.

The Planning Process

Couples are expected to meet with the Director of Sacred Music sufficiently in advance, normally at least two months be-fore the celebration. The Director of Sacred Music commits to working with the couple so that their preferences may be accommodated whenever they are consistent with liturgical principles. While respecting the sensibilities of the couple, musical selection is carried out within a collaborative process governed by the requirements of the liturgical rite. The musical program must be submitted and approved by the Director of Sacred Music no later than one month prior to the wedding. If no agreement is reached within the established timeframe, the Director of Sacred Music will determine the repertoire using the parish's standard liturgical selections. Exceptions may be granted by the Pastor.

Repertoire

As a norm, music is selected from the Catholic liturgical tradition. At the discretion of the Director of Sacred Music, classical instrumental music may also be performed at certain moments of the celebration, provided it is deemed appropriate to the dignity of the liturgy. Contemporary Christian music may be permitted on a case-by-case basis, depending on theological content, liturgical suitability, and stylistic compatibility. Pop, Rock, commercial, cinematic, or otherwise non-liturgical music is not permitted. Recorded music is not allowed.

Musical Instruments

The instruction Musicam Sacram, issued by the Sacred Congregation for Rites, provides that "in the Latin Church the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem" (62). This suggests a preferential status for the organ in the liturgical tradition of the West. Any other instrument used must be suitable for sacred music and contribute to the edification of the faithful (63). Their use must remain rooted in and guided by the teaching and documents of the Church.

Musicians

Musical service is provided by a parish organist and cantor. The Director of Sacred Music is the principal organist of the Parish. The Parish provides a substitute organist, when necessary, always a musician of high quality. In the event of substitution, the appointed organist assumes all functions of the Director of Sacred Music. Guest organists may be authorized by the Director of Sacred Music only for the performance of the prelude and postlude. External musicians (cantors, choirs, instrumentalists) may be admitted only with the approval of the Director of Sacred Music, normally granted when adequate technical competence and familiarity with Catholic liturgy are demonstrated.

Rehearsals

No music is provided during the wedding rehearsal. Any rehearsal involving external musicians must be arranged in advance with the Director of Sacred Music.

Worship aid

A worship aid is provided by the parish to facilitate the participation of the assembly. If a couple wants a more decorative, keepsake program (listing all the attendants and so on) they provide this personally.

Fees for Music

The total fee for the musical service required by a wedding is $650. This includes the services of the organist and cantor, coordination by the Director of Sacred Music, the preliminary meeting with the couple, planning of the musical program, and the production and printing of the worship aid, as well as related organizational tasks for the celebration. The first rehearsal with external musicians is included. Additional rehearsals are charged at $50 each. Additional musicians (instrumentalists, ensembles, choirs) are not included and are arranged separately with the Director of Sacred Music.

These norms are in force as of September 1, 2026 and replace any previous parish regulations concerning sacred music in the celebration of marriage.

Church Use Guidelines

CHURCH DECORATIONS AND BUILDING USE

The church is appointed and decorated for the celebration of the liturgy and specifically for the liturgical seasons throughout the year. The atmosphere and environment of the liturgical season should be maintained. None of the fixtures or appointments in the sanctuary may be moved or replaced.

Flowers and other living plants may be used in the sanctuary and in other areas of the church. No other decorations may be placed in the sanctuary. Flower arrangements placed in front of the altar may not obscure the top of the altar. Flowers must be in vases that do not draw attention to them. Decorations at the end of the pews may be used but may not be attached with adhesive tape. Aisle runners, flower petals, rice, confetti, etc. are NOT permitted.

You are welcome to bring a guest book, signs, photos, or other decorations to be placed in the Gathering Space of the church.

There are rooms available for use by the wedding party and family before and after the wedding. You may serve food and non-alcoholic beverages in these rooms.

We will work with an outside wedding coordinator provided that s/he has agreed to these guidelines (a signed agreement is required).

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photos and video may be taken during the liturgy providing the photographer is unobtrusive and respectful. We highly encourage that formal pictures (if they are to be done in church) be taken before the liturgy. (There is limited time for pictures afterward, especially if the couple would like to greet family and friends.) Also, it is highly encouraged that the bride and groom see each other before the liturgy begins (often your photographer will even be there for this "first look").

NO ALCOHOL POLICY

Any use of alcohol by the bride, groom, or members of the wedding party prior to the wedding will result in stopping the wedding. Consumption of alcohol by the bride or groom before the wedding could result in an invalid sacramental marriage. No alcohol may be consumed—by wedding party or guests—on parish grounds.

Marriage License

Apply for a marriage license with the Dane County Clerk's Office. Appointments to do this take place remotely. (You must apply at least 4 full days prior to your wedding date, but not more than 60 days prior.) Please visit clerk.countyofdane.com/Marriage for the most up to date information about applying for a marriage license in Dane County.

Please bring your license with you to your wedding rehearsal. The license will be signed by the presider and the witnesses in the sacristy following the wedding liturgy and will be filed with the county by the parish staff.

Wedding Guidelines Agreement

Having read these *Guidelines for Planning Your Wedding*, your signatures at the conclusion of the Marriage Request Form indicate that you have agreed to the guidelines. We will be happy to clarify anything that you may have questions about. Please know that these guidelines are in place to ensure that your wedding is a holy and beautiful celebration. It is with joy that we celebrate with you in Christ!