

Marriage Preparation

AT

Saint Denis Parish

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We congratulate you on your engagement and we are happy that you want to celebrate your Marriage in the presence of the Lord and His people here at our parish. Because the Sacrament of Matrimony is so significant, proper preparation and ample planning are essential. It is the common policy of the Bishops of New Jersey that engaged couples contact their Parish one year before their intended date. You should speak with a Parish Priest or Deacon prior to your booking a reception.

Remember that your solemn promise to each other takes place in a special, holy place. We invite you to welcome the assistance of priests, deacons, and/or those in the religious life you know as well as your faithful family and friends to help and guide you in selecting appropriate readings from Sacred Scripture and Liturgical music.

The Church wants the best for you and asks that you have a high regard for your time of engagement and your celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. Consider your choices of text and music in the light of the Church's guidelines so that you may more effectively express your faith and enhance your celebration as a true act of worship. Please don't hesitate to ask us any questions you may have. We are here to assist you.

The Priests and Deacons of Saint Denis

Prayer of an Engaged Couple

Lord God, Source of all love, In Your wise plan you have brought us together.

As we prepare to be married, we pray for Your Grace. Please strengthen us by Your blessing. Help us to grow in our respect for one another, And to cherish each other with sincere love. We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

OVERVIEW OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION

There are three stages to the marriage preparation process; Introduction & Orientation, Formation & Pastoral Sessions, and Wedding Liturgy & Beyond.

Introduction & Orientation

When you call the rectory office, you can “pencil in” a potential date for your

Wedding, based on the parish calendar, but you can only confirm the date for

Your wedding after your first meeting with the priest or deacon. At the first

Meeting, a priest or deacon will not only establish a couple’s freedom to marry,

but will also address any special circumstances or questions you may have. You

are asked to bring a \$200, deposit, counted towards your total donation. You

will receive an overview of wedding preparation and set up subsequent meetings.

Formation & Pastoral Sessions

In this second stage, the parish utilizes a nationally recognized pre-marital communications survey called *FOCCUS* (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study.) After the completion of this instrument there is a follow-up session(s) with one of our clergymen that assists the couple to realistically look at their relationship and talk about their expectations for married life. In addition to these FOCCUS sessions, the couple is required to attend an approved marriage preparation program; Pre-Cana, Joy-filled marriage or an Engaged Encounter Weekend during their year of preparation.

A calendar of these programs from the Office of Family Life is up-to-date at <http://www.dioceseoftrenton.org/go/precana>.

These programs explore areas, which are of special importance in married life such as Expectations in Marriage, Communication skills, Faith in God, Prayer/Worship, Sexuality and Parenting. Time spent on these areas prove to be most beneficial and insightful for couples.

The Wedding Liturgy & Beyond

While marriage preparation is focused more on the lifetime experiences of the couple than the single event of the wedding day, preparation of the ceremony is an important part of this process. After reflecting on the couples experience during the first part of the year, the priest or deacon and couple will complete plans for the wedding liturgy itself at least two months prior to the wedding date.

Recognizing the highly mobile society of today, should a couple married in this parish relocate following the ceremony to another parish or diocese, our clergy will make contact with the parish where the couple will reside as a means of introduction to their new faith community.

Spiritual Preparation

A very important part of your preparation should be spiritual. Regular Sunday worship at Mass together will be the cornerstone of your preparation for Marriage. For couples with different faith backgrounds, appropriate discussions on spirituality and religious practice must be had. Our life with God is our highest priority, and so it is of utmost importance for engaged couples to develop their spiritual lives.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) should also be incorporated into your time of preparation. A review of your spiritual life, confessing your sins to God, and celebration of God's acceptance and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a moment of deep spirituality and peace as you prepare to enter into the covenant of Marriage. You can make a meeting with a priest for Confession, or go on any Saturday, at the beginning of your engagement, and certainly a week or two before you celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage.

Who will help prepare you?

If you request a Nuptial Mass, a parish priest will prepare you and officiate at your Nuptial Mass. If you request a Nuptial Ceremony, a parish deacon will prepare you and officiate at your Nuptial Ceremony. You may request the priest or deacon you would like to prepare with, should he be available. Or, you may wish to request a Roman Catholic clergyman from another parish or diocese to celebrate your ceremony. Guest clergy are always welcome; please make this request at your first meeting in order to sort out the necessary details. *(Guest clergy need to accept your invitation and then write to the pastor stating his acceptance and making the formal request to marry you at St. Denis and describe what part of your preparation they will be responsible for. They must also provide a letter of good standing prior to your wedding.)

When are weddings scheduled?

Friday afternoons and evenings and Saturdays at Noon, 1:00 or 2:00 PM. (*Please be aware that Parish celebration of Reconciliation begins at 3:30 PM.*) Weddings can be celebrated at Our Lady Star of the Sea Beach Chapel only outside the time between Memorial Day and Labor Day. (There is no parish parking lot at the Beach Chapel.)

The Nuptial Mass:

A Nuptial Mass would be appropriate when both the bride and groom are active Catholics and are able to share Holy Communion together.

The Nuptial Ceremony:

A Nuptial Ceremony would be appropriate when one of the persons is a Catholic and the other is a member of another religious tradition or does not practice any religion. It is not ecumenically sensitive to offer Communion when a large number of non-Catholic attendees are not able to receive Communion.

Choices for your Wedding Liturgy:

The words, gestures and music for your wedding liturgy should manifest to all present what is happening within you, namely, an encounter with Christ through the Sacrament of Matrimony. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony provides various options for songs, prayers, readings and appropriate customs for the Catholic wedding ceremony. While couples have many options available to them, secular readings and songs are not permitted in a Church ceremony.

Non-Catholic customs:

These must be discussed with the priest or deacon as you prepare. Last minute additions that are deemed disrespectful and/or inappropriate will be declined at your embarrassment. The couple does not have the right to misappropriate the Liturgy of the Church.

Unity Candle has never been part of the Wedding Liturgy. This can be used at the reception and we can provide you information.

Signs are also not part of the Wedding Liturgy. Inappropriate signs will be confiscated. A child should not be disrespected/used to carry a sign that degrades the sacrament of marriage and the prayerfulness of the liturgy.

Flower petals, fake nor real, are not permitted for safety reasons.

Fake snow/confetti/rice cannot be thrown for littering reasons

Live animals, other than service animals, are not permitted in church.

Aisle runners cannot be used for safety reasons.

How can we involve family/friends in our Wedding Liturgy?

Readers: The First and Second Readings along with the Prayer of the Faithful may be read by family members and/or friends.

Altar Servers: Practicing altar servers in their parish may also assist at the wedding liturgy.

Gift Bearers: At a Nuptial Mass, two to four people may bring forward the gifts of bread and wine.

Music for the Order of Celebrating Matrimony:

Our Church Organist and Soloists are familiar with the Catholic ritual and will meet with you to plan appropriate music. **Please contact our Liturgical Musician at least two months prior to your wedding to set up an appointment.** Caroline Woodrow can be reached at carolinenj@aol.com MUSICIAN FEES ARE PAID DIRECTLY TO THE MUSICIANS. (\$175 FOR ORGANIST AND \$150 FOR CANTOR) Outside musicians can assist with the music but this must be discussed by you with Caroline Woodrow.

Decorations for the Church/Chapel:

Flowers add solemnity and festivity of a wedding. **Florists must contact our office at least two days ahead to coordinate the delivery of flowers.** At St. Denis Church, there is space for a single large flower arrangement that will fit appropriately into the urn on the predella. At the Chapel, there is space for a single flower arrangement in front of the altar. If you would like us to coordinate on your behalf with the parish florist for a single arrangement – please let us know. Such arrangements typically cost \$150.

Please advise your florist that ABSOLUTELY NO TAPE; PUTTY OR ADHESIVES may be used to attach things to the pew markers.

Photographers: Please have your Photographers/Videographers speak with the priest or deacon at least 20 minutes before the ceremony.

THE WEDDING REHEARSAL:

Rehearsals are scheduled with the priest or deacon and usually happen the evening before the wedding. All persons directly involved in the ceremony are invited to be present. **Couples must bring the NJ Wedding License to the rehearsal.** Feel free to bring any programs or bubbles or bells to be used after the ceremony. They will be kept, locked in the sacristy overnight

WHAT HAPPENS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE WEDDING?

Please understand that there may be events in the Church directly after your wedding. Therefore, you must speak with the priest or deacon regarding the logistics of a receiving line. We do want for there to be enough time for you to take photos in the Church, or weather permitting, outside of the church.

Alcohol: Alcoholic beverages of any kind are not permitted to be served or consumed in the church or on parish property. Please realize that a bride and groom drinking before their wedding constitutes a potential nullification of validity of freedom of exchange of vows and rings.

Church Donation.

We ask for a donation of \$600.00 for registered parishioners and children of parishioners and \$900 for non-parishioners. Please know this is a gift for the parish and helps us to continue the costs of operation. If this is a hardship, please speak to the clergyman. Checks are to be made payable to the “Church of St. Denis.” You are asked to bring \$200 to the parish at the start of your preparation to show good faith in the preparation process. The rest can be given in installments or before your rehearsal. Any personal gift to clergy should be given directly to the clergyman separately and is above and beyond your gift to the parish.

WHAT DOCUMENTS DO WE NEED TO OBTAIN?

Certificate of Baptism issued within 6 months of your wedding date (you can contact the parish where you were baptized and request a “*Baptism Certificate with Notations*”, notations are listed on the reverse of the certificate. Your other sacramental history will also be obtained.);

Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter Certificate (you will receive one when you participate in the program);

Testimonial Forms (we sometimes need to request forms indicating one or both persons are free to marry.);

Permission Forms (should they be required by Canon Law for non-Catholic persons);

NJ Marriage License (or Civil Marriage Certificate if you are celebrating a Convalidation). The Marriage License should be obtained within 30 days of the date of marriage.

ALL DOCUMENTS MUST BE FILED WITH RECTORY TEN DAYS PRIOR TO THE WEDDING WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MARRIAGE LICENSE, WHICH MUST BE PRESENTED ON THE EVENING OF REHEARSAL.

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