

Stella Maris
Catholic Church



Founded 1845

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TO: THOSE WHO INQUIRE ABOUT MARRIAGE AT STELLA MARIS
FROM: REV. MSGR. LAWRENCE B. McINERNEY
RE: WEDDING POLICIES/COHABITATION OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE

Enclosed is a rather detailed listing of policies about weddings along with information about marriage preparation. In presenting these policies about weddings, I acknowledge that there seem to be many rules about the ceremony. It might help you to know that all of them are based on past experiences and are offered in the hope of making your wedding ceremony as beautiful, meaningful, and spiritual as possible. Before you proceed to ask me to witness your wedding, there is an important question I ask you to address:

Are you living together or planning to live together before the wedding? If the answer is "yes", I prefer that you not ask me to witness your marriage unless you are willing to separate and live apart until the wedding. Here's why: After over twenty-five years of working with cohabitating couples and trying to help them build stable marriages, I find the situation has not gotten better, but worse. The most recent statistics available to me show that 50% of all couples entering marriage today will divorce, but 65% of cohabitating couples will divorce. Besides, there is a moral problem. The presumption is that when two people with romantic interest in each other live together, they are living a sexual relationship. The constant teaching of Christianity in Scripture and Sacred Tradition is that sexual activity belongs only in marriage. Sex outside of marriage is a serious sin. People in the state of serious sin cannot receive the sacraments of the living (sacraments to be received in the state of grace, i.e. Holy Communion, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders) without committing sacrilege (cf. I Cor. 11:27-28).

I realize there are couples who commit to a chaste relationship before marriage even as they live together. This, however, also causes a problem in the sin of scandal (an action likely to induce another to do wrong). Many people today have seen so many couples cohabitating before marriage that they have no idea that cohabitation before marriage is wrong. With a loving concern for you, your marriage and the sanctity of marriage, I urge you to address this question before celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony. With this understanding, if you are ready to proceed towards a wedding in Stella Maris Church, please telephone me (or the person you will ask to witness your wedding) for an appointment. May God bless you.

- Msgr. McInerney

Wedding Guidelines

**Stella Maris Catholic Church
Sullivan's Island, South Carolina**

(revised – May 2018)

Stella Maris Church receives many requests for weddings. Typically, Catholics are married in the church in which they are registered and active. Non-parishioner requests will be considered on an individual basis.

The following guidelines draw upon Canon Law, Church rubrics, and pastoral experience; they apply to all couples wishing to marry at Stella Maris.

1. All arrangements are to be made by the bride or the groom personally. (No third parties - i.e. privately-contracted wedding coordinators, parents, etc.) The Diocese of Charleston requires a minimum of six months' prior contact with a priest or deacon before the desired marriage date. If any party to a proposed marriage has been married before in any form, the previous marriage must be addressed to determine whether the person is free to marry in the Church.

2. Parishioners/Non-parishioners:

- a) **Registered parishioners** who attend Mass regularly for a sufficient period of time and who are canonically free to marry may schedule a wedding at Stella Maris. We are only able to verify regular attendance at Mass if parishioners use the envelope system. Regrettably, in the past some couples have registered solely to obtain the use of the church for weddings. Final determination of active parishioner status is to be made by the pastor.
- b) **Non-parishioners** are not usually allowed the use of Stella Maris. The pastor will consider extreme circumstances. In the event of non-parishioners getting married here, they usually provide their own priest or deacon to witness the ceremonies. Priests or deacons celebrating weddings in Stella Maris are expected to follow the ritual of the Church for weddings. If the priest or deacon is not attached to the parish of the Catholic party, he must obtain permission from the proper Pastor of the Catholic. Visiting clergy must also receive delegation to witness the marriage from the Pastor of Stella Maris, cf 3.b below..

3. Reservations

The attached reservation form must be completed and returned to the Parish Office, before a wedding can be scheduled on the Church Calendar. We do not make "tentative reservations" or "hold" dates.

- a) A reservation *must include* the name, address, and telephone number of the Catholic priest or deacon who has already agreed to witness the marriage. Should the clergyman cancel due to unforeseen circumstances, it is the responsibility of the couple to obtain a replacement and to notify the Parish Office immediately.
- b) Visiting priests or deacons will be given the necessary delegation to witness the marriage once they have presented the Pastor with the required pre-nuptial papers (including necessary permissions, dispensations and verification that the couple is free to marry).
- c) Reservations must include an offering for the use of the church. For **active, registered parishioners** (minimum, one year) no offering is required. For others, including **non-parishioners**, the offering for the use of the church is **\$800.00**. If the wedding is cancelled, a refund will be made (less a \$50.00 office fee).
- d) Couples will receive a letter of confirmation from the parish after submitting the form to reserve the church. If no confirmation is received within two weeks, couples should notify the Parish Office.

4. Dates and Times

- a) No weddings are scheduled during the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent.
- b) Weddings may not begin any later than **2:00 PM** on Saturdays. The wedding party and the photographers must vacate the church **no later than 3:30 PM** to accommodate parish confessions and preparation for the Saturday Vigil Mass. Couples preferring a wedding later in the day should consider Friday evening.
- c) Sunday weddings are not celebrated at Stella Maris.

5. Music

The Director of Liturgical Music is Mr. Huey Waldron. Couples should contact him immediately after scheduling the wedding. His fees, policies, and contact information are found below in the “Guidelines for Wedding Music”. Mr. Waldron plays the organ at all weddings at Stella Maris Church.

6. Flowers

- a) Any florist may be used
- b) A maximum of four arrangements are allowed.
- c) The two main arrangements are usually placed in the brass urns located on the altar. Florists should be aware that our urns are older and have a smaller capacity, which requires a smaller liner. We try to have smaller liners on hand for use by florists. If needed, the florist can inquire at the Church office. Additional smaller arrangements may be placed in any appropriate containers in front of the two side statues but the space is very limited.
- d) Floral pew markers or bows may not damage the pews (no tacks, nails, pushpins, scotch tape, or metal clips). The floral markers or bows should be tied to the pew or attached with masking tape.
- e) Flower petals may not intentionally be dropped or spread on the floor.
- f) Artificial flowers and greenery are not appropriate and may not be used.
- g) Arbors may not be erected in the church.
- h) It is the responsibility of the florist to coordinate delivery of the flowers to the church at a time convenient to the pastor and staff. If additional flowers, such as corsages and boutonnieres are to be delivered to the parish center, it is the responsibility of the florist to insure that someone will be available to receive them.
- i) Flower arrangements are usually left in the church for use the following Sunday. Couples who wish to remove their flowers should inform the church office in advance to insure that we have flowers for Sunday.

7. Furnishings

- a) Only those candles, candlesticks, and candelabrae provided by the church may be used. (Pew Candles and Unity Candles are not allowed).
- b) The ambo (lectern/pulpit) is a fixed furnishing and cannot be moved.
- c) Statues, the votive candle stand, and certain seasonal appointments like the Paschal Candle are not to be moved.
- d) The church will provide kneelers, chairs and other items to be used within the ceremony.
- e) Aisle runners are a safety hazard and are not allowed.

8. Photography

- a) Photographers and videographers must be respectful and unobtrusive. They are not to be visible to the congregation during the ceremony.
- b) Flash photography and light bars may not be used during the service.
- c) The wedding party is invited to pose for photographs immediately following the ceremony (30 minutes maximum)

9. Rehearsals

- a) Rehearsals must begin and end promptly. If the rehearsal is not begun within fifteen minutes of the scheduled time, the church is to be locked and the rehearsal is to be postponed until one hour before the scheduled start of the wedding.
- b) Rehearsals need not last longer than forty-five minutes.
- c) At a minimum, those who should attend the rehearsal include:
 - ✓ bride and groom
 - ✓ maid/ matron of honor and best man
 - ✓ bridesmaids and groomsmen
 - ✓ flower girls and ring bearers.
 - ✓ lectors (with their readings)

10. Wedding Coordinator

The Parish Wedding Coordinator is Jane Ellen Herron. Her fee is **\$100.00 for active parishioners** and **\$150.00 for non-parishioners**.

11. Miscellaneous

- a) Fees for the Director of Liturgical Music, cantors, additional musicians (if any), and the Wedding Coordinator are to be paid at the time of the wedding rehearsal. Checks can be given to Ms. Herron.
- b) The marriage license must be given to the Wedding Coordinator at the time of the wedding rehearsal. The priest or deacon cannot witness a wedding without a valid South Carolina marriage license.
- c) Rice is not to be thrown on church property; birdseed may be thrown as a substitute (outside only).

12. Wedding Mass /Wedding Ceremony:

The Marriage Rite may be celebrated either within the context of the Mass or outside of Mass.

- a) A Nuptial *Mass* may be celebrated when both the bride and the groom are practicing Catholics.
- b) If either the bride or the groom is not a practicing Catholic, the Rite of Marriage is usually celebrated outside of the Mass (a Wedding “Ceremony”) because the Roman Catholic Church does not have inter-communion with other denominations.
- c) Outlines for both the Nuptial Mass and the Rite of Marriage *outside of* Mass are attached as addenda to these guidelines.
- d) Using materials provided in Marriage Preparation sessions, couples may select the readings for the liturgy and the form of the vows they take.
- e) Neither the Nuptial Mass nor the Rite of Marriage *outside of* Mass accommodates non-liturgical elements or rituals. [These include, but are not limited to: writing one's own vows, reading poetry during the service, and the lighting of the so-called "Unity Candle"].

13. Programs

- a) The preparation and printing of an Order of Worship is not required.

- b) If so desired, the Director of Liturgical Music may be contracted to design and reproduce an Order of Worship. Because of errors in the past, we do not encourage couples or their friends to produce their own Orders of Worship. Those who elect to prepare their own must have them approved by a priest or a deacon before having them printed.

14. Decorum

- a) Couples, wedding participants and guests are expected to conduct themselves with reverence, dignity, and prayerful quietude in the church.
- b) Receiving lines are to be held at the wedding reception (not at the church).
- c) Alcoholic beverages are forbidden on church premises (including the church, the hall, the parking lots, and the grounds).

15. Facilities

- a) Stella Maris does not have a brides' room for dressing prior to the wedding. **If requested in advance**, the Library in the Parish Hall may be used as a gathering area for the bride and her attendants. If the library is used, it should be left clean and all personal items removed before the wedding party departs. No food or beverages are to be consumed in the library.
- b) Stella Maris can not accommodate wedding guests in need of a dressing/changing location.
- c) Restrooms are located at the far end of the Parish Hall. There are no restrooms in the church.

16. Marriage Preparation

- a) Diocesan law requires a minimum of six months notice for clergymen witnessing weddings. This priest or deacon who will witness the wedding has the responsibility of preparing the couple for marriage and completing the pre-nuptial paperwork.
- b) Couples are required to attend a recognized marriage preparation program such as Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter. Space in such programs is limited; arrangements should be made early. (See attached Addendum for information).

17. Special Circumstances

a) Previously married/Divorced

In accord with the teachings of the Gospel, the Roman Catholic Church holds that marriage is a permanent commitment. Any person who has been previously married and divorced, whether Catholic or not, is not free to marry in the Catholic Church. In such cases the Church's Marriage Tribunal will investigate the previous marriage to see if it might be declared null; the parish staff is available to assist parishioners in this process. Without a decree of nullity in hand, no wedding date can be set.

b) Cohabitation

Living together before marriage is contrary to the moral law. Statistically, cohabiting couples have a higher divorce rate.