

What to Know about a Church Wedding at St. Catherine of Siena

This leaflet is for people who know they are called to a married vocation, or at least have a good idea who will likely become their spouse.

Who can get married here?

Catholic parishioners rightfully ask their priest to witness their vows – one man and one woman (one or both baptized Catholic) who are publicly able to commit to each other exclusively in the covenant of marriage.

If one or both persons have been previously divorced, the couple must demonstrate their freedom to marry sacramentally. A person is free to marry if the previous spouse has died, or where a canonical declaration of nullity (an “annulment”) has been given. We can assist individuals and couples in this matter. We can help to initiate any remedial steps.

What is the general process to get started to arrange a wedding?

It begins with the couple visiting the priest together. A wedding date is set after the couple finishes an inventory of attitudes that relate to priority issues for the wedding and married life. If there are no major obstacles, we pencil a wedding date into the calendar.

- Just as laws require soup makers to list what’s in the cans, the church advises a couple about the “content” of a sacramental wedding and a covenantal marriage. All the preparations are traditionally called “the instructions.” The wedding ceremony itself takes only an hour; instructions are called “marriage preparation” with reason.
- The wedding is a public, religious statement by the Church and the couple about the sacred nature of their love and commitment. Couples enjoy learning about the powerful ways that God’s grace has brought them together. Human married love is one way that God can sustain them daily.
- The “instructions” do not cover every possible thing. People have a right to marry, and the Church asks that they be capable of fulfilling four promises: that they see this marriage as lifelong, being faithful to each other, and (where age appropriate) open to having children.

- If a Catholic person wishes to sacramentally marry a person who is not a Catholic, then the Catholic person promises his/her intention to baptize and raise their children Catholic. Both the future parents should support this. There is no requirement to become a Catholic to marry one.

- There are usually 6-8 meetings, including wedding planning and rehearsal. Most couples have fewer appointments at the parish when they attend an Engaged Encounter. The Diocese of Rockford requires couples to attend a Natural Family Planning seminar on a Friday night or a Saturday. The parish office has these schedules. These programs have fees which friends may cover as shower gifts, etc.

What if the engaged couple is living together now?

Cohabitation, by itself, does not disqualify a couple from sacramental marriage. It raises issues that the neither the Church nor the couple can overlook. For example, the divorce rate among those who have cohabited is much higher than among those who have not. In charity and respect, it is in the couple’s best interests to resist cohabiting as unmarrieds.

Will we have a Mass?

Two Catholics ordinarily exchange vows during a nuptial Mass. When one of the couple is not Catholic, usually not. In either

case, these are the Church's sacred rituals. A joyful reverence and respectful decorum mark both rehearsals and ceremonies.

How big should our wedding party be?

The only people required for a church approved ceremony are the bride and groom, two suitable witnesses, and a priest or deacon. Otherwise, good taste should influence your preferences.

Is this wedding recognized by the State of Illinois?

Yes. The priest/deacon acts as a witness for the state. A Kane County marriage license is required for weddings here.

Can we get married in some other church and still have the Sacrament of Matrimony?

One can get permission to marry in a Catholic church other than one's home parish – provided the other pastor agrees to accept the arrangement. About non-Catholic churches, ask your priest.

Are there other policies?

Yes, some local, some diocesan. We ask a \$150 offering to St. Catherine's which covers both the pre-marriage preparation and the wedding. Musicians and vocalists approved to accompany the wedding are compensated separately by the couple. Proper etiquette for photography and videography can be explained during the instructions. Music and songs for performance in church must be music composed for, or historically related to, Catholic, Christian religious use. Ceremonies are governed by "Catholic Wedding Guidelines" (April 2002) which help pastors and couples to plan a reverent and religious celebration of their love and vocation to marriage. Copies are available.

When are weddings held at St. Catherine?

Weddings are most commonly celebrated in the church on Saturday afternoons. The latest start is 2:00 PM for a Mass. No Sunday ceremonies. Weddings during Advent or Lent are to be more modest than during other liturgical seasons.

Confidentiality: The priest holds confidential a couple's plans and their conversations during pre-marriage instructions. The priest does not make or adjust wedding plans with the couple's parents or other family members.

List of requirements:

- prenuptial questionnaires appointments with a priest or deacon
- FOCCUS premarriage inventory and feedback session
- then (*then*) confirm the wedding date and a rehearsal date
- newly made baptismal certificates from original church
- witness affidavits (freedom to marry)
- permissions and dispensations where required
- Engaged Encounter seminar
- Natural Family Planning seminar
- License from Kane County
- hire and instruct a photographer
- plan the wedding liturgy: readings, music, flowers, etc.

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