



Wedding Guidelines

Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier

P.O. Box 407

13717 Cuba Road

Hunt Valley, Maryland

410-785-0356

www.ccsfx.org

www.facebook.com/CCSFX.HuntValley

Bride/Groom To-Do Checklist:

- _____ Schedule 1st appointment with Presider
- _____ Call Parish Office and let them know date of Wedding and Rehearsal
- _____ Send in deposit monies for Church (if applicable)
- _____ Contact Parish Sponsor Couple
- _____ Attend Marriage Preparation Classes with Sponsor Couple
- _____ Forward Re-Issued Baptismal Certificate(s) to church
- _____ Complete and forward to Church all other forms or documents requested
- _____ Schedule 2nd appointment with Presider to plan wedding liturgy
- _____ Connect with CCSFX Director of Music Ministries to review music
- _____ Forward outstanding fees to Church, Music Minister, etc. (1 month prior)
- _____ Obtain marriage license at least two weeks prior to wedding
- _____ Arrange for florist to call Wedding Sacristan to schedule delivery of flowers
- _____ Attend Rehearsal
- _____ Give Marriage License to Presider at the rehearsal

Congratulations!

A wedding is the focus of many social customs and expectations, but for Christians it is, first and foremost, the celebration of a sacrament, an action of the Church that reveals the ongoing presence of God's saving love. Because marriage is such an important and far-reaching event for the couple and the Christian community, the staff at the Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier wishes to assist you in every possible way the effective preparation for it. The demands of a meaningful liturgy, suitable music, and good order of the parish make the establishment of certain policies and procedures necessary.

Those wishing to be married in the Church should be registered in a parish and actively involved in the life of that parish. Although traditionally, Roman Catholics are married in the parish of the bride, the wedding may take place in the parish of either Catholic party. In cases where the bride nor the groom are not members of CCSFX, a letter of permission must be obtained from the pastor of the parish where the bride or groom is registered.

If you have questions at any time, please do not hesitate to ask. May our good God bless your marriage with His richest blessings!

**In Christ's love,
Rev. J. Kevin Farmer
410-785-0357 x716
kfarmer@ccsfx.org**

Stages of Marriage Preparation

(1) CONTACT A PRIEST/DEACON AND SECURE A DATE

- Contact a Priest or Deacon at CCSFX **at least six months before the desired date of your marriage.** Once you have met with your priest or deacon and set a wedding date and time, your wedding will be entered in the church calendar. **No wedding date can be reserved in our church calendar before a Priest or Deacon has agreed to perform your ceremony.**
- If you wish to have a visiting priest or deacon from another parish officiate at your marriage, they are welcome to do so. We ask you supply his name, address and phone number at the time you set your date. Our pastor will grant in writing the necessary delegation for your priest to officiate at the Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier. **The wedding rehearsal and all necessary paperwork are the responsibility of the priest or deacon who will witness your marriage unless other arrangements have been made.**

(2) ENROLL IN MARRIAGE PREP

- Life together as husband and wife requires serious preparation. For this reason, all couples marrying in the Archdiocese of Baltimore **must** take part in a Marriage Preparation Program. Contact the Parish Office at 410-785-0356 for more information.

(3) PLAN YOUR LITURGY

- After you have taken your marriage preparation course, you will again meet with your Priest or Deacon. He will review what has taken place in your marriage preparation, answer any questions, check on necessary documents and plan the wedding liturgy with you.

(4) MEET WITH THE CCSFX COORDINATOR OF MUSIC MINISTRIES

- Our Coordinator of Music Ministries will assist you with your music selections and can arrange for a cantor and pianist/organist. Music selected should support the action of the liturgy and be sung by the assembly. See more information on music on page 10.

PLEASE NOTE:

If you opt to bring in outside musicians for your wedding, you must seek approval from the Coordinator of Music Ministries.

(5) REHEARSAL

- This is usually scheduled the evening before the wedding. Your marriage license must be turned in at this time. Typically, musicians do not attend rehearsals.

Required Documents

- **A baptismal certificate** for each Catholic party. This certificate must be recent, that is, **issued within six months prior to the date of marriage**. You may obtain a certificate by contacting the church of your baptism. If you were baptized at CCSFX, the certificate is not required.
- For non-Catholic Christians, **a copy of the certificate** you received at baptism will suffice.
- **A marriage license** issued by Baltimore County. This can be obtained at the County Courts Building, in Towson, Maryland. There is a 48-hour waiting period for a marriage license, and it is valid for use within six months of issue date. Only one party needs to apply. Please bring proof of identification for both parties and \$35.00. **(cash only)** Please call (410-887-2607) before you go to verify this information. For further information please visit: **www.baltimorecountymd.gov**

Frequently Asked Questions

When can a Marriage be Scheduled?

Marriages are celebrated at CCSFX on Saturday beginning at 11:30 a.m. and no later than 2:00 pm. Weddings on Friday evenings are at the discretion of the Pastor.

Advent and Lent

If you wish to have your wedding during Advent (December) you will need to take into consideration the nature of the liturgical season. Weddings are not celebrated during Lent.

Nuptial Mass or Service?

There are three rites for celebrating marriage in the Roman Catholic Church:

1. **The Rite of Marriage during Mass** is normally used when two Catholics marry.
2. **The Rite of Marriage outside Mass** is used when a Catholic marries a baptized person from another Christian church.
3. **The Rite of Marriage between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person** is used when a Catholic marries someone who is not Christian.

In the first form, the Mass is celebrated. Choosing to be married with the Mass is appropriate if the couple is active and regular in the practice of their faith and most of the guests can participate. In the second and third forms, Mass is not celebrated. In the case of an interfaith marriage, we recommend a Nuptial Service.

What do I need to do if I was previously married?

If you or your fiancé have been previously married, you will need to present the final Decree of Nullity from the tribunal. If your annulment is in process, wait until the annulment has been granted before setting a firm date. If you are a widow or widower, a certificate of death of the spouse is required. Either way, you will need to attend a marriage preparation program. Our Sponsor Couple program is for previously married couples as well.

Weddings in another Catholic Church or Chapel

The pastor of the Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier is happy to write a letter of permission for parish members who wish to be married in another Catholic Church or chapel. However, because of the demands of this parish and schedule commitments, he cannot always accept invitations to preside at these weddings.

What About Ecumenical or Interfaith Marriages?

If you or your fiancé are not Catholic, in your conversation with the priest or deacon, Catholic belief and practice will be discussed, especially in relation to marriage. The Catholic party will be asked to make a commitment to have the children baptized in the Catholic faith and to share his or her faith with the children. The non-Catholic partner will be asked to be trusting, open and understanding about the Catholic faith and traditions. We welcome ministers of other faiths to participate in your wedding ceremony.

Celebrants from Other Faiths

A marriage usually takes place in the parish of the bride if both bride and groom are of the Catholic faith. When one party is not Catholic, the parish of the Catholic party is the usual place for the ceremony. A priest or deacon, who is a close personal friend or relative is always welcome to officiate at your marriage. The visiting priest or deacon should be made aware of the policies and procedures at the Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier. In either case, the priest of the parish where the marriage is to take place should be consulted first. When one of the parties is not Catholic, a minister of his/her denomination certainly may be invited to be present in the sanctuary and participate in the ceremony.

Who is the Official Witness?

The Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor serve as witnesses to the marriage as a sacramental union. They do not have to be Catholic, but they should be in good standing in their faith community.

Weddings in Churches of Other Faith Traditions

Should there be reasons to be married in a Church of another Christian denomination, permission to do so may be requested of the archbishop through the parish priest. You are still required to participate in the Marriage Preparation Program, even if you are married in a Christian church. Also, you must meet with the parish priest to complete the necessary prenuptial paperwork.

Eucharistic & Other Liturgical Ministers

When the Eucharist is part of the wedding ceremony, **two** Cup Ministers are needed. The priest or deacon will instruct the cup ministers at the rehearsal. **Gift Bearers** present the gifts (only when the Eucharist is celebrated) and can be any family member or friends of the bride and groom. **Lectors** should be people who are at ease in reading God's word.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers

A good age for flower girls and ring bearers is **six years of age and older**. They should be able to walk down the aisle without assistance.

Can I use an Aisle Runner?

Use of the runner was previously used to protect the bride's dress. However, it is no longer needed for this purpose and aisle runners have been known to cause people to slip and fall. **Because of this danger, runners may not be used at CCSFX.**

Do you have a Dressing Room?

We regret we do not have a dressing room at CCSFX. We do have a nearby room where bridal attendants may gather prior to the ceremony. However, you should arrive at church dressed and ready to go. Please be here at least 30 minutes prior to the ceremony. Groomsmen should arrive dressed 1 hour before the ceremony.

What is the seating capacity?

The seating capacity of our Church is 600, and the seating capacity of the Chapel is 90. We have an upper and lower parking lot and are our church is handicapped accessible.

Flowers

We recommend two large floral sprays for each ledge in the sanctuary. Floral arrangements around the altar candles are also permitted. Tape and pins may not be used on the pews or chairs in the church. If you would like bows, they can be slipped on with a ribbon loop, elastic banding or clips. Family or friends are not permitted to decorate the church. Your florist, along with our Wedding Sacristan, will ensure everything is properly placed. **The week of your wedding, please have your florist contact us to arrange delivery of your church flowers.**

If you would like to use a Unity Candle during the ceremony, we have a very handsome holder and will provide a candle which you may keep as the community's gift to you. Additional rental candles are prohibited.

Rice, bird seed, bubbles, rose petals....Throwing of any of the above is not allowed either inside or outside of church. Please ensure your guests are aware of this policy. We also have a no smoking policy at the church.

Photography

Any professional photographer engaged by the couple should be made aware of the sacred nature of the marriage ceremony and should conduct him/herself in such a manner so as not to be a distraction. Pictures may be taken during the ceremony, provided the photographer does not enter the sanctuary area. It is suggested your photographer consult with the priest/deacon before the ceremony begins. Flash pictures are not permitted during the ceremony. Pictures may be taken in the church after the ceremony only if there is sufficient time for the next service. Please remember the church is not a studio. No sanctuary furniture or decorations may be moved. Also, standing on pews or other furniture is not permitted.

It is suggested that pictures after your ceremony be reserved to the bridal party, the couple and their parents, and the couple alone. All other pictures should be taken at the reception or another location. It is the couples' responsibility to notify the photographer concerning these requests and recommended you provide him/her with a copy of this policy.

Music

The wedding liturgy is a celebration of the entire community. The music selected should support the action of the liturgy and be sung by the assembly (including the couple and the bridal party). Examples: hymns, songs, responsorial psalms and acclamations.

There are opportunities for other music to enhance the celebration such as: prelude/postlude, mother's song, solo instrumental or vocal pieces. Selections should reflect the faith of the couple and the assembly.

The role of a cantor in a wedding liturgy is to lead the song of the assembly. **Using parish cantors is highly recommended because they have been trained for this purpose.** Our Director of Music Ministries can assist you with choosing your liturgical music selections and can arrange for cantor and pianist/organist.

The Wedding Liturgy

Our parish practice for a wedding procession follows the principle of liturgical worship. What this means is all participate in the procession as we gather to celebrate this sacrament. The Rite of Marriage describes the procession in this way: the minister(s) go first (lector/reader), followed by the priest/deacon, and then the bride and bridegroom. The bride and bridegroom occupy this position, rather than the priest/deacon who receives their vows, because they are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage. There are several options that may be permitted for the procession. However, this should be the primary choice. The following are two other options: (1) Lector/reader (with Lectionary), priest, bridal party, the best man and maid/matron of honor, the groom and his parents, then the bride and her parents. (2) Mothers seated prior to the procession, lector/reader (with Lectionary), priest, bridal party, maid/matron of honor, groom and best man, then the bride and her father.

The Liturgy of the Word

The priest/deacon who will witness your marriage will assist you with the choosing of the readings by providing you with a workbook featuring a large selection of appropriate readings. In choosing a lector, ideally it should be someone who serves as a lector on a regular basis. **It is very important that you pick someone who will be an effective proclaimer of God's Word.** You should avoid bestowing the role of lector simply as a way to honor a relative or friend. There are other ways to involve relative or friends who are not proficient public speakers, such as bringing up the gifts of bread and wine.

The Rite of Marriage

It is important that each member in the assembly see and hear the marriage rite. The couple should face the assembly with witnesses on either side of the couple with the priest/deacon at the front of the assembly, facing the couple. **The vows that you as a couple will declare are the most important promise that you will make in your life.** Declaring your vows directly to one another is clearly the most powerful expression of the central action of the marriage rite. If you are fearful of forgetting the text of the vows, the priest/deacon will be able to help prompt you. Preparing your own vows is not permitted in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

The General Intercessions conclude the Rite of Marriage and offer an occasion to raise up the prayers of the couple and their families, while also remembering the universal needs of the Church and the world.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

When the wedding is celebrated within the Mass (both parties are Catholic), the Liturgy of the Eucharist is much the same as at Sunday Mass. The participation of the assembly during this part of the wedding can be encouraged by using well-known musical settings for the acclamations for the Eucharistic Prayer (“Holy, Holy, Holy”; the doxology of “Christ has died, etc.; and the Great “Amen”). As the prayer that binds all Christians regardless of denomination, the “Lord’s Prayer” should be accessible to all present. This will usually mean reciting it rather than singing it.

Concluding Rites

There are four forms of the final blessing which are some of the most beautiful prayers in the wedding liturgy. The parents of the bride and bridegroom could be invited to come forward to join in this blessing by placing their hands on the shoulder of their children as the priest proclaims the prayer. **This allows the parents to give visible expression through the blessing of their children on their wedding day.**

The recessional begins with the couple exiting first, followed by the bridal party, the parents, and then the other liturgical ministers.

Reception line

Because of the limited amount of time between weddings and other parish functions, reception lines are not permitted at CCSFX.

Priest/Deacon’s Attendance at the Reception

CCSFX is a one-priest parish, which means he cannot guarantee attendance at the reception. If you wish your celebrant to attend, the priest/deacon should receive a printed invitation with a reply card. If you wish him to say grace, this should be personally arranged in advance. If the deacon is married, the invitation should be extended to his wife as well.