



Wedding Guidelines

Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier

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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,

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Stages of Marriage Preparation

Contact a priest to secure a date:

Contact one of our parish priests at CCSFX at least six months before the desired date of your marriage. Once you have met with your priest and set a wedding date and time, your wedding will be entered in the church calendar. Until that time, you will be told if your date is available but not actually confirmed until the meeting takes place.

If you wish to have a visiting priest 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 who will witness your marriage unless other arrangements have been made.

Date and Time of the Wedding:

Marriages are celebrated at CCSFX on Saturday beginning at 11:30 am and no later than 2:00 pm. Weddings may also be celebrated Monday through Friday based on availability of the church. If you wish to have your wedding during Advent (December) you will need to take into consideration the nature of the liturgical season. Please note that weddings that take place in the month of November will have the Altar of Remembrance displayed on the baptismal font. Weddings are not celebrated during Lent or on Holy days.

Enroll in Marriage Preparation:

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. You have four options to accomplish this.

1. Parish Sponsor Couple

CCSFX has a couple that has received special training in the preparation of engaged couples. A series of five sessions covers marriage as a journey, its trials and triumphs, its stress and successes. If this form of preparation is used, the parish office will connect you with the Sponsor after the first meeting with the priest. This program is only available to parishioners of CCSFX.

2. Engaged Encounter

If you are not prepared for marriage by a sponsor couple you may participate in an Engaged Encounter weekend. For more information on this program see

<https://baltimore.engagedencounter.com>

3. Marriage Preparation Conference (Pre-Cana)

If you are not prepared for marriage by a sponsor couple you may participate in Pre-Cana. For more information on dates in your area see <https://www.archbalt.org/pre-cana/>

4. Online Marriage Preparation

If you are not prepared for marriage by a sponsor couple you may participate in an online course. For more information see <https://themarriagegroup.com>
<https://catholicmarriageprep.com>

Plan your Liturgy:

After you have taken your marriage preparation course, you will again meet with your Priest. 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. He will also give you a copy of Together for Life to help you with this. You may visit the online version at <https://togetherforlifeonline.com/catholic-wedding-ceremony/>

Music Ministry:

Our Director of Music 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. If you opt to bring in outside musicians for your wedding, please seek approval from the Director of Music. *Kindly note that if you choose to bring in outside musicians, our Director of Music applies a standard bench fee of \$250.00.* Our Director of Music will be at the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony for quality control and to assist with instruments, microphones, sound system and any other acoustical occurrences.

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 can assist you with choosing your liturgical music selections and can arrange for cantor and pianist/organist. See Appendix B for an approved selection.

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. Ensure this date is on the Parish Calendar when you schedule your wedding.

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

<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/circuit/clerk/marriage-divorce>

The Wedding Liturgy

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 groom. The bride and groom occupy this position, rather than the priest who receives their vows, because they are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage.

The Liturgy of the Word:

The priest 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:

The marriage rite is a beautiful celebration meant to be seen and heard by all. The couple should face the assembly, with witnesses on either side and the priest before them. Your vows are the most meaningful promise you will ever make, and speaking them directly to one another is the heart of the ceremony. The Roman Catholic Church Canon Law prescribes the vows for marriage, so preparing personal vows is not permitted in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The General Intercessions conclude the rite, lifting up prayers for you, your families, and the 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. 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.

Eucharistic Liturgical Ministers:

When the Eucharist is part of the wedding ceremony, Gift Bearers present the gifts 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.

Non-Catholics are welcome to receive a blessing by crossing their arms over their chest when they reach the Celebrant in the communion line. The Celebrants will offer a verbal blessing. You can respond with "Amen" if you wish.

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 groom 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.

Marriage Certificate/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 and 18 years of age.

Receiving Line:

Because of the limited amount of time between weddings and other parish functions, reception lines are not permitted at CCSFX. The throwing of rice, bird seed, bubbles, and rose petals 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.

Priest's Attendance at the Reception:

If you wish your celebrant to attend, the priest should receive a printed invitation with a reply card. If you wish him to say grace, this should be personally arranged in advance.

Use of the Church

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 our church is handicapped accessible.

Church Offerings:

Facility	\$250.00	\$500.00 Non-Parishioner \$250.00 non-refundable deposit due at your first meeting with the Pastor. The remaining balance of \$250.00 is due at the rehearsal.
Accompanist	\$250.00	
Cantor	\$200 for Nuptial Mass \$150 for Rite of Marriage	Accompanist/Cantor same person \$300 (no additional cantor needed)
Livestream	\$125	

It is customary for the priest who facilitates your marriage preparation and officiates at your wedding to receive a stipend. It is usually given on the Wedding Day.

Dressing Rooms:

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.

Aisle Runner:

Aisle runners have been known to cause people to slip and fall. Because of this danger, runners may not be used at CCSFX.

Programs:

We welcome you to use programs, CCSFX does not produce programs and they are not required. It allows those not familiar with our faith and traditions to feel more a part of the Marriage Ceremony.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers:

Flower girls and ring bearers should be able to walk down the aisle without assistance to participate.

Unity Candle (Optional):

If you would like to use a Unity Candle during the ceremony, we have a very handsome holder, however, you will need to provide your own candles. Candles can be easily purchased online, two 1 inch candles and one 3 inch candle. Additional candles are prohibited.

Placing Flowers on the Blessed Mother (Optional):

Placing flowers on the Blessed Mother at a Catholic wedding is a common, optional tradition where the couple presents a bouquet to a statue or altar of Mary, usually after Communion. This gesture honors her role as a model for marriage and asks for her intercession and is frequently accompanied by a Marian hymn like the "Ave Maria".

Flowers/Decorations:

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 church staff will ensure everything is properly placed. The week of your wedding, please have your florist contact us to arrange delivery of your church flowers. When flowers are purchased for the wedding, they are generally donated to church for the weekend Masses. Please let us know if you are donating them to the church so that we do not purchase flowers. If you have flowers that you have used at the reception on the tables and would like to donate them to Parish Perk after the reception, we will gladly accept them. Any florist is welcomed at CCSFX, however If you would like the ease of using a florist who is familiar with our church, we recommend Janda Florist (410) 666-8888, www.jandaflorist.com.

Photography:

Photographers should respect the sacred nature of the ceremony and avoid being a distraction. Photos may be taken during the ceremony, but the photographer must remain outside the sanctuary and may not use flash. It's recommended they consult the priest beforehand. After the ceremony, photos in the church are allowed only if time permits. The church is not a studio—furniture and decorations must not be moved, and standing on pews or other furniture is prohibited. Post-ceremony photos should focus on the couple, bridal party, and parents; all other photos should be taken at the reception or another location. The couple is responsible for informing the photographer of these guidelines and providing a copy of this policy.

Livestream:

We can livestream your wedding if you choose. You must request this well in advance as we are limited in the technicians that can do this. Fee is \$125.00.

Important Things to Know

What is the Difference Between a 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 has 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.

May I have my Wedding at Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier if we are not members of the Church?

In cases where neither the bride nor the groom is a parishioner of CCSFX, a Letter of Permission must be obtained from the pastor of the parish where the bride or groom is registered.

May I Have a Wedding 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 is not Catholic, in your conversation with the priest, 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.

Engaged Couple Checklist

- _____ Call Parish Office and schedule initial appointment with Presider and request date.
- _____ Send in deposit monies for Church
- _____ Connect with Parish Sponsor Couple or Enroll in one of the marriage prep options
- _____ Attend Marriage Preparation Classes if not meeting with the Sponsor Couple
- _____ Forward Re-Issued Baptismal Certificate(s) to church
- _____ Schedule 2nd appointment with Presider to plan wedding liturgy
- _____ Connect with CCSFX Director of Music to review music
- _____ Forward outstanding fees to church, music, etc.
- _____ Obtain marriage license at least two weeks prior to wedding
- _____ Arrange for florist to call church to schedule delivery of flowers
- _____ Attend rehearsal
- _____ **Give Marriage License to Presider at the rehearsal**

Wedding Ceremony Mass

Opening Rites	
Processional Hymn:	
<i>Assembly: Standing</i> Entrance of bridal party and bride.	
Greeting & Sign of the Cross <i>Assembly Standing</i> Penitential Act <i>Assembly Standing</i> Gloria (if used) <i>Assembly Standing</i> Opening Prayer <i>Assembly Standing</i> Ends with “Amen,” after which everyone sits	Celebrant
Liturgy of the Word	
First Reading Select a reading from the Old Testament <i>Assembly Sitting</i> Reader cue: - Reader approaches the ambo as the priest invites, or immediately after the opening prayer. Priest sits; reader begins when assembly is seated	Reader #1
Responsorial Psalm <i>Assembly Sitting</i> - Sung or spoken by cantor/psalmist	Reader #2 or Cantor

Second Reading Select a reading from the New Testament • <i>Assembly Sitting</i> • Reader cue: ○ Second reader stands and approaches the ambo after the psalm concludes.	Reader #3
Gospel Acclamation • <i>Assembly Standing</i> • Cantor begins “Alleluia...” Everyone stands when the cantor begins	Cantor
Gospel • <i>Assembly Standing</i>	Celebrant
Homily • <i>Assembly Sitting</i>	Celebrant
Rite of Marriage Address & Declaration of Intent Exchange of Vows <i>Lighting of Unity Candle - Optional</i> Blessing & Exchange of Rings	Celebrant
General Intercessions (Prayers of the Faithful) • <i>Assembly Standing</i> • Ends with “Amen,” after which everyone sits for the offertory.	Reader #4
Liturgy of the Eucharist	
Offertory Hymn:	
Preparation of the Gifts (Offertory) • <i>Assembly Sitting</i> • Gift Bearer Cue:	Gift Bearer#1 Gift Bearer#2

○ Priest stands at the altar and signals (usually with eye contact or a subtle nod) for the gift bearers. ○ Gift bearers proceed up the aisle with bread and wine when the offertory music begins.	
Prayer Over the Gifts • Still Sitting until the priest says: ○ “Pray, brothers and sisters...” ○ Assembly stands and responds: “May the Lord accept...”	Celebrant
Eucharistic Prayer • Standing during preface. • Kneeling at the <i>Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus)</i> ○ Kneel until the <i>Great Amen</i>	Celebrant
Communion Rite Lord’s Prayer • Standing Sign of Peace • Standing Lamb of God • Kneeling (most parishes) ○ Some remain standing until after “Behold the Lamb of God...”	Celebrant
Communion Song:	
Communion Non-Catholics are welcome to receive a blessing by crossing their arms over their chest when they reach the Celebrant in the communion line. The Celebrants will offer a verbal blessing. You can respond with “Amen” if you wish. Kneeling after receiving	Celebrant

<i>Once the Celebrant sits down, assembly may sit</i> <i>Placing Flowers on the Blessed Mother (Optional)</i>	
Concluding Rites Final Blessing • Standing	Celebrant
Recessional Hymn:	
Recessional • Standing • Bridal couple exits first, followed by wedding party, then the assembly.	

Wedding Ceremony Without Communion

Opening Rites	
Processional Hymn:	
<i>Assembly: Standing</i> Entrance of bridal party and bride.	
Greeting & Sign of the Cross <i>Assembly Standing</i> Penitential Act <i>Assembly Standing</i> Gloria (if used) <i>Assembly Standing</i> Opening Prayer <i>Assembly Standing</i> Ends with “Amen,” after which everyone sits	Celebrant
Liturgy of the Word	
First Reading Select a reading from the Old Testament <i>Assembly Sitting</i> Reader cue: - Reader approaches the ambo as the priest invites, or immediately after the opening prayer. Priest sits; reader begins when assembly is seated	Reader #1
Responsorial Psalm <i>Assembly Sitting</i> - Sung or spoken by cantor/psalmist	Reader #2 or Cantor

Second Reading Select a reading from the New Testament • <i>Assembly Sitting</i> • Reader cue: ○ Second reader stands and approaches the ambo after the psalm concludes.	Reader #3
Gospel Acclamation • <i>Assembly Standing</i> • Cantor begins “Alleluia...” Everyone stands when the cantor begins	Cantor
Gospel • <i>Assembly Standing</i>	Celebrant
Homily • <i>Assembly Sitting</i>	Celebrant
Rite of Marriage Address & Declaration of Intent Exchange of Vows <i>Lighting of Unity Candle - Optional</i> Blessing & Exchange of Rings	Celebrant
Concluding Rites Final Blessing Announcing the Couple Standing	Celebrant
Recessional Hymn:	
Recessional • Standing • Bridal couple exits first, followed by wedding party, then the assembly.	

Wedding Music Suggestions

Prelude/Processional:

Canon in D	Pachelbel
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring	Bach
The Prince of Denmark's March	Clarke
Trumpet Tune	Clark
Allegro Maestoso (Hornpipe) from Water Music Suite	George Frideric Handel
Rondeau from Symphony of Fanfares	Jean Joseph Mouret
Psalm 19, The Heaven's Declare the Glory of God	Benedetto Marcello

Hymns:

By My Side	Thomas Porter
Hand in Hand	Angrisano
Love Never Fails	Manibusan, Canedo
To Believe in Love	Whitaker
God of Love, O God of Goodness	Trad
I Have Loved You	
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	Wesley/Prichard
When Love is Found	Wren
Nuptial Blessing: May You Be Filled	Kilma
Faith, Hope, and Love	O'Brian
Wherever You Go	Norbet
My Song Will Be You Forever	Haas
Wedding Song (There Is Love)	Stookey
I Will Be Here	Chapman
Bridal Prayer	Copeland
The Servant Song	Gillard

Psalms/Responses:

Blest Are Those Who Love You	Psalm 128
The Lord is My Light and my Salvation	Psalm 27
Every Morning in Your Eyes (Psalm 33)	Rory Cooney
The Lord is Kind and Merciful	Colson

Blessed Mother:

Ave Maria
Hail Mary, Gentle Woman
Be With Us Mary
Arioso

Schubert

Hart
Bach

Communion:

Panis Angelicus
That There May Be Bread
For Living, For Dying
How Beautiful
Here at This Table
Bread of Life
Come to the Feast
One Bread, One Cup

Handel
Mendelssohn
Pena
Paris
Whitaker
Fisher
Colson
Fisher

Recessional:

Hornpipe from *Water Music*
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring Bach
Ode to Joy
The Rejoicing from Fireworks Suite
Four Seasons

Handel
Bach
Beethoven
George Frideric Handel
Vilvaldi