



St. Joseph's Church In Greenwich Village Wedding Handbook

But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.

Mark 10:6-9

Congratulations on your engagement! Weddings are a joyful occasion and a pivotal moment in life. Marriage embarks the couple on a new journey together. A Catholic wedding is a sacrament in which the couples make vows to each other before God. They promise each other their faithfulness, fidelity, and fertility. Marriage bonds a man and woman together as one in love. The Church welcomes the faithful called to marriage and helps prepare them to embark upon the journey of marriage.

St. Joseph's is pleased to help you prepare for your Roman Catholic wedding. Whether you wish to celebrate your marriage in our historic church and vibrant parish, or to prepare for a wedding that will be celebrated elsewhere, we are happy to help you. We will assist you in laying a foundation for a successful marriage. We will help you grow in your spiritual life and prepare for all the steps necessary for to enter into marriage.

Matrimony is a Sacrament.

The Sacrament of Matrimony is a vocation or calling to live out the Christian witness within marriage. We commend your desire to bring your marriage before the Lord. The Sacrament of Marriage requires a commitment to living out the Christian vocation of married life and giving living witness to the love that Christ has for his Church. It is, therefore, expected that your Catholic faith should be an important part of your lives.

God instituted marriage as a school of love, where a spouse learns to love as Christ loves us. Marriage is a preparation for heaven—the highest duty of spouses is to help each other attain heaven. The Catholic sacrament of marriage is religious at its core, not a secular event with religious trappings. Therefore, St. Joseph’s Church is not a 'venue.' We expect those preparing for a Catholic wedding to respect the religious nature of a Catholic wedding.

Who May Marry at St. Joseph’s Church?

We welcome all parishioners. A parishioner is someone who lives within the canonical boundaries of the parish (roughly, the West Village: Houston to 14th Street and Hudson to University Place), and those who have registered as parishioners.

If you have not already, please [register](#) and [support](#) our parish online.

The Catholic Church makes provisions for all baptized Catholics to celebrate their weddings in a religious ceremony. This includes couples where one member is of another faith tradition, or none. All Catholic weddings must be celebrated in a Catholic church, the sacred space designated for the celebration of the sacraments. Those with special circumstances should consult one of our priests.

Scheduling a Wedding.

Couples should contact the parish at least 6 months in advance of their anticipated wedding date, as required by the Archdiocese of New York. If couples are planning on marrying outside of the United States, they should contact the parish at least 9 months in advance.

Please do not make arrangements for your reception or other post wedding celebration(s) prior to confirming your wedding date with the church.

Weddings may be celebrated on almost any day of the year except on those few days when they are not permitted by Church law (such as Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter). If the wedding is to be celebrated during Advent or Lent, we ask couples to keep in mind the special

character of these liturgical seasons and understand that certain decorations within the church may not be moved.

Please note that that Saturday weddings cannot be scheduled after 3:30pm because they will conflict with the Saturday Vigil mass.

To inquire about holding your wedding at St. Joseph's Church, please call our parish secretary at (212) 741-1274

Marriage Preparation.

The purpose of marriage preparation is to help the couple lay a strong foundation for their marriage. Our goal is to prepare the couple spiritually for marriage– to help them understand what marriage is and how to thrive in the married state of life. Essential to a strong Catholic marriage is teaching the couple what Jesus Christ and His Church have revealed about the meaning of marriage and how to live one's married life successfully. Specifically, how to give oneself fully to one's spouse in love and how to accept the graces that flow from the sacrament of marriage.

Marriage preparation at St. Joseph's Church has a number of steps. There is a checklist in this handbook to help you navigate all the requirements. The core of the preparation is a number of meetings with a friar at St. Joseph's Church, the Archdiocesan Pre-Cana course, and a natural family

planning course. The friar who works with you will explain all these requirements.

Steps in Marriage Preparation at St. Joseph.

•**Prayer and living your Faith.** Marriage is a sacrament and thus a call to holiness as a spouse and potential parent. An essential part of preparing for the sacrament of marriage is living your faith. We expect you to attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation. You should also pray every day as an individual, and as a couple. If it has been a long time since your last confession, you should receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation soon. Also, a few days before your wedding date, you should go to confession to spiritually prepare yourself for marriage. If you have not been practicing your faith, the friar preparing you for marriage can help you get started again.

•**Call the parish office.** The first step in the marriage process is to call St. Joseph's parish office. The secretary will take your information and give it to the friars. A friar will then contact you about setting up the first meeting.

•**First meeting: Canonical interview.** The goal of the first meeting with a friar is to go over the wedding preparation program and to see whether any dispensations are needed for the wedding. The Archdiocese of New York provides specific questions that the priest must ask to make sure that there are no impediments to the marriage

(such as the couple being related, previous marriages, etc.). If there are any impediments, the friar will help you resolve them.

•**Reserve a wedding date.** After the first meeting with a friar the couple can reserve a wedding date at St. Joseph's Church. Just call the parish office and the secretary will see whether your date is open and reserve it for you. Your reserved date will be held for ten days pending the receipt of your wedding fees. Once fees are received the secretary will confirm your wedding date. If you are being married in another parish, this is the time to reserve a date in that parish.

-**Wedding Fees.** Before your reserved wedding date can be confirmed, you must pay all fees related to the wedding. A list of fees is below. If you are not celebrating your wedding at St. Joseph's Church, then please pay the related fees for marriage preparation prior to your second meeting with a friar. All checks should be payable to "St. Joseph's Church." Please include on the check the names of the bride and groom. If the couple decides to cancel their wedding at St. Joseph's Church, the wedding fees will be refunded minus a cancellation fee of \$250.00.

-**Rehearsal.** When you reserve a wedding date, also reserve a date for your rehearsal. Usually the rehearsal takes place the evening before the wedding.

•**Contact the music director.** Once you reserve a wedding date, call one of the music directors at St. Joseph's Church. We have two music directors, one for traditional music and one for contemporary music. Chose the style of music you prefer and call that director to start talking about what you want for your wedding. Contact information for the music directors is available from the parish secretary. The music fee for a wedding at St. Joseph's Church includes an organist or pianist plus a cantor. If you want more musicians or singers, that can be arranged with the music director for an additional fee. Any outside musicians must be approved by the St. Joseph music directors. If you are getting married elsewhere, please call that parish about music arrangements.

•**Paperwork.** Some paperwork is required prior to your marriage. Namely:

-**Baptismal Certificates.** For Catholics, call the parish at which you were baptized and have them send your baptismal certificate with notations directly to St. Joseph's Church. For Protestants, have the community that baptized you send your baptismal certificate directly to St. Joseph's Church.

-**Premarital Affidavits.** Two premarital affidavits are required for each person preparing for marriage—meaning 4 in total. The friar will give you the forms at your first meeting. Have anyone who knows you well fill it out and then either mail the forms to St. Joseph's Church or bring them to your next meeting.

-Dispensations. In some situations dispensations are required. The most common situation requiring a dispensation is when a Catholic wants to marry a non-Catholic. The friar will fill out the form for you and take care of the process.

•**Archdiocesan Pre-Cana Class.** The Archdiocese of New York requires that couples preparing for marriage attend one of their Pre-Cana classes. Information about these classes is available at <http://nyfamilylife.org/marriage-preparation/>. Please sign up for a class as soon as possible because they fill up quickly. When you complete the Pre-Cana class, you must take an online survey and watch some videos, and then they will send you a certificate of completion. Please send the certificate to St. Joseph's Church.

•**Catholic Couple Checkup.** When you register for the Pre-Cana class you also will have the option to register for the Catholic Couple Checkup online premarital inventory. Sign up for inventory when you register for the Pre-Cana class because it is free for those registering for the class. After you take the Catholic Couple Checkup online premarital survey, email the report to the friar preparing you for marriage. That report will form the basis of the second meeting with a friar.

•**Natural Family Planning Course.** Couples must take a course on Natural Family Planning. Couples have several

options to fulfill their NFP requirement. They can meet the requirement through a program with the [Couple to Couple League \(https://ccli.org/\)](https://ccli.org/), or [Dr. Anne Nolte \(https://sppanj.com/doctors/anne-nolte-md/\)](https://sppanj.com/doctors/anne-nolte-md/), or [FEMM \(https://femmhealth.org/education/learn-for-self/\)](https://femmhealth.org/education/learn-for-self/), whom you can contact at education@femmhealth.org.

●**Second Meeting: Inventory Review.** After the couple has taken the Catholic Couple Checkup and have emailed the results to the friar preparing them for marriage, they will meet with the friar and talk about the results. The inventory is not something a couple can 'fail,' but is instead an aid to the couple. It identifies how the couple can better prepare themselves for marriage.

●**Third Meeting: Theology of Marriage.** After the couple has completed their Pre-Cana class and their NFP class, as well as their second meeting with their friar, the third meeting with the friar will cover the spirituality of marriage and the significance of a *sacramental* marriage.

●**Fourth Meeting: Ceremony Planning.** If the couple plans to marry at St. Joseph's Church, then this last meeting with the friar will plan out the wedding ceremony. If the couple plans to marry elsewhere, contact the priest who will celebrate your wedding to plan the ceremony.

●**Marriage License.** In the United States you must obtain a license from the state or county in which you plan to

marry. These usually expire within a month, depending on the state, so make sure to obtain a marriage license prior to your wedding date but not too far in advance. If you are being married outside of the United States make sure to research the local laws concerning marriage.

•**Wedding Rehearsal.** The rehearsal date should be scheduled at the same time you schedule your wedding date. Traditionally held the night before the wedding, the rehearsal is a run-through of the wedding ceremony so that those with special roles will understand what they need to do at the ceremony. The bridal party, parents, readers, and any other participants should plan on attending this event. The rehearsal should only be attended by those directly involved in the ceremony. The priest performing the wedding will conduct the rehearsal. **The couple must bring their civil marriage license with them to the rehearsal.** If you request, a priest can be available to hear confessions at the rehearsal so that everyone can be spiritually prepared for the wedding.

On the Day of the Wedding.

At the wedding there are various roles that the couple needs to assign people to. These include:

- Ushers to hand out programs and assist with seating.
- 1 to 3 Readers.
- At least 2 people to bring up the gifts if the wedding is taking place within a Mass. Often the mothers of the bride and groom bring up the gifts.
- 2 witnesses to sign the marriage license.
- Assign a group to clean up after the wedding.

Ushers need to arrive at the Church at least a half hour before the ceremony. The Groom and Best Man should come to the Sacristy at least a half hour before the wedding. The Bridal Party should arrive at least ten minutes before the ceremony.

St. Joseph's is an historical church; in order to preserve its beauty, to ensure safety, and to maintain the integrity of the Sacrament of Marriage, we ask all to adhere to the following guidelines:

•**Flower Petals/Runner.** For safety reasons we cannot allow the strewing of flower petals or the use of a runner down the aisle. These items represent hazards that make our marble floors quite slippery and dangerous.

•**Unity Candle/Wedding Candle.** The unity candle is a tradition outside of the Roman Catholic liturgy and is not allowed as a part of the wedding rite. Many couples use this symbol of unity as part of their reception, when grace is said before the meal.

•**Rice/Birdseed/Confetti.** The throwing of any items over the wedding couple as they exit the Church is prohibited for safety and sanitary reasons.

•**Promptness.** St. Joseph's is a very busy church. In order to conduct both the rehearsal and wedding in a dignified manner, we ask that everyone be on time for the rehearsal and wedding. Often, baptisms, funerals, or other weddings or Masses are scheduled either before or after your wedding. We want you to be able to celebrate your wedding in an unhurried manner, and your promptness will ensure this.

•**Cleanup.** The church must be in the same state of cleanliness as it was before the wedding. Any programs or other items in the church for the wedding must be removed. If the parish staff is required to clean up after the wedding, then the couple's cleaning deposit will not be refunded.

Weddings in Other Dioceses.

If you are planning on marrying in a diocese other than the Archdiocese of New York, then at the end of your wedding preparation the friar who prepared you for marriage will send your paperwork to the Archdiocese of New York, who will then send it to the church where you are planning on marrying. This takes a few weeks, and so it is important to not wait until the last moment to complete your wedding preparation. Marriages in foreign countries can take longer, so please factor that delay into your planning.

Wedding Planners.

Couples are free to use a wedding planner; however, any event in the Church will be run by the priest helping the couple, not the wedding planner. Wedding planners may not be in charge of the rehearsal or emcee the wedding liturgy.

Wedding Fees.

For registered and active parishioners of St. Joseph's Church being married at St. Joseph's Church:

- \$1,700 fee for the use of the church building
- \$300 refundable cleaning deposit
- \$600 music fee (pianist or organist & cantor)
- \$200 marriage preparation fee
- \$300 stole fee

total: \$3,100

For non-parishioners being married at St. Joseph's Church:

- \$3,000 fee for the use of the church building
- \$300 refundable cleaning deposit
- \$600 music fee (pianist or organist & cantor)
- \$200 marriage preparation fee
- \$300 stole fee

total: \$4,400

For those being married at another church:

- \$200 marriage preparation fee

If any couple believes that they cannot afford these fees, please talk to the pastor—arrangements can be made. All active and registered parishioners can be married at St. Joseph's regardless of their financial situation.

Marriage Preparation Checklist.

- ❖ Pray & Practice your faith
- Call St. Joseph and fill out the marriage request form
- First meeting with a friar: canonical interview
- Reserve wedding & rehearsal date
 - pay applicable fees
- Contact music director
- Pre-Cana registration
 - take Catholic Couple Checkup
 - send checkup results to friar
 - attend Pre-Cana class
 - send Pre-Cana certificate to friar
- Second meeting with a friar: checkup review
- NFP registration
 - attend NFP classes
 - send NFP certificate to friar
- Send baptismal certificates to St. Joseph Church
- 4 pre-marital affidavits completed & sent to friar
- Dispensations completed (if applicable)
- Third meeting with a friar: theology of marriage
- Fourth meeting with a friar: ceremony planning
- Obtain civil marriage license