

WEDDING GUIDELINES



St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church
3 Village Road
Newnan, GA 30265
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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed to help you plan your wedding at St. Mary Magdalene. The subjects covered are from questions asked by many couples over the years.

Your wedding day should be one of the most memorable days of your life. To ensure this, all arrangements should be as complete and precise as possible. Remember, too, you are not only planning a wedding, but also a *marriage*. So, while it is perfectly all right to be concerned with the details of the ceremony, the main focus of your attention should be on the sacramental state into which you are entering.

By having this detailed outline as you begin planning your wedding, you should be able to maintain a balance in the preparations so that the practical details, important as they are, do not become all absorbing.

The clergy and staff at St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church wish you every blessing for your married life together.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Terry Crone

Pastor

1. BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR A CATHOLIC MARRIAGE

Simply calling the church office to reserve the date undermines the significant life-changing occasion that our faith believes a marriage to be. Furthermore, employees of the parish are not authorized to reserve the church, only the clergy may do this. Please call the office and make an appointment with a priest or deacon.

Church law requires that both Bride and Groom must be free to marry, i.e., **neither one was married before**. If either was married before and the former spouse(s) are still living, you will need to obtain a declaration of nullity for the marriage from an Ecclesiastical (Church) Tribunal. A civil annulment is in no way a substitute. The Priest or Deacon will assist you in starting the process. Under no circumstances can a date be set for the ceremony, even tentatively, until the Tribunal process is completed.

In an interfaith marriage, the Catholic person makes a promise to practice the Catholic faith and, to the best of his or her ability, ensure that any children born of the union will be raised in the Catholic faith. The party who is not Catholic makes no promises but is made aware of the promise by the Catholic.

In some circumstances, permission will be given for a Minister to officiate at the marriage in a Church building of another faith tradition. If you wish to obtain this permission, you need to talk to the parish priest or deacon. This permission affects only the actual marriage ceremony. You must still comply with the other provisions of Church law, especially in regard to preparation.

2. MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Premarital preparation is mandatory. On your first visit, the Officiant will discuss how to fulfill this requirement. Available programs may include:

- a) *A weekend Engaged Encounter Retreat*
(Please consult www.atlcee.org for dates)
- b) *Joy-Filled Marriage Program*
(Please email dwest@archatl.com for dates)
- c) *A Sponsor Couple Program*
The sponsor couple program is a couple-to-couple program. Several married couples in the parish have agreed to share their experiences and advice for living a faithful and fruitful marriage. One of these couples will be assigned to you after your initial meeting with a priest or deacon.

Your preparation may include an additional program, which is primarily informative in nature to help you, the couple, to identify strengths and weaknesses of your relationship in areas that are critical in any stable, married relationship.

During this preparation period, you and your assisting clergy will complete the necessary documentation and go over the wedding ceremony. **The most important aspect of your preparation for the marriage is spiritual -- your readiness to be united in a Sacrament before God.** This means that both members of the engagement should have an active faith involvement. For Catholics, that should include active participation in a Catholic parish, at the very least by being registered and attending Sunday Mass.

In both a spiritual and cultural sense, marriage represents a new beginning for both of you. For Catholics, a way to prepare for this new stage in life is to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). It is highly encouraged that you receive the sacrament several days prior to the wedding. While it is a busy

week for everyone, most priests are willing to schedule an appointment to accommodate this occasion.

Also, for Catholics who never received the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Church strongly encourages this sacrament as well. Think of it as a good way to re-engage the faith life and to complement the spirit of commitment celebrated at the wedding. Please speak to the priest or deacon assisting with your preparation if you wish to make arrangements.

3. DOCUMENTS NEEDED

You will need to give the following documents to the priest or deacon who is preparing you:

1. The Catholic party (parties), an **updated, original** copy of your baptismal certificate, issued **no more than six months** prior to the wedding. *The Baptismal certificate issued at the time of the Baptism is **not** acceptable for these proceedings.* Contact the parish in which you were baptized and request a copy. Since there is a special form of baptismal certificate used for the purpose of marriage, it is important to let them know why you are requesting a copy.

Please request a certified baptismal certificate with all notations, to include "no notations," if applicable.

If the non-Catholic party was baptized in another Christian denomination, the matter of baptism will be handled by the Affidavits.

2. Each party, whether Catholic or not, must have an Affidavit of Freedom to Marry from two people. These are usually completed by your parents, but can be done by anyone who has known you since your early teenage years. Any priest or deacon may witness their signatures or a notary public may for non-Catholics.

3. You must obtain a marriage license. It is illegal in Georgia to officiate at a marriage unless the license is in hand. Assurances that the license has been issued are not sufficient.

Georgia law provides that if neither party to be married is a resident of the State of Georgia, then they must be married in the county in which the marriage license is issued; otherwise, the license may be obtained in any county in Georgia. St. Mary Magdalene Parish is located in Coweta County.

If clergy from St. Mary Magdalene is performing the wedding, then we ask that the marriage license and return envelope be brought to the church office as soon as you get it. That way, you won't run the risk of misplacing it or forgetting it.

After the ceremony, you can obtain a certified copy of your marriage certificate from the county in which the license was issued.

It is the responsibility of the couple, not the parish or the clergy, to gather the documents and submit them in a timely fashion. All paperwork should be in the parish office no later than thirty (30) days before the wedding. Failure to do so may result in the cancellation of the wedding.

4. ARRANGING THE CEREMONY

The primary purpose of any wedding ceremony is unity. In a wedding where both Bride and Groom are practicing Catholics, the unity celebrated in the Sacrament of Matrimony is echoed in the sharing of the Eucharist. For weddings involving a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the Eucharist would only draw attention away from the unity which binds the couple. In this case, the more appropriate course of action is to celebrate God's Word as found in Sacred Scripture. This ceremony is just as thoroughly rooted in the tradition of the Catholic Church and allows for a more inclusive celebration of God's manifested love.

Once the Bride contacts the Wedding Guild, several months before the wedding, a meeting with the Bride and Groom will be set up. You will need to know the number of attendants, whether there are one or two sets of parents, grandparents, and any other significant people. A member of the Guild will be present for the rehearsal as well as the day of the wedding.

There is no charge for the administration of Sacraments, but it is customary for the Groom to give an honorarium to the Officiant. The amount is a matter of personal choice. We suggest, however, that it should be commensurate with the overall cost of the wedding. The honorarium should be given to the Officiant at the rehearsal or, at the very latest, before the ceremony begins.

Additionally, a parishioner is charged \$325 for the use of the Church.

A non-parishioner is charged \$500 for the use of the Church.

A parishioner is defined as “a registered and contributing member of the parish for at least six (6) months prior to scheduling the wedding date.”

These fees do not include any compensation for musicians.

NO REFUNDS will be given if the wedding is canceled within thirty (30) days of the reserved wedding date. Refunds for a wedding canceled prior to thirty days will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

To reserve the date and time of your marriage, you must first contact a priest or deacon in the parish. Only he can authorize reservation of the date and time on the parish schedule. *The Church is reserved upon receipt of the Church Usage Fee (see page 16). Your date is tentative until the Church Usage Fee is paid in full.* All reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis. You should contact the parish as far in advance of your proposed date as possible and certainly not less than six months. Allow even more time if you plan to marry during the more popular wedding months.

5. PLANNING THE LITURGY

The clergy on staff are happy to help you plan the ceremony. Several resources are available to help this process. *Together for Life* is a book that allows the couple to review the various options for readings and special prayers and makes selections that best complement the occasion. Any other special arrangements must be discussed with the Officiant well before hand.

If you would like another priest or deacon from the Archdiocese of Atlanta to officiate, you should get in touch with him and ask him to contact the Pastor of St. Mary Magdalene. If the priest or deacon is from another Diocese, he must complete the Statement of the Ordinary or Statement of the Religious Superior. Either way, the Officiant will be asked to confirm in writing that:

He is willing to officiate;

He is willing to complete all the necessary premarital instructions and paperwork;

He must forward all paperwork to St. Mary Magdalene no less than thirty (30) days prior to the wedding date.

The permission required by Church law for him to officiate will be granted **only after the completed paperwork has been received** at St. Mary Magdalene.

In an interfaith marriage, the minister of the other party may be invited to participate in the ceremony. The type of participation will depend on whether or not the marriage will be celebrated within a Mass. During a Mass, the minister can proclaim one or more readings and/or give a blessing. Church law does not permit the priest/deacon and minister jointly to ask for and receive the vows, nor does it permit a double recitation of the vows.

The entire ceremony is under the direction of the priest or deacon, with the assistance of the members of the Wedding Guild. Bridal consultants, if you choose to have them, are not to interfere and may function only under the direction of the Officiant and the Wedding Guild members. The rehearsal is scheduled for forty-five

(45) minutes, and will be terminated at the end of that allotted time, whether finished or not. The Bride and Groom should make sure the wedding party is here on time. In fact, they should ask those planning to attend to be here at least fifteen minutes before the scheduled start time.

St. Mary Magdalene does not have a “dress code;” however, you have chosen to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony and to have your ceremony take place in the Church. It is important that you keep this in mind when choosing the wedding attire for you and your attendants. Your choices should reflect respect for the dignity of this religious surrounding.

6. MUSIC

Our parish policy is to have our Music Director meet with you to go over all music for your wedding. The Music Director will help to provide appropriate sacred music pieces needed for your liturgical celebration and work with any soloists singing or playing for your wedding. The Music Director should be contacted as soon as a date is decided upon.

All questions concerning music must be discussed with the Music Director. The general presumption is that the Music Director, or one of the designated associates, may play for weddings at that particular ceremony. If there is a family member or friend whom you would like to sing or play at the ceremony, out of courtesy and for the sake of clear and open communication, the Music Director should be informed as early as possible.

Because the wedding ceremony is a sacred act, secular music, such as family favorites, themes from movies, Broadway plays, or love songs, while beautiful, will be even more memorable at the reception. Only sacred music approved by the Music Director will be allowed during the wedding ceremony.

A Catholic wedding has many opportunities for musical sections, all of which will be discussed in your music consultation. Your

wedding music will be a great part of your memory of this wonderful day.

As our church will not allow the use of our sound equipment without supervision, the Music Director, or a designated associate, will be at your wedding to run the sound and oversee any visiting wedding musicians.

Wedding music fees (due at wedding rehearsal):

\$150 for consultation and playing a wedding in the
Liturgy of the Word*

\$175 for consultation and playing a wedding in Mass.*

\$50 for rehearsal if you wish to have the Director there*

\$50 for consultation and music/sound supervision only
with permission

**If more than one soloist is used, a fee of \$50 per soloist will be added to the fee due to the extra rehearsal time required. This includes any instrumentals.*

7. FLOWERS AND CANDLES

You may use your own florist for floral arrangements in the Church. However, your florist may not place arrangements anywhere in the sanctuary (the altar area) without prior approval. Supplementary arrangements may not be placed on top of the altar, or in any manner which would affect the celebration of the scheduled Masses. The decision of the Wedding Guild member about placement will be final. Existing sanctuary furnishings, candles, coverings, flags, etc. may not be moved.

Florists should plan to deliver the arrangements between 9 and 9:30 am the day of the wedding so that they do not interfere with any other liturgies that Saturday.

Flowers may be used for weddings planned during Lent. Weddings scheduled after Easter and during the Christmas season should plan around seasonal decorations in the Church. Your flowers are considered a donation to the parish.

8. PEW DECORATIONS

Any pew decorations must not block access to the pew from either side. Tacks, staples, tape, and putty are not permitted on the Church walls or furniture. All pew decorations must be removed immediately following the ceremony. It is a privilege to have your wedding at a church, so please show courtesy by leaving the church exactly as you found it. Your florist should assist you with this cleanup. Remember, you will be held responsible for any damage to the pews or other furnishings.

Given the possibility of injury, runners are not allowed.

9. FLOWER GIRLS

Flower petals, real or artificial, may not be strewn on the floor. They could stain the Bride's gown and the church flooring. If you have a flower girl in your wedding party, her role is to be strictly symbolic.

10. ALTAR SERVERS

Customarily the parish does not provide altar servers for weddings. If you would prefer to have servers, only active servers from the parish may be used. While it is a very laudable idea to have younger family members participate as servers, the reality is that unless they are trained and familiar with this particular parish, it only causes an awkward confusion and may result in an unwanted disruption in what would otherwise be a beautiful ceremony.

11. PHOTOGRAPHY

Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, your photographer may make use of the Church to his or her convenience and for the effectiveness of his or her work, except that he or she cannot photograph from the sanctuary – the area defined by the steps up around the altar – at any time. Respect for our faith and the tangible property of the church is assumed. He or she can take still pictures during the service or Mass only without flash and only from the Narthex or behind the baptismal font. The photographer should never disrupt the ceremony or call attention to himself or herself.

We realize how important good pictures are to you on this occasion, and we wish to accommodate your photographer as much as we can. If your ceremony is part of a Mass, you have the use of the Church for ninety minutes. If your ceremony is part of a Liturgy of the Word, you may use the Church for sixty minutes. This time allocation includes the time for your ceremony and approximately thirty minutes for posed pictures afterward. At the end of this time, the photographer will be asked to vacate the premises.

For the sake of time, the photographer may not attend the wedding rehearsal. Any questions he or she may have must be answered before the rehearsal.

Photographers shall be dressed appropriately for a formal Church service, i.e., in a manner comparable to the guests in attendance.

We reserve the right to ask any photographer who is in violation of these rules to correct the violation immediately or to leave the premises. No exceptions will be made. It is your responsibility to make your photographer aware of these regulations and to stress our insistence upon compliance. The photographer must sign a contract of agreement to these terms.

Please consult the Wedding Guild before contracting with a photographer.

12. VIDEO

The following regulations apply to videotaping weddings:

1. All video equipment must be set up behind the baptismal font at least thirty minutes prior to the scheduled time of the wedding. Any exposed cables/cords must be covered, but not with tape.
2. No wireless microphones may be worn by members of the wedding party.
3. Video equipment may not be moved during the ceremony; no "roving" camera is permitted.
4. No floodlights or any other special lighting may be used during the ceremony.
5. Nothing may be taped, pinned, stapled or otherwise attached in any way to the Church walls, furnishings, or floors.
6. Only one person will be allowed to videotape the service. Persons operating video equipment shall be dressed appropriately for a formal Church service, i.e., in a manner comparable to the guests in attendance.

We reserve the right to ask any videographer who is in violation of these rules to correct the violation immediately or to leave the premises. No exceptions will be made. It is your responsibility to make your videographer aware of these regulations and to stress our insistence upon compliance. The videographer must sign a contract of agreement to these terms.

13. OTHER DETAILS

It is the responsibility of the couple to contact the Wedding Guild prior to the wedding. A member of the Guild will plan to meet with you to go over all the details so that you can have a well-planned and efficient rehearsal and wedding. The Wedding Guild

members will be available to help make your rehearsal and wedding everything that you want it to be.

NO SMOKING is permitted anywhere in the Church buildings. **NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES** may be brought onto the premises of St. Mary Magdalene Church or consumed prior to the ceremony. Save the celebration for after the ceremony. **PLEASE MAKE ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR WEDDING PARTY AWARE OF THESE RESTRICTIONS.**

NO BIRDSEED, CONFETTI OR FLOWER PETALS may be thrown or used anywhere on the parish grounds. Please advise your guests of this.

Do not bring a guest book to the Church. It would only delay the seating of your guests.

The wedding party should plan to arrive at Church one and one-half (1½) hours prior to start time.

Our Bride's Room is located down the hall from the narthex, in room 106. Please note the restrictions about smoking and alcoholic beverages. The Bride and Bridesmaids should remain in the dressing room until ten minutes prior to start time at which time the Wedding Guild member will bring you to the Narthex. Be sure to secure all personal belongings 30 minutes prior to the ceremony, as the Church cannot be responsible for their security. Have someone take responsibility to bring these to their car.

The Groomsmen should be in the narthex to escort people to their pews.

For weddings within the context of Mass, the guidelines that call for a one-hour fast prior to receiving Communion are still in effect. Catholics often ask, "Does the Wedding Mass count for Sunday?" Generally speaking, it does not, even if it is scheduled for Saturday evening. The prayers and readings for a wedding are different from those of the Sunday following and a Wedding Mass is not intended for the entire parish to attend.

Do not allow a receiving line to form at the back of the Church.

If the wedding is during the liturgical season of Lent, it is normative to abstain from meat on Fridays. Given the celebratory nature of the occasion, it is possible to receive a special dispensation from the Archbishop to have the obligation suspended for the Rehearsal Dinner. Please mention to your priest/deacon if you would like to have this done.

14. SUMMARY OF FEES

Church Usage Fee for Wedding and Rehearsal (due within 30 days of booking date):

Parishioner	\$325
Non-Parishioner	\$500

Musician for consultation and playing (due at Wedding Rehearsal):

in a Liturgy of the Word	\$150
in Mass	\$175
at the rehearsal, if requested	\$50

For music/sound supervision only \$50

For add'l soloist(s) each \$50

For add'l instrumentalist(s) each \$50

These fees include the additional rehearsals required.

15. PHOTOGRAPHY CONTRACT

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Photographer's Signature

Date

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Videographer's Signature

Date

