

Planning Your Wedding at St. Mary's or St. Raymond's

Congratulations on your engagement! We look forward to assisting you as you plan for this important celebration of your faith. Your first step should always be to schedule an appointment with the pastor.

The Catholic Church puts a high value on marriage. We want couples to have successful marriages that bring them happiness and joy. As with all of the sacraments, adequate preparations are essential if the sacrament is to reach its full potential.

In an effort to help you prepare for the sacrament, the Catholic Church leads you through a comprehensive marriage preparation process. You will learn more about your personal values - how you view money, work, sex, children and extended family. The process will also help you deepen your understanding of a Christian marriage. Marriage preparation includes:

Discussions with a Mentoring Couple
FOCCUS inventory & discussion
Online Natural Family Planning Course
Marriage Retreat
2 meetings with the pastor/other priest

Because this process takes time, it is necessary that arrangements for marriage be made at least 6 months prior to the marriage date. It is far preferable, however, that **marriage preparation be completed 6 months prior to the marriage date.**

No date can be set in the parish calendar until you've completed a meeting with the pastor or parochial vicar. During this meeting, he will ensure that there is nothing standing in the way of celebrating the sacrament of marriage. This allows him to put your wedding date in the parish calendar without future surprises. One important piece of information we need is the place and date of your baptism. If you have a copy of your baptismal certificate, please bring it to your initial meeting. We eventually will need an up-to-date certificate regardless of religion.

Father will also walk you through the subsequent steps of the preparation process. After the initial meeting, it is important you contact your mentoring couple and the wedding coordinator to begin that process. Once you've completed the steps, you'll meet with Father or the presider to talk about what you've learned and reflect on marriage as a covenant and sacrament. We find that couples have a much more enriching experience if they have all the steps **finished** 4-6 months before the wedding. That will leave you free for all your "event planning" at the end.

Further Questions: If at any time you have questions please contact the wedding coordinator. In all matters, the final decision rests with the pastor.

St. Mary's and St. Raymond's Pastor
Fr. Derek Sakowski
(715) 855-1294, ext. 101

Wedding Coordinator
Alecia Plaetz
(507) 828-9320 or plaetza@gmail.com

Cost: We ask a donation from couples that are wed in our parish. For registered and active parishioners, we ask \$200. For non-parishioners or inactive parishioners, we ask \$400. We use \$100 to cover our administrative costs and the remainder is deposited into our Works of Mercy Fund. This fund is used to help the poor in our area. If you have financial difficulties, please talk with Father. A down payment of \$100 is required when you meet with the wedding coordinator. The remainder is required two months prior to the wedding.

Presider: The Presider at the Wedding Mass or ceremony is normally the pastor or parochial vicar. With the pastor's permission, any other priest or deacon in good standing can preside.

Marriage License: It is your responsibility to obtain your civil marriage license. The cost is \$80 and cannot be obtained until the final 30 days leading up to the wedding. There are extra fees if you wait until the last week. For detailed information, contact the Eau Claire County Clerk's Office at (715) 839-4801. Bring your license to rehearsal.

Rehearsal: Typically, couples set their wedding rehearsal time around 5:00pm on Friday. All participants in the ceremony should be present and at the church at least 15 minutes prior to avoid delays. Make sure they know how to find the church. Bring your marriage license.

Wedding Time: Access to either Church is until 7:00pm on Friday after rehearsal and not before 9:00am on Saturday before your ceremony. Please plan accordingly.

St. Mary's On Saturdays, the earliest start time is 1:00pm due to Confessions and the latest start time is 2:00pm due to the 4:00pm Mass. You can also choose to have your wedding during the parish Mass. We encourage pre-wedding photos and do not mind if they happen during Confessions. **The church needs to be cleared by 3pm for parishioners attending the 4pm Mass.**

St. Raymond's: On Saturdays the church is generally free from 9:00am-5:00pm. However, the pastor normally can only accommodate a start time of 1, 1:30, or 2pm.

Rooms for Use: On your wedding day, we make some rooms available for your use. We are not responsible for lost or stolen items. The church is available for prayer or photographs, being careful to respect the sacred space. The bathrooms are also available for use. All other rooms are normally off limits unless you have special permission. Speak with the wedding coordinator to reserve rooms.

St. Mary's: The bridal room is available for the bride and bridesmaids, while the conference room is available for the groom and groomsmen.

St. Raymond's: The "cry room" near the entrance to the church is available for the bride and bridesmaids as it has access to a separate bathroom. The library is available for the groom and groomsmen. The parish kitchen and hall are off limits unless you have made arrangements to rent them for the day. The fountain behind the church is available for photographs. **No one is allowed on the rocks or in the fountain.**

Outdoor Marriages: In the Diocese of La Crosse, outdoor marriages are not allowed. The sacrament of marriage is a sacred, religious ceremony in which solemn and religious acts should be made in sacred and religious surroundings. Marriage

promises are made not just to one another, but to God as well and should be celebrated in the house of God.

Alcohol Use: There is a time and place for everything. The proper place for alcohol consumption is at your reception. **The consumption of alcohol on church grounds on your wedding day is absolutely forbidden.** If we discover anyone in your wedding party drinking alcohol on church grounds, or if anyone appears drunk, we reserve the right to cancel the wedding on the spot.

Photography/Videography: Discretion and respect of the sacred space should be used while taking photos or videos. Photos can be taken at any time during the wedding parts of the ceremony except during the sermon or the Eucharistic prayers. If the photographer/ videographer is new to the parish, they should touch base with the presider prior to the service. **No outside microphones are allowed for the priest.**

Servers or Eucharistic Ministers: May be used, but they are not necessary.

Music: Scheduling musicians and cantors is your responsibility. Suitable compensation should be given to the musicians and cantors directly. **Music used at a marriage should be Christian and suited for a Catholic wedding.** Please contact our music director, Sydney Alexander at (715) 828-1687 for music and cantor assistance. Cantors are required for the Psalm Response and Alleluia at a minimum.

Flowers: We always encourage couples to let the beauty of the church and the ceremony speak for itself, and not to add the stress of extra decorations. If still wanted, then medium sized arrangements are recommended. We have silk flower arrangements and adjustable flower stands available for use. Flowers may not be placed in front of the altar and may not block access to the sanctuary.

Decorations: No unsafe decorations are allowed (e.g., candles or glass). No tape or wire is allowed on the wooden pews. We suggest ribbon or covered florist wire. For safety and insurance purposes, we do not allow any decorations in the aisle as the floor is sloped.

Bird Seed, Rice, Etc.: We do not allow the throwing of anything following the ceremony.

Cleanup: It is helpful to have a designated person that is responsible for removing all personal items and return the church to its original setup. The rooms and church should be cleared out as soon as possible, remembering that a parish Mass will normally be celebrated following your wedding.

Damages: Fees will be charged for any damages to the church or property. Please leave the church as you found it.

Flower Girls/Ring Bearers: We encourage you to think twice before having anyone younger than 5 years in the ceremony, as it can be more challenging than people realize. There should be a designated adult assigned throughout the ceremony to assist any children participating.

Bridal Party: Please take care not to overload the wedding with attendants. This can distract from the bride and groom and pose logistical challenges for the procession and photographer.

Unity Candle: The Unity Candle is not part of the Catholic wedding ceremony. We encourage you to save your money or, if it's important to you, make it a part of your reception.