

**A Guide to Marriage Preparation
Procedure and Guidelines
for
Saint Philip the Apostle Parish
797 Valley Road
Clifton, New Jersey
973-779-6200**

Congratulations on your engagement!

We rejoice that you are interested in celebrating your marriage in the Catholic Church, and that you are eager to make God and the Catholic faith an important part of your relationship. We want to assist you in every way possible to prepare seriously and prayerfully for this sacred event and for the journey you will share in the years ahead.

Our marriage preparation program is designed to offer you the very best possible resources for the reverent and dignified celebration of your Marriage Covenant as practiced by the Church.

The proper and beautiful celebration of a Catholic wedding depends very much on your interest and cooperation. We trust in your desire to love one another and God, and to follow the guidelines of the Church and the parish. We promise to do what we do best – to help you plan a wedding at St. Philip’s that is focused on God and the religious significance of the celebration.

Since planning a wedding can be overwhelming at times, we have prepared the following pages to help guide you through the process and policies that honor the beautiful mystery of the Covenant of Marriage and that ensure a couple enters marriage with the best intentions.

Again, congratulations, and may the Lord continue to bless you on your journey together!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. David A. Monteleone
Pastor

Rev. Emerson Francisco
Parochial Vicar

A MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH

A marriage in the Catholic Church is a sacred event, involving an invitation from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, for a man and a woman to enter an unconditional covenant with each other and with God.

Essential ingredients include an openness to receiving God's grace, the intention to enter a faithful and lifelong relationship and to have children, and the freedom and maturity to understand what you are undertaking.

Minimally, to be married at St. Philip's, the following should be true:

- One of you is a practicing Catholic
- One of you desires the Sacrament of Marriage
- One of you is a parishioner of St. Philip's or lives within the parish; or one of you has an important connection to St. Philip's and can get a letter of permission from your current pastor to be married here

Although the following sentiments may be present, these are not compelling reasons to be married at St. Philip's:

- We always thought a church wedding would be nice
- Our parents really want us to do this
- We think that St. Philip Church is beautiful
- The church is close to our planned reception
- Someone we know was married here
- Someone we know is a parishioner here

In short, the faith dimension and the connection to this parish are most important. Although these do not need to be perfectly intact or perfectly formed, they should be major motivating factors in a couple's desire to be married at St. Philip's.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Marriage Preparation includes the following:

- Attendance at Mass and selection of a priest or deacon to officiate your wedding
- Private preparation sessions with the priest or deacon who will witness your marriage.
- A Pre-Cana Experience
- Gathering of Documentation

ATTENDING MASS, CHOOSING AN OFFICIANT & PRIVATE PREPARATIONS

At least one year prior to your marriage, you should decide, as a couple, which one of the parish priests or deacons you would like to be a part of the preparation for, and the celebration of, your marriage. Please contact the parish office and make a request to be in touch with the priest or deacon you would like to officiate your wedding. If you have no preference, a priest or deacon will be assigned to you. If you would like a priest or deacon from another parish or diocese to witness your marriage, please indicate this to us as soon as planning for your wedding begins.

If another priest or deacon will be witnessing your marriage, one of the priests of Saint Philip's will complete the pre-nuptial investigation and your officiating clergy will take care of the rest of the paperwork and preparations for your wedding. In this circumstance, we ask that you have the visiting priest or deacon notify us of his willingness to officiate at your wedding by completing the enclosed form, found at the end of this guide, and mailing it to the parish (ATTN: Parish Secretary.) The paperwork is expected to be in the Parish Office at least a month before the wedding. If the visiting priest or deacon cannot complete the paperwork, please notify the Parish Office. All documents must be in place before the marriage is celebrated.

Please note: It is extremely important that you let us know at the very beginning of the marriage preparation process if there are any special circumstances involved in your wedding, such as you are living out of state, in the Armed Forces, or if there has been a previous marriage, religious or civil, of either party, whether Catholic or not.

There will be a minimum of four or five meetings with the priest or deacon to prepare you for your marriage. Topics to be covered will include communication, honesty, sexuality, trust, and family relationships. The focus will be your faith, your personal journey, past and present, and your willingness to make your Catholic Christian faith the center and source of your life. A pre-marital inventory (FOCCUS) will also be administered during these meetings to use as a tool to better understand your relationship.

It is expected that a couple preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage is trying to develop the habit of sharing in the Eucharist every week. It is the best possible way to nourish your faith with your future family and friends.

Weddings can be scheduled from Monday to Sunday if they do not interfere with any regular Mass Schedule. Please check with the parish secretary for available times. **All weddings must begin on time.** Should circumstances require that a ceremony begin late, the officiant may abbreviate the ceremony by eliminating musical selections, performing

the simple Rite of Marriage without the Mass, etc.

PRE-CANA

A group Pre-Cana experience in the form of either an Engaged Encounter weekend or a one-day Pre-Cana experience is a very important part of the preparation process. The couple is responsible for making the necessary reservations for these experiences. There is a registration fee for these experiences, for which each couple is responsible.

DOCUMENTS

1. A **new** copy of your Baptismal Certificates, each issued by the church of Baptism within six months of the wedding.

If one or both parties were baptized at Saint Philip the Apostle Parish, the above information will be provided by our own Parish Office.

2. A certificate of attendance from either Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana experience
3. The civil marriage license: Four to six weeks before the wedding date, you must call the Marriage License Bureau of the municipality of the BRIDE to arrange for an appointment for your marriage license. Once the license is issued, it is valid for one month. Please make sure not to leave this important part of the process to the week before the wedding! When you have the license, it is best to bring it to the Parish Office, where it will be filed with the rest of your marriage documents.

PLANNING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Your wedding ceremony will be primarily planned by you with assistance of the priest. When you meet with the priest who will officiate your wedding, he will review your plans for the wedding ceremony and make any modifications that may be needed. We strongly encourage you to follow the guidelines we have provided for you and to work closely with us to minimize the possibility of any last-minute changes deemed necessary by the priest due to lack of liturgical appropriateness. This will help everyone involved to avoid disappointment and keep stress levels to a minimum.

Deciding whether to have Mass

It is appropriate and encouraged that a Nuptial Mass be celebrated when both the bride and groom are Catholic. A ceremony is suggested when one of the members is a baptized

Christian of another denomination or unbaptized. The sacrament of Holy Matrimony is not lessened when Mass is not chosen. There are many reasons why you may or may not choose to celebrate your wedding with Mass. Your priest can help you make that decision when you meet with him.

If you choose to celebrate Mass as part of your wedding ceremony, the order of liturgical rites would be Liturgy of the Word (scripture readings), Marriage Rite, Liturgy of the Eucharist (consecration and communion). If you choose to plan a wedding ceremony outside of a Mass, the order of liturgical rites would be Liturgy of the Word (scripture readings), Marriage Rite, Blessing.

The Catholic Wedding

The Rite for Celebrating Marriage presents some options for the couple to consider, such as reading from the Sacred Scriptures. Elements extrinsic to the Catholic liturgy, however, will not be introduced into the rite. The lighting of a unity candle, for example, has NO place in the liturgy but couples may wish to incorporate it into their reception afterward.

- The congregation actively participates in both spoken and sung parts of the liturgy
- A reader may be a family member or close friend (2 readers is the norm)
- Gift bearers may be family members or close friends (2 gift bearers is the norm)
- Our parish has excellent, professional, liturgical musicians who will assist you with musical selections and whose terms of employment specify that only they provide instrumental and vocal music at all weddings at this parish.
- Music selections are sacred or classical pieces

FEES AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Flowers

Please have your florist check with the Parish Office to find out when they may begin to decorate on the day of the wedding.

Flowers may not be placed on the altar, the ambo, or the tabernacle.

Great care should be taken in affixing bows and flowers to the pews or any other structure or fixture in the church. NO tape, wiring or tacks are to be used. Elastic bands, strings or ribbons are acceptable.

You may wish to collaborate with other couples who are being married on the same day to share the expense of flowers. Please note that during certain liturgical seasons (i.e. Christmas, Easter, Lent) extra floral arrangements may not be allowable, necessary or practical.

The optional custom of offering flowers at the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a gesture of prayer and petition that takes place after the Prayer after Communion.

Offering to the Church

The offering given is not for the priest or deacon, but is for the use of the church, and should always be in proportion to the overall expenses for the wedding. The offering covers the costs of such expenses as heating, lighting, air conditioning, maintenance, supplies, insurance, staffing, cleaning up, etc.

The suggested minimum offering to the parish is **\$1200**. This includes the Marriage Preparation Process (FOCCUS Pre-marital Inventory, Together for Life book, God's Plan for Love book), Organist, and the Cantor.

This offering is due a month before the wedding. The check should be made out to **St. Philip the Apostle Parish**. For further information, please see Stipends for Marriage Preparation Process and Church Ceremony attached at the end of this guide.

An extra gift to the priest or the officiating clergy especially if he has traveled from outside the parish is considerate and appreciated.

Organist

Couples should arrange to meet with the Parish Director of Music and Organist at least two months before the wedding. He will confirm the day and time of your wedding and discuss with you your preferences regarding music and in selecting soloist. He will also guide you in choosing music that is appropriate for the church ceremony. Arranging and wedding music consultation maybe made by contacting the Director of Music via the Parish office, email, or by introducing yourselves in person following any weekend liturgy.

Normally, music is provided by our own parish organist and singers. Should you have other preferences, please discuss these with the Director of Music. The Director of Music has been contracted by the parish to serve as organist at all parish weddings. While professional courtesy will be extended to other professional musicians, a bench fee of \$150 will need to be paid to the parish organist should an outside organist be asked to play for the ceremony at the couple's request.

If special considerations and preparations are necessary, such as practices with outside musicians and soloists, please contact the Director of Music so that these arrangements can be made. An additional fee of \$75.00 is to be included with the stipend to the Director of Music and Organist per guest instrumentalist, small instrumental ensemble, and/or

singer. This fee is required for the purpose of covering any potential rehearsal time, communication, music preparation, procedural instruction, etc., for the satisfactory accommodation of guest musicians and singers participating in the Nuptial Ceremony or Mass.

Mr. Frank Hydash, Director of Music and Organist
frankhydash@rocketmail.com

Photographers and Videographers

Photographers may take pictures of the wedding but must do so in a manner that is unobtrusive and respectful of the religious ceremony taking place. Likewise, videotaping is allowed during the wedding ceremony in an unobtrusive and respectful manner.

Photographers and videographers must not enter the sanctuary area at any time, nor any area that may block the view of the congregation. Videographers will be positioned at the baptismal font or in the space located in front of the ambo throughout the ceremony. Freestanding or pole lights of any kind are not permitted in the church.

Posed pictures in the church after the ceremony are allowed, time and schedule permitting.

Photographers and videographers should introduce themselves to the officiant at least 15 minutes before the beginning of the ceremony for any further or specific instructions. They should not delay the beginning of the wedding ceremony.

Rehearsal

The date and time of your rehearsal should be set with the priest or deacon officiating your wedding at least one month before the wedding. Please be on time for the wedding rehearsal, since there may be other parish events scheduled.

Rice, Confetti, Birdseed, Runners, and Bubbles

To prevent serious injuries, our insurance provider prohibits the use of runners, rice, confetti, birdseed, rose petals or any other custom that jeopardizes the safety of others. If these regulations are not adhered to, a \$200 penalty will be imposed. **No exceptions will be made.**

WEDDINGS TAKING PLACE AT HOLY FACE MONASTERY

A letter of permission from Holy Face Monastery to have your wedding take place there must be presented to Saint Philip the Apostle Parish.

Paperwork for the wedding must be done by the officiating clergy. Only in exceptional circumstances will the paperwork be completed by one of the priests or deacons of Saint Philip the Apostle Parish. A Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter session should be scheduled as part of the preparations for marriage.

Private preparation sessions should take place with the officiating clergy.

The officiating clergy must make his request in writing to the pastor of Saint Philip the Apostle Parish for delegation to witness the marriage. A request for delegation can be found on the last page of this guide.

Delegation will be given only when the request form has been properly completed and returned to the Parish Office.

Signed copies of the marriage license should be returned to the Parish Office with all paperwork.

A copy of the license will be mailed to the bride and groom.

All weddings taking place at Holy Face Monastery are officially recorded at Saint Philip the Apostle Parish and are kept on permanent record.

A marriage certificate will be issued to the couple from Saint Philip the Apostle Parish when all information has been received and recorded in the Parish marriage register.

**Saint Philip the Apostle Parish
797 Valley Road
Clifton, New Jersey 07013**

To be completed by a visiting priest or deacon
Or for marriages performed at Holy Face Monastery

Please print:

Bride: _____

Groom: _____

Date of Wedding: _____ Time: _____

I have agreed to officiate at the wedding of the couple whose names appear above, at the date and time indicated. I also agree to direct the rehearsal, and should I be unable to officiate at the wedding, it would also be my responsibility to arrange for a replacement.

Signed copies of the marriage license will be returned to the Parish Office at the Msgr. Thomas J. Molloy Center.

Upon return of this form to the Parish Office, delegation for the marriage will be given.

Signature _____

Name of Officiant: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

PLEASE RETURN THE ENTIRE FORM
TO THE PARISH OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Stipends for Marriage Preparation Process and Church Ceremony

Marriage Ceremony/Parish Fees	\$1200
Church	\$650 Included
Organist	\$300 Included
Cantor	\$250 Included

Other Marriage Preparation Process	
Marriage Skills	Varies
God's Plan for a Joy Filled Marriage	Varies
FOCCUS (Pre-marital Inventory)	Varies

Other Stipends	Amount
Priest/Officiant	Free will donation
Bench Fee – St. Philip's Organist (If you are hiring outside organist)	\$150
Additional Musicians	\$75 per Singer/ Instrumentalist

All stipends are due a month before the wedding.

Check is to be made out to **St. Philip the Apostle Parish.**