

Preparing for Your Wedding Day



An overview of the Catholic Church's teachings on marriage, the marriage preparation process, and our parish guidelines for weddings.

St. Damian Catholic Church
Oak Forest, IL



Parish of Saint Damian

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Dear Engaged Couple,

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage! We will assist you in making your wedding a joyful, holy and memorable experience. The time leading up to your wedding will be filled with excitement and fun. This is also a time for serious reflection, decision making and prayer.

The Roman Catholic Church, the Archdiocese of Chicago and St. Damian Parish have guidelines regarding marriage preparation and the wedding ceremony. We appreciate your cooperation and compliance with these policies and procedures.

Please be assured that our prayers are with you during this wonderful time. May God continue to draw you closer to one another through this marriage preparation process!

Sincerely,

Reverend Joe Noonan

Reverend Michael Grisolano

Reverend Paul Guzman

Statements about the Sacrament of Marriage from the Catholic Catechism

The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman are joined in an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by our Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and raising of children. Christ the Lord elevated marriage of a baptized man and woman to the dignity of a sacrament.

The sacrament of matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life.

Marriage is based on the consent of the contracting parties, that is, on their will to give themselves each to the other, mutually and definitively, in order to form and live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love.

Since marriage establishes the couple in a public state of life in the Church, it is fitting that its celebration be public, in the framework of a liturgical celebration, before the priest or deacon, the witnesses, and the assembly of the faithful.

The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. Parents are the primary teachers of faith to their children. For this reason the family home is rightfully called “the domestic church,” a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity.



What is the Marriage Preparation Process?

At the first meeting between the engaged couple and a priest or deacon a date may be finalized for your wedding. If the information provided in that meeting requires further action, we will know what needs to be done and can begin immediately. If there are extraordinary circumstances to be dealt with, the date for the wedding may not yet be finalized. The guidelines established by the Archdiocese of Chicago will be followed. We are required to prepare certain documents and to formally meet with you on several occasions. The process will consist of the following:

Step 1. Introductory Meeting — The first meeting between the engaged couple and the priest or deacon will provide an opportunity to begin the required paper work and to discuss any special circumstances. It will help assess the couple's readiness for marriage.

Step 2. Marriage Preparation Program — The couple must participate in an Archdiocesan approved marriage preparation program entitled “One in Christ.” This program enables the couple to concentrate more intensely on the many facets of married life and help them become more aware of all dimensions of marriage.

To Register go to the website: *www.oneinchristmarriage.com*

Step 3. Online FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Inventory — The couple is expected to complete the pre-marital inventory process called Catholic Couple Checkup (or FOCCUS). This can be accomplished through the Archdiocesan website: *www.familyministries.org*. Please bring in the completed and scored inventory at your next meeting with the priest or deacon. This process gives the couple greater insight into their relationship which helps them to be better prepared for marriage.

Step 4. Preparation and Liturgy — The engaged couple will meet with the priest or deacon to discuss their feelings and reactions to the material presented at the marriage preparation program and the premarital inventory or FOCCUS. Time should be spent during this visit on the religious dimension of marriage, sacramental theology of marriage, and on the preparation of the wedding liturgy.

Step 5. Sacrament of Reconciliation — Please plan on receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation before your marriage. A Catholic should receive the Sacrament of Matrimony, in the proper spiritual state and be practicing the faith on a regular basis. Proper marriage preparation includes spiritual preparation on behalf of both parties which includes reflecting on the sacredness of marriage, spending sufficient time in prayer, participating in Mass every week and celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Step 6. Rehearsal — Date and time for the rehearsal should be established with the priest as far in advance as possible.

Please note: To cover all of the above steps will require three or more meetings with the priest or deacon. All documents and preparations must be completed before the wedding can take place.

Documents You Must Provide Prior to the Wedding

A. Church Documents

1. A QUESTIONNAIRE to be filled out by both parties with the assistance of the priest or deacon
2. A new copy of your BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE dated within the last six months. You need to call the church where you were baptized and they will send one to you or directly to St. Damian.
3. A new copy of your CONFIRMATION CERTIFICATE dated within the last six months.

You will need to call the church where you were confirmed and they will send one to you or directly to St. Damian.

4. TWO AFFIDAVITS are required. These are filled out by two people who have known you well from at least the age of fifteen. These are statements from people who can testify as to your proper disposition and readiness for marriage.

B. Civil Document

The State of Illinois requires that a marriage license be obtained from the Clerk of Cook County. The license is valid for a maximum of 60 days.

Please note: You must bring the marriage license to the wedding rehearsal. Without this document the wedding cannot take place!

Wedding Times Available:

Friday Evenings	4:00pm or 5:00pm
Saturday	1:00pm or 3:00pm

Types of Services Available:

The Nuptial Mass This service includes the Eucharistic Liturgy

The Nuptial Liturgy The Eucharist is not included in this service

Guidelines Regarding Which Wedding Ceremony You May Choose From:

Presbyteral Faculties and Permissions — Archdiocese of Chicago, effective August 15, 1986, page A/7 No. 27:

(The Faculties of the Archdiocese direct the priest...) to allow the celebration of the Nuptial Mass for the marriage of a Catholic with a baptized person who is not Catholic, provided the couple request it and the circumstances justify it. The Eucharist is not to be administered to non-Catholics except as provided in canon 844 #3. In a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized person who is not Catholic, the Rite of Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass is to be used.

In a marriage between a Catholic and one who is not baptized, Mass may not be celebrated. The Rite for Celebrating Marriage Between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person is to be used.

Suggested Donations to St. Damian's to Help Cover the Expense of Your Wedding Ceremony in Church:

For **ACTIVE REGISTERED** parishioners (couples who attend Mass here every week and use envelopes on a regular basis), the donation is \$500.00, made payable to St. Damian Parish.

For **NON-REGISTERED** Parishioners, the donation is \$600.00, made payable to St. Damian Parish.

It is customary to provide a \$10.00 monetary gratuity to the altar servers. It is best if all donations can be given at the time of rehearsal.

Music

We have a Music Director in our parish who works with couples preparing for a wedding. He will discuss options and can work with you to provide music for the wedding. The music fee is \$300. You need to contact this individual as soon as possible to make sure your date is open on his calendar. The Music Director's name and telephone number is:

Mr. Tony Berardi – 708-687-9532

Banns

The announcement of the wedding in the Sunday Bulletin will be printed on three consecutive weeks. This is the time that the parish will be made aware of your upcoming marriage so that they can be praying for you.

Flowers

Flowers are chosen at your discretion and your budget. We're grateful if you choose to leave your flowers in the Church after the wedding. You may not attach decorations to the pews with tape or staples. An aisle runner is optional and can be obtained from a florist. Purchase an aisle runner at least 100 feet long. Our aisle is 70 feet long. If you would like to use a "unity candle" in the ceremony, it can also be obtained from a florist.

Rehearsal

A rehearsal prior to the wedding must be arranged with your priest or deacon. All individuals who are standing up to or reading for your wedding are required to be at the rehearsal. You need to bring the following to the rehearsal: marriage license, donations, liturgy sheet, unity candle (if you choose to have one).

Punctuality

There are many functions scheduled in our church every day. Please do not disrupt our parish schedule by being late for your rehearsal or ceremony or staying longer than is reasonable.

Photographs and Videos

Please inform anyone you hire for photos or videos of the following mandatory rules:

1. Respect for the sacredness of our church and the wedding ceremony must be observed;

2. **NO ONE IS ALLOWED IN THE SANCTUARY FOR PHOTOS OR VIDEOS;**
3. Photographers and videographers cannot use the ramp behind the altar;
4. The videographer must set up and remain in one place;
5. If you choose to take photos after the ceremony, you are limited to 30 minutes maximum.

Readers

Readers are invited to participate in your ceremony. They should be people who are selected because of their ability to proclaim the Word of God and their special connection to the bride and groom. They are required to attend the wedding rehearsal and practice their reading at that time.

Visiting Priests Or Deacons

If you have a close friend or relative who is a priest or deacon, you are most welcome to invite him to celebrate your wedding. Please inform us as soon as possible if this is the case.

Marriage Certification

This will be given to you by the priest or deacon on the day of the wedding. A civil copy can be obtained from the Office of the County Clerk.

Basic Facts To Keep In Mind

1. If your wedding preparation involves dealing with a divorce, annulment, or previous marriage, there will be additional paperwork and meetings. Your full cooperation with the process required for dealing with these special circumstances is appreciated.
2. The process of choosing the various readings and prayers for

your wedding is not simply a practicality. This is an opportunity for a couple to spend time together carefully and prayerfully selecting the readings. The priest or deacon will be happy to assist you in the selection process.

3. The procession is to include only members of the bridal party. Children unable to walk may be carried by an adult, but no wagons, strollers etc. are allowed in the procession. Also, no pets are permitted in the Church. Young children should be accompanied by older children or adults to aid them in procession.
4. No items should be thrown inside or outside of the church. This includes no rice, birdseed or rose petals before, during or after the wedding liturgy. Bubbles are allowed outside of church only.
5. In a mixed faith environment the Roman Catholic Party will be asked to make a promise to continue to practice the Catholic faith as well as a promise to have the children baptized and raised Roman Catholic.
6. A Saturday Wedding Mass does not fulfill the obligation for Catholics to attend Mass on Sunday.
7. You are encouraged to ask questions so as to fully understand what the sacrament and ceremony is all about. Please enter into dialogue with the priest or deacon to the fullest extent possible. The more you put into it, the more you'll get out of it.

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage!

