

**ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF GROTON
SACRED HEART - SAINT JAMES PARISH**

INFORMATION for the SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS – SETTING THE DATE

1. Contact the Pastor at least nine months before your desired wedding date in order to fill out the

necessary papers and to arrange for the date that you would prefer. Wedding dates will be arranged

according to the policy stated below (see # 11) and according to the availability of the Pastor.

2. Please arrange to have sent to the Pastoral Center Office (271 Main Street Groton, MA 01450)

a recent copy of your BAPTISM RECORD & CONFIRMATION RECORD (unless you were

baptized / confirmed at Sacred Heart or St. James - in which case our own parish can research this).

When you request the record be sure to inform the parish that this is part of a marriage application,

which will guarantee that the correct form is sent to the office. This form becomes part of the file.

3. Those who have not been baptized in a Catholic church are asked also to present a certificate of their

baptism from their own church community. An unbaptized person will need to discuss with the priest

the paperwork needed to complete the application process. All marriages in the Catholic church must

have the approval of the Bishop before a date can be set. The Pastor will explain this in more detail.

4. **IMPORTANT: IF YOU DECIDE LATER ON TO POSTPONE OR CANCEL YOUR WEDDING**

IT IS NECESSARY THAT YOU INFORM THE PASTOR OF THIS FACT IN WRITING.

STATE REQUIREMENTS -

5. Marriages in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must also have the approval of the state in the form

of a valid **MARRIAGE LICENSE**. Contact a Massachusetts town or city hall to find out about the

required application procedure (including the 3-day waiting period to pick up the license).

Please bring your license with you and give it to the Pastor, no later than the rehearsal.

6. Our Pastor is happy to welcome **any priest or deacon in good standing** to take his place in assisting you

with your plans. Have the guest priest or deacon contact him directly at the office (978) 448-6633.

(Note: If the priest/deacon comes from outside the Commonwealth of Massachusetts he is also required

to receive an official document of permission from the Secretary of State in Boston in order to perform the

ceremony. Please be sure to explain this to him well in advance of the wedding.

PARISH POLICIES -

7. All marriage arrangements are **the direct responsibility of the Bride and Groom** (and not the parents).

Our Pastor is very happy to assist you in the preparation for and celebration of your chosen Sacrament.

He will ask you to meet with him to discuss your plans.

8. Because Marriage is a Sacrament all weddings take place **in the sanctuary of one of the parish churches.**

You may choose either church according to your preference ... but we suggest that you be married in the Holy

Place that is the most meaningful to you & to your spiritual life. If you wish to be married in another Catholic church

our Pastor will be happy to direct you on how to make that contact. If you wish to be married in another church venue

please discuss the circumstances with our Pastor.

9. All engaged couples are required to participate in a **Marriage Preparation Program** involving both meetings with

the Pastor & **an enrichment program** provided by the Archdiocese (or equivalent). We can provide a list from

which you may choose to attend the most convenient program. Or we also offer **our own Parish-based mentoring**

program where the engaged couple meets with a married couple. In both formats the emphasis is on the actual lived

experience of marriage and shared dialogue.

10. Each bride & groom should be in **the state of grace** to receive the full spiritual benefit of the Holy Sacrament of

Marriage. For Catholics, the normal way to do this would be for each to participate in the **Sacrament of**

Reconciliation before the wedding. While regular confession is recommended for all, it is especially appropriate

that a bride & groom do everything they can to present the best self both to the Lord and their spouse on the

wedding day. Regular parish times for Reconciliation (Penance) are on Saturday afternoon, one hour before the

Evening Mass at Saint James Church. Other times are available by appointment with the Pastor. If you would

prefer, you are free to go to confession in any other church to any other priest whom you choose.

(Note: Non-Catholics are encouraged to welcome to speak to the Pastor or to speak to their own minister, seeking this same spiritual goal through personal prayer or as appropriate within their own faith tradition.)

11. **PARISH WEDDINGS** may be scheduled for the following times in consultation with our Pastor:

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday ... after 5:00 pm (according to church availability)

Saturday ... 11:00 AM to 1:30 pm & anytime after 6:00 pm (according to church availability)

Sunday ... after 2:00 pm (according to church availability)

(Note: on second Sunday of each month we celebrate Baptism at 2:00 pm)

12. **Wedding rehearsals** are usually scheduled with the Pastor (or visiting officiant) at the time when you set the date for the actual wedding ceremony. Subsequent changes are not always possible.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE CEREMONY

13. It is your choice whether to have a **NUPTIAL MASS** (including Holy Communion) or a **WEDDING**

CEREMONY (without Eucharist). Our Pastor will help you to plan the ceremony, including the readings & prayers, the format for the vows & rings, etc. We want this to be a special and sacred event.

14. If you choose to have **Holy Communion** at your wedding please know that we warmly welcome all

Catholics to share in the Sacrament (who have prepared themselves to receive). Non-Catholics

are invited to unite themselves to us in “**spiritual communion**” through personal prayer & reflection.

A special blessing may be offered instead to all those who do not choose to come to Communion.

Whether for Holy Communion or for a Blessing, all are welcome to come forward.

15. If you wish to have a **UNITY CANDLE** as part of your wedding ceremony, we ask that you provide

the candle (and that you bring it with you to the rehearsal).

INFORMATION REGARDING MUSIC:

16. Our church musicians are **Ellen Blackwell**, **Matthew Rimkus**, and **Mary Pat Heelan**. Each of these

experienced professionals gladly serve as soloists as well. Please contact one of them as soon as

possible to make your arrangements for music needs. You are responsible for arranging to meet with

this person and for paying for her/his services.

17. Should you have **someone else in mind to provide music** for the ceremony, please discuss this with the Pastor before making a commitment to that person. Anyone who provides music for a wedding must be familiar with the following guidelines & must agree to abide by them.

18. **Guidelines for appropriate liturgical music** have been drawn up by the Archdiocese of Boston.

We adhere faithfully to those guidelines. Since Christian Marriage is a Holy Sacrament of the Church the Catholic wedding is a celebration of faith, an act of community worship & a sacred event in the life of the parish. The music chosen for the wedding must be religious in nature, expressing faith in God and commitment to His way of life. Popular or trendy songs cannot carry the depth of meaning found in this Holy Sacrament. Music choices need to be discussed with the parish music staff or with the Pastor.

INFORMATION FOR FLORISTS:

19.. **Flowers** are welcome to be placed in the sanctuary by the florist upon delivery. Flowers for a Saturday wedding may be delivered on Friday and those for a Sunday wedding may be delivered on Saturday, prior to or following, the evening Mass. You may take the flowers with you after the ceremony or you may choose to leave them as a gift to the community. Please call the office to arrange to have the church building open at the agreed upon time of delivery.

20. The rental or purchase (& installation) of the **white runner** (carpet) is the responsibility of the Bride & Groom. As we do not supply this runner, it usually can be ordered through the florist.

21. We ask that florists NOT leave boxes and other materials in the vestibules of the churches. The church basement spaces can be useful as gathering places for the bridal party's preparations. Since our two worship spaces are rather small this courtesy would be much appreciated by our parish staff.

22. "**Flower girls**" are welcome to be part of the processional / recessional but we ask that they carry (and not scatter) flower petals or confetti on the church steps or floor.

23. **Throwing of rice, bird seed, confetti** or any other substance (either inside or outside the church)

building – is strictly forbidden. Please notify your friends of this ahead of time so there will be no misunderstanding. As this is an important matter of public safety as well as an issue of keeping the church & grounds clean, we appreciate sincerely your cooperation in this regard.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

23. All **photography and videography arrangements** must be cleared in advance by the attending priest, who reserves the right to set limits. Depending on the time of your (and what is scheduled next for the parish) the church may or may not be available for photographs immediately after the service.
Check with our Pastor to be sure of this availability.

24. In all cases the photo/video personnel are urged to be discrete about their tasks during the service.
While we recognize the value of a photographic record of your ceremony, we do not want to sacrifice appropriate reverence in worship in order to obtain it. Questions should be referred to the Pastor.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

25. All offerings are to be given at the rehearsal (rather than at the ceremony).

26. For all celebrations of Marriage, whether a **NUPTIAL MASS or a WEDDING CEREMONY**,
we suggest an offering of \$200.00 (if your means allow). This is a suggested offering –

please know that there is no “charge” for any of the Church’s Sacraments. If you are in the position to make a donation, we invite you to make out the check to the parish itself:

“ SACRED HEART -- SAINT JAMES PARISH. “

27. If you would like for us to arrange for **Altar Servers** to assist at the wedding, we are happy to do so.
Should you know any girls or boys who serve in this ministry, let us know & we will ask them for you.
If you know servers from another parish, they too would be welcome to serve with our Pastor. In any case, it is customary for you to give each server a small gift - \$ 10.00 – for his/her time & effort.

**ANY OTHER QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS CAN BE DISCUSSED
WITH OUR PASTOR WHEN YOU MEET WITH HIM.**

**CONGRATULATIONS ! WE’RE VERY HAPPY TO HELP YOU TO CELEBRATE
THIS HOLY SACRAMENT OF LIFE-LONG LOVE & COMMITMENT.**