

Guidelines for Weddings St. Martin of Tours Parish

Please Read All of These Guidelines First

Congratulations!

We at St. Martin's Catholic parish share your joy in your coming marriage. At the same time, the "to do" checklist can seem gigantic. We would like to help you with the wedding ceremony parts of your special day. These guidelines, then, are an attempt to relieve some of the planning and checking stress. They contain information that should be of help to you as you move forward towards the date of your wedding. Please read through all of this material as you begin your preparation. If, at any time, you have any questions or concerns, please contact us. The parish e-mail is: stmartin_cecil@frontiernet.net. The parish telephone is: **715-745-6681**.

You are beginning a process of formation and reflection that will help you prepare for the permanent commitment you are about to make to each other in the presence of the Church. We recognize that the marriage of two baptized Christians is a sacramental act, in addition to a legal action. It is a sign of a lifelong promise of fidelity, and an act not to be lightly undertaken.

Initial Notification

Couples seeking sacramental marriage should contact the parish office at least 6 months before the date of the wedding. Upon receipt of the wedding date, we save that date and time in the parish calendar, in "pencil," not as an already permanent date. **Please do not order or send out invitations until the assessment phase of your preparation is complete.**

Pre-Requisites

Couples entering into a Catholic marriage must be free, under canon law, to marry each other. If a previous marriage is involved, steps may have to be taken through the Diocese of Green Bay to determine the status of the prior marriage. Sometimes this can take a few months. If an annulment is required, this can take up to one year. Please note, that if a prior marriage status has to be determined, **this is in no way meant to be a reflection of any sort on the prior marriage.** It is simply something the Church requires of all couples who seek a sacramental marriage.

Catholics who are asking to be married in the Catholic Church must actively practice their faith. This means you must:

1. Attend weekly Mass
2. Be a registered member of a Catholic parish
3. Be comfortable with and practice prayer on a regular basis

For those who have not been active in the faith, there must be at least a firm willingness to start practicing the faith and carry on throughout the preparation process. And for those who never really were formed in the faith, or are interested in

becoming a Catholic, the parish offers a way for this to take place. RCIA is a process that helps people discover their faith.

Preparation for Marriage

This is the process that helps prepare you both for the commitment you are about to make to each other. This process should start about six months before the planned wedding date. **For those preparing for marriage through St. Martin's, a fee of \$50 is requested, payable at the time the FOCCUS inventory is taken.**

- (1) There will be an Initial Assessment with the Parish Director. Here is what happens then:
 - a. This involves meeting with the Parish Director and discussing:
 - i. A bit about yourselves and your desire to marry
 - ii. Human relationship
 - iii. The Three "C's" of marriage – commitment, compromise and companionship.
 - iv. Church involvement and prayer.
 - b. At this session, you will also be given an Affidavit form (B) – two each, to be completed and notarized as indicated on the form.
 - c. A Parish Marriage Record form will be filled out, as far as possible at that time.
 - d. If applicable, you will be given a pamphlet from the Shawano County Clerk regarding the legal requirements.
 - e. You must also obtain and furnish a copy of a Baptismal and Confirmation certificate that is no more than 6 months old (from date of issue).
- (2) The second session involves both of you taking (separately) the marriage inventory called FOCCUS. At or before this session, you will be given a booklet entitled, *Together for Life* and a handout from the diocese regarding suggested music for the ceremony. After finishing the FOCCUS inventory, it will be scored and graphed.
- (3) The third session will be a discussion of the results of the FOCCUS assessment. At this session we will:
 - a. Separately complete a Pre-Nuptial Survey form (A) supplied by the Diocese.
 - b. Look at the Graph of Agreement
 - c. Discuss notable agreements and variations
- (4) The last session will involve:
 - a. a review of all necessary papers and documentation, including Baptismal and Confirmation certificates, St. Martin Parish Marriage Record, parish registration documentation (if necessary) and any letters of permission or delegation that may be required.

- b. **If you are** *being married in another Catholic church, but are members here,* **you must obtain a letter from St. Martin's Parish Director granting permission to the other celebrant to preside at your wedding.**
- c. **If you are** *being married at St. Martin's, but will live in another parish,* **you must register at that parish as a member and obtain a letter granting us permission to preside at your wedding here.**
- d. This last session will also be for a discussion of the details of the ceremony itself. We will also discuss the wedding vows and their meaning.
- e. A Catholic bride or groom is expected to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation before the date of the wedding.

Somewhere between the beginning and end of the preparation process, you both must attend (together) a **Marriage Preparation Day** sponsored by the Green Bay Diocese, and obtain a certificate of attendance from the presenters. These days usually take place on a Saturday, and are offered in different locations. Please contact the Green Bay Diocese's Office of Family and Married Life for more information.

The Wedding Liturgy

All words, actions, songs and parts of your wedding ceremony should emphasize that you are being married before a community of Christian believers and that it is a sacred moment. To maintain the sacredness of the wedding, any non-religious love songs, poems or actions, even though of a special nature, are best shared at the wedding reception rather than as a part of your ceremony in church. **The details of your wedding ceremony must be approved in advance by the Parish Director as to weddings taking place at St. Martin's parish.**

A. Wedding or Mon-Mass Liturgy

Normally, when two Catholics are married, the wedding is celebrated within the Mass. The Mass, however, is not celebrated in mixed religion weddings in order to respect the sensitivities of the non-Catholic spouse and family. In that instance, a wedding outside of Mass is used as the preferred format.

B. Wedding Program or Worship Aid

Most couples use some type of wedding program to identify the various participants, the music and any special notes. You will be asked to choose your readings, the prayers of the faithful, and who should bring up the gifts. We can assist you with the preparation and printing of a program (for a fee) or, you may do it yourself. **If you choose to print a program, it must be pre-approved by the Parish Director to insure accuracy.**

C. Dressing Areas

The bride and her attendants may use the religion education rooms on the other side of the main divider between the church and the parish hall to

prepare for the ceremony. There are bathrooms and water fountains in that area. The groom and his attendants may use the confessional room and the sacristy to prepare and for waiting before the ceremony.

D. Church Environment

Flowers, greens, candles and other *appropriate* decorations may be brought into the church for the wedding, the morning of the wedding. We appreciate any flowers or greens you may want to donate to the parish after the ceremony. Due to fire regulations, no ribbons or rope may be used to block off pews or the aisles during the ceremony.

The wedding should not take place during the Liturgical season of Lent, a penitential time. Rice, birdseed, bubbles or live doves may not be used at St. Martin's as a part of a wedding ceremony at church.

If a Unity Candle is used, it should not be placed so as to block a view of the altar. It should be placed behind and off to one side of the altar.

E. Music

Music must be appropriate for the sacredness of the occasion. It must be religious, prayerful and fit with the liturgy. We will provide a handout for you from the diocese in this regard. Musicians available for your wedding at St. Martin's include:

Pat Wallace – organist	715-745-2649
Colleen Keberlein-Schmitt – organist/vocalist	715-201-0092
Linda Grzeca – organist/vocalist	920-819-3511

You may also arrange for your own musicians as long as they follow the music guidelines for Catholic weddings. Recorded music is not allowed as a part of the wedding ceremony.

F. Procession

After all the guests and families are seated, the two basic choices for the procession are as follows:

1. **“Giving away the Bride.”** Women down the center aisle, men come in from the side and wait at the front of the pews; bride escorted in last by her father.
2. **“Create a new Family.”** Couples come down the aisle together; at the front, the couples separate and stand in a row at the bottom of the steps, leaving room for the bride and groom in the center next to the best man and maid of honor. Groom comes down accompanied by his parents and pauses with them along the side of the first few pews as bride enters with her parents. Both families stand along the first few pews and bride and groom each hug their parents and they are brought together by the parents and proceed to the foot of the steps and head bow (with the other couples lined up along the steps).

In either scenario, the presider and any servers process in first. In either scenario, the bride does not come out from behind the hall door to the rear aisle

until all couples have processed down. The couples move to the front open pews (on either side) and bride and groom move to two matching chairs set up in the sanctuary, near the Ambo. This seating is arranged so that you have a special place without having your back to the assembly.

During the vows, the couples will stand in a semi-circle on the steps of the sanctuary facing the congregation. The presider will stand in the center aisle with his back to the people. You will face towards each other during the vows.

G. Miscellaneous Considerations for the Ceremony

1. **Ushers.** You will need at least two trustworthy and mature ushers to help the ceremony run smoothly. The ushers should plan to attend the rehearsal. They will be asked to help clean up the church after the ceremony as to obvious items.
2. **Servers.** Although not required, it is recommended to use two altar servers who are trained Catholic altar servers. It is common practice to remunerate these young men or women for their help, payable on the wedding day before the service begins.
3. **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.** At a Mass, offering Communion under both species of bread and wine is preferred. Typically, the priest and deacon distribute Holy Communion. However, if there are a number of guests, lay extraordinary ministers of communion may be used. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may be friends or relatives, who are Catholic adults and have a basic understanding of how to distribute. We can work with them to assist them. **Please Note:** Non-Catholics or Catholics not prepared to receive the Eucharist may either stay in the pews or, come forward with their arms crossed over their chest, indicating they are to only receive a blessing instead of Communion.
4. **Financial Considerations.** Your wedding is something that is planned, prepared and practiced. It is only fitting that you consider a generous donation to St. Martin Parish at the time of your wedding here. The Green Bay Diocese recommends a minimum stipend of \$75.
5. **Alcohol or Other Contraband.** No Alcohol, Drugs or Contraband may be brought onto parish grounds at any time, nor may any such thing be used or consumed on parish grounds.
6. **Photography or Videotaping.** We do allow photography and/or videotaping during the wedding ceremony, as long as it is done discreetly. No camera operators are allowed in the sanctuary during the ceremony.