



The Parish of
Our Lady of Good Counsel
Southampton, Pennsylvania

Dear Friends,

The priests and staff of Our Lady of Good Counsel rejoice with you at the announcement of your engagement. Congratulations! As you enter the planning stage for your marriage, the Catholic Church is most happy to assist you in the preparations that lead to the celebration of your wedding and a lifetime together.

The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of acknowledging significant events in our lives through our liturgical worship. Your wedding is an important moment in Church life as it is a sign of your faith and commitment to God and each other. We gather as a community of faith (parish, family and friends) to celebrate and to praise God for his blessings and favors and to witness your vows of love, fidelity and faithfulness as a married couple.

Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish priests and staff have prepared this booklet as a guide in the planning of your wedding liturgy. Contained in its contents are the canonical requirements of the Catholic Church. We have also included common questions that you may have about traditions or requirements unique to OLGC.

Please take the time to read through this packet, in order to ensure all necessary information and documents are provided to us in a timely fashion.

May God be with you as you enter this new and wonderful phase of your life.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Robert G. Suskey, Pastor
Rev. Msgr. Joseph A. Tracy, Parochial Vicar
Rev. John Hutter, Parochial Vicar

Other Important Phone Numbers:

Parish Office	215-357-1300 or by email: tcoffice@olgc.org
Mrs. Joan Kozlowski, Music Director	215-357-1300 ext. 206 or by email: joank@olgc.org
Mrs. Vicki Francis, Rehearsal Coordinator	215-357-1300 ext. 131 or by email: WeddingRehearsal@olgc.org



Marriage Preparation Process at Our Lady of Good Counsel

When a couple seeks to be married in the Catholic Church, they are availing themselves of a precious gift. The community of the Church recognizes that they are responding in faith to an *invitation* and a *call* from God. As Christians, the gift of this love of God is a sacrament.

The Catholic Church believes that the marriage of Christians is a sacrament and is based on the very serious relationship of *covenant*. The decision to make a life-long commitment requires sufficient reflection, discussion and responsible preparation. Therefore, the celebration of this sacrament is preceded by a period of preparation. You are entering a period of discernment to marry. The Church and the priests are also discerning along with you. This discernment period has a threefold nature: Personal and Relational, Communal, and Liturgical.

Personal and Relational: As the bride and groom you are the ministers and celebrants of the Sacrament of Marriage. On the part of the Church and the State the priest is the legal and proper witness. Therefore, it is important to meet with the priest prior to your wedding in order for all parties to become familiar with each other. This relationship also reflects the Church's concern for you as husband and wife and as important members of the Body of Christ.

Communal: Marriage by its very nature is a public celebration. Though the term "my wedding" is natural to the common vocabulary, from the Church's point of view the sacrament of marriage is much fuller. Marriage reflects a relationship that extends beyond the couple and includes Christ and his Church, both in heaven and earth.

Liturgical: Liturgy gathers the Church at prayer and expresses who we are in relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit through ritual. The Sacrament of Marriage is part of the Church's liturgy that celebrates an authentic human love that "is caught up into a divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 48). This sacrament also consecrates the couple to the duties and dignity of the married state that lead to a personal holiness and mutual sanctification. Therefore, the Rite of Marriage is a rich prayer which captures the beliefs and long standing customs of the Catholic Church.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia requests that couples presenting themselves for marriage do so at least six months before their intended wedding date. This requirement is to ensure the necessary time to make all the arrangements.

An interview with a parish priest with the couple is necessary before setting the date for your wedding. Please note-- calendar dates for wedding availability are not given over the telephone.

The Steps You Need to Take

Step One: Consult with one of the parish priests. At this meeting, the priest will ascertain one's freedom to marry, schedule a wedding date and briefly review the wedding program of our parish. At this meeting, the parish priest will inform you about additional meetings and the required paperwork that you will need to provide.

Step Two: Attend a Marriage and Family Life Preparation Program. The marriage preparation program helps you to discover the tools necessary for a good Christian marriage. You are strongly encouraged to register and attend a program as far in advance of your wedding as possible to make best use of this opportunity for discernment and preparation for the sacrament of Matrimony.

Attendance by both the Bride and the Groom in a Marriage and Family Life Preparation Program is mandatory. Register for a program ASAP, as they fill up quickly. In this packet is information from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia on approved programs, both online courses and in-person sessions.

Step Three: Schedule your wedding rehearsal with the parish coordinator, Mrs. Vicki Francis 215-357-1300 ext. 131
email: WeddingRehearsal@olgc.org

Please note: Confessions are not heard on the night of the rehearsal.

The Basic Requirements in Preparing for Marriage

A. Documents Needed

- a. **A Baptismal certificate** dated *within six months* of your wedding is required for both catholic parties, unless baptized at OLGc. If one of the parties is a Christian of another denomination, proof of baptism is required.
- b. **A Letter of Freedom** dated *within six months* of your wedding is required of those Catholics who are not registered at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church. It can be obtained from your current parish.
- c. **A Decree of Nullity from the Catholic Church** or a **Death Certificate of your former spouse** is required before your wedding date can be confirmed of those previously married (regardless of your religion).

B. Marriage License

Your license can be obtained at any county courthouse in Pennsylvania and is to be presented to the parish office ***no later than two weeks*** prior to your wedding date. Out of state licenses are not valid. Generally, the county licenses are valid **for sixty days** after they are issued.

C. Music at your Wedding

The Sacrament is enhanced by the use of liturgical music. Whether a couple chooses a nuptial Mass or a Ceremony, music can help to focus the attention of those assembled and create a mood for prayer. Our policy regarding music is as follows: all music, even those pieces played as preludes or postludes, and all within the ceremony must be of a liturgical nature.

There are parish cantors (Leaders of Song) and organists available to help facilitate the singing at your wedding ceremony. Please contact Mrs. Joan Kozlowski (215-357-1300, ext. 206) to make these arrangements. The Parish Leader of Song must be present at the wedding. The fee for an organist is \$150.00 and for the cantor, \$150.00. **It is the couple's responsibility to pay the organist and cantor directly.** Checks are to be made payable to the organist and cantor. These checks should be handed in with the parish fee and altar server stipends (see D below).

D. Parish Fee

The parish fee is \$450.00. This includes use of the Church, and stipends for the parish priest, rehearsalist and sacristan. The check should be made payable to **Our Lady of Good Counsel Church** and should be sent ***no later than two weeks*** prior to the wedding date. Please include the **Marriage License** with the check and send to the attention of the priest assisting at your wedding. Also include, please, two envelopes for the Altar Servers, with \$20 in each.

E. Liturgy and Rehearsal Worksheets

The Liturgy Worksheet (whether Mass or Ceremony) and the Rehearsal Worksheets should be handed in with your marriage license, music selections and all fees, ***no later than two weeks prior to the date of your wedding.***

Some Other Things You Need to Know

Your wedding is a public celebration of you and your family and friends here in our parish. We would appreciate your cooperation in the following:

1. Times for Weddings

The times for weddings on Saturday are 12:00pm and 2:00pm. 12:00pm weddings must be out of the church by 1:30pm and 2:00pm weddings must be out of the church by 3:30pm. This time block includes time for picture taking.

Friday evening weddings are also permissible and times are arranged with the parish priest. Weddings are not celebrated on Sundays at OLGC.

2. Vows

Wedding vows are an essential part of the Catholic Wedding Liturgy and as such cannot be amended or rewritten. You are receiving a Sacrament and the vows are at the center of that. It is not like the petitions in the General Intercessions which can be personalized and adapted. It is more like the words of absolution in the Sacrament of Penance, the words used in Baptizing, or the words used at the Consecration of the Mass by the priest. The priest cannot amend those words either. Another option for couples who want to personalize the expression of their love is to include a personal statement in the printed wedding program. You could also raise your glasses and exchange words of love during the reception afterward.

3. Picture Policy

Picture taking and videotaping are permitted but should not be a distraction from the liturgy. Please speak to the priest about specific regulations and communicate these to your photographer and/or videographer.

4. Aisle Runner

An aisle runner is not permitted in our church.

5. Flowers/Sanctuary

Flowers and other decorations are the responsibility of the couple.

6. Decorations

If you wish to decorate the ends of the pews, please note that the use of any kind of tape or wire is prohibited. They cause damage to the pews. Only clips or rubber bands are permitted. Please communicate this to your florist or family members.

7. Reception lines

Reception lines are discouraged due to the parish schedule; however, please feel free to discuss this matter with the parish priest.

8. The following are not permitted to avoid accident, injury or harm:

Flowers, flower petals, rice, birdseed, confetti, balloons

9. Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic beverages are **not** permitted on Church property at **anytime** during your wedding rehearsal or the day of your wedding. Please communicate this policy to the wedding party and to the chauffeur.

****It is inappropriate to bring any food/drink into church. Please dispose of any food, drink, and/or food or drink containers before entering the church.**

10. Wedding Booklets

If a program booklet is desired, Our Lady of Good Counsel provides an outline for the Nuptial Mass and the Nuptial Ceremony and you are asked to follow these outlines. **At least two weeks prior to your wedding, please present a draft of your booklet to Joan Kozlowski for approval. Do not make arrangements for printing until receiving approval.**

11. Visiting Clergy

If you desire to arrange for a guest priest, you will need to provide the visiting priest's name and address as soon as possible, so permission and delegation may be granted for him to witness the wedding. Visiting priests are welcome to attend the rehearsal. We remind you that our parish wedding fee does not compensate the visiting priest and is the responsibility of the couple.

We do extend an invitation to those Christian or other Clergy who would have some significant role in an inter-religious marriage. Please express this desire to the parish priest.

12. Altar Servers

Altar servers are scheduled by the parish unless the couple requests OLGC altar servers or receives permission from the parish priest to have family members serve.

We thank you for your cooperation in all of these matters. Please be confident of our prayers for you. May God bless you!