

Guidelines for Weddings at St. Patrick and St. Lawrence parishes

Contact: phone (905) 522-9828 or email parishoffice@stpatrickshamilton.ca
St. Patrick website: stpatrickshamilton.ca
St. Lawrence website: stlawrencehamilton.ca

Our parishes welcome you to celebrate your wedding in our Christian community.

God has chosen marriage of man and woman to be an image and sign of God's tender love for us. St. Paul reminds us that the love of husband and wife is like the love of Christ for his Church (*Ephesians* 5:21-23), this love is life-long and faithful. The marriage covenant is a sign of God's covenant with God's people. Entering the Sacrament of Marriage is a sacred and serious undertaking. By choosing to celebrate your marriage before a representative of the Church in the midst of the Christian Community, rather than a civil ceremony, you are acknowledging your agreement with, and commitment to, Christian ideals.

St. Patrick and St. Lawrence parishes in Hamilton see Sunday Mass attendance as an integral part of the preparation and celebration of the sacraments. In particular, we ask engaged couples to be with us at our Sunday liturgies.

Christian marriage is celebrated within this community which we call the Church. A priest presides at the celebration in an official capacity for the Church, but the bride and groom are the ministers of the sacrament.

You have a responsibility to prepare yourselves to the best of your ability for a happy and lasting sacramental life. We offer these guidelines to help in your preparation.

PREPARING FOR YOUR WEDDING

a) **NOTIFICATION:** You should notify the parish of your intention to be married **at least nine to twelve months in advance, and certainly before setting a firm date**, enabling all concerned to make adequate preparations. A longer period may be required for varied reasons... e.g. *one of the parties may have been in a previous marriage; the date that you wish may not be available*, etc. Please call the parish office at (905) 522-9828 to set up an appointment with the Parish priest. It will give you an opportunity to introduce yourself to the pastor and receive the basic information regarding your upcoming wedding.

b) **MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE:** It will be necessary to take part in a preparation program. This program is designed to nourish the love relationship you share as a couple. **Commitment, Communication and Conflict Resolution:** these are the three top attributes of couples married happily for more than 25 years. The function of marriage preparation is to provide you with the tools that will help you live your marriage with all three of these components being strong and healthy.

The course, led by married facilitating couples, covers a variety of topics including sacramentality of marriage, effective communication, conflict resolution, intimacy and sexuality in marriage, finances and family of origin. Much of the course time is spent with the two of you talking to each other. This is a chance to move away from the stress of the wedding plans and learn or freshen up the skills you will need for a happy marriage.

The Marriage Preparation Course is offered by the Family Ministry Office of the Diocese of Hamilton. Please contact Connie Cramarossa at the diocesan office at (905) 528-7988 to register, or register on line (www.hamiltondiocese.com) Please contact the Parish Office to find out exact times for this course as it is a mandatory requirement for all couples marrying in the Catholic Church. Courses run on Friday evenings (approximately 7:00–9:30 pm) and Saturday (approximately 9 am–5 pm). Cost: \$125.00 per couple (includes course materials, snacks and lunch Saturday).

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

a) **BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE:** The Catholic party must present one that was **issued less than six months before the wedding date.** For baptized non-Catholics, a photocopy of their baptismal certificate is sufficient.

b) **LICENSE:** A marriage license must be secured by the couple and delivered to the Parish Office at least two weeks before the ceremony.

INTERCHURCH MARRIAGES

If yours is an interchurch marriage (i.e. a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic) you must know the following:

- a) The non-Catholic party is not required to become a Catholic and should not be pressured by anyone to do so.
- b) The Catholic party must promise to do whatever is possible to have all children born of this marriage baptized and raised in the Catholic faith.
- c) The non-Catholic party must be informed of the promise made by the Catholic party.
- d) In an interchurch marriage, the custom is to have the wedding liturgy only, without the celebration of the Eucharist.
However, this may be discussed further with the priest.

MARRIAGES IN OTHER CHURCHES

If you are registered or reside at St. Patrick or St. Lawrence parish in Hamilton, ON and plan on getting married in another church (Catholic or otherwise) anywhere in Canada, the marriage documentation must be completed here, at your parish of residency. This parish will be responsible for getting the documentation to the church of the wedding. There is a \$50.00 fee to process the paper work. Well in advance of the wedding date, contact the priest/minister of the Church where you are getting married, to plan your wedding ceremony and set a date for the rehearsal.

WEDDING LITURGY: It is the couple's responsibility to help prepare their wedding liturgy with the priest. Booklets are available to guide you through the service and assist you with selecting the required readings and prayers. The wedding rehearsal takes place at a convenient time. A time should be set up with the priest who is witnessing your marriage at least two weeks prior to the day.

THE BRIDAL PARTY: You are encouraged to keep the bridal party reasonably small. It is traditional to have two witnesses (maid of honor & best man) and in addition, not more than two bridesmaids and groomsmen. Please do not change the witnesses at the last minute as that demands a change in documents that have already been prepared.

HONORARIUM AND FEES: The fee for marriage at St. Patrick/St. Lawrence parish is \$200.00 for registered and active parishioners of St. Patrick/St. Lawrence parish or \$600.00 for non-parishioners. This fee is for the use of the Church. The cheque should be made payable to St. Patrick Parish or St. Lawrence Parish, not to the clergy. **This fee should be paid when you bring your marriage license to the Parish Office.** A separate free-will offering may be made to the priest who witnesses your marriage.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS: The responsibility for flowers and other decorations is yours. You are asked to be prudent and exercise restraint. Nothing is to be placed on the altar. Arrangements should be in place well before the ceremony.

PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEOS: May be taken as the wedding party enters and leaves the church. During the actual ceremony, pictures and videos may be taken **ONLY** by authorized photographers from previously assigned areas.

MUSIC: From the start of your preparation for marriage, you will want to think about the choice of music for the occasion. Remember that your wedding is a Catholic Liturgy. Popular songs from movies, Top 40 Hits, etc. are not appropriate choices for Liturgy. To avoid disappointment, consult early with the Parish Office regarding your choices. Parish musicians may be available to provide music for your wedding. It is the responsibility of the couple to arrange for the services of musicians.