

**Sacred Hearts Parish
Bradford-Groveland, Massachusetts**

PARISH OFFICES: 48 South Chestnut Street - Bradford, MA 01835
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The Sacrament of Matrimony
Marriage Preparation Guidelines

Congratulations

The priests, pastoral staff and the parish community of Sacred Hearts, Bradford-Groveland congratulate you on your engagement to be married. We are very happy to help you make your wedding a joyful and spirit-filled day for you and for your families. Perhaps most importantly, we wish to offer our best to you so that you may witness to and live out the Sacrament of Matrimony for many years to come.

This publication is presented to you to guide and direct you through the process of marriage preparation, and to acquaint you with parish policies and guidelines

Marriage Preparation

There are some logical steps for you to follow in order to be married in the Catholic Church. Your wedding is, above all, a sacramental encounter “where two become one” through the action of God and the activity of the Holy Spirit.

The parishes of the Archdiocese of Boston require a **6 month period** of notification and preparation (at a minimum). You are urged to contact the priest or Pastoral Associate as soon as possible with a **tentative date** in mind. Today, most people contact the priest at least **one year in advance** to set a date and to begin the process of preparation.

In accord with Archdiocesan Policy, a **DATE for the wedding CANNOT be reserved or confirmed “over the phone”**; an in-person meeting must take place before a wedding can be scheduled.

Marriage Preparation ordinarily entails three (3) to four (4) meetings with the priest or Pastoral Associate in addition a Marriage Preparation Workshop and the Wedding Rehearsal.

WHAT TO EXPECT

At your meetings with the priest or Pastoral Associate you can anticipate the following:

1. INTRODUCTIONS, INFORMATION and EXPECTATIONS

It will be a time for **Introductions** (getting acquainted with one another), some **Information Gathering** (phone numbers / points of contact, ascertaining your freedom to marry), and presenting you with **Expectations** (what you need to do in order to marry in the Catholic Church).

2. PRELIMINARY INTERROGATORY

The **Preliminary Interrogatory** is a document that you will complete in the company of the priest or Pastoral Associate. Essentially, the Preliminary Interrogatory is an affidavit that states a great deal of information about you, especially your sacramental life, and ascertains your freedom to marry.

3. MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The priest or Pastoral Associate will discuss with you your *required participation* in a **Marriage Preparation Program** also known as “**Pre Cana**”. Many couples find Pre-Cana to be interesting, helpful and enjoyable. There are **options**, in terms of the format, style, structure and location of various programs, but all accomplish the same end: preparing the engaged couple for living the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Option 1: An Archdiocesan-approved program, listed by the Archdiocesan

Family Life Office and offered at another parish or site (e.g. St. Basil’s, Methuen 978-683-2959; Espousal Center, Waltham, 781-209-3120) **in the Archdiocese of Boston.**
(There are varying day/time formats)

Option 2: Engaged Encounter Weekend. This is a Friday evening to Sunday

Afternoon / evening experience, usually offered at a retreat house.

Upon completion of any of these programs, you will be presented with a certificate of completion which must be submitted to the priest for the Marriage Archives.

4. SCHEDULING

As the conversation proceeds, and the priest, or Pastoral Associate is able to determine your freedom to marry, the selection of a date will then be undertaken. Weddings are scheduled with several factors in mind: *regularly-scheduled parish liturgies, availability of priest and unforeseen but inevitable events (a funeral liturgy)*.

5. SACRAMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

Any Baptized Christian choosing to be married in the Catholic Church, **must present the long form of their Baptismal Certificate**, verifying the fact of Baptism (Please NOTE: This applies to individuals who are not of the Catholic faith as well as for Catholics.)

- If Baptism and / or Confirmation were received at Sacred Hearts Parish, that documentation would exist in the Sacred Hearts Parish Archives.
- If Baptism and / or Confirmation were received at any other parish or religious community (a non-Catholic congregation) then you must contact the respective church or parish and request that Baptismal and / or Confirmation records [in an expanded “long form”] be sent directly to the priest or Pastoral Associate who is preparing you for your wedding.

Sometimes, individuals are unaware of their parish of Baptism and this fact must be verified by parents. The instruction to gather Sacramental Documentation is a pivotal task which must be undertaken in the days immediately following the First Meeting with the priest or Pastoral Associate.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Visiting Clergy.

Ordinarily, a priest or Deacon of the parish will preside at your wedding. However, Priests or Deacons who are relatives or friends of the couple are most welcome to preside. To that end:

- A visiting priest or deacon must submit, in writing, a request to preside at a wedding at Sacred Hearts Parish. The request is to be sent to the Pastor of Sacred Hearts and should include the visiting priest’s name, diocese and/or religious order. A letter of good standing from the respective diocese or religious community should accompany the request.
- A priest or deacon who resides in another state or country would need to receive special authorization from the Massachusetts Secretary of State to witness the marriage. Please consult for further information
- Even if a visiting priest or deacon is to preside at the wedding, ALL “paperwork” for the wedding will be processed by a Sacred Hearts Parish Pastoral Staff member.

2. Music.

As soon as your wedding date is set, you must contact the Sacred Hearts Parish Music Minister. **Arrangements are made only through the Music Director of Sacred Hearts Parish. ALL music for the wedding is subject to the approval of the Sacred Hearts Parish Music Director. Only Sacred Hearts Parish – approved vocalists and musicians would be permitted to participate in the wedding ceremony.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. REHEARSALS

The rehearsal will be scheduled by the priest or Pastoral Associate who is working with you. Rehearsals are generally scheduled on Thursday evening and are conducted / directed by a **Parish Wedding Coordinator**. Thursday evening rehearsals serve a very practical advantage, as Friday, a working day, can be used to address all last minute details and concerns prior to a Friday evening or Saturday wedding. (especially any civil requirements)

The Parish Wedding Coordinator will also be present at your Wedding Liturgy to assist with all details of gathering , processing and overall orchestration of the event.

The Parish Wedding Coordinator acts on behalf of the priest and, as such, should be treated with the same measure of dignity and respect.

2. MARRIAGE LICENSE

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires you to obtain a Marriage License in order to be married anywhere in Massachusetts (civil or religious ceremony). **NOTE:**

- You may apply for a Marriage License at **ANY city or town clerk’s office** anywhere in Massachusetts.
- The Bride and Groom **must both appear in person** at the clerk’s office to apply for the Marriage License.
- A **blood test** for a Marriage License is no longer required in Massachusetts.
- After you file the application for the Marriage License, there is a **three day waiting period**.
- A Marriage License is **only valid for 60 days**.
- **You can NOT be married in Massachusetts without a Marriage License.**
- **Please present the Marriage License to the Wedding Coordinator at the rehearsal or give to the priest or Deacon.**

At the REHEARSAL, please be certain that you are *PROMPT*, and that you present the following to the Wedding Coordinator:

(please check)

1. ___ Marriage License
2. ___ *Together for Life* Selection Sheet
3. ___ Church Offering
4. ___ Coordinator Stipend
5. ___ Altar Server Offering.
6. ___ Information Sheet of Vendors

On the day or evening of your WEDDING, please be certain that you are *PROMPT*. Weddings usually occur on the weekend, and weekends are the most heavily-scheduled times at the church for all liturgies and other events which are central to parish life. Please honor your verbal commitment to start the wedding liturgy at the designated time.

Photographers, videographers and limousine service personnel are Externs to the wedding; they are not orchestrating the liturgy. Please remind them of their appropriate role.

In the interests of fairness to all parties concerned, as well as out of respect for your guests, please be punctual for your wedding.

(Fill out this form and submit it to the Wedding Coordinator at the time of your rehearsal.)

INFORMATION

IDENTIFICATION OF VENDORS / SERVICE PROVIDERS

For the sake of greater knowledge, precise information and better communication, please identify the following vendors / services that you will be utilizing for your wedding:

FLORIST: _____

Telephone: _____

LIMOUSINE: _____

(Transportation)

Telephone: _____

PHOTOGRAPHER: _____

Telephone: _____

VIDEOGRAPHER: _____

Telephone: _____

EXTERNS: _____

(i.e. Bagpiper)

Telephone: _____