



2006 Weston Street
La Crosse WI 54601
608-788-5483
mmoc.mobi
mmoclacrosse.org

Congratulations on your forthcoming marriage!

We welcome your wedding at Mary Mother of the Church Parish and we look forward to assisting you in planning this important celebration of your faith.

Your marriage is a sacred calling by God which means it is a special vocation. Just as the Catholic Church commits a lot of resources for the preparation and formation of young men to the priesthood or permanent diaconate, so also the Church wishes to support you in your formation for the Sacrament of Marriage.

Below you will find the answers to the most frequently asked question we receive about preparing for your Catholic wedding at Mary, Mother of the Church.

Deacon Richard Sage and I are committed to supporting you as you prepare for your marriage covenant. As a general rule, Deacon Sage assists interfaith couples and I assist couples who are both Catholic.

We look forward to working with you in preparing your celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Brian D. Konopa

THE WEDDING PROCESS...and Frequently Asked Questions

What must we do to be married at Mary, Mother of the Church?

1. Check Availability: contact the parish office 788-5483 ext. 2 to check on open wedding dates and confirm the availability of the presider.
2. Reserve Wedding Date: to secure the requested date, complete the Reservation Form and return with a non-refundable \$200 Reservation Fee payable to "MMOC," which will be used for "Works of Charity." Those who are not members of MMOC or are inactive Catholics will make an additional \$200 offering for the general operating of the parish.
3. Gather Documents: request from your places of baptism a "Certificate of Baptism." For Catholics, the certificate must be dated within 6 months of contacting MMOC. If you were baptized at MMOC (St. Thomas More or St. Pius), you do not need a "Certificate of Baptism"; the parish already has the information. Non-Catholic Christians may supply a copy of their original baptismal certificate. Also, if there has been any previous marriage, please supply an authentic copy of the Declaration of Nullity (i.e. annulment) or the marriage license and proof of divorce. If the marriage has not been declared null by the Catholic Church, the priest/deacon will help you with this process.

4. Meet Presider: when you have the documents, please contact the priest if both are Catholic (788-5483 ext. 7) or the deacon if it is an interfaith marriage (608-317-5584) to set up an initial meeting. It will be essential to bring the Reservation Form and fee to this meeting if it has not already been returned.
5. Meet Sponsor Couple: complete the FOCCUS marriage inventory online and meet with a sponsor couple 2-3 times to discuss the results. The parish secretary will get you set up for this and a sponsor couple will be assigned.
6. Marriage Prep Weekend: register and attend the La Crosse Deanery marriage preparation weekend or another approved option. Forward the Certificate of Completion to MMOC.
7. Christian Sexuality/Natural Family Planning: complete the NFP online course or some other approved form of NFP education. **It would be ideal to start this step immediately after the Marriage Prep Weekend.** Cost of the online option is \$95. Please return the Certificate of Completion to MMOC.
8. Meet Presider Again: contact your presider to review the marriage prep process, to complete the pre-nuptial paperwork, and to discuss the wedding ceremony.
9. Liturgical Planning: the couple will make an appointment with the Director of Sacred Music (Mary Jo Lium) to discuss the role of music at the wedding: mjlium@mmoclacrosse.org.
10. Wedding Rehearsal: schedule the rehearsal time at least one month in advance. Please bring the marriage license and any unpaid fees to the rehearsal. Weddings cannot take place without a marriage license.
11. PRAYER: since your plan for marriage is a response to God's will in your lives, it is important to remain connected to God for support and guidance. It is important to pray regularly (and together). Christians are reminded of the Commandment to "Keep holy the Sabbath," particularly through weekly church attendance. Please note, your wedding ceremony - even if it includes Mass - does not fulfill a Catholic's obligation for the Lord's Day. Catholics are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation before marriage and ideally would participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation near the date of the wedding.

If one of us was married before, can we still get married in the Catholic Church? While this is not a real complicated question to answer, no one can answer it without knowing the exact circumstances. The best way to find out is to ask a priest, deacon, or other pastoral minister.

If my fiancé is not Catholic, is there anything special we have to do to be married in the Catholic Church? No more than any other couple, except that the Catholic party must promise to do his/her best to see that any children born of the marriage will be raised Catholic. We encourage those planning an interfaith marriage to learn, appreciate and understand as much as possible about the faith background of the other partner. An interfaith marriage can be a truly beautiful relationship when both partners have faced the religious questions honestly right from the start. It can be very difficult and painful when this is not done.

How do we decide whether or not to have Mass with our wedding? You should make your decision in consultation with the priest or deacon who is assisting in the preparation of your marriage. You will want to consider the following: What is our relationship to the Sunday Eucharist? Are we faithful to the Church's Sunday worship? Have we committed ourselves to returning?

If one of you is not Catholic, he/she will not be able to receive Holy Communion during the wedding. Do you want to include something in this celebration in which only one of you will be able to partake? For this reason, the Catholic Church encourages interfaith couples not to have a Mass with their wedding, but does not insist on this.

Is the Mass or a Word Service the better context for the celebration of your marriage? Some people seem to think that a couple is not really married unless the wedding takes place during Mass. This is simply not true. Be open and honest with the presider with whom you are preparing your wedding and make the decision which will provide the best context for prayer and celebration.

Can we have our wedding outdoors? Marriage regulations for the Diocese of La Crosse require that priests and deacons who officiate at weddings can only do so in a church. There are very good reasons for this policy and the Diocese enforces it strictly.

Is there a limit to the number of attendants we can have? The bride and groom are the focal point of the wedding, and an excessive number of attendants detracts from this focus. Therefore MMOC encourages a prudent decision. If chosen, a flower girl and ring-bearer should be mature enough to follow simple instructions. Please be aware that children can be excited about participating in these important roles only to become overwhelmed on the day of the wedding.

Are there any financial charges? The Reservation Fee to the parish is \$200. This offering is used to aid the poor through the parish's "Works of Charity." It is not given to the minister, the musicians, nor for general parish use. Those who are not members of the parish or are inactive members will make an additional \$200 offering for the general operating of the parish. Should you wish to give a monetary gift to the priest or deacon who presides at your wedding, the amount of \$100 is suggested. Musicians have their own fees; arrangements need to be made with them. The Director of Sacred Music can help you with this.

How is the wedding service determined? The celebration of the wedding is determined by the "Order of Celebrating Matrimony" of the Catholic Church. Although unity candles, pouring sand and other practices are common, they are not part of the "Order of Celebrating Matrimony" and will not be included in the church service. However, these symbols have value and couples are encouraged to incorporate these elements at the reception.

Music and Your Wedding Liturgy Music is an integral part of Catholic liturgy and congregational singing is an important part. Unfortunately, this can be the last type of music couples consider. Allowing a musician or soloist to perform all of the music is not compatible with Catholic liturgy. Planning music in which the entire assembly can take part is a vital requirement when planning music. Those who come to share the day with you want and deserve the opportunity to help you celebrate by lifting their hearts and voices in song. They are not there to be passive; let them celebrate with you. Choose songs and refrains they can sing. By doing this, you give them a sense that this is a celebration of joy where everyone can participate. They don't have to wait until the reception to express their joy!

The music must fit the context of faith and dignity of the occasion. The texts should speak of a Christian concept of marriage, not simply a romantic one. Every generation has its love songs, and many of them are great music. They may have a place on your wedding day, but not as part of your wedding liturgy.

We will offer guidance in creating the worship aid for your wedding.

Who may play and sing at our wedding? MMOC has a strong tradition of faith-filled, talented musicians who are trained to assist in planning and ministering the music for your wedding; therefore, we expect you to choose from our list of musicians. You may also include family and friends who wish to sing for your wedding. Please consult with our Director of Sacred Music (Mary Jo Lium): mjlium@mmoclacrosse.org.