

Celebrating Your Wedding at St. Paul's



Saint Paul's Parish, Cambridge MA
617.491.8400 <https://www.stpaulsharvardsquare.org>

Congratulations on your engagement!

All of us at Saint Paul Parish congratulate you and promise our support and prayers. It is an honor to assist you in planning the celebration of Holy Matrimony, for through this great sacrament, the Lord is inviting you into a deeper relationship with Him. If you have not already done so, please make an appointment to meet with one of our parish priests by calling the parish center at 617.491.8400 at least six months prior to your wedding.

Scheduling a wedding date requires first meeting with the priest together as a couple. Once your freedom to marry in the Catholic Church has been formally established, and after completion of the requisite paperwork, your wedding can be scheduled.

The priest and pastoral staff will assist you as a couple during your time of marriage preparation. It is our hope that this process will help you to grow in faith together, especially by joining fully in the celebration of the Sunday Mass. We also invite you to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession regularly, especially prior to your wedding day; the graces of every sacrament will help you to deepen your trust in the Lord and in one another.

Please find the answers to many commonly asked questions in this packet. You may also wish to consult www.foryourmarriage.org for additional resources on marriage and wedding planning. If there is anything that we can do to provide additional support, please contact us at the parish center or feel free to speak with us after any Mass.

We wish you every grace and blessing as you move forward toward your wedding day. May the Lord bless and protect each of you, and may our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph intercede for you and those you love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend William T. Kelly, Pastor and Senior Chaplain
Reverend George S. Salzmann, O.S.F.S., Graduate Chaplain
Reverend Nathaniel A. Sanders, Parochial Vicar and Undergraduate Chaplain

Where do we start?

Please contact Nancy Nicolaou, Administrative Coordinator, at the parish office at 617.491.8400, x 303 and she can help arrange an initial visit with one of the priests at St. Paul's. All matters pertaining to the ceremony are addressed only after this initial contact. *The future bride or groom should call directly, not a designated third party (family member, friend, etc.)*

This initial contact should take place a year before the wedding, or, at a minimum, six months prior. You will need time to reserve the church and to participate in the marriage formation process as described below.

Who is eligible to be married at St. Paul's?

You can be married at St. Paul's if either member of the couple is:

- ❖ A Roman Catholic residing within the boundaries of the parish;
- ❖ A registered parishioner of St. Paul's;
- ❖ A Roman Catholic affiliated with Harvard University as a student, alumnus/a, or member of a faculty or staff;
- ❖ A Roman Catholic affiliated with St. Paul's Choir School as an alumnus or member of the faculty or staff;
- ❖ A catechumen or a candidate in the process of entering the Catholic Church through St. Paul's.

Even if you do not fall into any of the above categories, please feel free to make an inquiry about eligibility with one of the priests. Parishioners of other Catholic churches, including Harvard alumni, faculty or staff, will ultimately need a letter of permission from their local pastor.

What do we need to get?

After meeting with a priest or deacon at St. Paul's, you will need to obtain a *newly issued* record of your baptism and confirmation in order to complete the paperwork and for the proper recording in the parish sacramental register. These are available at the parish location where you received your baptism and confirmation. They must be mailed directly from that parish to St. Paul Parish, not to the persons being married. (Photocopies/scans of original baptismal and confirmation certificates are not necessary or sufficient.)

If your wedding is in Massachusetts, within a month of your wedding day, you are required to go to any Massachusetts city or town hall to complete the application for a wedding license and any civil requirements for the Commonwealth. This license must be given to the priest, deacon

or wedding coordinator on or before the wedding rehearsal. Without it, by law, the wedding cannot take place. You can contact the city/town hall ten days after your wedding and they can send you a formal marriage certificate for a small fee. If you need a copy of your marriage license for honeymoon travel or other immediate needs following the wedding, please let the priest know.

What about a marriage formation (“pre-Cana”) program?

Generally, the priest meets with the couple 3-4 times and they are asked to participate in a marriage preparation program certified by any Catholic diocese. Check online at the Archdiocese of Boston’s Family Life page at <https://www.evangelizeboston.com/for-couples/transformed-in-love/> for a comprehensive list of offerings around Boston. The “Transformed in Love” program is offered regularly throughout the year at different parishes including St. Paul’s.

Why does the Catholic Church require marriage preparation and formation?

The marriage of man and woman is not only an institution that is basic to the well-being and health of society but is also a sacrament in the Catholic Church. The Christian married life, enhanced by love in grace, is the principal means of each spouse’s sanctification. It is also a dynamic sign to the world of the special relationship that exists between Christ and His Bride, the Church. As the Second Vatican Council says: “By the joys and sacrifices of their vocation and through their future love, married people will become witnesses of the mystery of that love which the Lord revealed to the world by his dying and rising up to life again.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 52.) Because of the sacred quality of marriage and of the binding promises that are exchanged, couples must treat their time of engagement with utmost seriousness. Marriage preparation is not just about planning for one day, but for life!

When may our wedding be celebrated at St. Paul’s?

Due to our busy Mass schedule, weekend weddings are limited to the following times:

Saturday: 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM or after 6:30 PM

Sunday: 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Weddings are also possible on other days of the week. Liturgies during Advent and Lent carry a subdued tone and thus weddings are not encouraged if other times are possible for the couple. In addition, the schedule of liturgies at St. Paul’s during Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday) does not allow for weddings.

What if we want to be married in another setting?

If both the bride and groom are Catholic, permission is ordinarily not given for places other than a Catholic parish church. (Memorial Church in Harvard Yard, as a University Chapel, is regarded, for these purposes, as an extension of St. Paul's and does not require special permission). Permission is usually granted for a Catholic to marry a baptized Christian of another denomination in the non-Catholic person's church. Because marriage is a sacrament, two Christians are not normally permitted to marry in a private home, a secular chapel, a function hall, or outdoors. A Catholic who marries a non-Christian may receive permission to marry in settings other than a religious building.

What if I am getting married in another church but would like to do the marriage formation and paperwork with someone at St. Paul's?

We are always willing to help you through the paperwork and to assist you in your preparation for a wedding in a different location. Please contact the main office here. A donation of \$125.00 to the parish is requested to assist with administrative costs.

How do I schedule a wedding rehearsal?

Your wedding rehearsal may be scheduled any time after the wedding has been scheduled. Each couple is assigned to our parish wedding coordinator, who spends adequate time with the couple during the rehearsal, ensuring that the format of the liturgy is explained and that your guests are at ease. The wedding coordinator will also be present at the wedding to help the procession run smoothly, and to make sure the Church is back in order after the ceremony.

If for any reason your wedding plans change after a date has been scheduled, please notify immediately the priest with whom you have been working.

Please bring the following to the wedding rehearsal: the completed selection sheet or program booklet for your ceremony, your Massachusetts marriage license, your parish donation, and all other payments. (If you are having the optional "Unity Candle" at the wedding, bring that as well.)

Finally, the "Wedding Banns" (announcement of your marriage) will automatically appear in our bulletin for the three consecutive Sundays prior to your wedding day.

Can we be married by a priest/deacon who is not at St. Paul's?

Yes. In Catholic theology, marriage arises from the consent exchanged by the couple. For two Catholics, this consent is usually witnessed and blessed by a priest or deacon. Priests other than those assigned to St. Paul's are welcome to preside here but must first obtain permission and delegation from the pastor of St. Paul's. Also, if the priest or deacon is not a member of the Boston clergy, a "Letter of Good Standing" from his diocese will be required. When a priest or deacon is not a citizen of Massachusetts, permission must also be obtained from the Secretary of State of the Commonwealth; otherwise your marriage is not legal as a matter of secular law.

Will St. Paul's priests travel to other churches?

Unfortunately, busy weekend schedules at St. Paul's makes this almost always impossible, but you can ask!

Is the ceremony a Mass, or are there other options?

You would decide, in conversation with your priest or deacon, the best ceremony for your marriage. The norm is that when two Catholics who are active in their faith marry, the Nuptial Mass is celebrated. In this case, the Eucharist will be celebrated much like a Sunday Mass. When a couple is not regularly part of the sacramental life of the Church, they may reach a different decision. In this case, the couple may decide to have a ceremony that does not include the celebration of the Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion. These matters, however, should be decided only after having first discussed the issue with the priest.

Usually, when a Catholic marries a Christian from another tradition or a non-Christian, the Eucharist is not celebrated. This helps to highlight the dimension of unity so central to marriage rather than any differences associated with varied backgrounds. Again, you should talk to your priest or deacon about your situation.

How many people have to be involved in the ceremony?

A Catholic wedding ceremony is a public, ecclesial event in which you proclaim your intentions before the community. It may however, be conducted with as few as five people: the bride and groom, two witnesses (the "best man" and the "maid of honor"), and a priest or deacon. If you are planning a very small ceremony (fewer than ten people), you may also consider using the Women Doctors Chapel in the parish center.

Is there a “Bridal Suite” at St. Paul’s?

No. We do not have a location for the wedding party to get ready in before the wedding.

Who can be a witness?

Anyone fourteen years of age or older is eligible to be a witness. This may include parents and non-Catholics.

Are there are fees for our wedding at St. Paul’s?

Since the parish incurs expenses in the process of both preparing and celebrating weddings, it is customary for parishes to have established fees. However, finances should never be a factor in trying to decide whether one should be married in the Catholic Church or not. Please feel free to speak to the clergy member with whom you are working if finances are a concern.

The requested offerings are as follows:

- ❖ Church reservation: \$500 (made when date confirmed)
- ❖ Wedding Coordinator: \$150 (check made out to Nancy Nicolaou)
- ❖ Music fees: please view our music guidelines and fees [here](#)

Nota bene: A gift to the priest is not included here and would be offered separately.

How do I go about selecting music?

Sacred music is an integral part of the liturgy and is approached as a form of prayer. Since the celebration of marriage is an act of worship, the music played or sung should support and enhance this act of worship for all those who participate in it – both the wedding party and the entire assembly.

The parish Director of Music is responsible for all wedding music at St. Paul’s. As a professional musician, he is a valuable resource in helping you select your music. He is pleased to meet with you for this purpose and can obtain a cantor, extra singers, or other instrumentalists. The Director of Music must give final approval for all music and musician choices. Please view our music selections [here](#).

The famous Saint Paul’s Choir, which is the resident choir at St. Paul’s, can be engaged to sing

at weddings during the school year. Arrangements should be made in advance by calling the Music Director at 617.868.8658 ext. 319.

What about photography?

Please have your photographer and videographer check with the celebrant (the priest or deacon) prior to the start of the Mass or ceremony. Additional lighting is not needed and should be discouraged for your comfort, as well as that of your guests.

What about flowers and carpet?

Florists are typically accustomed to the set-up and delivery of flowers for your wedding. We welcome all appropriate displays. When the sacrament of Holy Matrimony is celebrated during Advent and Lent, please bear in mind the more subdued nature of these liturgical seasons. During Christmas and Easter the church is decorated seasonally. Even so, you may add particular appropriate additions with permission. Please remind your florist that there is a 5:00 PM Mass on Saturdays. Some couples are accustomed to leaving their flowers in the church following the wedding ceremony for the weekend Masses and you are welcomed to do so as well.

Please be mindful that the Church building is a sacred space. We ask you to make sure that your wedding party or guests do not throw anything - including flowers, rice, birdseed, bubbles or confetti, either inside or outside of the church. If you are putting bows on the pews, please make arrangements for someone from among your wedding party or guests to remove them after the wedding. (We recommend not using an aisle runner because of safety issues and cost.)

What about altar servers?

St. Paul's Parish has a dedicated team of altar servers. We normally assign two for your Mass or ceremony. If you have trained family members or friends who are altar servers they are welcome to serve with the approval of the officiating minister. (This should be planned well in advance so that server scheduling can be accurate.) Albs are available for visiting servers. A gift of \$20.00 per server (cash) is usually offered to the servers prior to the wedding ceremony.

Is there disabled accessibility to the church?

Yes. There is elevator access through the Parish Center, 29 Mt. Auburn Street.

The Sacrament of Matrimony is joyful and powerful- it is a holy vocation to which God calls you and in which God will help you to find happiness and fulfillment in a life of love. God bless you during this beautiful time as you prepare to join your lives together in the presence of God's Church. Anything we can do, please let us know.

The Clergy of St. Paul's