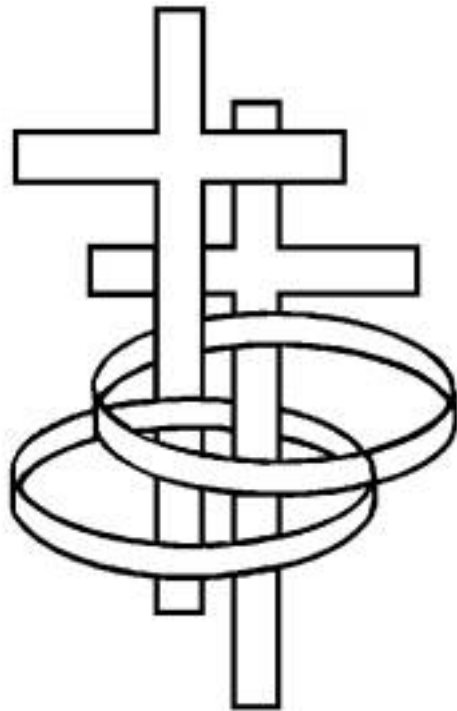


Wedding Guidelines & Procedures



St. Stephen's Church
Kearny, New Jersey

Marriage Preparation

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A Message from the Pastor

Dear Couple,

On behalf of the Priests, Deacons and Staff of St. Stephen's Church, I welcome you to our parish and we congratulate you as you prepare yourselves for this very important journey in your life.

As you are preparing for your marriage in our parish, this "Wedding Booklet" will be helpful. In it we have outlined our parish guidelines for your information and reference. We ask that you take the time out to read through it. The following pages will give you the needed information as far as the basic requirements for marriage, the documents that you need to prepare, the wedding liturgy, the parish donations and other important information. Please read these guidelines and procedures carefully. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the priest or deacon who will be presiding at your wedding. We are here to serve and assist you in every possible way.

We at St. Stephen's pray that this exciting time of your marriage preparation will be a time of growth in and deeper love of the Lord Jesus who you will encounter in a special way in the Sacrament of Marriage. For this we congratulate you and we offer you our best wishes for a joy-filled wedding day and a truly happy married life.

We assure you of our support and prayers.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Richard E. Cabezas and Staff of St. Stephen's

1. Time of Preparation

a. The Bishop's Conference of the United States mandates that the couples preparing for marriage should contact the rectory one year in advance of the proposed wedding date.

b. The Bishops of New Jersey mandates that this wedding preparation must include:

(1) A series of meetings with the priest/deacon who will witness the wedding, at least *three times within a year*, to find out any possible impediments, to ensure the freedom of the parties, and to find out whether the contracting parties are sufficiently instructed in the Christian doctrine, particularly on the nature, ends, and essential properties of marriage (Canons 1095;1067).

(2) Attendance at either a Pre-Cana session or an Engaged Encounter retreat weekend.

c. As a general policy, the parish of St. Stephen's requires that the couple intending to get married in this parish should undergo a one year preparation program. The only exception is in some emergency or exceptional cases, which will be determined by the pastor.

2. Who can get married in our parish?

(a) As a general policy, we only allow couples who are registered parishioners of our parish to get married in our Church. At least one person must be from the parish.

(b) If not registered, we allow the couple to get married in our Church if one or both of them have some 'connection' to our parish(For example, they had been baptized, confirmed, had their first communion, etc. in our Church). As a general policy, if there is no connection to the parish, the wedding cannot take place at St. Stephen's.

3. Wedding Date & Time

(a) Before you make any arrangements for your wedding (reception, photography, etc.), please contact the parish office for an appointment with the priest who is in-charge of the initial preparation process.

(b) As a general policy, no weddings are scheduled on a Sunday. Friday Weddings are most welcome. If a wedding is performed on a Saturday, it can be scheduled as early as 11:30 A.M., but not later than 3:00 P.M.

(c) We only accept one wedding a day. No exception.

4. Required Documents

- (a) For Catholics, an original copy of the Certificate of Baptism that is *not more than 6 months old* (referred to as an "updated" Baptismal certificate).
- (b) A copy of the Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter Certificate.
- (c) Two witnesses for the Groom and two witnesses for the bride are required to testify to their freedom to marry. These witnesses maybe family members, relatives or friends. Arrangements should be made with the officiating priest or deacon.
- (d) A Marriage License must be obtained from the bride's hometown, or otherwise it is obtained from Kearny Board of Health - 646 Kearny avenue. A license is good for 30 days but takes 3 days to process after the application is made. It must be obtained at least 3 days(72 hours) prior to the wedding day.
- (e) Other documents as they may apply:
 - (1) Decree of Nullity and/or certification of death are required for those with previous marriages.
 - (2) Certificate of Dispensation , if one party has another religious affiliation.

5. Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter Seminar

You are required to attend a Pre-Cana Seminar or an Engaged Encounter Seminar. You cannot be married in a Catholic Church unless you do. Arrangements and reservations must be made as soon as possible . A list of dates, and places of Pre-Cana classes is available from our parish office. St. Stephen's parish hosts a Pre-Cana seminar once a year, in March.

For more information, you can call up the Archdiocesan Family Office at 973-497-4328 (Pre-Cana), or at 973-497-4323

(Engaged Encounter Seminar). For Pre-Cana registration, it is available online at: <http://www.rcan.org/famlife/pre-cana.htm>.

6. Wedding Music

(a) Only Liturgical Music is appropriate for wedding ceremonies. Songs which have romantic or sentimental nature should be reserved for the wedding reception. Please have your music program cleared with our music director beforehand.

(b) Any music for your wedding should be planned with our music director, Mr. Robert Maidhof. Make an appointment with him no later than three(3) months before your wedding. He can be reached at 201-795-9630.

(c) As a parish regulation, no outside organist or cantors are allowed at St. Stephen's.

(d) Other musicians are permitted provided arrangements are made well in advance with Mr. Maidhof.

7. Wedding Planners/Coordinators

The Catholic Church does not allow Commercial Wedding Planners/Coordinators to handle any aspect of the Mass or Ceremony for the simple fact that Liturgy is the responsibility of the priest or deacon. While such planners may assist a couple with other concerns on their wedding day, they may not have a role in anything pertaining to the Church.

8. Clergy and Visiting Priests

(a) As a general policy, no priest or deacon is assigned to a wedding, unless he is especially requested by the couple, and then it is up to the discretion of the pastor.

(b) If a visiting priest is requested, he is to be contacted first by the Bride and Groom, and then referred to the pastor for delegation.

9. Dress Code

The Church trusts that brides, grooms and bridal party members will be dressed modestly for Church. Those participating in the Liturgy should be dressed in a manner befitting the seriousness and holiness of the occasion.

10. Rehearsals

(a) Rehearsals should be scheduled between you and your officiating priest or deacon, far enough in advance through the rectory to avoid conflicts in our schedules.

(b) The wedding rehearsal is normally scheduled for an evening shortly before the wedding date, at the convenience of the couple and the priest/deacon.

(c) We expect that all the members of the wedding party are to attend, including those who are assigned to read or those who, in some way, take part in the Liturgy.

(d) We require that all documents be submitted before the rehearsal (Marriage License, Baptismal certificates, Two witnesses forms for the Bride and Groom, Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter Certificates, and other forms as they may apply).

(e) Unity Candle(if any) and other liturgical items that will be used in the Liturgy should also be brought during the rehearsal.

11. Sacrament of Reconciliation

(a) We ask the couple who belong to the Catholic Faith to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation before entering the Sacrament of Matrimony.

(b) St. Stephen's Schedule of Reconciliation: Saturday, from 11:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., and Monday Evenings, from 6:45 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

(c) By Appointment with a priest.

12. Some Prohibitions

(a) Taping of Flowers on Pews

Any plans for altar flowers or pew decorations should be discussed with your officiating priest. Please inform your florist that tape of any kind is not permitted on the Church pews.

(b) Throwing of flower petals, rice, confetti, etc.

Throwing of rice, confetti, flower petals, birdseeds, etc. inside or outside the Church is strictly prohibited. Insurance regulations are very strict on this matter. This will help prevent accidents and possible litigations.

(c) Aisle Runners

As a matter of policy, our Church does not allow aisle runners.

(d) Additional Candles, canopies and lamps

The use of additional candles, hurricane lamps, balloons, canopies are prohibited.

(e) Shouting, Whistling, Standing on the Pews

Whistling, shouting or standing on the pews during the ceremony are strictly prohibited.

13. Photography and Videography

We know that videos and photography provide the couple with lasting memories of their wedding ceremony. It is for this reason that you are permitted to take them. However, we would like to ask that your photographers and videographers must abide by our rules governing their movement around the Church and their use of certain equipment.

(a) As a Church rule, your photographers and videographers may take pictures or videos, but no one is allowed in the Sacristy or the Sanctuary area during the Mass or ceremony.

(b) Please be reminded that you are entering a holy place and the wedding is a sacrament; not a photo opportunity or press conference.

(c) After the ceremony, you are permitted to take pictures inside the Church. But the Sanctuary is off limits.

14. Church Offering & Fees

(a) The following are the donations that the couple has to settle and accomplish prior to the wedding:

- 1) the parish donation is \$500.00
- 2) the Organist is \$225.00
- 3) the Soloist is \$150.00
- 4) the Celebrant is a *Free Will Offering*
- 5) each Altar Server is customarily given a \$10.00 stipend. If it is a wedding mass, there are usually two(2) servers; if it is just a ceremony, we have one(1) server.

(b) As far as settling marriage donations:

- (1) The couple needs to give a security deposit of \$200.00 dollars(cash), within one week, upon application for marriage in the parish. This security deposit will be refunded, however, it will not be returned if: (1) Bride is more than 5 minutes late, (2) If flower petals, rice, confetti, birdseeds, etc. are thrown anywhere on Church property.

(2) Within one week of their marriage application, the couple has to pay 50 % of their parish donation, which amounts to \$250.00 dollars.

(3) Only when couples have settled and given the \$200.00 dollars security deposit and 50% of their parish donation can they be considered officially booked in our parish calendar.

(4) All other donations must be settled One Month(or earlier) prior to the Wedding.

15. Unity Candle and Flowers for the Virgin Mary

(a) Unity Candle

The Wedding Candle, sometimes referred to as the 'Unity Candle', is actually NOT PART of the Church's Wedding Rite. While it has become a popular visual symbol for some couples, it is regarded by many as an intrusion into the ceremony because it overburdens the ceremony and overshadows the primary symbols, namely the exchange of consent and the exchange of rings which should stand out above all else. While it is not forbidden to have a unity candle in a wedding, the couple should reflect very well whether they really want to have or need to have a unity candle at their wedding or not. A unity candle can be ceremoniously lit at the reception as an alternative.

(b) Flowers for the Virgin Mary

Like the Wedding Candle, the custom of bringing flowers to the shrine of the Blessed Mother is NOT a part of the Church's marriage ritual. While it is not forbidden to offer a bouquet of flowers to the Blessed Mother, there are several things that you need to consider before deciding whether or not you want this pious practice to be part of your wedding. You should ask yourselves whether you really have a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother. Is prayer to Mary part of your devotional life? Why do you want to do this?

(c) As mentioned, a Unity Candle, the flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, exchanging flowers with family members, and other cultural customs are not part of the Roman rite. Should couples desire them, please observe the following:

- (1) Any of the above would take place before the concluding prayer.
- (2) The use of one of these elements is best covered by one song that reflects the action that is occurring ("Ave Maria" for the flowers to the Virgin, a song celebrating "two becoming one" for the Unity Candle, etc.)

16. Preparing the Wedding Liturgy

(a) Manner of Celebrating: Mass or Ceremony?

You will need to decide whether to celebrate your marriage within the context of a mass or a Ceremony without Eucharist.

(1) Bride and Groom are both Catholic

In the tradition of the Catholic Church, the exchange of vows between two Catholics is to take place within the context of a Mass. If you make this choice, a priest must preside at your wedding. A Mass is not absolutely required, however.

(2) One Party not Catholic

If one of the parties is not Catholic, the marriage rite outside of Mass (Ceremony) is the prescribed norm. This offers the couple being married the opportunity to join the two families together at the wedding liturgy without fear of excluding members of the congregation who would not be invited to Communion. A deacon or priest may witness this rite.

(3) Validation and non-familiarity with the Mass

A wedding ceremony usually becomes an option when many of those attending the wedding are unfamiliar with the Roman Catholic Mass, and when it is a marriage validation (that is, it is a validation of a previously performed civil wedding).

(b) The Wedding Liturgy

(1) Prelude/Seating

a) Decide how your guests will be seated.

- b) Be sure that the ushers are aware of their roles as ministers of hospitality. They are not ushers in a movie theater or at a concert, but greeters and hosts at your wedding.
- c) Be sure to inform your guests that you intend to begin on time and ask them to arrange their arrival accordingly.

(2) The Procession

There are several options for the wedding procession. They should be discussed with the priest or deacon who is to preside.

(3) The Liturgy of the Word

(a) The Liturgy of the Word consists of two or three Scripture readings: One from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament and one from the Gospels (if there are only two readings, one is always from the Gospels).

(b) After the first reading a psalm is sung. A gospel follows after the second reading and Alleluia.

(c) Take special care in choosing your readers. Readers who are invited to read should have the ability to read, and be willing to prepare carefully. Be sure to give a copy of the reading at least a week or two before the wedding so they can prepare.

(c) In some instances, the readings will be placed in the ambo before the ceremony. Others however may

prefer to have the reader bring his/her copy when he or she goes up to the ambo and read. The arrangement has to be decided by the couple and officiating priest or deacon before the ceremony.

(d) You will be given a booklet called "Together for Life" which offers suggested readings. From there you can choose your readings and gospel.

(4) Vows and Exchange of Rings

(a) After the homily, the priest or deacon will invite you to declare your love for one another. You will answer some questions declaring your intentions and then be invited to declare your consent (state your vows). Consult "Together for Life" for the texts.

(b) After the vows, the priest or deacon blesses the rings and invites you to give them to one another with a short declaration.

(5) Liturgy of the Eucharist

This section refers only to those taking place in the context of a mass.

(a) Presentation of Gifts

If you have a wedding mass, you may wish to ask at least two people to present the bread and wine to the priest as he prepares for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Sometimes the couple

may want to have their moms as gift bearers, or it may be two of their closest relatives.

(b) Receiving Holy Communion

For Holy Communion, the couple has to inform the priest prior to the wedding whether they wish to receive the Eucharist in both species(both body and blood), or just the host.

(c) Worship Aids

You are encouraged to provide a worship aid to support full congregational participation. The worship aid is not meant to be a program for spectators such as a concert program. Although it may include names of the wedding party and other ministers, they should be identified by their ministerial functions, not their relationship with one another or the couple. You can ask your officiating priest for sample programs.

(d) The Role of the Couple

The couple are the principal ministers at the wedding liturgy. Their behavior and attitudes set the tone for the entire assembly. Therefore their active participation in the prayers and singing will enable all gathered to feel comfortable and take an active role in the whole ceremony.

(e) Two Witnesses

In a Catholic Wedding, a priest or deacon and at least two witnesses ("best man," "maid/matron of honor") are required to be present for the validity of marriage. Although the two witnesses need not be Catholics, it is suggested that at least one witness be a practicing Catholic. Only these two witnesses will sit in the sanctuary with the couple during the ceremony. They must be, by State Law, at least 18 years old.

(f) Children

It is advisable and recommended that small children should not be part of the procession and actual ceremony. As we all know, the awesomeness of a wedding can be intimidating for a very young child and place huge expectations on both the child and his or her parents.

17. Things You Need To Remember

(a) It is recommended that any media personnel (photographers/videographers) contact the celebrating priest BEFORE the wedding ceremony to discuss proper procedures, boundaries, expectations and concerns, unless they have already worked here at St. Stephen's.

(b) We expect that the couples and wedding entourage be on time for the marriage celebration. Being late is not fashionable, nor is it socially acceptable. Being prompt is a great virtue of charity.

(c) We ask that there be a minimum of motion and noise throughout the Church area. Remember, the Church is not a social hall, it is the house of God. Hence, proper reverence should be displayed in Church at all times.

(d) As you come near to the day of your wedding, we encourage you to PRAY for each other and with each other. This is a wonderful opportunity to invite God into the life you are about to share.

18. Address, Direction and Map

(a) Address

St. Stephen's Church

676 Kearny Avenue

Kearny, New Jersey 07032

Tel: 201-998-3314/ 201-998-4924 (Fax)

Website: www.ststephenskearny.com

(b) Directions

From Route 21 (North)

- Take Route 21 South to exit 7 - Main Street Belleville
- At the end of the exit ramp make a left at the light onto Main Street
- Just before the second light make a right onto Academy Street

- Make your first left onto Stephens Street
- Make another left onto Rutgers Street
- Once you pass the bridge Rutgers becomes Belleville Turnpike
- At the second traffic light after passing the bridge make a right onto Kearny Avenue
- St. Stephen's Church is on left hand side

From Route 3 West

- Take Route 3 East to Route 21 South
- Follow directions From Route 21

From the Garden State Parkway

- Take the Garden State Parkway to Exit 153
- Take exit 3 East to Route 21 South
- Follow directions From Route 21

From the George Washington Bridge

- Take the New Jersey Turnpike South
- Take exit 16W to Route 3 West
- Follow directions From Route 21

From the Holland Tunnel

- Take the ramp towards US 1 & 9 North
- Take Truck US 1&9/Jersey City/Kearny exit (second exit)
- Follow signs to Route 7 West/Route 508/Belleville
- Make a left at the 3rd traffic light onto Kearny Avenue
- St. Stephen's Church is on left hand side

From 280 West

- Take Route 280 East to exit 16
- At the second light make a right onto Harrison Avenue
- At the second light make a right onto Passaic Avenue
- Make a right onto South Midland Avenue
- At the stop sign make a right onto Midland Avenue
- At the second light make a left onto Kearny Avenue

- St. Stephen's is on your right hand side

(c) Map

676 Kearny Avenue, Kearny, NJ 07032-2936

