



# SAINT STEPHEN CATHEDRAL

---



# WEDDING GUIDELINES



**A Message to Engaged Couples**  
**Planning a Wedding at Saint Stephen Cathedral**

*Dear Engaged Couple,*

*Congratulations on your engagement!*

*We are delighted that you have chosen to celebrate your love within the Sacrament of Marriage. We want to support you in this faith decision to marry for life, which takes faith in each other and in God.*

*Because we schedule many weddings here at the Cathedral, we have found that it is helpful for everyone concerned – you, your families, and guests – if we outline some items in written form. Please understand, because of the number of weddings and events taking place at the Cathedral, we cannot begin making exceptions to the policies and guidelines we have established. Also, we have the responsibility of assuring that weddings celebrated at the Saint Stephen Cathedral adhere to Church law and liturgical standards.*

*Just as your marriage will not be lived in a vacuum, your wedding should be celebrated in the context of community. Our Saint Stephen Cathedral faith community takes pride in how we celebrate the Church's sacraments, and we wish to support you in preparing for a meaningful and beautiful wedding ceremony. You may have heard it said that "the wedding is a day, but marriage is a lifetime." How much more important, then, that the beginning of your sacrament, the wedding day, be celebrated in such a way that it speaks of the joy, dignity, and hope of your commitment.*

*We welcome this opportunity to walk with you during this important step in your life. Our prayer for you is that this time of marriage preparation be rewarding and life-giving to you individually and as a couple. I remain*

*A servant in the Lord,*

*Reverend Father John M. Thomas*



# SAINT STEPHEN CATHEDRAL WEDDING GUIDELINES

## Table of Contents

Requesting a Wedding Date.....	5
Wedding Times.....	5
Wedding Rehearsal Times.....	5
Father John Vaughan Community Center.....	5
Fees.....	6
Documents Needed.....	6
Marriage Preparation Process.....	6
The Bridal Party.....	7
Bridal Suite.....	7
Decorations.....	7
Receiving Line.....	8
Wedding Photography.....	8
Livestreaming.....	8
Music.....	9
Liturgical Ministers.....	9
Start Time.....	9
Miscellaneous Items.....	10
Liturgy Preparation.....	11
Order of Celebration.....	11
Outline of the Celebration of Matrimony.....	13
Wedding Preparation Timeline and Checklist.....	14
Wedding Guidelines Agreement.....	15

### **Saint Stephen Cathedral Catholic Church**

610 Locust Street,  
Owensboro, KY 42301  
270-683-6525  
[www.ststephencathedral.org](http://www.ststephencathedral.org)

### **Saint Stephen Cathedral Pastoral Team**

Fr. John M. Thomas, Pastor/Rector  
Fr. Shibu Cheriyankunnel, Parochial Vicar  
Rev. Mr. Richard Murphy, Permanent Deacon  
James Wells, Director of Music

*Revised October 2023*

### **Requesting a Wedding Date**

The Diocese of Owensboro requires that arrangements for a wedding be made at least six months prior to the date of the wedding liturgy. Please contact the Saint Stephen Cathedral parish office and speak to the Pastoral Assistant about a possible date. The date you schedule is only *tentative* at this time. In order to confirm your date, you must complete the following:

- Provide a \$300 refundable damage/cleaning deposit, signed contract for use of the church, and signed back page of the wedding guidelines.
- Schedule a meeting with the pastor of Saint Stephen Cathedral to discuss wedding expectations.
- Confirm which priest/deacon will be presiding at your wedding. If you choose a priest other than one here at the Cathedral, we will need a letter from that priest stating his intent to complete marriage preparation and to preside at your wedding.
  - If the priest you have presiding at your wedding is from outside of the Diocese of Owensboro, they must provide a letter of good standing from his diocese.

### **Wedding Times**

Weddings may be scheduled at the following times:

- **Friday** wedding ceremonies may begin anytime between 4:00pm and 7:00pm.
- **Saturday** wedding ceremonies may begin at 2:00pm or 6:30pm.
- **Regular Scheduled Liturgies:** If you are having a small wedding, you may choose to have your wedding during our regularly scheduled Liturgies on Saturday 4:30pm, Sunday at 8:30am, and 11:00am.
- **Weekday** weddings may be scheduled during the day or evening. Please discuss these details with the parish office for available times.

*Weddings are not celebrated during the season of Lent or during Holy Week.*

### **Wedding Rehearsal Times**

Wedding Rehearsals are typically scheduled at 5:00 pm on the evening prior to the wedding, unless otherwise discussed. The priest or deacon who witnesses your marriage will direct the rehearsal.

### **Father John Vaughan Community Center**

The Community Center is available for rent by parishioners and non-parishioners for a wedding reception. The capacity is approximately 180. It is recommended that reservations be made as soon as your wedding date is finalized with the parish office. Please contact the parish office for more information about renting the Community Center for your reception.

## **Fees**

The following fees have been established for Saint Stephen Cathedral:

- *For registered parishioners or their parents who have been active in and supportive of the Cathedral for at least one year prior to the date of contact:*
  - \$300 refundable damage/cleaning deposit
- *For non-registered parishioners who wish to be married at the Cathedral:*
  - \$300 refundable damage/cleaning deposit
  - \$750 fee that is due 60 days prior to the wedding date

## **Required Documents**

- A Certificate of Baptism for Catholics and other Christians (if possible), generated within six months. Catholics need verification of their Confirmation – this should be noted on the back side of the Baptism Certificate. This document can be obtained by contacting the parish where the Sacrament of Baptism was received.
- A civil marriage license obtained from any county clerk's office in Kentucky, up to thirty days before the wedding date. The presiding priest needs the marriage license at least one week before the ceremony. The church will file the license with the county clerk after the wedding.
- If either party was previously married, official copies of Church documents must be submitted which prove that the person is free to marry in the Catholic Church. If widowed, a death certificate of the deceased spouse is needed. If divorced, an official copy of the declaration of nullity from the Church and an official copy of a civil divorce decree must be provided.
- If any dispensations or special permissions are needed, these will be handled by the priest who is preparing the couple for the Sacrament of Marriage.

## **Marriage Preparation Process**

Since marriage is one of the most important decisions in a couple's life, a mature judgement for marriage can only be made after careful reflection on the nature of marriage and the responsibilities of married life. A certain amount of time is needed to allow for this reflection.

- Over the course of the engagement, couples preparing for marriage will meet with the priest presiding over their wedding to discuss the meaning of the Marriage Sacrament and the essential place of prayer and worship during engagement and married life.
- Couples will choose between the Engaged Encounter Weekend Retreat and the Sponsor Couple Program.
- Couples will complete a pre-marriage inventory which addresses numerous issues and dimensions of married life. It is designed to emphasize strengths and possible areas of growth.
- Couples are encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the wedding.
- The couple's plan for the Marriage Liturgy should be finalized with the priest and Director of Music.

## **The Bridal Party**

There are no limits or restrictions on the size of the wedding party, although the Cathedral strongly suggests that children participating in your wedding be at least 5 years of age and of sufficient maturity to process without fear down the aisle.

## **Bridal Suite**

Our Bridal Suite is in the Community Center and is available for your use on the day of your wedding at no additional cost. Please assign someone to be responsible for cleaning up the bridal dressing area after the wedding, checking to ensure nothing is left behind including boxes, hangers, paper, clothing, etc.

## **Decorations**

Decorations and flowers are the responsibility of the bride and the groom. Keep in mind that during various liturgical seasons, Saint Stephen Cathedral is already appropriately decorated, especially through the Christmas Season and Easter through Pentecost, and may not be removed. During Ordinary Time in the calendar of the church, there is a wide range of use for flowers you might consider. They should be arranged in such a way that they will enhance the liturgical celebration and not detract from it.

Only fresh flowers are allowed in the sanctuary area. No decorations are to be placed on or directly in front of the altar or the ambo.

If you wish to use flowers, greenery, or other decorations down the aisles or elsewhere, you or your florist will need to furnish the appropriate stands or ribbons. If you are using pew markers, you must use scratchless brackets; do not use tape, nails, tacks, pushpins, wire, or anything that might deface the pews.

The large candles that are always beside the altar and ambo, along with a unity candle set if you choose to use one, are sufficient.

Due to safety issues, rice, confetti, birdseed, or other residual material are not permitted inside the church or on the church property are not allowed to be used.

Please designate a person to remove all decorations immediately after the wedding liturgy to ensure that nothing is left behind.

For the safety of you and your guests, we do not allow the use of an aisle runner on our marble floor and real flower pedals may not be used during the procession of the wedding party.

## **Receiving Line**

If you are choosing to have a receiving line, we recommend that this be held at your reception venue.

## **Wedding Photography**

To help maintain the dignity and solemnity of your wedding, we ask that you inform your photographer of some minimal guidelines:

- Photography should not distract those assembled for your wedding.
- Flash or extra lighting is not permitted during the Liturgy; photographers and guests may use only available light. An exception for the photographer is made so that flash may be used for the processional and recessional, as long as these processions are not delayed or interrupted.
- Please, do not move any furniture in the church. Nothing is to be placed on top of the altar, the ambo, or the presider's chair.
- Photos may be taken both before and after the ceremony in order to make the best use of your time as long as it doesn't interfere with other scheduled parish activities. If you are planning to take pictures in the sanctuary before the wedding, please double check with the parish office a few days before the wedding to be sure nothing else is going on at the time you wish to take your pictures. If you have a Saturday afternoon wedding, photographs must be completed at least one hour before the 4:30 pm Liturgy.
- If your wedding is being videotaped, all restrictions for photography must be followed. Cables or electrical cords should not be used across walkways.
- Movement of cameras and video-taping devices should be minimal.

## **Livestreaming**

Saint Stephen Cathedral has livestreaming capabilities – the wedding may be viewed by accessing the livestream on our Facebook page or YouTube channel (both accessible from our website at [www.ststephencathedral.org](http://www.ststephencathedral.org)). The fee for livestreaming is \$100. The wedding will be recorded at your request and a flash-drive will be provided to the couple or designated person after the wedding.

You must request this at least 30 days in advance of the wedding date to provide Saint Stephen Cathedral ample time to schedule a trained person to operate the livestream equipment. Only a designated person from Saint Stephen Cathedral will have access to this equipment. The fee is due and payable at the time the request is made. *In the event that livestreaming is unavailable due to technical or personnel reasons, the Bride/Groom will be notified, and the fee will be refunded.*

## **Music**

Before making commitments with any musician or vocalists, please consult our Director of Music as The Cathedral Director of Music and Organist is the most appropriate and experienced choice as the musician for a wedding at the Cathedral Parish. He is ultimately responsible for approving all liturgical music, musicians, and cantor as he is the most familiar with our worship space and instruments.

A trained Cathedral cantor is preferred to serve as a cantor/soloist for all weddings at the Cathedral. Other arrangements can be made with consultation from the Director of Music. A suitable replacement must have a working knowledge of or experience with Catholic liturgy. Couples should contact the Director of Music at least three months prior to the wedding date to coordinate the music with the other liturgical functions of the wedding.

Saint Stephen Cathedral upholds the Church's guidelines regarding appropriate music for all liturgical celebrations, including weddings. Careful attention to the selection of liturgical music will enhance this sacred ceremony and assist in engaging the congregation in participation. While popular songs and secular music may not be used in the wedding liturgy, they may be appropriate for your reception. No recorded music may be used at the wedding liturgy.

Every effort will be made to provide music which pleases the bride and groom while still conforming to the liturgical standards and guidelines put forth by the Church.

### **Saint Stephen Cathedral Director of Music**

**James Wells**

**270-683-6525**

**[Jwells@sscobo.org](mailto:Jwells@sscobo.org)**

## **Liturgical Ministers**

Saint Stephen Cathedral does not provide liturgical ministers for your wedding. If you wish to have servers and/or Lectors, you must provide them. You must choose individuals who have experience in the ministry they will fulfill.

## **Starting Time Must Be Respected**

All weddings are expected to start on time. Ushers are to stop seating guests 5 minutes before the liturgy is scheduled to begin so that those in the procession can be lined up and prepared to begin on time. After seating has ceased, guests are to seat themselves by means of the side aisles. Any delay in starting will possibly lessen the amount of time for photographs afterward.

## Miscellaneous Items

Saint Stephen Cathedral is a house of worship. Reverence is expected among the family, members of the wedding party, and guests.

No food or beverages are to be taken into the church worship space at any time.

There is to be absolutely no alcohol. It is very important that everyone in the wedding party clearly understands this restriction. Any member of the wedding party showing signs of alcohol use before the rehearsal, or the wedding liturgy will not be permitted to participate in the ceremony. It is vitally important to understand there are canonical issues involved if the bride and/or groom and/or witnesses are under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the wedding.

Saint Stephen Cathedral is not responsible for any items lost, stolen, or left behind.

The church and bridal suite should be back in order after the wedding ceremony. You, your florist, family, and friends are asked to gather wedding programs from the pews and remove flowers, tissues, decorations, trash, and anything else that was brought into the church and bridal suite area. Please note: not following through with these guidelines may impact the return of a full damage/cleaning deposit.

## Finally

*Once again, CONGRATULATIONS! If all of this seems overwhelming, it may be helpful to remember that these guidelines are the result of many years of experience celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony. Be assured that these guidelines arise out of our desire to help you prepare a wedding liturgy which will be prayerful, dignified, and memorable. We look forward to assisting you in your preparation for marriage and your wedding day. All of us at Saint Stephen Cathedral are honored to assist you in planning your wedding ceremony and in preparing for a lifelong Catholic marriage.*



## **Liturgy Preparation**

The wedding ceremony is rooted in the teaching of the Catholic Church, the life of the parish, and its worship. The Sacrament of Marriage is not a private affair that belongs only to the Bride and Groom; it is a public event which belongs to the church and mirrors the worship experience of this faith community. It is important for couples to begin their marriage preparation by being attentive to the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Saint Stephen Cathedral Parish puts a strong emphasis on all aspects of worship: proclamation of the Scriptures, music, environment, hospitality, distributing Communion, and much more. We expect those who have gathered will join in the prayers and hymns that all will participate in giving thanks and praise to God. Just as the Sunday celebration is the primary time of worship for the parish, it is also the primary model for all other occasions of worship, including the Wedding Liturgy.

<https://www.foryourmarriage.org/dating-engaged/planning-a-catholic-wedding/> is a great resource to use when planning the details of your Wedding Liturgy.

## **Order of Celebration**

Since the Wedding Liturgy mirrors the Sunday celebration, the order of the wedding is similar:

- Entrance Procession – The celebration begins with a procession led by the cross bearer followed by the lector carrying the Word of God, the priest, the Groomsmen, and Bridesmaids. (The Groom may process in with the priest or with his parents and the bride with her parent(s)). The inclusion of the parents in the procession speaks clearly of the Christian notion of marriage in which both partners come from their families to begin a new family in the Church. Another option for the procession is for the bride to enter with the celebrant at the rear of the procession. The custom of the bride’s father “handing over” his daughter to the Groom is not part of the Catholic Wedding Liturgy. Couples choosing to include a ring bearer and flower girl need to choose children who are least 5 years old and can walk without fear down the aisle. Following the Procession, a Gathering Song may be sung if you wish. The gathering song is followed by a greeting and the singing of the “Glory to God.” This allows the assembly to participate in the celebration of your marriage.
- Liturgy of the Word – The proclamation of Scripture is a primary element of the Marriage Rite. Readings are chosen from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospels; also included are the Responsorial Psalm (sung), Homily, and the Prayers of the Faithful (Intercessions); Intercessions are encouraged to be written by the couple. You can find reading options at <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/readings/>
- The Marriage Rite – The Bride and Groom, as the primary ministers of the Sacrament, declare their consent by exchanging the vows of marriage and by exchanging rings as symbol of permanent commitment and unity. “Unity candles” are not part of the Catholic marriage rite, though they are permitted. Our parish does have a unity candle stand available for use or you can rent one from your florist.

- Liturgy of the Eucharist – If both bride and groom are Catholic, it is the norm for the wedding celebration to include the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The gifts of bread and wine are presented (usually by friends and family) as the order of Mass proceeds. Aside from a special blessing after the Lord’s Prayer, the order of Mass is the same as on Sunday. Those gathered who are not Catholic are welcome to come forward during the Communion Rite to receive a blessing.
- Concluding Rite – The liturgy concludes with a solemn blessing of the Bride and Groom and all those assembled. The Bride and Groom lead the procession out of the Church.

**When a Mass is not celebrated**

Eucharist is the center of Catholic life, but not everyone who participates in a Wedding Liturgy is Catholic. When one of the engaged parties is non-Catholic, the Church offers a ritual which includes the Entrance Rite, and Liturgy of the Word, Marriage Rite, the Lord’s Prayer, Blessing, and Procession. In this way the unity that exists between the couple (and their families) can be emphasized – rather than the differences of their faith traditions.

A Catholic bride or groom may receive permission to marry in their fiancé’s non-Catholic church building. Please consult your priest; marriage preparation is still required.

**Ministers Needed** – The couple should select:

- 1 or 2 people to proclaim the Scripture readings (those who have experience proclaiming the Scripture, or those who are comfortable with this important role, should be chosen as Lectors). One of the lectors will carry the Book of the Gospels during the Procession
- 1 person to read the Prayers of the Faithful/Intercessions
- At least 2 ushers/greeters to welcome guests as they arrive
- 1 person to carry the cross in the Procession

**When the Eucharist (Mass) is celebrated** – The couple should also select:

- 2 or more people to present the gifts of bread and wine
- 2 or more commissioned Eucharistic Ministers
- 2 Altar Servers

**An Outline of the Celebration of Matrimony  
Without Mass**

**The Introductory Rite**

The Entrance Procession  
(Hymn)  
Opening Prayer

**The Liturgy of the Word**

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
(Second Reading)  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel  
Homily

**The Celebration of Matrimony**

Questions before the Consent  
Consent  
Acclamation  
Blessing and Giving of Rings  
Hymn or Canticle of Praise (Optional)  
Universal Prayer  
The Nuptial Blessing

**The Conclusion of the Celebration**

Our Father  
Blessing and Dismissal  
Closing Song/Recessional

**An Outline of the Celebration of Matrimony  
within Mass**

**The Introductory Rite**

The Entrance Procession  
(Hymn)  
Gloria  
Opening Prayer

**The Liturgy of the Word**

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
(Second Reading)  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel  
Homily

**The Celebration of Matrimony**

Questions before the Consent  
Consent  
Acclamation  
Blessing and Giving of Rings  
Hymn or Canticle of Praise (Optional)  
Universal Prayer

**The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

Music during the Preparation of the Gifts  
Prayer over the Gifts  
Preface  
The Eucharistic Prayer  
Holy, Holy  
Mystery of Faith  
Amen

**The Communion Rite**

Our Father  
Nuptial Blessing  
Sign of Peace  
Lamb of God  
Communion Procession Hymn  
Prayer after Communion

**The Conclusion of the Celebration**

Solemn Blessing  
Dismissal  
Closing Song/Recessional

# WEDDING PREPARATION TIMELINE AND CHECKLIST



## At least 6 months prior to wedding

- Contact parish office 270-683-6525 to schedule tentative wedding date
- Schedule appointment with the pastor of the Cathedral
- Schedule appointment with priest or deacon who will be presiding if other than the pastor of the Cathedral
- Sign contract and wedding guidelines, and provide \$300 refundable deposit to Cathedral to confirm your wedding date and rehearsal time
  - If a priest other than one at the Cathedral is presiding at your wedding, a letter stating his intent to do the preparation and the wedding must be turned in as well
- Call for Baptismal Certificate at church of baptism
- Plan to attend an Engaged Encounter weekend or meet with a Sponsor Couple

## 3-6 months prior to the wedding

- Discuss musical options with Cathedral Director of Music
- Turn in necessary documents to priest
- Begin preparing the wedding liturgy

## At least 60 days before the wedding

- \$750 balance due to the cathedral for non-parishioners
- Final appointment with the presider

## 30 days before the wedding

- Obtain the civil marriage license and give to the priest/deacon at least one week before the wedding. Kentucky law requires the wedding to take place within 30 days of obtaining civil license.
- Select ministers needed for the wedding
- Please assure everyone in the wedding party, photographer, florist, etc. are aware of the decorations and guidelines.

## Prior to the Rehearsal

- Please ask everyone to be on time for both the rehearsal and the wedding. This is very important since neither can begin until all are present

## Wedding Day

- Arrive at the church at least one hour early. If pictures are being taken before the ceremony, instruct your wedding party to arrive earlier.

## Clean-up after the Wedding

- Remove wedding programs, tissues, or other items from the pews and or tables
- Ensure bridal suite is tidy and all items have been removed.
- Remove all flowers, candles, petals, decorations, etc.
  - Flowers may remain in the church as a gift

**Wedding Guidelines Agreement**

*We have received and thoroughly read the Wedding Guidelines for Saint Stephen Cathedral, and we agree to abide by the guidelines for our wedding. Please return this completed form along with the signed church contract and \$300 refundable damage/cleaning deposit for the church.*

Name of Bride: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Groom: \_\_\_\_\_

Groom Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Groom Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Wedding Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Wedding Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Rehearsal Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Priest celebrating your wedding: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Office Use: Letter received from priest, if needed? Yes NA )*

Musician: \_\_\_\_\_ Cantor: \_\_\_\_\_

LIVESTREAM *(please circle)*: Yes No

FULL MASS *(please circle)*: Yes No

Name of person responsible for church and bridal suite cleanup *(can be filled in at a later date)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Bride Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Groom Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_