

WEDDING PLANNING HANDBOOK

*St. Helen Church
2315 W. Augusta Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60622*





Saint Helen Parish

2315 West Augusta Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60622

Dear Engaged Couple:

Congratulations on your forthcoming marriage! This holy union for which you seek the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is one of the most important relationships in the life of a Christian who chooses to marry.

We at St. Helen Church consider it a privilege to serve you and our Lord, Jesus Christ, as you prepare to come into His sanctuary and publicly make your vows, seeking guidance and blessings from Holy Scripture.

As you no doubt realize, this next step in your life will be a big one- something which should not be taken lightly, yet one that comes with many joys and blessings.

We are concerned about you and your future life together in holy wedlock. That is why we strive to do our best to prepare couples seeking marriage build a strong foundation for their marriage. That foundation, of course, is Jesus Christ and him crucified.

May the Lord bless your preparation time, as you seek to do his will in all aspects of your life.

Please take the time to carefully read through and understand this entire handbook.

It will help guide us in the preparation and planning of this special wedding ceremony where the Lord will declare you to be husband and wife.

In Christ,
St. Helen Parish

First step

[Note: All previous marriages are presumed to be valid by the Catholic Church. A previously married person is free to marry in the Catholic Church only if the former spouse is deceased or if the previous marriage has been declared null by the church tribunal.]

Documents, which should be completed and returned to before wedding:

1. Baptismal Certificate (issued not earlier than 6 months before the wedding date)
2. Confirmation Certificate
3. Marriage license obtained from City Hall (valid only 60 days)
4. Required Promise in Interfaith Marriages
5. Marriage Preparation Classes (Archdiocesan Pre-Cana Program)

Your **Marriage license** should be given to the priest at the rehearsal.



Wedding Date

To avoid scheduling conflicts, please call the church office before you make reservations for a reception, etc. The dates of your wedding service and rehearsal must be approved by the pastor or parish staff.

The date and time available for a wedding will depend on what other activities the congregation has previously scheduled.

No weddings may be scheduled

- December 23 – 25
- Palm Sunday
- During Holy Week
- Easter Sunday

Music

Your wedding is a sacred moment; sacred music is appropriate. Please contact the Director of Music, Mrs. Katie Rholl at least 3 months in advance of your wedding date, to schedule a consultation regarding the music at your celebration. Our organist has the first right of refusal for all weddings. This means you must contact him to make all music arrangements, and if she is unavailable, she will find another organist for your ceremony. You will discuss music decisions with him directly.

The Wedding Liturgy

The model for any liturgical celebration in the Catholic tradition is the Sunday liturgy, since it is the heart of our worship life.

Liturgy is communal prayer. The ceremony is community-oriented as well as prayerful, personal, beautiful and memorable both for the couple and for their assembled relatives and friends.

This community focus does not mean that you, as a couple, will be unable to make this celebration “your own.” In addition to choosing members of your wedding party, you are encouraged to select from among the options provided by Catholic tradition, readings from Sacred Scripture, prayers and music.

- **Interfaith Weddings:** It is usually preferable to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in the context of a Liturgy of the Word rather than a Mass.
- **Introductory Rites:** While guests are assembling, instrumentalists or vocal soloist may perform appropriate music. The purpose of the prelude music is to gather up and unite the thoughts of all present and to prepare them for the celebrations of Christian marriage.
- **Liturgy of the Word:** You will invite readers from among your family and friends to proclaim the first and second readings you have chosen – from the Old and New Testaments, respectively. These readers should be selected for their devotion to the Word of God, and for their ability to speak clearly in public. Do not include the actual

text of these readings and other prayers in programs or worship aids. The assembly will benefit more from listening actively to the readings and prayers well prepared and well proclaimed. The Responsorial Psalm and Gospel acclamation will be sung. The cantor will sing verses of each, with the assembly singing a simple response after the verses. The priest or deacon will proclaim the Gospel, which is followed by the homily.

- **Rite of Marriage:** The Marriage Rite includes the statement of the couple's intentions, the exchange of vows, the blessing and exchange of rings, and general intercession.
- **Liturgy of the Eucharist:** The gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar by two of your family members or friends who will be participating in the Holy Communion.
- **Concluding Rites:** The blessing and dismissal are followed immediately by strong, joyous recessional music, which can be a song sung by the assembly or an instrumental selection.

Other Considerations

- **Attendants:** The Church requires you to be married in the presence of an ordained minister and two witnesses. You may choose to have honorary witnesses (bridesmaids and groomsmen).
- **The Presentation of Flowers to the Blessed Mother** is not actually a part of the rite. It is best done privately, immediately following the liturgy, but not during it.



Rehearsal

Normally, all rehearsals are held the evening before the wedding.

- **Rehearsal must start on time:** There may be two rehearsals on one evening. Members of the wedding party should arrive at

least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled rehearsal time. Please remind them of traffic delays on Highway 78 in Snellville on Friday evenings, and ask them to plan accordingly.

- **Rehearsal will proceed in a quiet, dignified manner:** Members of the wedding party should be reminded that they are in a holy place. They should dress appropriately.

Decorations

To maintain proper reverence for the Lord's house, the decorations may be as simple or elaborate as the couple chooses as long as they conform to the policies given in this document.

Marriage/unity candles are the responsibility of the couple. They can be purchased locally at a Christian bookstore or at the parish office. Plastic sheets must be placed under the candles to prevent wax from dripping on the altar cloth.

White center aisle runners may be rented from outside sources. The center aisle of the church is approximately 60 ft. If bows, ropes, or ribbons are to be attached to pews, wire/metal fasteners and tape are not to be used (they damage the pews).

Please ask your florist for special plastic pew clips designed for this purpose. All decorations should be removed from the church the day of the wedding so that the custodian may clean the church for any upcoming worship services.



Gifts and Fees

It is customary to make an offering to the church on the occasion of marriage. The offering is made to the Church and the Parish Office will advise you of the fees.

[This offering covers the cost of heating, air conditioning, light and maintenance of the Church. It is not for the personal use of the priest or deacon. It does not include the fee for the music ministers.]

Any fees pertaining to music will be discussed directly with the Parish Director of Music, Mrs. Katie Rholl.

It is also customary to give each altar server a gratuity of at least \$10 cash.

Photography

We understand that photographs are important reminders of your wedding. We ask that these pictures be taken and completed 30 minutes before or after the ceremony. The officiant will be happy to pose with you in the first picture immediately after the ceremony; please understand that he will have many other weekend commitments, and may not be available if your pictures are delayed.

After the wedding, you may stay 20 minutes for posed pictures. The sanctuary is a sacred place in our Catholic tradition. The altar is consecrated as a symbol of Christ's presence. It is inappropriate to use the sanctuary as a studio for casual photographs. In particular, sitting on the floor or on the sanctuary steps, and moving the altar or leaning against it are not permitted.

*A Wedding Is A Day
A Marriage Is A Lifetime*

The Wedding Guide was created to assist the bride and groom in the planning of their nuptial ceremony or liturgy. It is our mission to insure that each wedding is prayerful and memorable. The Wedding Guide arranges an initial consultation with each bridal party, conducts the rehearsal and directs the wedding service. Our primary expectations are that each marriage celebration be sacred in nature and follow the regulations set by St. Helen's and the Catholic Church. We hope that your wedding day is a beautiful and memorable occasion. May the Lord bless both of you abundantly on your journey together.

