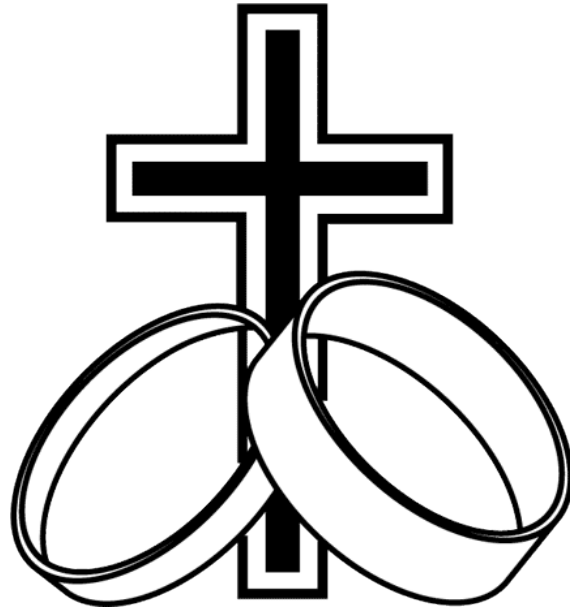


Marriage, You, and Santo Christo Parish



**Santo Christo Parish
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Guidelines for Marriages at Santo Christo Parish, Fall River, MA

Congratulations! Our warmest wishes and prayers for you two. We congratulate you on your upcoming wedding and urge you to consider the sacredness of marriage. Besides being a very meaningful social occasion for you and your families, it is a profoundly sacred reality, as you are receiving the Sacrament of Marriage.

By your marriage in the Church, you are making a public statement of your faith and your love and fidelity to each other and to Christ, within the community of the Church. Please take this time to spiritually prepare yourselves for living out the Sacrament of Marriage.

General Guidelines:

1. It is presumed that either the **bride** or the **groom is a member of Santo Christo Parish** and that the Catholic party/ies is/are practicing their faith. It would be our hope and expectation that Catholics are **faithful to the weekly celebration of the Eucharist (Mass)**.
2. The Guidelines for the Diocese of Fall River in regards to the Sacrament of Marriage clearly state that those wishing to marry are to notify the parish priest at least a minimum of **eight months** before the requested wedding date. **It is highly recommended that anyone wishing to marry contact the parish at least one year before the requested date** since there are many different requirements for the couple to fulfill and participate in. Further, **the couple is required to have an initial meeting** with one of the parish priests **in order to secure a wedding date**. Please note: for pastoral reasons, weddings are not celebrated any later than 1:30 PM on Saturdays.
3. Church law requires that both parties be free to marry and that the parish priest must ascertain this fact. Therefore, **no wedding date** can be established or confirmed **over the phone**, nor can it be arranged by anyone other than the **parties themselves**. Both parties must be present for this initial meeting with the parish priest. Couples are asked to set up an initial appointment with the priest **as soon as possible**, but before they book the hall.
4. As soon as a wedding date is secured with the parish priest, **the couple is required to take part in the Marriage Preparation Program** of the Diocese of Fall River, as part of their spiritual preparation for Marriage. This program consists of participation in a Marriage Preparation workshop and can be registered online at <http://www.fallriverfaithformation.org/marriage/marriage-prep/>. Marriage Prep classes are usually held in Dartmouth, Mansfield and Cape Cod.

5. In addition to the Diocesan Marriage Preparation Workshop that all couples are required to attend, our Parish will provide an opportunity for all couples to participate in the **FOCCUS Marriage Survey**. Please set up a time with the priest working with you, but set up this appointment **BEFORE** you attend the Diocesan Marriage Preparation Program. The FOCCUS Survey normally takes one hour at most to complete.

Required Diocesan Documentation:

1. Once the Marriage Preparation workshop has been completed **the couple is expected to contact the parish office 508-676-1184 to arrange an appointment with the parish priest** to complete the required Diocesan documentation and pastoral planning for the Liturgical celebration of the Sacrament.

Please Note: Arranging this appointment with the priest is to be completed after the Marriage Preparation Program, **but no later than four months before the wedding date.**

2. There is also the need for planning the Liturgy of your Wedding. When you meet with the parish priest, you will be given a pamphlet (“Together for Life”) to assist you. The priest will go over this with you and ask you to complete the form in the rear of the book and to return it **at least two weeks before the wedding!**

3. Likewise, please note that **each couple must obtain a valid Marriage License** from any city or town hall in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The process of obtaining this license should be undertaken at least one month prior to the intended wedding date. The license is to be given to the priest as soon as it is received by the couple, which is expected **before** the date of the wedding rehearsal.

Please note: In the event that a couple decides to **postpone** or **cancel** a wedding date, we would ask that they notify the parish office as soon as possible.

Music:

1. It is strongly suggested that **as soon as you secure a wedding date** from the parish priest, **that you contact a liturgical (church) musician** to provide music for your wedding. We recommend the following Organists for your wedding:

Suzette Cruz-Augusto (Port/Eng)	508-496-8988
John Travers (Port/English)	401-297-1501
Scott Lariviere (English)	774-301-5780
Kyle Medeiros (Port/English)	401-855-5585
Betty Henderson (Port/English)	401-625-5594
Caterina Avelar (Port/English)	508-728-5285
Madeline Grace (English)	508-678-1054

2. You are free to choose another liturgical musician to provide music for your wedding. It is required however, that liturgical music be an important part of your wedding liturgy. For that reason, we require that a musician, who is currently employed in that capacity, in another Roman Catholic parish community, provide the music for your wedding liturgy. **A non-liturgical musician or singer is not allowed to provide the music for wedding liturgies.** Please Note: Secular (non-Church) music is not suitable or appropriate for the liturgical celebration of Marriage. Please see the parish priest regarding any questions or for more information.

Flowers and Decorations:

1. It is the usual custom that the **couple provide two medium size flower arrangements for the altar** at the time of their wedding. It is also the expected and accepted practice that these flowers remain in the Church after the wedding. More than just decoration, these flowers are an offering to the Lord and should continue to adorn the altar.

2. **Any other type of floral arrangements should be discussed with the parish priest** prior to contacting the florist. Please be sure to discuss your plans with the parish priest well in advance of your wedding date.

3. Flower deliveries or setups by **florists/arrangers must be scheduled** in advance of the wedding date. The parish is not responsible for floral arrangements left outside due to florists not scheduling a time for delivery. You are permitted to provide bows or flowers for the pews if you so desire. **For reasons of safety, you are strongly encouraged NOT to utilize an ‘aisle runner’ for the main aisle of Church.** If you wish to use a *Wedding Unity Candle* please discuss this with the parish priest prior to obtaining one.

Photographers and Videographers:

The Photographer, as well as the Videographer, **as a matter of courtesy should speak with the priest celebrant before** the liturgy begins. The photographer is welcome to take pictures throughout the celebration, as long as the celebration is not disrupted in any way. In no case is the photographer or videographer allowed within the inner sanctuary area of the Church.

Rice Throwing:

The throwing of rice, birdseed, rose petals, bubbles, and/or any confetti-like object is not allowed within the Church building or outside on the grounds due to the very serious problem of safety and cleaning. It also doesn't add to the sacredness of the marriage liturgy.

Offering to the Church:

1. It is customary to make **an offering to the Church** on the occasion of a marriage (the usual offering is a donation of \$200). There are separate fees for musicians and altar servers. If the couple wishes, a donation may also be made to the officiating priest or deacon.
2. In the event that you would like to have an altar server for your wedding, and provided that we are able to obtain them for you, it is customary to give a small gratuity to those who serve the wedding.

Wedding Rehearsal:

1. Your **wedding rehearsal** should be scheduled when you meet with the parish priest. Generally, the rehearsal is scheduled an evening or two before the actual wedding date. **All who will be attending the rehearsal are expected to be on time.** This is important since it is always possible that another rehearsal may follow your own. The cooperation and participation of all present is both expected and appreciated.
2. Those who **must attend the rehearsal** are: the bride and groom; best man and maid of honor; the bridesmaids; the ushers; ring bearers; flower girls; and the parents of the couple. In addition, those who are doing the readings and bringing up the gifts for the celebration should attend as well. In a word, anybody who will be formally seated or participating in any way should be present for the rehearsal.
3. A note in regards to ring bearers and flower girls: If you do select very young children for these roles (under age 5), you run the risk of their not understanding where to go or what to do. Experience has made this very clear to any person involved in wedding preparations. Please consider an older child in fairness to them and to the celebration.
4. Please remember that a **valid marriage license** is to be given to the parish priest or to the parish office well in advance of the wedding rehearsal.

Wedding Reception:

Please do not assume that the parish priest will be able to attend your wedding reception. This is usually not possible because of the parish schedule as well as other commitments. Your understanding in this regard is most appreciated.

Checklist for Church Requirements

- Initial Paperwork with Parish
- Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates
- FOCCUS
- Marriage Prep / Pre-Cana Class
- FOCCUS / Pre-Cana Class Review
- Mass Selection Sheet (Together for Life)
- Contacted Musician
- Rehearsal Date Set
- Marriage License
- Church Offering