

The Sacrament of Marriage

at Saint Brigid Catholic Church



Congratulations on your engagement.

We are so happy you will begin your life together with the Sacrament of Marriage. Preparing for your life together is an exciting and wonderful time in your life. We hope this booklet will help answer your questions about preparation for marriage and the celebration of your wedding at Saint Brigid.

After you are married and settled in your new home, I urge you to seek out a parish where you live. Introduce yourself to the staff of that parish, register as a parishioner, and most importantly become active in that parish community.

Please feel free to call on us at any time if you have questions. The staff and clergy of Saint Brigid wish you every blessing as you begin your married life together.

God bless,

Father Neil Herlihy
Pastor of Saint Brigid Catholic Church

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1. Who can marry at Saint Brigid?

Interfaith Marriages

To marry at Saint Brigid at least one member of the couple must be Catholic, but it is not necessary for both the bride and groom to be Catholic. Many of the weddings at Saint Brigid are interfaith marriages.

Parishioner Status

You do not have to be a parishioner of Saint Brigid to marry here.

Freedom to Marry

Both the bride and groom must be “free to marry” in the Catholic Church.

Whenever a couple approaches the Church for marriage one of the first steps is to determine their “freedom to marry”. The Catholic Church recognizes all marriages as valid marriages, so if *either* the bride or groom was previously married, and the former spouse is still alive, then that previous marriage is considered when determining freedom to marry. A "previous marriage" includes any legal marriage (e.g. in a Catholic church, a church of other denomination, or a civil ceremony) and applies to both the Catholic party and the non-Catholic party.

In the case of a previous marriage, Freedom to Marry may be established with the help of a deacon by completing a marriage case with the Tribunal of the Archdiocese. (either an Annulment or Lack of Form case) If this is necessary, a deacon of Saint Brigid can help you contact the Archdiocese of Atlanta to start the process. A wedding date may not be scheduled until Freedom to Marry has been granted. Please contact us with any questions.

2. Scheduling your Wedding

Your first step is to contact the wedding office at weddings@saintbrigid.org

Please include the name of both bride and groom, contact information and any wedding dates you are considering. We will check availability for you and answer your questions.

All reservations are made on a first come, first served basis. Weddings should be scheduled at least 6 months before your wedding date, but not more than 18 months before the date.

After you receive information on availability from the wedding office, your next step will be to meet with our pastor Father Neil to discuss your desire for marriage and plan for marriage preparation. After your meeting you will be able to schedule your desired date.

Wedding Times

Weddings at Saint Brigid are celebrated on Saturdays at 11 am, 2 pm or 7 pm and occasionally on Fridays at 4pm. The wedding times cannot be changed.

You may arrive at the church one hour before your scheduled wedding for preparations and photographs, and stay 30-45 minutes after the wedding for photographs.

Clergy

Usually a priest or deacon from Saint Brigid will preside at your ceremony, or you may invite a priest or deacon from a different parish to come to Saint Brigid for your wedding.

Please note: In rare circumstances it may be necessary to reassign your wedding to another member of our clergy due to scheduling conflicts or clergy reassignments to other parishes.

Visiting Clergy

Visiting Catholic priests or deacons from other parishes are welcome to celebrate weddings at Saint Brigid, or you may invite a clergy relative or family friend to celebrate your wedding.

All visiting clergy will need to contact our pastor to request delegation (permission) to celebrate the sacrament at Saint Brigid.

Clergy who are not of the Archdiocese of Atlanta will also need to arrange for faculties in Atlanta by providing a Statement of Good Standing to the Archbishop's office.

Interfaith Marriages

If you are marrying someone of a different faith, we welcome his/her minister or rabbi to participate in the ceremony in some way, usually by giving a special blessing. You can ask your priest or deacon for more details.

3. Facilities and Fees

Facilities

Weddings may be scheduled in either the Main Church or the Chapel.

The Main Church can accommodate up to 800 guests.

The Chapel seats up to 75 people, including the wedding party. The altar area in the chapel is small, so we recommend 2-3 bridesmaids at most for a chapel wedding.

Bride's Room: The bride's room is available for the bride and her bridal party starting one hour before the scheduled wedding time.

Elevator: Saint Brigid is equipped with a centrally located elevator for anyone that may have difficulty with stairs.

Fees

A wedding fee is required to help maintain the church facility and provide wedding services.

The fee is \$1500 for a wedding in the Main Church, or \$1000 in the Chapel. A discount for active parishioners is available (see below*)

The wedding fee includes:

- Reservation of the church and bride's room for your rehearsal and wedding.
- A Wedding Director who will meet with you to plan your ceremony and facilitate at your rehearsal and ceremony.
- A Music Consultation with our music department.
- An Organist to play at your ceremony
- Marriage Preparation materials

Your Wedding Date is confirmed upon receipt of the signed Reservation Form and wedding fee, checks payable to **Saint Brigid Catholic Church**

Active Parishioner Discount: The wedding fee is discounted if the couple (or their parent) is an "active and registered parishioner" of Saint Brigid. To qualify for this discount, you must be registered and active at Saint Brigid for at least six months **before you reserve your wedding date. An "active" parishioner is defined by regular attendance at Mass, volunteer work in parish ministries and/or financial contribution on record at the parish. Please contact us for more details.*

Other Optional Fees

Additional Musicians: The organist is included in the wedding fee, but there would be an additional fee for other musicians or vocalists.

Altar Servers: If there are altar servers at your ceremony, it is customary for the groom to give them a stipend. to the altar servers. The suggested amount is at least \$20 for each server.

Stipend for Clergy: Many couples make a personal gift to the priest or deacon who presides at their wedding. The amount is entirely up to your discretion.

Refund Policy

If a wedding is cancelled at least six months before the date of the ceremony, the fee is fully refundable to the party who paid the fee. The fee is non-refundable if cancelled less than six months before the ceremony.

4. Marriage Preparation

All couples who request marriage at Saint Brigid must participate in Catholic Marriage Preparation.

Marriage Preparation at Saint Brigid typically includes:

- 3 or 4 meetings as a couple with the priest or deacon who will perform the ceremony *~and~*
- Participation in the Saint Brigid Sponsor Couple Program

If you do not live in the Saint Brigid area or are registered at another parish, you may complete marriage preparation at another Catholic parish that is more convenient to you. Proof of attendance at the marriage prep program is required.

Why is Marriage Preparation Required? As a newly engaged person, you are probably very focused on the details of your ceremony and reception. Marriage preparation helps you to also consider those variables that contribute to the success of your marriage and the happiness of your future life together.

Your engagement is also a good time to think about the practice of your faith and your participation in the Sacraments. Frequent participation in the Sacraments, especially Sunday Mass and Reconciliation, will give you a solid foundation to build your marriage and family life.

5. Required Documentation

The following documents will be required during the Marriage Preparation process when completing your wedding file:

Baptism Certificates

If you were baptized in the Catholic faith, you will need to request a **recent** copy of your baptism certificate from the parish where you were baptized. Please request a newly issued baptism certificate “with all notations.”

If you were baptized in another Christian religion, you will be asked to provide a certificate or other proof of baptism.

Affidavits of Freedom to Marry

The bride and groom will each be asked to provide two (2) affidavits testifying to their Freedom to Marry. The affidavit forms will be provided to you. These affidavits are usually completed by parents, but may be completed by anyone who has known you since childhood.

Marriage License

You must obtain a Georgia Marriage License. A marriage license can be obtained at any county Probate Court in the State of Georgia, and is valid anywhere in the state.

The Marriage License can be turned in to the Saint Brigid office for safe keeping in your file before the wedding, or you may bring it with you to the wedding rehearsal. ***Please note it is illegal in Georgia for clergy to officiate at a wedding unless the license is in hand.*** Assurances that the license has been issued are not sufficient, and the rehearsal will not take place if the license is not in hand.

6. Planning the Ceremony

Full Mass or Simple Ceremony?

When planning your ceremony, your first step is to decide whether you would like a Full Mass or Simple Ceremony.

A Simple Ceremony includes the Liturgy of the Word and the Sacrament of Marriage. A Simple Ceremony is often chosen for a mixed marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic when many in the congregation will not be receiving

Communion. (though it is possible to have a Nuptial Mass at a mixed marriage if that is desired.)

A Ceremony with a Full Mass (also known as a "**Nuptial Mass**") is a wedding that includes both the Sacrament of Marriage and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Communion is distributed to Catholic members of the congregation. A marriage between two Catholics is often celebrated during a Nuptial Mass. The sacramental graces received thru the reception of the Eucharist, in addition to the sacrament of Marriage, will continue to bless and strengthen their marriage throughout their life.

A Priest is required for a Nuptial Mass, but a Deacon may preside at a Simple Ceremony.

Readings and Prayers

Your clergy will provide you with a booklet of options for readings and prayers at the ceremony, and explain how to make your selections. Your selections should be given to both your clergy and your wedding director at least one month before your wedding date.

Your Saint Brigid Wedding Director

We are happy to provide a wedding director for your wedding at Saint Brigid. The wedding director is assigned by the parish, and will assist with the planning of your ceremony. She will coordinate both the rehearsal and wedding to organize the procession and make sure everything flows smoothly.

Your wedding director will contact you approximately two to three months before the wedding to schedule a meeting, and will be able to answer all your questions about the ceremony.

Wedding Consultants: If you choose to hire an additional Wedding Consultant, please advise them of the wedding policies and procedures of Saint Brigid. The consultant should know that the ceremony and rehearsal are under the direction of clergy and the Saint Brigid Wedding Director.

Music

You will receive a separate music packet by email when your wedding is confirmed on the calendar. The packet will include a list of suggested music selections.

Please note that any music not on the suggested list must be approved by the Music Director.

The Wedding Music Director will contact you about 3 months before your wedding to discuss and finalize music for your ceremony.

The organist is included in your wedding fee, but the Music Director can also arrange for a vocal soloist or other musicians if you like. There is an additional fee for vocalist and instrumentalists.

General Guidelines for Music at your Wedding

- Only live music is allowed; *recorded music is not allowed.*
- All music, including vocal solos, must be sacred in nature and suitable for liturgy.
- All musicians, either instrumental or vocal, must perform in the upper level gallery of the Main Church.
- The Director of Music must approve any guest organists, instrumental musicians and soloists. A member of our music staff will be present at the wedding, even if you have other musicians, to assist and oversee the equipment.

Flowers, Candles and Decorations

Altar Flowers

Every weekend two fresh flower arrangements are placed on the altar on each side of the tabernacle. These arrangements are usually sponsored by a parishioner family to honor an event or anniversary; you may sponsor the flower arrangements for the weekend of your wedding if you wish. Currently the cost to sponsor the arrangements is \$150 (\$75 each)

If you do sponsor the arrangements you may choose the *color* of flowers in the arrangements, but the actual flower type will be chosen by the Saint Brigid florist based on seasonal availability. The arrangements will then remain at Saint Brigid after the wedding for the rest of the weekend.

If you would like to sponsor the flowers please contact your Wedding Director or the Altar Flower Ministry.

Other options for Flowers

If you do not wish to sponsor the flowers, you may order custom arrangements from your florist. If custom arrangements are provided by your florist, they should be removed immediately following the ceremony and the church's arrangements put back in place.

Another option is to use the white silk flower arrangements available at Saint Brigid for your use. There is no cost to use the silk arrangements.

Additional floral arrangements or decorations are allowed in the church if desired, but must be in line with Saint Brigid guidelines. You will receive a *Florist Agreement* detailing the specific guidelines about placement of floral arrangements in the church, and your Wedding Director will also be able to assist you.

Unity Candle and Candelabras

The unity candle is common wedding tradition but is not required. A brass unity candle stand is provided, but the couple must provide the actual unity candle. The unity candle stand will accommodate a pillar candle that is 3¼” or less in diameter.

There are also two seven-candle candelabras available for the altar if requested. The candles in the candelabras are provided by Saint Brigid. Your florist may decorate the candelabras and/or the unity candle stand if you like, but that is not required.

Pew Decorations

Pew bows or decorations may be used but they must be affixed with plastic clips or ribbon. Tacks, staples, tape or putty are **not** permitted on the church walls or furnishings. Pew decorations may not contain any type of shedding greenery or candles.

Aisle runners

Aisle Runners are **not** allowed because of our insurance and liability concerns. Thank you for your understanding.

Seasonal Decorations

Any seasonal church decorations flowers (such as Easter or Christmas), as well as all sanctuary furnishings, coverings, flags, etc. must remain in place and may **not** be moved for your ceremony.

Outside Wedding Decorations

You may decorate the outside handrails of the main stairs. The entry doors may **not** be decorated. Please discuss any outside wedding decorations with your Wedding Director to make sure they meet Saint Brigid guidelines.

Clean Up of Decorations

All wedding decorations, with the exception of sponsored flower arrangements, must be taken down and cleaned up immediately following the ceremony by your Florist or other designated individual. This includes pew decorations, outside decorations and any additional flowers.

The Wedding Director is not responsible for clean-up. We ask that you leave the church as you found it so the space will be ready for the next parish event.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers

Flower petals, real or artificial, may not be tossed or sprinkled on the floors of the church, chapel or anywhere in or outside the church building or parking lot.

For ring bearers, the “real” rings to be used in the ceremony should not be attached to the ring bearer’s pillow.

After many years of experience, we suggest a minimum age of 3½-4 years for both flower girls and ring bearers.

Photography and Video

We know that photos are an important part of your wedding day, but we do ask that your professional photographer, as well as any unofficial family photographers, maintain the sacred nature of the occasion and conduct themselves accordingly.

To minimize distraction during the liturgy, the photographer should remain in the back rows of church (behind all guests) during the procession and ceremony. Any “down the aisle” pictures are only allowed from the back of the church. The photographer should not be near the altar or in front of the congregation during the procession or ceremony.

The photographer should be dressed appropriately for a formal church service.

You are allowed 30 minutes after the ceremony for posed photographs. Posed photographs involving clergy and/or altar servers should be taken first.

Video

Video equipment is allowed in designated areas of the choir loft only. All equipment should be set up and in place at least 30 minutes before the ceremony. Cameras should be stationary during the ceremony (no roving cameras) and may not be near or around the Altar area.

Livestreaming

You may request to livestream the ceremony to your family not in attendance, but Saint Brigid does not provide the equipment or built-in capability to livestream. You will need to plan for the required equipment and internet platform. Please discuss your plans for livestreaming with your Wedding Director.

You will receive a Photographer Agreement and Videographer Agreement for a complete list of photo and video guidelines. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make sure these guidelines are communicated to their vendors, guests and family.

Saint Brigid Church reserves the right to ask anyone in violation of these rules to correct the violation immediately or leave the premises. This includes members of the wedding party, outside wedding consultants, photographer, videographer or another vendor.

7. The Wedding Rehearsal

Wedding Rehearsals are scheduled on the day before your ceremony, usually on Friday at 6:00pm.

The rehearsal is limited to forty-five (45) minutes to allow for other wedding rehearsals and special events that take place on Friday evenings at Saint Brigid. **The bride and groom are asked to communicate the need for prompt attendance of the wedding party. All involved in the rehearsal should arrive at least 20 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time.**

All members of the wedding party should be mindful that they are within a sacred place; respectful behavior is expected from everyone.

Both the wedding rehearsal and the ceremony are under the direction of the Saint Brigid Wedding Director and clergy. If you choose to have an additional bridal consultant please ask them not to interfere with the direction of clergy or the Saint Brigid Wedding Director.

8. General Guidelines

- Smoking is not allowed anywhere in the parish buildings.
- Food, drinks or alcohol is not allowed in the church, bride's room or on parish grounds (i.e. no picnics). *Make sure your wedding party is aware of this policy so they can eat before they arrive.*
- No rice, bird seed, confetti, bubbles or flower petals may be thrown or used on the parish grounds. The stairs especially can be dangerous if slippery. Please advise your guests of this policy.
- Do not form a receiving line after the ceremony. You have a limited time for photographs after the wedding. The receiving line should take place at the reception.
- The Bride's Room is for the exclusive use of the bride and her bridesmaids only. Please remember no food or drink is allowed in the Bride's Room.

- All personal items must be removed from the Bride's Room **prior** to the ceremony. The parish is not responsible for the security of personal items.
- It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to ensure the florist, photographer, videographer, wedding party, family and guests are aware of and follow the applicable policies.
- These policies will be strictly enforced to maintain a sacred environment and for the safety of your guests.
- Saint Brigid is not obligated to proceed with the wedding if the requirements for marriage under the State of Georgia or Church law are not met.

Please contact the wedding office with any questions at
weddings@saintbrigid.org

We look forward to helping you with your wedding!

Saint Brigid Roman Catholic Church

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