



Saint John Berchmans Church • Wedding Guidelines

Congratulations on your engagement! The following information should help you as you begin the process of preparing as a couple for the Sacrament of Marriage and your wedding celebration at Saint John Berchmans Church.

“The Sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1661

Step-by-step Checklist

STEP ONE: Meet the Pastor

Contact the pastor, Fr. Patrick Marshall, to make an appointment. This should be done at least six months prior to the wedding date you would like to set. See *Timeline* below. You can contact him at 773-486-4300 or at pmarshall@stjohnberchmans.org.

STEP TWO: Meet for Marriage Preparation

With your presiding celebrant, you will begin the spiritual preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage. See *Marriage Preparation Program* below.

STEP THREE: Meet about the Liturgy

Contact our parish’s Director of Liturgy and Liturgical Ministries, Michael White, to discuss the shape of your wedding ceremony. Beginning with the official ritual of the Catholic Church, the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, you will make decisions about how *your celebration* that will reflect the Church’s joyful vision of the sacrament. You can contact Michael White at mwhite@stjohnberchmans.org.

STEP FOUR: Meet about the Music

Contact our parish’s Director of Music Ministry, Michael Ruzicki, to start planning the music for your wedding. A short thirty-minute meeting will be needed to discuss options and listen to samples. If you have unique requests, family or friends that would like to participate, or a desire for more instruments or singers, contact Michael at least four months prior to your wedding. You can reach Michael Ruzicki at mruzicki@stjohnberchmans.org.

STEP FIVE: Submit Your Ritual Overview Document

After meeting with your presiding celebrant, the parish liturgy director, and parish music director, you will have a completed a Ritual Overview Document. The final version of this ceremony outline should be emailed to each of them at least two weeks prior to the wedding.

Timeline

There should be a six-month period between the initial contact with the parish (and pastor) and the actual marriage ceremony. Meetings with the parish priest and participation in the diocesan preparation programs are a required. Please meet with the pastor before sending wedding invitations to your guests. In addition to the Archdiocesan paperwork that must be completed, you will work with the parish priest, liturgy director, and music director to prepare the liturgical celebration.

Scheduling the Date and Time

Weddings at Saint John Berchmans are ordinarily celebrated on Saturday afternoons at 12:00pm and 2:00pm. Celebrations at other times are possible but are subject to approval by the pastor. Please plan to begin your ceremony on time. You should plan on arriving at the church thirty minutes before the ceremony. Following the celebration, you welcome to remain to take photographs for another thirty minutes. If another liturgy is scheduled after your ceremony, this guideline will be strictly enforced.

Marriage Preparation Program

After meeting with the pastor, together you will determine how you will spiritually prepare for the Sacrament of Matrimony. In consultation, you will select from a number of opportunities provided by the Archdiocese of Chicago: <https://pvm.archchicago.org/lifelong-formation/marriage-and-family-ministries/getting-married>. At your first meeting with the pastor, you will discuss the online FOCCUS survey (Facilitate Open, Couple, Communication, Understanding and Study). During this meeting, you will be asked to complete a Wedding Registration Form, which will provide us with all of the information needed to set up the online survey. Once the FOCCUS survey has been set up, you will each receive an email from FOCCUS with a login ID and password allowing you to access the survey and get started. Your results will be sent directly to the pastor.

The Ceremony

A liturgy planning booklet will be provided, with options for readings, prayers, and petitions, which you can choose for your wedding in consultation with your presiding celebrant. When two Catholics marry, the marriage usually takes place within the celebration of Mass. However, if one of you is not Catholic, a wedding ceremony without Mass may be more advisable. This should be decided in consultation with the pastor and/or your presiding celebrant.

Participants

At a minimum, two witnesses (usually a best man and a maid (or matron) of honor) are required. In an inter-faith marriage, one witness may be a non-Catholic. Aside from the wedding party, you are encouraged to invite friends or family members to read scripture or the general intercessions during the service. You are free to invite priests or deacons who are relatives or friends to participate in your wedding. Priests visiting from other dioceses must have a "letter of good standing" sent from their diocese to ours. In inter-denominational weddings, ministers from other churches are welcome to take part in the ceremony. Please let your presiding celebrant know if other priests, deacons or if a minister will participate.

Music Planning

Our parish music ministry is ready to provide you with joy-filled and liturgically appropriate music for your wedding ceremony. To begin the conversation, each couple should contact our Director of Music Ministry, Michael Ruzicki at mruzicki@stjohnberchmans.org. A separate list of music guidelines and suggestions will be provided. Stipends for musicians are independent of the church stipend.

Altar Servers

Saint John Berchmans is the patron saint of altar servers, so we will be happy to provide servers for your celebration! Ordinarily there are two altar servers. If you want to provide your own servers, please let us know in advance. It is customary to offer a \$20 gift to each altar server, independent of the church wedding fee.

Rehearsal

Be sure to schedule a wedding rehearsal with the parish liturgy director. The wedding rehearsal is usually scheduled to take place during the week before the wedding and should take no longer than an hour. Ideally, the rehearsal for the readers of the Scripture readings and intercessions/petitions can be completed in the first ten minutes of the rehearsal. Following that, we will work with those who are included in the entrance procession and closing recessional. Out of respect for each other and the church, please be prompt and refrain from drinking before or during the rehearsal.

Before the Wedding

The wedding couple, witnesses, and members of the wedding party should arrive at the church no later than thirty minutes prior to the celebration. If the bride and groom wish to remain separate before the liturgy, the bride and her attendants are welcome to wait in the downstairs hall while the groom and his attendants should meet the priest in the sacristy.

Decorations

You are welcome to add flowers to the church on the day of your wedding. Before ordering arrangements, please discuss this with the parish Director of Liturgy in your meeting. At this meeting, you will discuss where floral arrangements can be placed, what can and cannot be placed on the pews, and more. When considering rose pedals, aisle runners, and other decorations, a good rule of thumb is, "you, or someone in your wedding party, should return the church to its original condition. Rice, balloons, and other things items to animals, the environment, or the property should excluded from your visit to St. John Berchmans Parish.

Photography and Videography

Photographs may be taken before, during, and after the liturgical celebration. Please convey to your photographer and videographers the sacred nature of the ceremony. It is also their responsibility to check-in with the presiding celebrant at least thirty minutes before the beginning of the liturgy. During the ceremony, they should remain outside the sanctuary area (below the steps). You are welcome to take post-ceremony photos in the church. Since you have thirty minutes for this, we recommend that you create a photo list of desired shots and let family and friends know that they are needed at this time.

Church Offering

The customary offering for use of Saint John Berchmans Church for weddings is \$1200 for parishioners and \$1500 for non-parishioners. Stipends for musicians is arranged independent of this offering. Considering the costs of a wedding, an offering to the Church should be proportioned to other expenses. An initial nonrefundable deposit of \$500 will reserve the date for your wedding (due at the first meeting with the pastor), and the balance is due before your final meeting with the priest.

Wedding Planners

Outside wedding planners are helpful in looking at the big picture and making attending to the small details Be assured that the liturgical team at St. John Berchmans is prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony with you with style and grace. Your contracted wedding planner should check-in with the presiding celebrating and parish director of liturgy. In the planning process, our parish team will only work with the bride and groom.

Marriage Licenses

To obtain a license, bride and groom must appear together at a County Clerk facility and present two forms of identification. The license is effective one day after you obtain it and is valid for sixty (60) days thereafter. A list of county facilities can be found on the attached wedding checklist.

Prayer of Blessing for an Engaged Couple

May God, who in His gentle plan draws you together in love for one another, strengthen your hearts so that you will keep faith with each other. May you grow in your respect for one another and cherish each other with a sincere love and come to the happiness of celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage. May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

- *A Baptismal Certificate*, with notations and less than six months old, is required for each Catholic. In an inter-faith marriage, the non-Catholic is asked to provide a baptismal certificate, if possible. Catholics must contact the parish of their baptism to obtain such a certificate.
- *Confirmation Certificates* for each Catholic, from the parish where you were confirmed.
- *Two Affidavits* each of the bride and groom, affirming freedom to marry. We will provide the forms and suggest that parents or other family members complete these, ordinarily in the presence of a priest or deacon.
- *A Pre-Marital Questionnaire* for both bride and groom, to be completed at one of the initial meetings with the presiding celebrant at Saint John Berchmans Church.
- In an inter-faith marriage, a *Dispensation* is necessary. The document for obtaining it will be completed at Saint John Berchmans.
- The *Marriage License* from the Cook County Clerk. You may obtain the License at one of the following facilities:
 - 118 North Clark Street, Chicago
 - 1500 Maybrook Drive, Maywood
 - 5600 Old Orchard Road, Skokie
 - 2121 Euclid Avenue, Rolling Meadows