

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish
Lindenhurst, New York

WEDDING GUIDELINES





OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP CHURCH

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Dear Friends,

The entire parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help joyfully congratulates you both, and we want you to know of our prayerful support for you on your forthcoming marriage. We join you and your family in looking forward to the day when both of you will pledge and accept your real and exclusive love for each other in the presence of God and the Church. Remember, it takes **three** persons to make a happy, lasting, and sacramental marriage: the husband, the wife, and Jesus Christ.

In order to assist you with the necessary preparations for your marriage and to answer questions you may have regarding this important and religious event in your life, we have prepared the following guidelines. Some of these topics may not apply to your marriage. If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the priest or deacon with whom you are making your arrangements.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY ON YOUR WEDDING DAY AND EVERY DAY OF YOUR LIFE TOGETHER!

Cordially,

The Priests, Deacons, Staff, and Parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish

1. TIMES FOR WEDDINGS

Fridays: 3:00 p.m.
 4:30 p.m.

Saturdays: 10:15 a.m.
 12:00 Noon
 1:30 p.m.
 3:00 p.m.

Sundays: 3:30 p.m. — Ceremony only (no Nuptial Masses on a Sunday)

If you would like a priest or deacon friend or relative to officiate at your wedding, he would be most welcome at OLPH. He will need the proper **delegation**; therefore, please advise him to contact the Pastor concerning this.

2. NEW BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE FOR CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS

Catholic Christians must obtain a recently-dated baptismal certificate, which means a new certificate must be written up within six (6) months of your wedding date. (Original copies of the baptismal certificate are not acceptable.) This may be obtained from the church of your baptism upon request by advising that church of your name, your parents' names, the date of your birth and the fact of your forthcoming marriage. This updated baptismal certificate testifies to a person's freedom to marry and is required by Church law.

3. BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE AND AFFIDAVIT OF FREEDOM FOR NON-CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS

If one of the parties is a non-Catholic Christian, that person must provide his/her original baptismal certificate. In addition, that person must also obtain an affidavit of freedom to marry, signed by two witnesses (parents/guardians/close friends) attesting that he/she has never contracted any marriage before, that neither party is related to the other, and that there are no impediments to the proposed marriage. This affidavit may be obtained from the interviewing priest or deacon.

4. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: YOUNG AGE, PREGNANCY OR PRIOR COUNSELING

- If one of the parties is under 19 years of age, the question of marriage must be submitted to the Bishop.
- If one of the parties is under 21 years of age, a sworn affidavit must be submitted by the parents/guardians giving their permission for the marriage.
- If a pre-marital pregnancy is involved, approval must be received from the Bishop before a date can be set.
- If one of the parties has received any form of psychological or professional counseling, approval may be necessary from the Bishop.

In each of the above cases, special care and concern is given to couples requesting marriage, not to make things more difficult for the parties, but to help ensure the **sacredness and permanence of Christian marriage**. For this reason, in many of the above cases, **a date for your wedding may not be set** until the Bishop's office has been consulted.

5. MARRIAGE BETWEEN A CATHOLIC AND A NON-CATHOLIC

In order that a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic party be valid, a **dispensation** must be obtained from the Bishop of the diocese. Your consulting priest or deacon will obtain this for you and will handle the paperwork with you. The necessary conditions for this dispensation are:

- After prayerful and deliberate discussion between the future spouses about the question of raising all children as Catholics, the Catholic party is asked to promise that he/she will make every effort to bring up all children as Catholics;
- The non-Catholic party must understand the seriousness of this promise and must support this commitment of his/her spouse;
- It is very important that couples of different religious traditions spend time discussing all aspects of their different religious backgrounds as part of their marriage preparation. Your consulting priest or deacon can assist you in discussing this important issue.

6. PREVIOUS MARRIAGES

If your previous spouse is deceased, a death certificate must be presented to the consulting priest or deacon.

If you were previously married in the Catholic Church in a valid marriage and are now divorced, you must obtain a formal Declaration of Nullity (“annulment”) for that previous marriage, and there may be additional requirements accompanying the annulment. The consulting priest or deacon can give you information about beginning this process.

If you were previously married but the marriage was invalid, *i.e.*, not recognized by the Catholic Church, then a Defect of Form must be obtained declaring your freedom to marry. This is handled through your consulting priest or deacon.

*****PLEASE NOTE: IN THE CASE OF A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE OF ANY KIND, A DATE FOR THE WEDDING MAY NOT BE SET UNTIL THE PROPER DECLARATION OF FREEDOM HAS BEEN RECEIVED.**

7. BRIDE OR GROOM FROM A PARISH OTHER THAN OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

Catholic parties from outside Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish should request publication of the **Banns** in their home parish.

8. PRE-CANA MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAM

Pre-Cana is an important requirement in your preparation to be married. Jesus performed His first public miracle at the wedding feast at Cana, and in doing so sanctified the joyful union of husband and wife.

By virtue of having your wedding here at OLPH, you are automatically enrolled in our **Parish Pre-Cana Program**. Our parish program runs for approximately six (6) weeks and is offered at various times throughout the year. It is led by married couples who want to share their faith and marriage experiences with you. The opening and closing sessions take place in conjunction with one of our regularly-scheduled Sunday Masses. This is the preferred format for you to do Pre-Cana.

Occasionally it is impossible for a couple to do the Parish Pre-Cana Program because of scheduling difficulties. In these cases, a diocesan weekend Pre-Cana Retreat may fulfill this requirement in place of the parish program. If this option is chosen as an exception, your consulting priest or deacon can give you information about the diocesan program. Another possible exception is to do Pre-Cana through some other approved program, *e.g.*, in another Catholic parish. This can be discussed with your consulting priest or deacon. **After completing Pre-Cana, whether in-parish or out-of-parish, a certificate of completion must be presented to your consulting priest or deacon.**

9. WEDDING PLANNERS

If you choose to hire a wedding planner, their services will not be used here at the church. All matters concerning the liturgical celebration of your wedding are handled by church personnel, not by outside planners. While a wedding planner is welcome to be present at the wedding liturgy, he/she will not have any say in matters here in church.

10. LITURGY PREPARATION: READINGS, PRAYERS, MUSIC, ETC.

You are to work with your consulting priest or deacon to prepare your wedding liturgy (Mass or ceremony). There are many options for you to consider, and these options are detailed for you in a separate preparation booklet which will be given to you. This booklet will contain materials for selecting prayers, blessings, the form for your vows, Scripture readings, music and other options. Since we are obligated to adhere to the Catholic ritual for celebrating matrimony, **only the options described in those materials may be used; no secular or other elements may be introduced into the liturgy.** This includes the so-called “unity candle,” the “sand ceremony” and other non-liturgical elements. (The appropriate time to include these elements would be at another occasion apart from the church liturgy, for example, at your rehearsal dinner or at your reception.)

Please keep in mind that only music which is proper and fitting to the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony may be used. “Popular” or secular music, or the playing of “our song,” are more appropriate at the reception rather than as part of the Church ceremony, and is therefore **not allowed**. All music and singing

arrangements are discussed and arranged directly with our parish Director of Music, Mr. Christopher Ferraro. He can be reached by email at cferraro@oloph.org or by calling (631) 226-7725 ext. 210.

11. LITURGICAL ENTRANCE PROCESSION

Here at OLPH, all weddings begin with the proper liturgical procession, similar to the procession used at every other sacramental celebration. This form of the procession maintains the symbolic integrity that both the bride and the groom are the central symbols in the sacrament of marriage, that they are equal in dignity, and that they together are the ministers of the sacrament. Thus, the groom will be part of the Entrance Procession. There are two options for this: bride and groom may walk down together, or they may walk down separately, with the bride as the last one to enter and the groom as the next-to-last one to enter before the bride.

Therefore, the order of procession (those to walk in first are listed first) will be as follows, with possibilities for variation as indicated in brackets:

Altar Servers

(Note: An altar server will carry the rings in procession if there is no ring bearer.)

[Those doing Scripture readings]

Priest or Deacon

[Groom's Parents, if they are not accompanying the Groom, if desired]

[Bride's Parent(s) not accompanying the Bride, if desired]

[If parents are not part of the procession they are to be seated before the procession begins]

Bridesmaids and Ushers, **as couples**

Flower Girl and Ring Bearer, if any

Best Man and Maid of Honor, **as a couple**

Bride and Groom **together**

or

Groom with Parent(s)

Bride with Parent(s)

Thus, if the bride and groom do not walk down together, the groom will still be in the procession, and he will be the last one to walk down before the bride.

Please note that only one (1) piece of music will be used for the Entrance Procession, which will then be followed by an Opening Hymn.

Also note, because of their unpredictability, the participation of small children in the wedding party should be carefully considered.

Finally, **no other elements or items are to be included in the Entrance Procession; the carrying of signs or other objects is not permitted.**

12. MARRIAGE LICENSE

A marriage license is obtained at any Town Hall. Both applicants must appear in person to obtain the license. The license does not become effective until twenty-four (24) hours from its issuance, and it is valid for sixty (60) days from the date it becomes effective—your wedding must fall in that sixty-day period.

13. CHURCH AND MUSIC FEES

Sacraments are matters of faith; they are neither sold nor bought. None of us can place any financial value on sacraments, for they are gifts from God freely given and freely received. It is also a reality, however, that our parish has many temporal needs; we have to keep the lights on and our buildings maintained. Our parish has set a fee in accordance with diocesan guidelines. This fee will cover the maintenance costs of our church building and other services associated with a parish wedding such as insurance, sacristan and custodian salaries, *etc.*

The church fee is \$600. The music fee is \$300, which includes the organist and the cantor. Fees may be paid in cash or by check. If by check, there should be two (2) checks, both made out to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, one for \$600 and one for \$300. Fees are to be paid **no later than one (1) month before your wedding date.**

14. FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

Flowers and decorations must follow the norms for the liturgical year and respect the integrity of the liturgical seasons. Thus, there are to be **no flowers at all during Lent, and no Christmas flowers or decorations during Advent.**

Couples arrange for their own floral pieces with the florist of their choice. Normally two (2) arrangements are placed in the sanctuary.

If bows or flowers are to be placed on pews, use rubber bands or ribbons only—use of wire is not permitted.

You are welcome to take your flowers with you after your liturgy. Any flowers and decorations left behind will be removed. In some limited cases they may remain as decorations for the church, but in most cases they will be removed and discarded.

For safety reasons, runners are not permitted at weddings at OLPH.

15. WEDDING BOOKLETS (WORSHIP AID)

A worship aid (wedding booklet) will be provided for your liturgy by the parish and is arranged through our Director of Music. It will follow a standard format, according to the liturgical norms of the Church, but will also incorporate personalized elements such as the options you chose, and other items. Use of this booklet allows those who attend your liturgy to actively participate. You should arrange for your groomsmen/ushers to hand out booklets to your guests as they arrive in church.

16. PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY

Photographers and Videographers must speak to the officiating priest or deacon before the ceremony to confirm the procedures for taking pictures.

PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS MUST USE ONLY THE EXISTING LIGHTING IN THE CHURCH, I.E., NO FLOODLIGHTS OR SPOTLIGHTS. Flash pictures may be taken only during the processional and recessional. **THE PHOTOGRAPHER OR VIDEOGRAPHER IS NEVER TO ENTER THE SANCTUARY OR APPROACH THE STEPS LEADING TO THE ALTAR, AND IS TO REMAIN**

BEHIND THE FIRST ROW OF PEWS AT ALL TIMES. Should the photographer violate these rules at any time, the liturgy will be stopped and that person will be asked to leave the church.

17. REHEARSAL

Wedding rehearsals are usually held on the Friday night prior to the wedding. You must call the rectory to schedule your wedding rehearsal appointment. You may do so as early in the process as you wish. Your consulting priest or deacon can give you further information about setting up the wedding rehearsal.

Please advise your wedding party to be on time, since there might be other rehearsals that evening, and as a courtesy to the parishioners who conduct rehearsals as an offering of their time and service to the parish. **If you have not already given the marriage license to your officiating priest or deacon, you absolutely must bring it to the rehearsal (please be sure to bring the pre-addressed return envelope which is provided with the license). If you have not already paid your church and music fees, you absolutely must bring them to the rehearsal.**

18. YOUR WEDDING DAY—PUNCTUALITY

Your wedding MUST begin ON TIME!!! It is rude to keep all those involved with your wedding waiting. **The ushers, best man and groom are to arrive at the church no later than one-half hour (30 minutes) before the scheduled start time. The bride and bridesmaids are to arrive no later than ten (10) minutes before the scheduled start time. The scheduled start time is the time for the procession to begin, not for the bride to arrive.**

If you are late for your wedding, it may be necessary to shorten or exclude certain parts of your liturgy, at the discretion of the priest or deacon who is officiating. This is particularly true if there is another function in the church scheduled after yours, or if the priest or deacon has another commitment. If you are planning a Nuptial Mass and are late, the Mass may be omitted and there may be only a ceremony.

TO AVOID HEARTACHES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS: PLEASE BE ON TIME!!!

19. ALTAR SERVERS

It is customary to make a small donation (\$10 each) to the two altar servers assigned to serve at your wedding before the liturgy begins.

20. ALCOHOL AND OTHER SUBSTANCES

There is to be absolutely NO drinking of alcohol before your wedding. Absolutely no one should have liquor on his or her breath, nor in any way be under the influence of alcohol or other substances. The use of any illegal, non-prescription substances is absolutely prohibited. Any disregard for this can result in the cancellation of the wedding or the removal of the offender from the premises and participation in the wedding.

21. PARTICIPATION IN WEEKLY MASS

Participation in Mass, and receiving Holy Communion, every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation, except in cases of illness or other serious cause, is a moral obligation binding on all Catholics. We encourage the two of you to participate in Mass together as a way of deepening your oneness in Christ. If it has been a long time since you have been to Mass, we extend a warm welcome for you to return, with no judgment or criticism. If you have been away from Mass, the Church asks that you celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (“go to Confession”) before receiving Holy Communion again.

Please feel free to discuss this issue with your consulting priest or deacon without any fear or embarrassment. We simply want to welcome you back to participation in weekly Sunday Mass.

22. SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (“GOING TO CONFESSION”)

Catholics are encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation before the day of the wedding, if the opportunity has not presented itself as part of the Pre-Cana program. Confession should be attended to before the wedding day and not at the wedding rehearsal. Consult the parish bulletin or parish website for the times of Confession; Confession is also available at any time by appointment with one of the priests.

23. AFTER THE WEDDING—PLEASE DO NOT THROW ANYTHING!

It is not permitted to throw anything after the wedding, *e.g.*, rice, birdseed, confetti, *etc.* Aside from the fact that doing so creates a mess, detracts from the beauty and dignity of the church entrance, and creates a safety hazard to those walking into the church after the wedding, there is also the real issue that, in the case of throwing rice, it is an inappropriate and insensitive gesture to waste food, in view of the number of people in the world who do not have enough food to sustain their lives. The blowing of bubbles has become a popular custom and is permitted as an appropriate gesture.

24. SPECIAL QUESTIONS

Please feel free to discuss any concerns or questions you may have that have not been covered in these guidelines. Your consulting priest or deacon will be happy to assist you.