



On Getting Married at St. Francis Xavier

First off, a word of congratulations as you bring your mutual friendship and love to the life-long commitment of marriage.

If you are both Christian, this commitment is a covenant of love, a symbol of Christ's relationship to his Church.

If one of you is un-baptized, this commitment is equally blessed by God. God whose name is Love is present wherever and whenever husband and wife commit themselves to each other in love.

Thank you for bringing this love into our midst.

We are grateful that you desire to have your wedding at St. Francis Xavier Church. It is our desire as a parish community to help you make the day of your wedding a happy and holy one.

If you are a regular parishioner at St. Francis Xavier or live within the parish boundaries, it is our delight to share this special day in your life here as your parish community. If you are not a regular parishioner, it is our delight to welcome you into our midst as you take this step toward marriage. We will need a letter from local Pastor giving you permission to be married here.

St. Francis Xavier Church is the home of our parish community. Here we gather on Sunday for the Eucharist. Here some of us gather for the Eucharist during the week. Here we baptize our children and many adults who wish to enter the Catholic Church. Here we confirm, reconcile, pray for healing of the sick and bury our departed. Marriage in our midst is a most welcome event whether for parishioners, faculty and alumni of Xavier High School, or visitors who find our Church a lovely place for a wedding.

Because St. Francis Xavier Church is a parish of the Archdiocese of New York, all marriages that take place here are done in accordance with the norms of the Archdiocese.

Again, congratulations. You, your families and your friends are most welcome.

Rev. Robert E. VerEecke, S.J.
Pastor

Rev. Daniel Corrou, S.J.
Associate Pastor

Robert Choiniere
Wedding Coordinator

Introduction

The aim of this booklet, Marriage at St. Francis Xavier, is to assist you in planning your marriage. The various guidelines and suggestions should not be a burden to you. They are intended to make the day of your marriage one of grace-filled memories and to assist in strengthening the commitment that you are about to undertake.

Marriage arrangements should be made directly with the Robert Choiniere who is in charge of wedding coordinating Contact information: <mailto:rchoiniere@sfxavier.org>; 212-627-2100 ext. 225.

But first, two preliminary questions.

(1) The Church is concerned first of all that the two of you are free to get married. And so it asks: “has either of you ever been married before or attempted marriage to another person in Church, civilly, or in common law?” If there is a previous marriage, there must be an annulment by the Catholic Church for the proposed wedding to proceed. If you have any questions about this please contact the Pastor.

(2) The Church, like any other organization, requires certain procedures to be followed. At St. Francis Xavier we require that at least one of you be Roman Catholic, baptized in the Latin rite. The priests here have faculties for the Latin rite. If the Roman Catholic party belongs to an Eastern Church, it is still possible to be married here, but you must provide a priest with faculties for your specific Eastern Church.

Possibilities for Marriage at St. Francis Xavier

– Marriage within the celebration of the Eucharist

The ordinary celebration of marriage between two Catholics is celebrated within the Nuptial Mass. It is fitting that those whose mutual love bears witness to Christ's love for his Church begin their married life with full participation in the Church's Eucharist.

– Marriage as a ceremony without a Eucharist

While two Catholics may also choose to celebrate their marriage outside of the Eucharistic celebration, the celebration of marriage without a Eucharist is proposed for a marriage between two Christians, where only one is Catholic. If only one of the spouses is Catholic, permission of the bishop is required.

A Christian minister who is not Catholic may be invited to offer prayers during the celebration of a Catholic and a non-Catholic, but only the Catholic priest or deacon receives the vows and offers the blessing.

The celebration of marriage without a Eucharist is also proposed for the marriage of a Catholic and one who has not been baptized. This wedding too is made holy by God's presence in your mutual love. A wedding between a Catholic and one not baptized requires a dispensation from the diocese which is easily obtained.

– Marriage under special circumstances

With proper dispensation, a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian may take place in the church of, and according to the norms of, the particular non-Catholic community. This may likewise be done if one of the spouses is an un-baptized person. The place of the marriage, however, must be in some sacred space. The norms of the Archdiocese in regard to place apply.

Marriages at St. Francis Xavier usually take place in the body of the Church.

Any couple may celebrate their wedding in St. Francis Xavier Church if at least one of you is Roman Catholic.

Having an Existing Marriage Blessed or Con-validated by the Church

Roman Catholics are bound to observe a certain form of marriage ritual for their marriage to be valid. Canon law—the law of the Church—requires that Catholics enter into marriage by free mutual consent that is witnessed in a church by an authorized bishop, priest, or deacon and at least two other witnesses. Marriages in which one or both parties are Catholic and which are not witnessed by an authorized bishop, priest, or deacon, or which do not receive proper permission to take place in another forum, are considered invalid in the eyes of the Church.

A couple may later wish to enter into valid Catholic marriage. When they are ready and free to do so, they celebrate what is called a con-validation. This is sometimes referred to as the blessing of a marriage. It is important to realize that a con-validation is not merely a renewal of vows made previously but is a new act of consent by each spouse. This new act of consent is essential to marriage, and the words that the couple expresses are the outward sign of the gift of self that they exchange.

This con-validation of marriage may be celebrated within Mass or outside of Mass, again depending on the particular situation of the couple. If both are Catholic, it is fitting that the con-validation be celebrated within Mass. If one spouse is not, it is preferable that it be

celebrated outside of Mass. A simple celebration with close family and friends may seem more appropriate than a larger celebration.

Witnesses to the Marriage

In the Catholic Church (Latin Rite), the primary ministers of marriage are the couple themselves. The mutual commitment of love seals their marriage. Bearing witness to this mutual commitment is the priest or deacon and two other witnesses [usually a maid of honor and best man] chosen by the couple.

For parishioners of St. Francis Xavier, a person on the staff is available to guide the rehearsal. A priest from the parish will celebrate the marriage with you. Parishioners may also invite another priest or deacon to guide the rehearsal and witness the wedding. The preliminary interviews and the gathering of required documents will usually be done here at St. Francis Xavier.

A person is considered a parishioner who is registered with us for at least six months prior to making wedding arrangements. He/she is part of our worshipping community on a regular basis and provides weekly financial support to the parish. Also, you are considered a parishioner if you live within the parish boundaries. The parish priests will be happy to work with you in preparing and celebrating your wedding.

For those who are not parishioners of St. Francis Xavier, there are two possibilities:

- (a) You may bring your own priest or deacon to guide the rehearsal and witness the wedding.*
- (b) You may invite a priest here at St. Francis Xavier, if he is able to do so, to guide the rehearsal and celebrate the wedding*
- (c) You will need permission from your local Pastor.*

In all cases, however, the interviews and the gathering of documents will usually be done here at St. Francis Xavier parish.

It is customary if you have a visiting (non-Xavier parish) priest or deacon witness your wedding to give some financial gift for this service directly to that person.

Note: the priest or deacon must be registered in the city of New York. This is to be done through the Chancery Office of the New York Archdiocese [1011 First Avenue; New York, NY 10022 (212-371-1000)].

Scheduling the wedding

We ask you to schedule your marriage in St. Francis Xavier Church as soon as you know that you are getting married but at least six months before the wedding date. We strongly recommend that this be done before you arrange the reception. Marriages may be scheduled in the Church on Fridays and Saturdays with proper regard to the other liturgical celebrations of the parish and other scheduled events. No weddings are to be scheduled on Sunday.

The following times are usually available for weddings:

Fridays at 3:00 pm, 5:00 pm

(Note: rehearsals for Saturday weddings are also scheduled at these times)

Saturdays at 3:00 pm or 6:30 pm, or occasionally 1:00 pm

Not all weekend dates are available. Usually, marriages are not scheduled for major holy days and holidays,

During Advent and throughout the penitential season of Lent, in keeping with the custom of the Church, weddings are allowed, but the celebration itself must be more modest. The last two weekends of Lent are closed for weddings.

The availability of someone to preside at your marriage will also have a bearing on scheduling.

THE MARRIAGE OFFERING

St. Francis Xavier Church welcomes you to our community to celebrate your wedding in our lovely church. The church is now air-conditioned and the organ has been restored. We will do our best to insure that your wedding celebration is everything you desire it to be.

Wedding offering

We ask for use of the Church for a wedding an offering of \$3,000.00. That is for two hours, time to gather, for the service and for photographs afterward.

Because St. Francis Xavier Church is a busy church, the wedding procession ought to begin as close as possible to the agreed time. Should a wedding begin more than 30 minutes after that time, the wedding may have to be postponed, and the musicians may no longer be available.

Securing a date

To secure the date for a wedding, please contact Robert Choiniere at rchoiniere@sfxavier.org. A non-refundable deposit of \$300.00 is required. This is included in the \$3,000.00. The remaining \$2,700.00 should be presented one month before the wedding. When you contact Mr. Choiniere he will inform you about the procedure to follow in order to schedule and prepare for your wedding.

Music and musicians

The Music ministry provides an organist and a cantor. The fee for the music is an additional \$600. If you wish for more than organist and cantor, that can be provided for an additional fee.

If you choose to bring your own musicians for some of the music, you must first clear it with John Uehlein, our music director. Since the music ministry must still provide the ceremonial music, the fee remains \$600.

INTERVIEWS

In addition to the rehearsal and the actual wedding itself, we require two or three interviews depending upon individual circumstances.

Preliminary interview with Robert Choiniere Wedding Coordinator
He we will provide you with a list of required documents, materials for pre-wedding conferences and for the wedding itself.

If the first interview is more than six months before the wedding, a second preliminary interview will be required for the pre-Nuptial investigation.

Second Interview

The second interview, which usually comes after the pre-Cana program is complete should take place three months before the wedding. This is to ensure all materials are gathered, to speak of the actual service for the wedding, and to fulfill all financial arrangements for the wedding.

Third interview

This is with the Director of Music to determine the music appropriate for your wedding. Date and time of this interview is to be arranged directly with the director.

If there will be a visiting presider, it is assumed that the priest or deacon who presides at a wedding will be at the rehearsal as well. [Exceptions can be discussed with the wedding coordinator on staff who is handling the arrangements for your wedding.]

Check Lists

Since there are many things that need to be taken care of before your wedding, here is a set of check-lists you might find useful. Please read them carefully and take note of them.

A check list for the requirements for marriage at St. Francis Xavier

- You must schedule your marriage at least six months in advance of the proposed date.
- You must arrange for a priest or deacon to preside at your marriage. Xavier parish priests are primarily responsible for parishioners; they may be available for non-parishioners as mentioned above.
- Non-parishioners must contact the parish of the bride (or the parish of the groom if the bride is not Roman Catholic) and obtain written permission from the parish for the wedding to take place at St. Francis Xavier Church. Have the parish priest complete the form Permission to Marry.
- You must complete a marriage preparation program (Engaged Encounter, Marriage Encounter, or other). When you come for your initial interview we will provide a booklet listing the programs in the Archdiocese of New York. You may choose where you would like to attend a program; if it is more convenient, you may attend a program in another city or diocese.
- A rehearsal for your wedding is highly recommended an evening or two before your wedding. This is scheduled through the parish office. The priest or deacon presiding at the ceremony must be present for this rehearsal.

A check list for the documents required by the Archdiocese and by St. Francis Xavier Church

- An updated Baptismal Certificate. This certificate must be secured not more than six months prior to your wedding and can be obtained by calling or writing the parish of your baptism. Please mention that you are preparing for marriage and need to have the notations on the back filled in. If you are a baptized non-Catholic and a certificate can be obtained, please do so.
- Catholics should obtain First Communion and Confirmation data (parish and date). These should be part of the notations on the Baptismal Certificate, but they may have to be obtained separately if not included.
- Letter from your pastor or a relative stating that you are free to marry, and that you are not now married or otherwise prevented.
- If there was a previous marriage, a death certificate or church annulment must be presented.
- For non-parishioners, a letter from the bride's pastor (or from the groom's pastor, if the bride is not a Roman Catholic) giving permission for the marriage to take place in the Church of St. Francis Xavier (Permission to Marry Form).

- Marriage License. This is obtained from the civil authorities and should be brought to the wedding rehearsal.
- A completed Pre-Nuptial Investigation form. This form is completed by the priest or deacon during the interviews at St. Francis Xavier parish.
- A certificate (or copy) stating that you have attended an Engaged Encounter or other pre-marriage program. Participation in one of these is required, and information concerning these conferences will be provided during your first interview.
- The necessary Dispensation Forms if such are necessary.

A check list regarding the officiating priest or deacon.

- The officiating priest or deacon must be civilly registered to conduct a wedding in the City of New York. This is extremely important. The way to register is through the Chancery Office at 1011 First Avenue in New York (10022). If the one who officiates has previously conducted a wedding in the City of New York, he should already be registered.
- The officiating priest or deacon must obtain delegation from the Pastor or associate Pastor at Xavier Parish.
- Your officiating priest or deacon will assist you in planning the marriage liturgy (please consult the book we provided during the initial interview).
- Whoever is officiating at your wedding is welcome to attend and conduct the wedding rehearsal. The attendance of the priest or deacon helps assure a trouble-free marriage ceremony. One of the parish priests, if free, may be present to offer hospitality but normally does not run the rehearsal if he is not the presiding celebrant.
- Your officiating priest or deacon should complete and sign the marriage license. This is usually done at the rehearsal. Your officiating priest or deacon should not mail the license. The license should be signed by both spouses, the witnesses and the officiating priest or deacon. Your license should be left with a member of our parish staff or receptionist. We will mail the license after we have photocopied it for our files.
- Our office staff will enter the records in the Marriage Register.

A check list for the wedding itself

- During the initial interview you will be given a marriage preparation booklet entitled, Together for Life. Many couples have told us how helpful this book has been for them in preparing the wedding and specifically the marriage ceremony. Please spend some time reviewing the book with the priest or deacon performing your wedding.

- For both the rehearsal and the wedding, you should be alert to the fact that parking is always difficult. Xavier does not have any parking facilities of its own. During the week, on-street parking in the immediate vicinity is severely restricted before 6:00 pm. On weekends, the attractive shopping possibilities make parking very difficult after early morning.
- Couples should come prepared for the wedding rehearsal, bringing along the wedding party, readers, gift-bearers, ushers and anyone involved in the marriage ceremony. The marriage license must also be brought to the rehearsal. It is usually signed by the spouses and witnesses at this time. The priest signs and dates the license after the marriage celebration.
- The normal items used for the wedding liturgy are provided by the church, but items such as floral decorations and unity candles are not provided (if you would like such items for your celebration, you must arrange for these yourselves). **For safety reasons, aisle runners are not allowed.**
- Floral arrangements and other appointments must work around the furnishings of the church. Church furnishings and liturgical decorations may not be removed or changed.
- Weddings are expected to start at the scheduled time. From the scheduled time of your ceremony, you will have one-and-a-half-hours for the ceremony and photography (for instance, the ceremony and the photography for any wedding scheduled in the church for 3:00 pm must be completed by 4:30 pm). If you are more than 30 minutes late, the wedding may have to be postponed, and the musicians may not be available.
- Traffic is always a problem in the New York area, especially on the highways coming into Manhattan and in the immediate vicinity. Please remind your guests, and most especially members of the wedding party and photographers to allow plenty of time for traveling to Xavier.
- The use of any type of alcoholic beverages in or near the church is not appropriate and is not permitted.
- **Please refrain from anything scattered: flowers, rice, confetti, birdseed or anything else that will have to be cleaned after the wedding. Our resources are low.**

A check list about Music and Musicians

- The Director of Music at the Church of St. Francis Xavier, John Uehlein, will discuss with you the kind of music that is appropriate for a Catholic marriage ceremony and explain the choices of material that are available.
- The fees for music and musicians are separate from and in addition to the offering for the use of the church. The music fees include both the Music Director and Cantor - \$600. Additional musicians are also available for an additional fee.
- Outside musicians are permitted but not encouraged. Such musicians are required to consult with the Director of Music and arrange a time for rehearsal. Outside musicians are in addition to the \$600 fee for cantor and organist.

A check list for Photographers and Videographers

- Photographers and videographers should be as inconspicuous as possible throughout the ceremony.
- No additional lighting for videographers or photographers, flash excepted, will be permitted.
- Neither professional nor amateur photographers will be permitted to interrupt or delay any phase of the wedding ceremony.
- Photography is allowed after the wedding, but must be concluded at least 30 minutes before the next scheduled event in the Church
- All photographers should be aware that, first and foremost, your marriage ceremony is a prayer experience and they should not intrude on the sacredness of the moment.

Finally ...

You are responsible for any monetary stipends to be provided, including any outside priest, altar servers, if any, or musicians. Please be courteous, prepare their stipends ahead of time, and perhaps give them the stipends before the ceremony so that it will not be forgotten.

Our Address: if you have any questions, please be most welcome to contact us at:

The Church of St. Francis Xavier
55 W. 15th St.
New York, NY 10011
(212) 627-2100
(212) 675-6997 (Facsimile)
e-mail to either Rev. Robert VerEecke [rvereecke@sfxavier.org]
or Ms. Stephanie Fuentes [sfuentes@sfxavier.org]

One additional note:

Parishioners may choose to be married at another location from St. Francis Xavier church. Please see the specific piece on this website entitled: For Couples Who Plan to be Married Elsewhere. Here is but a brief piece of that longer document; please read the other document for dates and times for the interviews.

“For a couple, where at least one member is either a registered member of St. Francis Xavier parish or who lives within the parish boundaries, we will be happy to do the preparation (paperwork) that is required for the wedding, provided sufficient time is allowed for that preparation, usually 6 months.

Because of the time required both here and at the Archdiocesan offices, we ask for \$250.00 for this service. In addition, if a dispensation is required, we ask for an additional \$50.00. And if the mailing must be done internationally, the Archdiocese asks an additional \$150.00.

When all the materials are gathered, they will be sent to the New York Archdiocese and then to the Diocese in which the wedding will take place. Then that diocese will send the materials to the parish or other in question. A letter of permission to be married elsewhere must be included in the wedding materials. All this requires that all the materials be gathered at the latest one month before the wedding date.

For a couple, where neither party is a registered member of St. Francis Xavier nor lives within the parish boundaries, ability to do the paperwork that is required for the wedding will depend on our calendar and other parish commitments.

Also note: Attendance at St. Francis Xavier church for Sunday Mass does not in itself constitute being a registered member. If you are interested in becoming a parishioner and plan to part of the parish community for the foreseeable future forms for registration are available on our parish website.

Fill out the appropriate form below, and return it by mail or electronically to RChoiniere@sfxavier.org at St Francis Xavier.

Wedding Arrangements at St. Francis Xavier

Date of the Wedding _____ **Time of Wedding** _____

Mass - (yes) (no)

Bride's Information Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Groom's Information Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Date of first meeting:
Paperwork here: _____

Offering for the Wedding
Offering for use of the church
for two hours: **\$2500.00**

Date of rehearsal: _____

Time of rehearsal: _____

Of this, a non-refundable deposit
of **\$300.00** is required to
secure the date. This should be
paid within the next two weeks.

Officiating priest: _____

Address: _____

The remaining **\$2200.00** should
be paid one month before the
wedding.

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Dispensations: _____

Music fees negotiated separately - currently \$600.00

Contact Director of Music,
John Uehlein at 212-627-2100 x 202 or juehlein@sfxavier.org

For office use only:

\$300.00 deposit paid _____

\$2200.00 remaining _____

Baptismal certificates _____
Pre-Nuptial Investigation _____
Pre-Cana _____
Dispensation (if needed) _____
Freedom to marry forms _____
Permission from Parish _____
of residence if not SFX _____