



*Marriage  
Guidelines  
2021-2022*

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Congratulations on your upcoming wedding at St. Damien Parish. We share these guidelines with you in order to assist you with your immediate planning. More importantly, we hope our involvement with you will influence you in the life you will share together. Remember: **a wedding is a day—marriage is a lifetime.**

The Parish Church is where the Christian community gathers to celebrate those important events in life that are sacred and serious. We are very pleased that you have come to the decision that your wedding is a serious and sacred event and that you want to celebrate it at St. Damien. Marriage is a sacrament and we hope to be able to celebrate it with you with the dignity and the deep reverence which the occasion demands.

As you prepare for your wedding day, you are urged to participate in the weekly celebration of Mass. Learn to see in the nourishment of the Eucharist, the proclamation of the Word, and your joining together with the parish community the means to grow ever closer to God and to one another. Consider availing yourself of the healing strength of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, most preferably, with the priest preparing you for marriage and celebrating your liturgy, sometime before your wedding day. As you exchange your solemn vows before God and the Church community, witnessed by your priest or deacon, your lifelong commitment is best realized if it is prefaced by a serious and sincere resolve to live your marriage as taught by Christ in scripture and His Church.

As a sacrament, matrimony requires that those who enter into this special union be free to do so. In order to avoid any difficulties, no marriage can be officially scheduled at St. Damien until you have met personally with the pastor of the parish, Fr. Tom Newton. The parish secretary can pencil in one or two dates to hold for you until such time that you have met with the pastor. He will need to discuss with you any possible impediments to marrying in the Catholic Church. For example, not every prior marriage precludes a Catholic ceremony, however, many do and they would require a Church annulment prior to scheduling a wedding date. Ample time to prepare can be an invaluable ally in your preparation.

#### **The Date and the Time**

We prefer that the date and time of a wedding be arranged as far in advance as possible. St. Damien Parish has three churches. You can specify your preferred location. Because of other services, weddings cannot be scheduled before 10:00 a.m. or after 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Friday afternoon and evening weddings are also possible. Sundays, however, are usually unavailable for weddings. Photographers are allowed sufficient opportunity after the ceremony for pictures, provided the wedding has started on time.

#### **The Bridal Party**

The Church, as well as the State of New Jersey, requires two official witnesses (best man and matron or maid-of-honor) for your wedding. They may be Catholic or non-Catholic. Other friends and relatives can complete the wedding party.

### **Forms of the Wedding Ceremony**

**THE NUPTIAL MASS:** A couple consisting of two Catholics is encouraged to be married at Mass. Couples will be given the book, *Together for Life*, to choose their readings. There are many beautiful options. Talk to the person preparing you for marriage for suggestions. We want your sacramental marriage to be truly personal.

**THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY:** Couples, for their own reasons, may choose a marriage ceremony consisting of a service of prayer, scripture, vows, and a blessing. Options are also available for this type of ceremony.

### **Visiting Officiating Priests**

If you intend to request a priest other than the pastor of St. Damien to officiate your wedding, please secure the pastor's permission. If this is done, the officiating priest is responsible for the necessary marriage instructions and the prenuptial investigation, including any and all dispensations. He should also conduct the rehearsal. Other arrangements can be made if the officiating priest or deacon is from out of state. It is essential that the priest or deacon provide a letter of suitability from his Bishop or Major Superior. No priest or deacon from outside the Diocese of Camden can officiate or participate in a wedding at St. Damien without this letter.

### **Music for the Celebration**

The music for your wedding should reflect the sacred character of the Sacrament of Marriage into which you are entering. Those gathered for the celebration should be invited to participate actively in the liturgy, that is to listen, to respond, to pray, to sing, as well as to witness the exchange of your vows. All arrangements for singers and other musicians must be made with St. Damien's Pastoral Associate for Worship and Music, Patrick Gardner. No outside organist can be used for weddings at St. Damien. A possible exception to this rule could be made in consultation with Patrick. However, all couples are required to contact him at (856) 412-2012 or [pgardner@stparishdamien.com](mailto:pgardner@stparishdamien.com) to make music arrangements. We suggest you contact Patrick as soon as possible. Patrick will discuss with you possible music selections and options for singers, cantors, and other instrumentalists. The normal fee for each musician is \$200. An organist and leader of song (soloist) are required.

### **Photography and Videography**

Photographers and Videographers are permitted in the Church before, during and after the wedding. As professionals, they should conduct themselves with due respect and insure that they not distract from or interfere with the ceremony. Once the ceremony begins, photographs are permitted during the entrance procession, the marriage vows, the exchange of rings, the offertory procession, the nuptial blessing, the sign of peace, the final blessing and the recessional procession. Limited photographs are permitted during the Scripture readings (one photo of the reader). No photographs at all (including photos of the bride and groom, bridal party, and members of the assembly are permitted to be taken during the homily and the Liturgy of the Eucharist which extends from the Prayer Over the Gifts to the Lord's Prayer. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make sure that the photographers know and follow these guidelines.

### **Flowers and Decorations**

Flowers, decorations and bows for pews, are not required, however, if you desire to have them they are the responsibility of the couple. Due to insurance regulations no aisle runners are permitted.

## **Offerings**

The offering to the church for a wedding is based on a sliding scale. For active St. Damien parishioners the offering is \$300. For couples with no affiliation with St. Damien Parish, the offering is \$700. Please choose an offering between \$300-\$700 based on your involvement with the parish. Give this offering to the priest at the rehearsal (if it is a check, it should be made out to St. Damien Parish). This offering goes directly to the parish. If you wish to make a personal offering to the priest or deacon who prepared you for the sacrament and celebrated your wedding you may do so in a separate envelope.

## **Marriage Preparation Sessions**

In accord with the COMMON POLICY OF MARRIAGE of the Diocese of Camden, every couple planning marriage will be required to complete the Marriage Preparation program of St. Damien Church. This program includes three to four formational sessions with the priest or deacon preparing them for marriage and attendance at a diocesan-approved Pre-Cana Session.

St. Damien Parish recommends the Cape May County Marriage Preparation Pre-Cana Program. For additional information and to register please call 609-287-9205.

Your priest or deacon will give you all the information you need concerning marriage preparation. If a couple is currently not living in the area of the parish, they will be permitted to complete another program, approved by the pastor, in another diocese or parish.

## **Required Documents**

If you are a Catholic, you must present a baptismal certificate which has been issued within the past six months. Simply call or write the church where you were baptized and they will send it to you.

If you are non-Catholic Christian, then you must present a record of your baptism and two affidavits of freedom to marry.

If you are not baptized, you must present an affidavit of non-baptism.

If either party is under 18 years of age, a parent must come to the rectory and sign a permission form in the presence of the priest or deacon preparing you for the sacrament.

**MARRIAGE LICENSE:** Couples should be sure to get their marriage license in plenty of time to insure that all civil and church regulations are followed. You cannot be married in the Catholic Church without a valid New Jersey marriage license. To obtain this license, you should go to the City Hall or municipal building of the town where the woman resides. A license in this state is valid for thirty days after the date of issuance. There is a 72 hour waiting period between the time of application and the valid use of the license. Plan to make your application about two weeks prior to your wedding. Please make sure that you give the marriage license to the priest or deacon officiating at the wedding rehearsal.

After your wedding, the license will be mailed from the parish to the Ocean City Municipal Clerk. After receiving the license, the township has the official record in approx. 5 business days. If you need a copy of your license, call the township. They are not sent out automatically.

## **The Rehearsal**

The rehearsals should be scheduled with the priest or deacon performing your wedding well in advance. Please remember to bring the following to the rehearsal, each in a separate envelope:

1. Marriage License
2. Church Offering
3. Priest/Deacon Offering
4. Musicians Offerings

## **The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)**

All Catholic members of the wedding party, especially the bride and groom, should prepare for this special time by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confession is available at the normal time on Saturday, after the rehearsal, or by special arrangement with the priest.

## **The Wedding Day**

The groom, best man and ushers should be at the church at least 30 minutes before the start of the ceremony. Ushers escort guests to their places before the ceremony. The parents and the bridesmaids should be at the church 10 minutes before the wedding begins. Out of courtesy, the bridal party should make every effort to see that the wedding ceremony starts promptly.

Taking into account the sacredness of the ceremony, people should attend the ceremony and not congregate outside. No alcohol or alcoholic beverages are to be consumed or distributed on church property.

We want your wedding to be a festive occasion, a special time, but this is best accomplished through liturgy, music and the loved ones who share the day with you. We ask you, PLEASE do not have your guests throw rice, birdseed, or confetti outside the church. The resulting mess, especially in wet weather, wreaks havoc on the church carpets and floors. Balloons are also not permitted for environmental reasons. Bubbles are permitted.

## **At Your Assistance**

The Pastor and Staff of St. Damien Parish are available to assist you. We want your wedding to be a happy and holy celebration for both of you. Don't hesitate to call us...we'll be happy to answer all your questions. Be assured that you will be in our prayers in the months which lie ahead. We will do all we possibly can to make your wedding day and your wedded life a blessed and memorable occasion.

**Rev. Thomas A. Newton**  
*Pastor*



**Wedding Photography  
Guidelines  
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The Pastor and Staff of St. Damien ask that brides and grooms share the following guidelines for photography for your wedding with your still photographers:

1. Photographs may be taken at the following times:
  - a. Prior to the beginning of the ceremony or Mass
  - b. During the entrance procession
  - c. During the candle lighting ceremony (if there is one)
  - d. During the exchange of Vows
  - e. During the blessing and exchange of rings
  - f. At the offertory procession
  - g. During the Nuptial Blessing
  - h. During the Sign of Peace
  - i. At the time of the Flowers to the Blessed Mother (if there is one)
  - j. During the Recessional Procession
  
2. Limited photographs may be taken at the following times:
  - a. During the First Scripture reading one photo may be taken of the Reader
  - b. During the Second Scripture reading one photo may be taken of the Reader
  - c. During the General Intercessions one photo may be taken of the ReaderNo other photos are permitted to be taken at these times
  
3. Absolutely NO photographs may be taken at the following times:  
(This means no photos at all in the Church. Cameras may not be used.)
  - a. When the priest or deacon is reading the Gospel
  - b. When the priest or deacon is doing the homily
  - c. When the priest is standing at the Altar from after the Offertory procession until after the Lord's Prayer
  - d. During the Distribution of Communion

Thank you in advance for your adherence to these guidelines.

**Fr. Tom Newton**  
*Pastor*