



St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish
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1217 Prospect Street
Scranton

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Saint
Teresa
of Calcutta
Parish

Sacred Hearts Church • Nativity Church

Formed as one parish family in 2023 ~ A community of faith since 1854

Wedding Planning Guide



*The Church of the
Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary
1217 Prospect Street
Scranton*



*The Church of the
Nativity of Our Lord
633 Orchard Street
Scranton*

Congratulations!

Dear engaged couple!

Congratulations on your engagement! Our entire parish community celebrates this wonderful moment in your lives! In your planning folder you will find everything you need to plan your wedding liturgy.

First, you will find this booklet, the *Wedding Planning Guide*, which provides guidance and information about everything you need to consider. Next, you also have the options for the readings from Scripture for the First Reading, Second Reading, and the Gospel, as well as a form for the Prayer of the Faithful. Additionally, enclosed is the *Freedom to Marry Affidavit* which you must complete and return to the office. Finally, you will find the *Wedding Planning Form* which you can use to indicate your selections and preferences.

My prayer for you is that this time of preparation is filled with joy and not too much stress, that it brings you closer together, and above all that it deepens your faith and relationship with Christ. You will be in our prayers as you make this journey!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Kuhar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Jonathan Kuhar

Breakdown of Costs and Fees

- **\$350.....Use of the Church**

There is no fee for a simple convalidation (where the ceremony is to bless a preexisting civil marital union, is held outside of Mass, does not include music, and does not require a practice). A donation to the parish would be graciously accepted.

- **\$175.....Music Director and Organist Fee
(paid directly to Music Director)**

- **\$150.....Cantor Fee
(paid directly to Music Director)**

Additional instrumentalists may be hired to accompany the Organist and Cantor and each sets his or her own fee. If interested in this option, please discuss it with the Music Director. Any additional fees for musicians are paid directly to the Music Director.

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To Do Before the Wedding Ceremony

Have Your Initial Meeting

The first step in preparing for your wedding will be to meet with one of the priests or deacons from our parish community. This is to get to know you better and to discuss the details of your wedding ceremony. **Do not finalize the date of your wedding plans prior to meeting with the priest or deacon.** This is to ensure that your preferred date is available and to also confirm nothing else prevents you from getting married.

During this meeting we will discuss the process, set the date for the wedding, conduct the *Prenuptial Inquiry* to ensure no issues need to be resolved, and begin to prepare for your wedding. After this meeting, please keep track of your progress by using the check list on the back cover of this booklet.

Attend a PreCana Class

The sacrament of marriage is a lifelong commitment which impacts you, your family, and the entire community. To help you prepare to enter into this union, the Church requires that you understand the commitment you are making. One of the ways this is done is through a *PreCana Day of Reflection*. During your Day of Reflection you will learn about the theology of marriage, and have discussions about a variety of marriage related topics such as children, commitment, finances, and working through disagreements.

The Diocese of Scranton offers a number of options for your PreCana preparation, and also provides a number of other helpful marriage preparation resources. Please navigate to this site for the diocese's general wedding preparation page:

www.dioceseofscranton.org/parish-life/community/marriage/

And to this site for instructions specifically about PreCana options:

www.dioceseofscranton.org/parish-life/community/marriage/marriage-preparation/

If you live outside the Diocese of Scranton, check the marriage resources page of your local diocese to see what they offer. If you are unsure whether a particular program will satisfy our requirements please discuss it with us.

Once you complete your course, provide our office with the certificate of completion.

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there, Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine..."

Complete the FOCCUS Inventory

The FOCCUS Inventory is a survey taken by each of you which asks questions about your attitudes, preferences, and beliefs about married life. The goal of the survey is to identify those areas of strong agreement which will be a support in married life, and those areas of disagreement which should be discussed. The survey is taken online and must be completed individually without discussing the questions or your answers before you complete it. We will email you a link that you can follow to complete the survey.

Once you both complete the survey, the results will be discussed with you during your next meeting with the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage. Please keep in mind this is not a "test" that you can fail but simply a tool to facilitate a discussion about your relationship.

Complete the Freedom to Marry Affidavit

Catholic marriage teachings emphasize the importance of each person's free choice to enter into marriage. Lack of freedom to marry comes in many forms, from external pressure to internal emotional or psychological issues. If a person is not sufficiently free to make a full, voluntary, and conscious choice then this could invalidate the marriage.

The primary way we ensure you are free to enter into marriage is through the initial conversation with the priest or deacon from the parish, and the completion of the *Prenuptial Inquiry*. Another important way is the *Freedom to Marry Affidavit*. Each of you must ask two people who know you well to fill out the Affidavit. These people can be your parents, siblings, or friends. Once the forms are completed, please return them to the parish.

Obtain Your Marriage License

You must obtain a Pennsylvania Marriage License prior to your ceremony. You may obtain one through any county government, and a license from any county is valid in the entire state. You can find instructions on obtaining a Lackawanna County marriage license by calling the Register of Will at 570-963-6702 or navigating to:

www.lackawannacounty.org/government/elected_officials/register_of_wills/marriage_license.php

If you are getting a marriage license in a different county, check with your local county government for information.

A Pennsylvania marriage license requires a three-day waiting period before it can be used and is only valid for 60 days from the date of issue, so please get your license during this window of time. You are also required to make an appointment with their office for an in-person interview along with other minor requirements. If you need help with this process, please let us know.

Lackawanna County requires you to be physically present in their office for the interview. If this would be inconvenient for you, consider obtaining a license from our neighboring county, Luzerne, which has an option for the interview to be conducted over Skype. You can find more information here:

www.luzernecounty.org/617/Marriage-Licenses

If you are already civilly married, you do not need to obtain a new license. Please provide us a certified copy of your Marriage License.

Planning The Wedding Ceremony

Decide *Where* the Wedding Will Take Place

Your wedding may take place at either of the churches in our parish community: the *Church of the Nativity of Our Lord* at 633 Orchard St. or the *Church of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary* at 1217 Prospect Ave. Both buildings are beautiful and traditional and have storied histories, and provide an amazing place to celebrate the sacrament of marriage.

Please note, however, that our community is currently discerning whether we should close one of these two churches, and if so, which one. You may request a specific church, however, we cannot guarantee that your preferred church will be open on that date. However, to ensure that a church will be available to you, we will not schedule more than one celebration during that same day and time. If we do decide to close a church, it is extremely unlikely a closing date would be set within six months of a decision being made, so you will know well in advance of the specific location of your wedding.

Please also note that according to Diocesan policy and long-standing Catholic custom, weddings must take place in a church building unless a special dispensation is given by the bishop. Weddings are not celebrated in homes, outdoors, or elsewhere. There are some circumstances where the bishop's permission is easier to obtain than others, such as where a Catholic is marrying a non-Catholic or non-Christian, but the ideal and preferred location will always be in the House of God.

Decide *When* the Wedding Will Take Place

Weddings in our parish community are normally celebrated on Saturday mornings and early afternoons, but we can likely accommodate a different day of the week. For Saturday weddings, the earliest you can schedule your wedding to begin is 9:00 AM and the latest 2:00 PM.

Discuss *Who* Will Perform the Wedding

The assignment of a priest or deacon to perform a particular wedding is a decision made by the pastor of the parish, but if you would like to request a specific priest or deacon then please discuss this with the pastor. Please keep in mind though that clergy resources have become strained as fewer and fewer men have entered the priesthood. We do not have as much flexibility in making assignments as we have in the past, and we cannot accommodate every request.

Also, if you are closely acquainted with a priest or deacon from another parish, and would like to invite him to perform your wedding, this is likely possible, but please speak with us prior to asking him.

Schedule Your Rehearsal

Rehearsals are normally held the evening before the ceremony around 5:00 PM or 6:00 PM. You should expect the rehearsal to take about forty-five minutes, so your rehearsal should begin about an hour before you would like to begin your rehearsal dinner. Anyone participating in the ceremony should attend the rehearsal (lectors, Groomsmen, Bridesmaids, your parents, Gift Bearers, Ringbearer, Flower Girl/Boy, etc.).

Rehearsals are not required, and if you are planning a very simple ceremony then it might not be necessary. The Celebrant will discuss whether and when to have a rehearsal.

Select Who Will Participate in your Wedding

You are encouraged to invite family members and friends to serve in the wedding in a variety of ways. Lectors read the texts of Scripture (except the Gospel) and the Prayers of the Faithful, two to four (or more) may be selected to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine, you may select a Maid or Matron of Honor, Best Man, Bridesmaids and Groomsmen, a Ring Bearer, Flower Girl/Boy, and have your parents and grandparents walk in the entrance procession.

There is no limit on the number of Bridesmaids and Groomsmen which accompany the Bride and Groom, but the number should not be unreasonably excessive. Children asked to serve as the Ring Bearer or Flower Girl/Boy should either be able to walk unassisted down the aisle or should be accompanied by an adult during the procession. Please indicate your selections on the *Wedding Planning Form*.

Choose the Form of the Entrance Procession

There are a number of different forms of the Entrance Procession which the Church encourages, and which have developed by custom over time. Here are a few options for how the procession may take place. Please select one of these options, or if you would like to make modifications to better reflect your families' customs, please discuss this with the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage:

- ◆ **Bride and Groom walk down the aisle together, preceded by their parents who are preceded by the wedding party.** The priest greets the couple at the entrance of the church, symbolically representing that the church goes out to welcome you to the House of God. The priest then begins the procession with the altar servers, followed by the wedding party, then the parents of the Bride and Groom, and then the Bride and Groom walking together. Although this form of the procession is not customary in this country, it is nevertheless symbolically beautiful. The Bride and Groom walk together into the church to have their already

*I was glad when they said to me,
 "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"
 Our feet have been standing
 within your gates, O Jerusalem!*

existing relationship blessed by God in the sacrament of Matrimony. You have already chosen each other, and now have chosen to come together, hand in hand, into God's House to strengthen that relationship by having it sealed by His love.

- ◆ **Groom is stationed near the altar with the priest. The wedding party begins the procession, followed by the bride and accompanied by her parents.** In this form, the Groom is stationed at the beginning of the liturgy near the altar with the Best Man and the priest. The wedding party then begins the procession, followed by the parents of the Groom, then the Bride accompanied by her parents. This is a slight modification of the "traditional" wedding procession for our culture - the modification being that the Bride is accompanied by both of her parents rather than just her father. Her parents then "give her away" to the Groom once they reach the altar.
- ◆ **Groom is stationed near the altar with the priest. The wedding party begins the procession, followed by the bride, accompanied by her father.** Almost identical to the second form except the Bride is preceded by her mother, and walks with her father. Then, at the end of the procession, the Bride is "given away" by her father, symbolically representing leaving the father's house and entering the house of her husband-to-be. Although it's the more traditional form of procession for our culture, for some it more represents the social and economic realities of prior generations than the character of modern-day relationships between couples and between children and their parents.

Select Your Music

Please contact our Music Director and Organist, Ryan Caviston, to discuss the music for your wedding. He can be reached at 570-702-5926. You should contact him as soon as you set your date for the wedding, but certainly at least two months prior to your wedding date. He will meet with you to help select the music for the ceremony, and he will arrange for a Cantor to sing.

*O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

Because the wedding celebration is an action of worship in the Church, only sacred music is permitted at weddings. If you have a request for music which is not customarily regarded as liturgical or choral music, Ryan can discuss whether that request is possible based on Church guidance regarding sacred music.

To help you prepare for your meeting with Ryan, think about some of the music you love to hear during a Sunday Mass, the sacred music you remember from your childhood, your favorite hymns, and especially hymns those that focus on the power of God's love.

If you would like to invite a different Organist, your own Cantor, or other musicians please discuss this with us beforehand. You will need to provide us a list of the music you are considering using. Also, to respect the holiness of the liturgy and to ensure the ceremony flows seamlessly, outside accompanists and Cantors should be experienced musicians who are familiar with the Catholic liturgy.

Select the Form of the Vows

Although the entire liturgy is important, the exchange of vows is the pivotal moment of the wedding ceremony. Once the vows have been exchanged then you are married before God as well as under the law. The vows are officially called the "exchange of consent" because you are consenting to entering into a lifelong covenant with each other bound by God's love.

There are two different formulas for the vows, each having two slightly different versions. The first formula has you speak the words of your vows to each other. The second formula has you simply respond “I do” after the priest or deacon poses the vows as a question. You may choose either formula, but the Church encourages the first version where you speak the words yourselves.

The reason for this is the words can have a greater impact if you say them aloud, allowing them to dwell fully in your mind and heart as you speak them to your spouse to be. If you elect this format, then you can memorize the vows, write them down on a card and read them, or the priest or deacon can say them in a low voice, and you can repeat them. Once you make your selection, indicate your choice on the *Planning Your Wedding* form by circling A1, A2, B1, or B2.

A1
First Formula

**I, N., take you, N.,
to by my wife/husband.
I promise to be faithful to you,
in good times and in bad,
in sickness and in health,
to love you and to honor you
all the days of my life.**

B1
Second Formula

Priest or deacon says:
**N., do you take N.,
to be your husband/wife?
Do you promise to be faithful to him/her
in good times and in bad,
in sickness and in health,
to love him/her and to honor him/her
all the days of your life?**
You respond: I do.

A2
First Formula

**I, N., take you, N.,
for my lawful wife/husband,
to have and to hold,
from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish
until death do us part.**

B2
Second Formula

Priest or deacon says:
**N. do you take N.
for your lawful husband/wife,
to have and to hold,
from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish
until death do you part?**
You respond: I do.

Choose Your Readings

Your options for Scripture readings can be found in your packet. Choose ONE reading from the Old Testament, ONE from the New Testament, and ONE Gospel reading. Of those readings, at least ONE must explicitly speak about marriage. Those readings are indicated with an asterisk. You will also choose a Psalm but this will be done with the Music Director.

You will need three people to read during Mass. One to read the First Reading, one for the Second Reading, and one for the Prayer of the Faithful. If you do not have that many, then someone can read more than once. Please also consider doing a reading or two yourselves!

Please provide copies of the readings to your lectors to practice. They will not have to bring these copies to church because they will already be on the lectern for them. Please encourage your lectors to come to practice so they can get comfortable reading in the church.

Prepare the Prayer of the Faithful

One of your three lectors will read the Prayer of the Faithful. You do not need to write this yourself. A form has been provided in your packet with blank spaces to fill in your names and the names of the deceased members of your family who you would like to remember in the prayer. You can include anyone you want, but we encourage you to keep the circle tight. You do not want to risk forgetting a distant relative and causing hurt feelings.

Generally, people include deceased grandparents, parents, and siblings. A sample of the Prayer of the Faithful is included with your materials, and space is provided on your Planning Form to write in their names. If you would like to make any additional modifications to the petitions please mention this to the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage.

Decide Whether to Produce a Program

The parish does not produce programs for weddings, and you are not required or expected to bring a program. However, if you would like

to make one for your guests then you are certainly welcome to do so. You are encouraged to email us a copy (info@stcparish.com) before you send it to the printer so we can check it for accuracy.

Choose Additional Liturgical Moments

Although not required, frequently couples add other symbolic actions during the wedding ceremony to represent their dedication to each other. Here are four customarily included in Catholic wedding celebrations. If you would like to include one or more of these during your wedding, please indicate it on the *Wedding Planning Form*.

- ◆ **The Blessing of and Exchanging of Rings:** It might surprise you to know that the exchange of Wedding Rings is not a required aspect of the Wedding Liturgy. The only exchange which is required during the ceremony is the gift of your free consent to enter into a lifelong covenant with each other. That being said, the exchange of wedding rings is an ancient and treasured custom which serves as a daily reminder of your promise of unending love and fidelity.
- ◆ **Presenting Flowers to the Blessed Mother:** Although not formally a part of the Marriage Rite, many couples participate in the pious tradition of presenting flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary near the end of the Wedding Ceremony. This prayerful act is a way to seek the intercession of the Blessed Mother as you begin your lives together. If you choose to present flowers to Mary, please also consider discussing with the Music Director the singing of *Ave Maria* or *Gentle Woman* or another appropriate Marian hymn during this moment.

If you would like to make this custom a part of your wedding ceremony, indicate that on the *Wedding Planning Form* and also discuss with the Music Director the inclusion of a Marian hymn. Please bring a floral arrangement with you. Any beautiful flowers are appropriate, but some flowers are particularly connected to Mary, such as roses, white lilies, marigolds, and violets.

- ◆ **The *Lazo* and the *Arras*:** The Blessing and Placing of the *Lazo* and The Blessing and Giving of the *Arras* (Coins) are Hispanic customs which serve to symbolize the union of the couple.

The *Lazo* is a large decorative cord, often shaped like a rosary, which is blessed and placed over the shoulders of the couple after the exchange of vows to symbolize that they have been bound together as one.

The *Arras* is the giving of thirteen gold coins by the Groom to the Bride which symbolizes his commitment to support and care for his wife. Her reception of the coins shows she has confidence in his ability to do so. If you would like to include one or both of these customs in your wedding ceremony, indicate this on the *Wedding Planning Form*. You must provide the *Lazo* and/or *Arras*.

Select Other Aspects of the Liturgy

All of the choices you have already made might seem overwhelming, but there are actually many more you could make, for example, you can select the opening and closing prayers of the Mass, the specific form of the questions asked by the Celebrant before the vows, the prayer that he says after the vows, there are different options for the wording of the blessing of the rings. There are options for the specific prayers used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and options for the Solemn Blessing at the end of Mass.

To make this process a little simpler, the Celebrant of the Mass will make these selections for you. However, if you would like to consider making some of them yourself you are certainly welcome to do so! Talk to us and we can provide you an additional booklet which details these options, and we can help you make your selections.

Other Considerations

Attire: This is no explicit dress code, but please be mindful that wedding ceremonies are sacred celebrations in a church consecrated to the worship of God. We should always act with a respectful dignity while in His presence, and this includes in our manner of dress.

Alcohol and Illegal Drugs are forbidden. If anyone in the wedding party appears to be intoxicated they will be asked to leave. More importantly, *if the Bride or Groom appears intoxicated then the wedding will be immediately canceled.* The central act of the wedding ceremony is the

moment in which the vows are exchanged, where the Bride and Groom freely and consciously choose to give his or her life to the other. Intoxication prevents this moment from being a completely free and conscious action, which would prevent a valid exchange of wedding vows. Because of this, *Church law forbids the priest or deacon to marry people who are intoxicated.*

Decorations: Our parish community is blessed to have two churches which are stunningly beautiful and do not require many additional decorations. If you wish, however, you may decorate in a tasteful and respectful way, such as by bringing floral arrangements or bows for the ends of the pews. Aisle runners are strongly discouraged as they are unnecessary and could be a tripping hazard.

You may decorate the evening of your rehearsal unless another event is scheduled to take place in the church before your wedding. If you would like to decorate the night before, please call the office a day or so before your rehearsal to see if anything has been scheduled.

All decorations must be removed and the Church tidied at the end of the ceremony. You are welcome to leave the flowers if you like. *If you leave pots or vases that you want returned, please tape a note to the bottom and let us know that you will be picking them up later.*

Finally, *you are not permitted to throw rice, confetti, or other items inside or outside the church* (with the exception of flower petals thrown by the Flower Girl). Cleaning this up can be difficult and time-consuming, our maintenance staff does not work on Saturdays, and we usually need to make a quick transition from the wedding to Saturday evening Masses. Frequently, the priest himself needs to clean this up before the next Mass begins, and there is rarely any time for this.

Photography and Videography: You are more than welcome to memorialize your day by hiring a photographer and/or videographer. We expect the photographer and videographer to conduct themselves respectfully and unobtrusively during the ceremony. They are not permitted in the sanctuary during the Liturgy of the Eucharist (which begins after the vows are exchanged). Photos taken after the ceremony should be completed within a half hour to allow for preparation for the evening Mass.

One Final Thing to Do...

Planning a wedding is an enormous task, and it can become overwhelming. Try to stay focused on what really matters: you are committing your lives to each other until your final day on Earth. This kind of commitment and fidelity are only truly possible through the grace and love of God, so the most important thing to do while planning your wedding is to...

Pray!

Through prayer we truly connect to God. Pray for each other, pray for your families, pray for your community, pray for the world, pray while joyful, pray while angry, pray through your frustrations and anxieties.

Pray at all times, and especially pray *while together*. Praying together out loud in the quiet of your home might be the most intimate thing you ever do. It lets our interior faith be seen by the other, and it requires us to be vulnerable together before God. Praying together will support you in difficult times, and it will help you give thanks and praise to God in all times.

You will certainly be remembered in the prayers of the pastoral staff and the entire community as you prepare for your life together. May God bless you and keep you all the days of your lives!

Some words of wisdom about love from Mother Teresa...

“Intense love does not measure, it just gives.”

“Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired.”

“Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own home. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbor . . . Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.”

“Love begins by taking care of the closest ones – the ones at home.”

“If we want a love message to be heard, it has got to be sent out. To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it.”

“A life not lived for others is not a life.”

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.”

“It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the loneliness and pain of someone unloved in our own home. Bring love into your home for this is where our love for each other must start.”

“Each one of them is Jesus in disguise.”

“People are often unreasonable and self-centered. *Forgive them anyway.*
If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. *Be kind anyway.*

If you are honest, people may cheat you. *Be honest anyway.*

If you find happiness, people may be jealous. *Be happy anyway.*

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. *Do good anyway.*
Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. *Give your best anyway.*

For you see, in the end, it is between you and God.

It was never between you and them anyway. ”

MARRIAGE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

At Your First Meeting

- _____ We will discuss the process and give you the *Planning Packet*.
- _____ We will complete the *Prenuptial Inquiry*.
- _____ We will set a date, time, and location for your rehearsal and wedding.

Wedding Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

Rehearsal Date _____ Time _____

After Your First Meeting

- _____ Complete a Pre-Cana Class.
- _____ Complete the enclosed *Planning your Wedding* form which will help you select your readings and plan other aspects of the liturgy.
- _____ Obtain official copies of your baptismal certificates dated within the last six months (not necessary if you were baptized in our parish community).
- _____ Complete the *Freedom to Marry Affidavit* signed by four witnesses (two for the Groom and two for the Bride).
- _____ Contact our parish Music Director, Ryan Caviston at 570-702-5926 to plan the music. He will discuss the fees for music, and you will pay him directly for the services of the Organist, Cantor, and any instrumentalists.

At Least One Month Prior to Your Wedding

- _____ Pay for the use of the church. The cost is \$350. Make payment to the parish office, made payable to St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish. We do not take debit or credit cards.
- _____ Pay the Organist's and Cantor's fees to our Music Director, Ryan Caviston. If you are hiring additional musicians, make payment for their services as well.
- _____ Obtain a Marriage License and provide it to the office. Instructions on how to do this are in this packet.

After Your Wedding

The parish will mail your marriage license to the county government which issued it. Please allow a few days for it to be received by the records department before you apply for a certified copy.