

WEDDING GUIDELINES
CHURCH OF ST. COLUMBA
835 Route 82 ~ PO Box 428
Hopewell Junction, New York 12533
845-227-8380

Congratulations on your engagement! It is an occasion of great joy for you, your relatives, friends and your parish community. It is also a time to begin plans for your wedding and for your life together. These parish guidelines will help to guide you through this process.

WHO MAY MARRY IN OUR PARISH CHURCH? – Usually but not always, the marriage takes place in the bride’s church. Either the bride or groom (or their parents) should be registered parishioners of St. Columba, or either bride or groom received their sacraments here or went to School or Religious Education here. On occasion, couples from outside the parish (with no connection to St. Columba’s Parish) request the use of our church. If the parish schedule permits, the request may be granted at the discretion of the pastor.

SETTING THE DATE - Only a priest or deacon of St. Columba’s may set a date with you. A confirmed date will be set only after the priest or deacon has personally met with both of you and determined that you are free to marry here. The couple should secure the date and time with the parish before making other commitments like a reception hall. Sufficient time is needed to complete all marriage preparation requirements. (At least six months are needed).

SCHEDULING THE TIME

Friday – Earliest 3:30 pm, 4:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. – Nuptial Mass or Ceremony

Saturday – 11:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m. Nuptial Mass or Ceremony

Sunday – 3:00 or 3:30 p.m. Nuptial Mass or Ceremony

Normally only one wedding per day may be scheduled.

PREPARING FOR YOUR SACRAMENT

1) **DOCUMENTATION** - Certain documents must be obtained before your marriage may be celebrated. Please note: if either bride or groom has a previous marriage, we must be told immediately!

- a) Baptism Certificates: Recent ***new*** copies of your baptismal certificates, issued **WITHIN SIX MONTHS** prior to your wedding by the Church where you were Baptized.
- b) Certification of First Communion and Confirmation: Photo copies of documents are acceptable for this. If you do not have documents, you must contact the Church where the Sacrament took place and ask them to issue a new document.

- c) Letter of Freedom: The person who is not a member of St. Columba must contact their parish, inform them that you are getting married at St. Columba, and ask for a letter from your Pastor that states that you are free to marry. This ensures that the Marriage Banns are published in your church bulletin.
- d) You must have written permission from your parents if you are under 18 years.
- e) In Ecumenical (Catholic & Christian) or Interfaith (Catholic and non-Baptized) Marriages, the Catholic person must make in writing two promises:
 - to remain a member of the Catholic Church.
 - to do everything possible to raise your child(ren) in the Catholic Faith.These promises must be understood and accepted by the non-Catholic person.
- f) A Marriage License issued by the State of New York. It must be 24 hours old before it can be used.

2) **MARRIAGE PREPARATION** - Marriage Preparation prepares you for your life together after your wedding. The goals are to help you to grow in love and be open to God's grace, so that you might have a lasting and fulfilling sacramental marriage. Here are the steps:

a) Register for Pre-Cana by going to www.nyfamilylife.org/marriage-preparation/register/

b) Sign up for the two Pre-Cana Classes: Partners in Life and Love Part 1 and Partners in Life and Love Part 2. Many parishioners of St. Columba choose the classes offered at Mount Alvernia Retreat House in Wappingers Falls. (Note – you may take Part 2 before Part 1 if you wish) Other alternate programs available include Partners in Life and Love Four Evenings, Engaged Encounter and Three to Get Married. See the marriage prep booklet for more information.

c) When you sign up for Pre-Cana, we strongly suggest that you also sign up for Catholic Couple Checkup or Prepare/Enrich. These Premarital Inventories help you understand even more deeply your relationship. The cost is included with Pre-Cana.

d) Occasionally we have couples that must work on weekends and cannot take off or are living in different parts of the country. In these limited circumstances and after consulting with the priest/deacon, we invite you to use Catholic Marriage Prep Online. Sign up at www.catholicmarriagepreonline.com.

e) We also invite you to consider attending a course about Natural Family Planning. If used properly, it is as effective as any other method. It is the only family planning method accepted by the Catholic Church. Information is available at www.nyfamilylife.org/natural-family-planning

f) When you complete Pre-Cana, you will receive two Certificates. Please keep them with all your documents.

3) **MEETINGS** - At least three meetings should be held to prepare you for marriage. You are responsible for calling and making appointments.

- Today – Meeting #1 - your date will be set and you will go through all the information on these sheets, including how to sign up for Pre-Cana and the Pre-Marital Inventory.

- Meeting #2 – After you complete Pre-Cana and the Premarital Inventory, call the rectory for an appointment. Discuss your experience at Pre-Cana and the results of your Premarital Inventory: either Catholic Couple Check Up or Prepare/Enrich. If you were given one, bring the wedding planning book you received at Pre-Cana. We have extras if you did not receive one. We will show you how to plan your Wedding Mass or Ceremony. Schedule a rehearsal date and time today.

- Meeting #3 – About two months before the wedding, call the rectory for an appointment. Bring all the required documents and the wedding planning book. We will complete your paperwork by filling out the *PMI (Pre-Matrimonial Investigation)*. We will also complete the plans for your Wedding Mass or Ceremony. You will be reminded to bring the following to your Rehearsal: Marriage License, Wedding Fees, Wedding Planning Book.

NOTE ON THE CELEBRANT – You may choose any priest or deacon of St. Columba to celebrate your Wedding. Normally this priest or deacon will guide you through all the meetings and the rehearsal. Please understand that during the summer months, we cannot guarantee that a particular priest will be available for your date. We usually determine summer vacation schedules in the spring. At that time, you will be told which priest will be available for your wedding. On occasion, couples have a priest/deacon relative or friend that they would like to invite to celebrate their wedding. This is permitted. Please arrange for them to fill out the Visiting Priest/Deacon Information sheet as soon as possible and have them contact the Pastor of St. Columba to ensure that all paperwork is in order.

PLANNING THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

MASS OR CEREMONY? - Roman Catholics normally celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage during a Nuptial Mass. Your Sacrament may also be celebrated during a Wedding Ceremony. A Marriage between a Catholic and a Baptized Christian may be celebrated at Mass, however, those who are not Catholic may not receive Holy Communion. Instead, a blessing can be offered. A Marriage between a Catholic and a person who is not Baptized is always celebrated in a Wedding Ceremony.

MUSIC MINISTRY - Music at your wedding will normally be provided by our parish organist and cantor. They are trained in Catholic Liturgy, and they will make it a special experience for you, your family and your friends. On occasion, we receive requests for the use of an outside organist and/or singer who have ties to your family. We strongly discourage this practice, but they will be permitted to sing at your wedding if they are trained professionals with experience at Catholic Weddings. Our Parish Organist, Mrs. Linda Moore, is available to answer any questions that you may have and to help you plan your music. Please call her at 845-227-2779. No selections may be played/sung in our church without prior approval of our Organist.

FEES - The fees are due at the rehearsal. The church fee is \$175. This can be cash or a check made out to St. Columba Church. The fee for the Organist is \$125.00 and for the Cantor it is \$100.00. These music fees must be separate, either cash or checks made out to cash. This is also due at the rehearsal. (The organist must be paid whether she is present or not. Her contract requires her to be available for every service at St. Columba, which precludes her from working outside the parish). It is also customary to tip the Altar Servers on the day of the Wedding. (Two servers for a Nuptial Mass, one for a Ceremony, usually \$10.00 each).

LATENESS - It is the custom in some places to be fashionably late for weddings. It is not the custom here. We cannot stress enough that YOU MUST BE ON TIME! Your wedding is not the only liturgy in our parish this day. We simply do not have the time to wait for you! Please show consideration for your priests, deacons, our musicians, servers and for all the guests that you have invited.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE - You should plan on celebrating this Sacrament sometime before your wedding. Marriage is the beginning of a new life together. The Sacrament of Penance will help you to center your marriage in Christ. The Sacrament is celebrated here on Saturdays from 8:30-9:00 a.m. and 4:00-5:00 p.m. If this is not convenient, please call ahead and make an appointment. If you arrange it ahead of time, a priest may be available for confessions on the night of rehearsal.

THE REHEARSAL - Choose the date and time of your rehearsal at your 2nd meeting. PLEASE BE ON TIME FOR YOUR REHEARSAL! We are on a tight schedule here at St. Columba and there are other activities going on in the parish! **Please bring the following to the rehearsal: the wedding planning booklet, the Marriage License and Church & Music fees.**

REHEARSAL PROCEDURES - Before the rehearsal begins, please submit the marriage license, the wedding planning booklet with your selections, and the fees. You will be instructed to follow these general guidelines:

- Ushers, the Best Man and the Groom arrive generally 1/2 hour to 15 minutes before the wedding. Ushers seat your guests and the Best Man and Groom wait in the sacristy.
- When the Bride arrives, she is escorted to the church narthex.
- When the Bride is set, the parents are escorted to the first-row Center by the ushers.
- The Priest/Deacon, the Best Man and the Groom go to their places and the Procession begins.
- The Bridal Party sits in the first pew on the side aisles. If necessary, the second pew is used as well.
- The Best Man, Maid (Matron) of Honor, Bride and Groom sit on seats in front of the altar.
- Readers and Gift Bearers may sit anywhere, but preferable at the end of a pew.
- At the end of the Wedding, the recessional is in reverse order: Bride and Groom, Bridal Party, Parents, then guests.
- The bride and groom go out the front door (in good weather) and stand together with their parents and the Bridal Party. If the weather is poor, you may line up inside the church atrium.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS - Only two large bouquets please. We encourage you to choose colorful arrangements. Flowers should be left in church as a gift to God. Flowers must be removed after the wedding during Advent or Lent. You may have flowers or bows at the end of the pews. They **MAY NOT** be fastened with tape. (Try rubber bands!) A white carpet is not allowed due to trip hazard. Other flowers, trees or arches are not permitted. Flower girls may not drop petals in Church (slip hazard). Occasionally, couples wish to light a unity candle. You must provide your own. The wedding candle may not be placed on the altar. A table will be set up specifically for the candle.

PHOTOGRAPHY - Your photographer must be a professional. He/she may take flash pictures during the wedding. Photographers are NEVER permitted in the sanctuary. (This is the area up the steps). A video photographer is welcome. Make sure he/she understands that NO LIGHTS ARE PERMITTED in Church. This is an ARCHDIOCESAN POLICY. He/she must be prepared to use existing Church lighting throughout the wedding. If these guidelines are not followed, the wedding will stop and your photographer(s) will be asked to leave the Church. Do not abuse this privilege. We ask that when you hire your photographer(s), bring the attached guideline sheet and let him/her read them and agree to them before you hire them.

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH - The throwing of rice, birdseed or any other item is not permitted due to liability concerns.

A FINAL WORD - We hope that you will find these guidelines helpful. They are intended to ensure a reverent and joyful celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. It is our conviction that time and effort spent preparing now for your Sacrament will help to ensure a lifetime together! We look forward to celebrating your Sacrament with you! May Christ abundantly bless your love for each other, and fill you with His peace!

Church of St. Columba, Hopewell Junction, NY 12533
Photo Guidelines for The Sacrament of Marriage

(Please give this form to your photographer to sign. Ask your photographer to make a copy for their files, and return this form to the parish)

Photographers for the Wedding of

Groom _____

Bride _____

Date _____ Time _____

Policies of St. Columba Parish:

- 1) Flash photography is permitted
- 2) No additional lighting is permitted at any time in the church. Video photographers must work with the existing church lighting.
- 3) Photographers are not permitted in the sanctuary. (up the steps).
- 4) Weddings must begin on time. Plan! You may not pose people for pictures once the wedding time has arrived.
- 5) Photographers (still & video) are expected to be attired properly. No tee shirts or printed shirts. Dress shirts, blouses and a casual or formal jacket would be in order.
- 6) Pictures taken in church after the wedding may only take place with the permission of the parish priests/deacons and as time permits. Picture taking should be brief. The Church is not the place to take the formal wedding portraits.
- 7) Please check with the celebrant before the wedding to see if they have any suggestions for ways to serve the Bride & Groom.
- 8) We will be happy to mention you to other couples if you follow our guidelines!

PHOTOGRAPHER - PLEASE SIGN

I am aware of your policies, and our Company will follow them.

Signed: _____

Company: _____

City: _____ Phone _____

VISITING PRIEST/DEACON INFORMATION SHEET

Church of St. Columba
835 Route 82 ~ PO Box 428
Hopewell Junction, New York 12533
845-227-8380

Dear Father or Deacon,

This couple has advised us that you will be available to celebrate their Marriage here at St. Columba's Church. Would you kindly notify us of your acceptance by sending us the following information:

Priest/Deacon Name: _____

Diocese or Order: _____

Church or Ministry: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name of Groom: _____

Name of Bride: _____

Wedding Date & Time: _____

Visiting priests/deacons are asked to abide by the parish guidelines. Please make sure the couple gives you a copy. Please call if you have any questions. Please make sure to submit to the Pastor of St. Columba the required Priest/Deacon "In Good Standing" Forms from your (Arch)diocese/Order. You are normally asked to prepare the couple for marriage, complete all paperwork with them, plan the Liturgy with them, and be available for the rehearsal. If needed, the clergy of St. Columba would be happy to assist you in any of these areas (for example, because of long distance). Please call the Pastor at 845-227-8380.

Signature of Priest/Deacon _____