

Planning and Celebrating Your Wedding in St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish

A Practical Guide



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**At the beginning of creation,
God made them
male and female.
They are no longer two
but one flesh.**

Congratulations on your engagement to be married, and blessings on your preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church of St. Elizabeth of Hungary!

All of us in the parish joyfully extend our prayerful support on your wedding and your married life!

This booklet is designed to be a practical help for you during the days ahead. There are so many details that call for your attention, and the pages that follow will assist you in your planning for your church celebration of marriage.

A. Flowers and Decorations:

Simple flower arrangements may be placed on either side of the sanctuary and on the ends of the pews. Flowers should not be placed in front of the altar or ambo (pulpit). The florist is never to rearrange any of the altar furnishing. Any questions should be referred to the parish sacristan. Extensive display, such as decorative archways, aisle candelabra and balloons are not permitted in the church. There is no scattering of flower petals or other materials during the wedding procession.

B. Throwing of Rice?

We no longer permit the use of items such as rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, etc. which are dangerous, especially in wet weather and quite difficult to remove from the parish walkways and grounds. Some couples use safer items, e.g., bubbles. Please contact the parish so that permission can be granted.

C. A Runner?

We advise against using a runner in the main aisle of the church. Runners have shifted, slipped and torn and can be hazardous.

D. A Wedding Booklet?

A special booklet for an individual wedding is an excellent preparation aid which married couples choose to include. It is the responsibility of the couple to secure all necessary copyrights. The words or music to any song may never be reprinted without written permission of the publisher. If in doubt, please ask the Music Director. The booklet can include an *outline* of the parts of the service and titles of songs, etc. Reprinting texts and lyrics is usually against copyright laws. Feel free to send a draft to the Parish Center before you print it so that we can make suggestions for you.

We hope that this booklet has answered all your questions. Should you have additional questions not covered here, please feel free to call the Center at 271.4455 or email center@stelizabeth.org.

E. Photography and Videography:

Photographers and videographers have a special responsibility to perform their roles in a way that will not mar the dignity or the sanctity of your ceremony. It is important that you discuss these guidelines with your photographer/videographer so they are aware of our church procedures before you enter into an agreement with them. No exceptions to these procedures will be made on the day of your wedding. Remember that these professionals work for you and should abide by the parish rules and your sensibilities, not vice versa. St. Elizabeth Parish is happy to grant permission to photographers and videographers to photograph and record weddings at St. Elizabeth provided that the following guidelines are observed:



- Only one photographer and one videographer may be at the wedding.
- During a nuptial mass, both the photographer and videographer are part of the congregation and kneel or are seated during the Eucharistic prayer.
- The place for them to stand is at the wide break on either side of the main aisle. They are not permitted to leave that location during the wedding and should plan their equipment needs accordingly.
- Video lights are not permitted in the church at all.
- The still photographer may take flash pictures only during the processional, recessional, and during the vow ceremony.
- Double-lighting (i.e., lighting assistants) is not permitted in church during the wedding.
- You are allowed to return to church for additional pictures after the ceremony provided that there is sufficient time. You are to be complete and ready to depart at least one half-hour before the next wedding.

Table of Contents

I. **Four Easy Steps for You!**5

II. **Your Second Step** 6

A. Marriage Preparation: FOCCUS an Pre-Cana.....6

B. Newly-Issued Baptism Certificates.....7

III. **Your Third Step: Planning the Liturgy – Prayer**8

A. Meet with Your Officiant8

B. Nuptial Mass or a Ceremony8

C. Readings8

D. Prayers9

E. Two Witnesses9

F. Who Officiates at Your Wedding9

G. Who Can Be Part of the Liturgy9

H. *Together for Life* Booklet9

I. “Unity Candle” 10

IV. **Your Fourth Step: Planning Your Music and a Rehearsal**..... 11

A. Meet with the Music Director 11

1. Inviting Guest Musicians..... 11

2. Music Fees..... 11

3. Music Selections 12

B.	The Wedding Rehearsal	12
	1. Setting Up Your Rehearsal.....	12
	2. The Wedding Ministry Team	12
	3. What to Bring to Your Rehearsal.....	12
V.	Other Matters	13
A.	Parish Donation	13
B.	Altar Servers.....	13
C.	Banns of Marriage.....	13
D.	Changing the Time/Date, Postponing or Cancelling.....	13
E.	Photography and Videography	14
F.	Flowers and Decorations	15
G.	Throwing of Rice	15
H.	A Runner	15
I.	A Wedding Booklet.....	15

V. Other Matters

A. Parish Donation:

St. Elizabeth parish asks for a donation of \$500 on the occasion of your wedding, as per the guidelines of the Diocese of Rockville Centre. Donations made on the occasion of the celebration of a sacrament assist the community with maintaining the church and grounds with beauty and dignity. Should there be a financial difficulty, please speak to your priest or deacon.

B. Altar Servers:

Couples often ask about gratuities for the two altar servers will be assigned to assist at your wedding. It is customary to give a small gratuity to them before the ceremony.

C. Banns of Marriage:

St. Elizabeth Parish will publish the banns of marriage in the church bulletin for the three weeks before your wedding. This is to allow the community to know that you are being married and is a centuries-old way of determining if there are any obstacles to your marriage. Feel free to contact your fiancé's parish and let them know the date of your wedding so that they can publish the banns in his/her bulletin.

D. Changing the Time/Date, Postponing or Cancelling:

There is usually not a problem to make a change. Please contact the priest or deacon with whom you had your interview. He is the person responsible to make the change for you on the parish calendar.

3. **Music Selections:**

A separate list of music selections is provided at your wedding interview which will help you as you plan your meeting with the Music Director to finalize your choices.

B. **The Wedding Rehearsal.**

1. **Setting up your Rehearsal:**

You can set the date and time of your rehearsal as soon as you would like. This can be done at any time, especially because the parish schedule could fill up the closer you get to your wedding day. Please call the Parish Center at 271.4455 to arrange for a convenient time for your rehearsal. Rehearsals are held on Thursdays (6:00 p.m. is the last appointment) and Fridays (between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.) Rehearsals may not be scheduled for weekends. As there are often several rehearsals or other activities in the church on any given night, it is imperative that you be on time for our rehearsal.

2. **The Wedding Ministry Team:**

The Wedding Ministry Team is happy to be with you for the wedding rehearsal and on the day of your wedding. They will be available to help welcome your guests and ensure that the celebration is prayerful and organized.

3. **What to Bring to your Rehearsal:**

Bring your Marriage License to the rehearsal. Any New York State Town Clerk will draw up the marriage license. Some local numbers are: Huntington 351.3206; Babylon 957.3000; Hempstead 516.489.5000; Oyster Bay 516.922.5800. By law, applicants are obligated to appear in person to obtain this license. The marriage may not be performed for twenty-four (24) hours from the issuance of the marriage license, and the license is good sixty (60) days from the date of issue.

Also, should you plan to make a “unity candle” part of the ritual, please bring the candle to the rehearsal.

I. **Four Easy Steps for You!**

A quick overview before you read any further...

Your ***first step*** is done--the wedding interview! You have received a copy of this booklet at the end of your interview. The wedding date has been set in the parish calendar!

Your ***second step***, immediately following your wedding interview:

1. **Baptism Certificate:** The new certificate will have the *current year* on it, and can be obtained (usually free of charge) from the church of your baptism. (Your old baptism certificate isn't needed, only a freshly reissued one.) If you were baptized at St. Elizabeth Church, this will not be necessary.
2. **Pre-Cana registration:** You will need to complete the form *immediately* so you are part of our pre-cana program (see below). If you cannot find dates that suit your schedule, contact the parish right away for other options.
3. **FOCCUS:** You have been given the next couple of dates when you will come for the completion of the questionnaire. You will receive a phone call soon to confirm the appointment.

Your ***third step:*** you will be planning the liturgical details of your wedding and meeting with your Officiant.

Your ***fourth step:*** you will be planning your music and meeting with our Music Director. Your rehearsal date will also be set when you are ready.

For details see inside!

II. Your Second Step

You will be completing these steps right after your wedding interview.

A. Marriage Preparation: FOCCUS and Pre-Cana:

FOCCUS is an instrument used around the country that helps couples understand a little more deeply their relationship, compatibility, and ways they see themselves and the details of married life. (It stands for “Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study.”)

You will meet with a parishioner who will give you the opportunity to complete the questionnaire (individually). The questionnaires are scored electronically in Omaha, Nebraska. When the results are received, you will be contacted for a conversation where the results can be explained to you. The results are confidential and are meant for you alone.

All couples are required to be prepared for marriage. This is often called “Pre-Cana” (Jesus’ first miracle was at the wedding feast in the town of Cana). We encourage you to register for the parish pre-cana program. The dates and registration form have been given to you during your wedding interview. This is a six-week program. The first and last meetings take place on Sunday morning and include the celebration of mass (12:00 noon). Your parents and friends are invited to be part of these liturgies where you receive special blessings and prayers. The remaining four meetings take place usually Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m.

Should you not be able to attend the six parish sessions because of your schedule, you can arrange your marriage preparation through the Diocese of Rockville Centre (www.drvc.org). The diocese has different schedules (weekdays, weekends, etc.) that may suit your schedule better. The diocese will provide you with a *certificate of attendance* which you are to send to the parish.

Your decision regarding pre-cana is important and is to be made as soon as possible after your wedding interview.

IV. Your Fourth Step: Planning Your Music and a Rehearsal.

The following can be done as you wish, keeping in mind that the Wedding Rehearsal is your “deadline” for most of what needs to be completed.

Music is a basic element of our Catholic traditions and is, itself, a prayer. It creates an atmosphere of prayer and joy at your wedding. The music you choose will encourage all your guests to pray and sing. The celebration of marriage is a religious event, so certain popular tunes and songs will not be appropriate for church and are best reserved for the reception.

A. Meet with the Music Director.

You can make an appointment with our Music Director, Virgil Barkauskas, *as soon as possible* to assist you in the planning and coordinating of the music for your wedding. He can be reached via email, vbarka@stelizabeth.org or by calling the Parish Center at 631.271.4455.



1. Inviting Guest Musicians:

The Organist and Cantor are part of the parish staff. Please do not make arrangements with other musicians without first speaking to the Music Director. Qualified guest musicians and soloists can be invited and are be familiar with the order and structure of the Catholic wedding liturgy. Guest musicians follow the parish and diocesan guidelines for wedding music and are experienced at the task of leading a congregation in song. All guest musicians, soloists and programs of music are approved by the Music Director.

2. Music Fees:

The fee for our Organist, Virgil Barkauskas, is \$135; please make your check payable to Virgil; the fee for our Cantor is \$125; please make your check payable to “cash.” If you are providing your own musicians, the Music Director and Cantor fees are still to be paid. ***Please bring the music fees with you when you meet with the Music Director.***

I. “Unity Candle”

Many couples like the symbol of the Unity Candle, one candle lit by the couple and extinguishing the two separate candles. You will need to obtain this candle (and hold onto it as a keepsake after your wedding). It is brought to the rehearsal where the Wedding Team assists with a walk-through.



B. Newly-issued Baptism Certificates:

Perhaps you were baptized here at St. Elizabeth parish! We will have your record of baptism in the parish baptism register and there is no need for you to obtain another one. For those baptized in another parish, you will need to contact the parish and have them send you a *new baptism certificate*. (Your original certificate you can keep for family memories.) The parish where you were baptized will be happy to mail you the new certificate **OR** you can have it mailed directly to St. Elizabeth, whichever you prefer.



III. Your Third Step: Planning the Liturgy - Prayer

It is best that this is completed at least two months before your wedding. This will give you time to make your decisions, meet with people who can help you, and ensure that the wedding is celebrated as you would like. While you have many choices, all your choices are part of the way the Catholic Church celebrates the sacraments, including your marriage.

A. Meet with your Officiant.

At least ***two months*** before your wedding, meet with the priest or deacon who will be your Officiant. Bring the ***Together for Life*** selections (tear-out at the back of the booklet). Please bring the Parish donation (\$500, see below) when you have your meeting with your Officiant.

B. Nuptial Mass or a Ceremony?

When two Catholics marry, the wedding mass is the usual way the sacrament is celebrated. At the wedding mass, the bride and groom receive from the “one bread and the one cup,” the Eucharistic sign of their unity in marriage. For special reasons, the couple may choose to have a wedding ceremony. The ***Together for Life*** booklet explains the differences and has two editions, one for planning the mass and another for planning the ceremony. When a Catholic marries someone who is not a Catholic, the wedding ceremony is the usual way the sacrament is celebrated. Should you have questions about this, your priest or deacon will be happy to help you.

Your wedding may be scheduled on a Saturday at 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., or 3:00 p.m. and may be scheduled as a Nuptial Mass or a Ceremony. Sunday weddings may only be scheduled as a Ceremony.

C. Readings.

There are three choices from the Scriptures that you will be making. The first reading is always from the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures). The second reading is from the New Testament, often from the letters of St. Paul. The third reading is the gospel. Readers are people who can read the Word of God and other prayers with clarity and dignity. They should understand the seriousness and importance of their role in your wedding ceremony.

D. Prayers.

You can select the prayers and blessings which you prefer – the booklet contains all the choices and also explains them.

E. Two Witnesses.

You choose ***two*** witnesses who are part of the wedding and sign the marriage license. There is room on the license for only the signatures of two witnesses.

F. Who Officiates at your Wedding?

Usually the priest or deacon with whom you met for your interview will be the Officiant at your wedding. Should you wish to have a family member or friend who is a Catholic priest or deacon as your Officiant, please let us know so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

G. Who Can Be Part of the Liturgy?

You are welcome to have family or friends who are good readers to help with the first and second reading. (The gospel is always read by the priest or deacon.) You may also wish to have someone read the Prayer of the Faithful. Ring-bearers and flower girls are often younger children. Our experience dictates that they be at least four years old and have sufficient maturity to be part of a public ceremony.

H. Together For Life Booklet.

The booklet has a form at the back which lists all of your selections. Once you complete it, tear it out and make sure that your priest/deacon has this at least two months before your wedding.