

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Northampton, Massachusetts

Guidelines for Marriage Preparation

My Dear Friends,

Congratulations on embarking on this new chapter of your lives together. The union of two lives in this commitment of faith is a time of great excitement and joy. As you promise each other lasting love and fidelity before the Church, the priest, and God, we offer these guidelines to help you navigate the preparation process. These guidelines, a combination of general instructions from the Roman Catholic Church, specific directives from the Springfield Diocese, and particulars for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, aim to assist you in planning a wedding that will be a happy and holy experience to be cherished for years to come.

Despite the potential hectic and stressful nature of wedding preparation, remember that this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience meant to be enjoyed. Focus on the joy of answering God's call to start a new life with the one you love.

May God bless your wedding preparations, and may your marriage be filled with love and the peace of the Lord!

Sincerely yours in Christ, Father Kingsley Ihejirika

Administrator

INTRODUCTION

The Roman Catholic Church and the Diocese of Springfield, recognizing the richness and beauty of the sacrament of marriage, have established regulations for marriage preparation. These guidelines, developed to strengthen the stability of marriage, reflect the Church's concern for engaged couples by emphasizing the gravity of Matrimony. Marriage preparation serves as a tool for couples to deepen their commitment to fidelity and their sacramental marriage "in the Lord." It addresses various aspects of marriage, providing practical information for a successful union.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM PREPARATION TIME

The Diocese of Springfield mandates arrangements with a priest at least six months before the wedding. This period allows for spiritual and practical preparation, including sessions with a priest and participation in diocesan Pre-Nuptial Programs like Pre-Cana, Marriage Encounter, Natural Family Planning, or Retrouvaille Marriage Help Program. Couples must attend at least one of these programs and gather required documentation for their Marriage file. These meetings are informative, instructive, and contribute to a deeper awareness of self, sexuality, and the Sacrament of Matrimony.

To learn more about these programs and make an appointment, visit [Diocese of Springfield](#).

CONTACT OUR PARISH FOR YOUR WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

To initiate wedding arrangements, contact our parish assistant, Mary Ann Barnes, at the parish office: maryann@saintelizabethannseton.net or 413-584-7310 Ext. 101.

PMI SURVEY: PMI SURVEY: Our parish office marriage coordinator, Mary Ann Barnes, will provide you with an online link to complete the PMI. This is an assessment of the couple's readiness for marriage and will help in identifying problems, if any. While the survey is not a pass or fail test, it might indicate readiness issues or problems that may cause a delay in the marriage.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED:

1. Current baptismal certificate for Catholics
2. Copy of Baptismal Certificate for non-Catholics
3. Declaration of nullity for any party previously married.
4. Marriage license from the vital records office of the town where the marriage will take place (for Massachusetts weddings).

For more detailed information about these documents, discuss with your priest at your first meeting.

THE WEDDING

MASS OR CEREMONY: Discuss with your priest or deacon. Mixed Marriages may take place within Mass if the non-Catholic agrees, but Holy Communion is not allowed for non-Catholics. The minister of the non-Catholic party is welcome to participate in the ceremony in the case of a mixed marriage.

THE MINISTER: The parish priest or deacon will witness the marriage. A relative or friend who is a priest or deacon may be delegated, with civil authorization in Massachusetts. In mixed marriages, the minister of the non-Catholic party can participate with the priest's approval.

WEDDING COORDINATOR: All weddings are assigned a wedding coordinator. The name of our parish wedding coordinator is Karen Bobala, and she can be reached at 413-584-7310 x. 109. She is a parishioner familiar with weddings at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish and will coordinate the many details of your special day with your priest, photographer and florist. She will attend the rehearsal and be available for setup before your wedding. The wedding coordinator's fee is \$100.00 and is due one week before your wedding.

TIMES AND LOCATIONS FOR WEDDINGS:

TIMES AND LOCATIONS FOR WEDDINGS: All parish weddings are scheduled on Fridays or Saturdays. As far as the location of the wedding, intending couples have the option to choose our Church on 99 King Street Northampton or the chapel at 87 Beacon Street in Florence. For couples who choose to have their weddings celebrated at the church, weddings can be

scheduled anytime between 12noon and 4:00pm on Fridays and from 12noon to 2:00pm on Saturdays.

For couples who choose to have their wedding celebrated at the chapel, weddings can be scheduled anytime between 12noon and 5:00pm

- **Church:** Fridays between 2:00pm and 4:00 pm.
- **Church:** Saturdays, between 12 noon and 2:00 pm.
- **Chapel:** Fridays and Saturdays, between 12 noon and 5:00 pm.

Additional details and availability can be discussed with the priest. Also, due to Feast Days and other functions, not all Fridays and Saturdays may be available. Married couples and are welcome to take pictures in and around the church up to 30 minutes after the Mass or ceremony.

REHEARSAL: Rehearsals are scheduled on Wednesdays at 5:00pm or on Fridays at 4:00pm. The rehearsal is scheduled with the priest responsible for the ceremony and our parish wedding coordinator. Please remind your wedding party to be prompt. Tell the wedding party and others who will be attending the rehearsal to allow extra time when traveling to the church. In addition, it is very important that small children who are in the wedding party attend the rehearsal. This is their opportunity to “practice” walking down the aisle in the processional.

OFFERING AND FEES:

It is customary for the couple to make an offering to the Church:

- **For Parishioners:** \$600.00
- **For Non-Parishioners:** \$700.00

Organist and Cantor fees: Additional \$350.00

The couple may decide to offer a small gift to all those involved in the ceremony, including the altar server, the sacristan and the priest. However, it is only a gesture of appreciation and not an obligation. ***All offerings and fees are due one week before your wedding.*** Please bring them to the church office.

All fees are due one week before the wedding and paid separately.

PROPER CONDUCT:

Members of the bridal party should arrive about half an hour before the wedding, observing proper decorum in the church.

FLOWERS: Arrangements for the flowers are to be made by the couple in collaboration with our parish wedding coordinator. It is very important for the couple to realize that the flowers are their gift to God to beautify His house in celebration of their wedding day. For this reason, couples are encouraged to leave their flowers in the church for Masses that weekend. During

the seasons of Advent and Lent, however, flowers must be removed from the church following the Mass or ceremony.

OTHER DECORATIONS: Use plastic clips, elastic, or unwired ribbon for pew decorations. Discuss the use of unity candles with the priest before purchasing one.

PHOTOGRAPHS: Your photographer may take pictures during the ceremony from the rear or sides of the Church. We ask, however, that the photographer not interfere with the ceremony or come into the sanctuary, unless with prior permission from the priest. The photographer may use flash during the ceremony, as long as the use of flash is discreet. The photographer should check in with the priest and wedding coordinator before the ceremony begins to receive any last-minute instructions or have any questions answered. If the wedding is to be videotaped, the camera is to be located in the rear or along one of the sidewalls of the Church. The camera is to be mounted and not moved around during the ceremony, and movie lights are not to be used. The photographer must be unobtrusive. Please remind your guests to be respectful of the tabernacle, sanctuary and parishioners who may be praying while photos are being taken. Please feel free to use other parts of the church property for pictures.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- **No throwing** of rice, bird seed, confetti, or anything inside or outside the Church due to safety hazards and cleanup concerns.

- **HOME PARISH:** Notify the Parish Center Office if you plan to register with the parish after the wedding.

MUSIC:

Coordinate music through the Music Director, Doug Almanzar. Discuss music selection after the initial meeting with the priest: d.almanzar@hotmail.com or 413-320-3960.

READINGS:

During your first meeting with the priest, be sure to inquire about his assistance in choosing the readings for your wedding ceremony. It is the responsibility of the couples to select the first and second readings from the New and Old Testaments, along with the responsorial psalm.

Meanwhile, the priest or deacon will be responsible for choosing the Gospel reading.

Document Check List:

- Current Baptismal Certificate (with notations) for Catholics
- Copy of Baptismal Certificate for non-Catholics
- Confirmation Certificate – if necessary
- Copy of Declaration of nullity – if necessary
- State Marriage license

Fees and Offerings Check List:

- Church for Parishioner \$600.00

- Church for non-Parishioner \$700
- Organist \$200
- Cantor \$150
- Wedding Coordinator \$100.00
- Priests and servers – Entirely up to the couple and their families.

All fees are due in the parish center office one week before your wedding and paid in separate checks.

Once again, congratulations, and welcome to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Northampton, Massachusetts. We look forward to assisting you in creating a beautiful and blessed wedding ceremony.

To begin arrangements, contact our parish assistant Mary Ann Barnes:

maryann@saintelizabethannseton.net or 413-584-7310 Ext. 101.