Wedding Guidelines

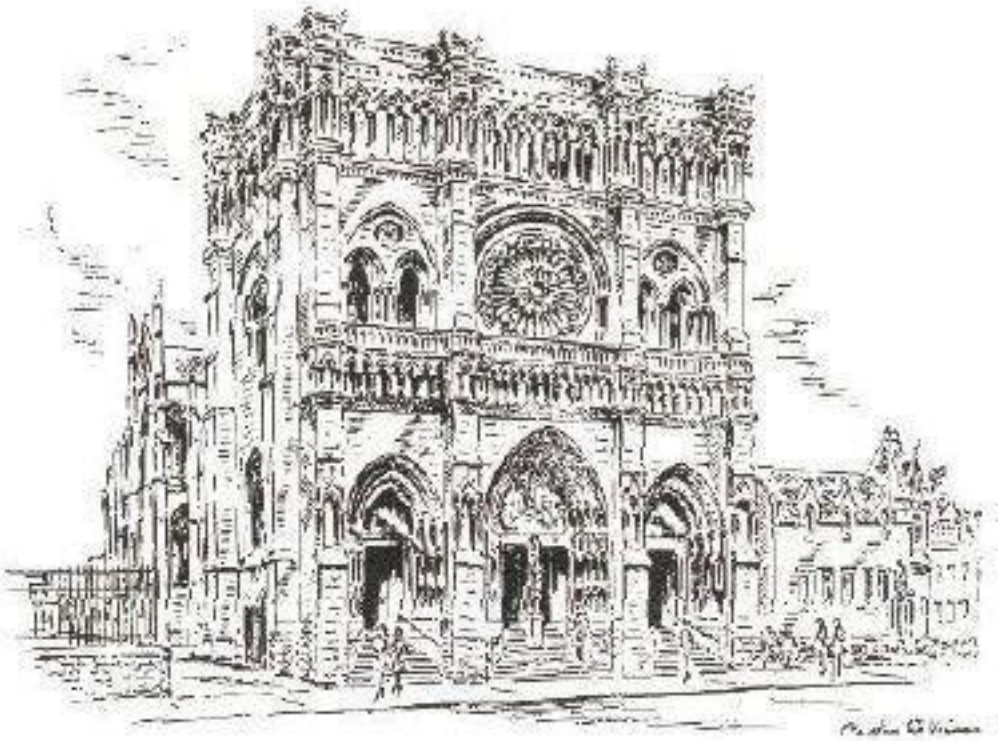
for

St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption

Mailing address:
1101 Madison Ave.*
Covington, KY, 41011

*Physical address of the Cathedral Basilica is 1130 Madison Ave.

November 5, 2026



Introduction
A message to Engaged Couples Planning a Wedding at the Cathedral. Congratulations on your decision to marry! Now that you have decided to marry, you will undoubtedly be putting a great deal of time, effort and prayer into planning and preparing for the wedding ceremony. Since you are planning to make the Cathedral the place for the celebration of your wedding, everyone at St. Mary's Cathedral would like to be as helpful as possible. That is the purpose of this booklet.

Because we schedule many more weddings here at the Cathedral than the typical parish church, we have found that it is helpful for everyone concerned - you, your families and your guests - if we put our expectations in written form. It is our experience that everything will go much more smoothly, both in preparation and in the ceremony itself if everyone knows what is expected of them, and adheres to those expectations.

Please understand that because of the number of weddings taking place at the Cathedral, we cannot begin making exceptions to the policies we have established. Additionally, we have the responsibility of assuring that weddings celebrated at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption adhere to Church law and liturgical standards. In choosing the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption as the place for the celebration of your wedding, you also have chosen to abide by the policies governing your Wedding Liturgy and the use of the facility. The information in this booklet is designed to help you with your wedding ceremony.

After you have read these guidelines, please sign the ACKNOWLEDGEMENT sheet at the end of this document, then detach and bring it to your initial meeting with the Cathedral Rector.

Very Reverend Ryan L. Maher, Rector

Confirming the Date and Wedding Fees
The first step in scheduling a wedding at the Cathedral is to call the Parish Office at 859-431-2060. The wedding date and time you have cleared with the Cathedral Secretary are ONLY TENTATIVE. We will hold that date and time for you for **seven (7) days**, during which time you (prospective bride and groom) must contact the Cathedral Rector, Very Rev. Ryan L. Maher, to schedule a meeting with him.

If all is agreeable at that time, the date and time will be held for you per payment of the nonrefundable deposit of **$500.00** to the Cathedral Basilica, and payment of the nonrefundable deposit of **$300.00** to the Cathedral Organist, Dr. Greg Schaffer; both payments are due within **fourteen (14) days** of your meeting with the Rector. The reservation of the date is, however, not a final commitment to the wedding taking place at the Cathedral; that commitment is made only when the priest or deacon officiating at the ceremony has informed the Cathedral parish that he will preside at the ceremony by returning the document received from the Cathedral, completed the marriage preparation with you, is satisfied that you are adequately prepared for the lifetime commitment implied in Christian marriage, and has supplied all of the proper papers to the Cathedral. ***We cannot confirm a date with you until you have a commitment from a priest or deacon who has agreed to accept the responsibility for the wedding.

The $500.00 nonrefundable deposit to the Cathedral Basilica should be made by check, payable to *Cathedral Basilica*, or made online at www.covcathedral.com.

The fee paid does not include any compensation to the presiding priest or the presiding deacon. It is customary for the presiding priest or deacon to receive a monetary stipend from the couple at the time of the ceremony.

Cathedral Staff musicians are the musicians for all weddings. After your deposit is received by Dr. Schaffer, he will contact you to setup a preliminary meeting about the selection of music for the wedding and answer any questions. The $300.00 non-refundable deposit to Dr. Greg Schaffer can be made in the following ways:

- Check (payable to Gregory Schaffer) dropped off at - or mailed to the Parish Office or
- Zelle pay to 859-445-1171 (Gregory Schaffer) or
- Venmo - @Gregory-Schaffer-7

If you have not contacted the Rector to discuss the wedding within the allotted **seven (7) day** time period, the tentative hold on the date and time selected will be dropped, any deposit submitted will be forfeited and that date will become available to anyone who might request it. If, after requesting that we hold a time and date for your wedding, you should no longer intend to follow through with your plan, please inform the Cathedral secretary so that the date and time can be made available to someone else.

Wedding Times

Because of other regularly scheduled services at the Cathedral, weddings can be scheduled only at certain times. These times are on Fridays at 6:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 1:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays or holidays, including civic holidays. Weddings are not held during Lent. The time of the rehearsal will be scheduled by the Cathedral secretary.

Officiating Priest/Deacon

The priests who staff the Cathedral are unable to accommodate requests to celebrate the weddings of those who are not parishioners of the Cathedral. The proper priest for doing so is your pastor (of either the bride or the groom). You are also free to invite any other priest or deacon who is in good standing with his Bishop and agreeable to the Rector to officiate.

We cannot confirm a date with you until you have a commitment from a priest or deacon who has agreed to accept the responsibility for the wedding. The priest or deacon who will officiate at your wedding is responsible for all prenuptial preparations, ensuring that all required documents are obtained, conducting the rehearsal, and the wedding itself. He is responsible, of course, for seeing that all diocesan norms, liturgical norms and Cathedral policies are followed. A letter from the Cathedral will be sent to the priest or deacon to ensure that he is clear about the responsibilities.

Any ecumenical gestures must be approved by the Rector of the Cathedral. This includes the participation in any public role by any non-Catholic minister.

Wedding Assistant
The Cathedral will provide a Wedding Assistant to be of service to you and the visiting clergy, e.g., to help at the rehearsal and the wedding. The Wedding Assistant will ensure the proper implementation of our wedding guidelines and, as such be the representative of the Rector.

His or her decision in all matters is final. The Wedding Assistant will make sure that the Cathedral is open ahead of time and that the facilities are available. He or she will provide direction as well as offer any assistance and any advice requested during the rehearsal. The Wedding Assistant will serve as sacristan for a Mass, setting up a small table with items needed for Mass to be placed next to the altar. The Wedding Assistant, a commissioned Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion will retrieve the Eucharist from the Blessed Sacrament chapel as needed prior to Communion, together with the priest, distribute Holy Communion to the faithful, and will repose the Eucharist after Communion.

Music
Music is an important element of all weddings celebrated at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. Careful attention to the choice of music (as well as the Scripture readings and liturgical prayers) will enhance this sacred celebration not only for the two of you, but for all who witness your marriage vows. This enables everyone to participate in a focused and spiritual manner.

Dr. Schaffer (email: gschaffer@covcathedral.com) will perform and be in charge of the music for your wedding and will provide the couple with guidance in selecting appropriate musical selections. An organist and a cantor will be provided. The role of cantor is to lead and assist the assembly in singing. A solo instrument (trumpet, violin, etc.) may be added for an additional fee with the permission of Dr. Schaffer.

The church wedding is a sacred rite invoking the blessing of God on the union of bride and groom. Any music used in connection with this ceremony must mirror the dignity of the Cathedral and the sanctity of the sacrament being celebrated. Wherever music is employed, and by whatever instruments or voices, it must reflect the festive yet reverent nature of the liturgy.

The music and texts selected should express the praise of God, God's love in Christ as the foundation and model for marriage, or the asking of God's presence and blessing. For these reasons, music from the operatic stage, secular theatre or popular culture is not permitted. The music staff of the Cathedral will assist you in every way toward fulfilling these guidelines as you select the music for your wedding.

Preparations
The Diocese of Covington requires that the arrangements for a wedding begin at least nine (9) months prior to the date of the ceremony. The initial contact with the Cathedral must be at least nine (9) months prior to the desired date, but because of the frequent use of the Cathedral and the schedules of priests and deacons, the reservation of a particular date often requires a much earlier contact. During the nine months prior to the wedding, other preparations must be completed. This is an important time for you. Our concern during this time is not just for the wedding

ceremony, but also that you be prepared as well as possible for your life together as a married couple.

The requirements for marriage preparation are the following:
Both an engaged couple program and a natural family course are required. The description, schedule and cost for these programs are available from Office of Catechesis and Faith Formation, www.covdio.org or 859-392-1500. If for a serious reason either or both of these required programs can not be completed in the Diocese of Covington, approved programs from another diocese may be acceptable.

A copy of the certificate obtained upon completion of both programs must be submitted for the marriage file. In addition to the completion of these two programs, a series of sessions with the priest or deacon who will officiate at the wedding, or who will prepare the couple, is required. This will include the gathering of information for the documents required by Church law, the preparations for the ceremony, information designed as instruction in the meaning of a Catholic marriage, and may include use of a professional evaluation tool designed to point out strengths and weaknesses in your relationship.

All preparations must be completed at least one (1) month before the wedding and the officiating priest or deacon must have sent the completed materials and all other completed paperwork to the Cathedral by that date. **If the officiating priest or deacon is visiting from a different diocese than Covington, then the completed materials and all other completed paperwork must be sent by the priest or deacon to the Chancery of his diocese at least (6) weeks before the wedding date.** If a priest or deacon of the Cathedral staff will preside at your wedding, contact him to begin these preparations at least nine (9) months prior to the wedding date.

Documents Needed
The celebrant or the person preparing the couple is responsible for the completion of the marriage paperwork and must ensure that the required documents are obtained.

- Both an engaged couple program and a natural family course are required as stated above. A certificate of completion for each program must be included in the wedding file.

- Baptismal certificates for both parties whether Catholic or Protestant. A baptismal certificate of a Catholic Party must be one issued **not more than six (6) months prior to the ceremony**.

- Any required dispensations and permissions that are needed.

- If either party was previously married, official copies of Church documents must be submitted which prove that the person is free to marry in the Catholic Church. If widowed, a death certificate of the deceased spouse is needed. If divorced, an official copy of the declaration of nullity from the Church and an official copy of a civil divorce decree must be provided. No wedding will be scheduled until any annulment processes

are complete.

- A civil marriage license from the Commonwealth of Kentucky must be given to the priest or deacon prior to the ceremony. The license must be obtained within thirty (30) days prior to the wedding. The wedding cannot be celebrated without this license. At the very latest, the license must be brought to the rehearsal, filled out after the wedding, and left with the paperwork at the Cathedral. The Cathedral staff is responsible for mailing the marriage license to the courthouse.

Photographs
To help us maintain the dignity and solemnity of your wedding, we ask that you inform your photographer of the following restrictions.

Flash or extra lighting is NOT permitted during the opening procession or the ceremony; photographers must use the available light. During the ceremony, pictures may not be taken from the head of the aisle after the procession is completed.

Photographers must not enter the main aisle or the sanctuary at any time or come between the people and the altar during the ceremony; they must remain on the periphery once the procession is completed. The sanctuary is the area around the altar and the steps that lead up to that level.

Photographers are not permitted in either of the choir lofts. Posed photographs after the ceremony have become a common part of weddings: Because of the Cathedral schedule, the time allotted for these pictures is limited. The amount of time available will depend upon the length of time for your wedding.

- Pictures after a 6:30 p.m. Friday wedding must be completed by 8:00 p.m.
- Pictures after a 1:00 p.m. Saturday wedding must be completed by 2:30 p.m.
- Pictures after a 6:30 p.m. Saturday wedding by 8:00 p.m.

Arrangements for some pictures to be taken in church or in the garden prior to the ceremony can sometimes be made, but only with the agreement of the Wedding Assistant at the wedding. Weather permitting, photographs may generally be taken in the garden at the rear of the Cathedral prior to a 6:30 p.m. Saturday evening wedding provided that there is no disturbance of the people attending and leaving the 4:30 p.m. Mass.

There is no room available for the photographer to use as a studio. Pictures may not be taken in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. **Please Note:** The wedding party and any others to be in photographs must return to the sanctuary immediately after the recessional for the photographs after the wedding.

A receiving line or "release" of the congregation (guests) by the bride and groom is not permitted. The bride and groom are not permitted to stop in the back and greet guests. The complete wedding party led by the newly married couple, must recess down the aisle and return by the south side aisle to the altar steps for the pictures. The guests must leave the cathedral (preferably by the main entrance) by following the wedding party. The priest or deacon

presiding at the wedding should help to facilitate this departure in a timely manner.

Videotaping of Weddings
Videotaping is permitted only if the following guidelines are observed and the same rules for photographs must be followed. The use of a drone or any other similar device inside of the Cathedral is strictly prohibited.

No equipment may be installed more than one hour prior to the wedding or before the assembly has left from any previous function. All equipment must be removed immediately after the wedding. No cables or electric cords may be used in positions where people will walk. No additional lighting may be used. Movement of cameras and videographers must be held to a minimum.

The Start Time
All weddings are expected to start on time. The Wedding Assistant is responsible to make sure that the procession begins on time and that the wedding party is in the correct order. One person designated by the bride or groom should be responsible to be near the baptismal font near the doors of the church to ensure that the wedding party is in the correct order. This person should attend the rehearsal. At the time the wedding is scheduled to begin the parents of the bride and groom are seated. After they are seated and the musical piece for it ends, the procession of the wedding party begins. (Note: Any delay in starting will accordingly lessen the amount of time for photographs afterward).

Sanctuary Furnishings
There is one standard sanctuary arrangement for all weddings: two chairs and two kneelers. The two chairs can be placed either on the floor of the nave in front of the first pew on the ambo side OR two chairs can be placed in the sanctuary facing the south side of the altar and the great window. The kneelers, which must be used at wedding Masses, are placed only in front of the altar facing the apse. These items will be placed by the Wedding Assistant. Other chairs may not be moved for the wedding. The priest or deacon uses the chair at the center back of the sanctuary. The Rector's chair by the pulpit may not be moved or used. The Bishop's throne, of course, may not be moved or used. The small backless seats next to the Bishop's throne may not be used.

Flowers and Decorations
A small arrangement of flowers may be placed in front of the altar. The top of the flower arrangement must not exceed the height of the top of the altar. It is advisable that you choose a florist who is familiar with the space. No other flowers are permitted. If any other flower arrangements of any size are brought into the Cathedral they will be removed by the Wedding Assistant.

No extra candles may be used in the Cathedral. The "unity candle" may not be used. The candles present at the altar may not be moved nor may any cathedral furnishings be moved. When candles are lit at the altar, only three candles on each side of the altar are lit.

No decorations of any kind (candles, flowers, ribbons etc.) may be placed on the pews. No runners may be placed on the aisles.

Marian Devotion
The custom of a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is not a part of the marriage ritual, and is not very effective visually at the Cathedral, since the shrine for the Blessed Mother is off to the right and behind several columns and it is difficult for the assembly to see it.

The Rehearsal
Everyone coming to the rehearsal must enter the north doors at the ramp to the Cathedral and should park in the parking lot on the north side (Latin School parking lot). Please see that everyone coming to the rehearsal is alerted to this. The Madison Avenue doors will not be open and may not be opened. The Wedding Assistant will generally have the north doors open thirty (30) minutes prior to the scheduled start of the rehearsal. Musicians do not attend the rehearsal.

Rehearsals must start promptly on time and must be finished within one (1) hour. Participants in the rehearsal should leave the Cathedral promptly at the end of the rehearsal. If you arrive early for a rehearsal you may wait in the parking lot, weather permitting, or enter the Cathedral, but please be quiet and aware that there may be a rehearsal or another event in progress.

As always, please be respectful of the Cathedral as a house of God, before during and after the rehearsal. No food or drink is ever permitted in the Cathedral; it will be removed and disposed of by the Cathedral personnel. Keep talking to a minimum and talk in hushed tones. The Blessed Sacrament chapel is strictly reserved for silent prayer.

Liturgical Ministers
The Cathedral does not provide liturgical ministers for weddings. The Wedding Assistant will serve as sacristan and take care of all of the "behind the scenes" details. Altar Servers are not used at weddings in the Cathedral. Lectors must be provided by the couple. The person(s) chosen to be a lector(s) must be catholic and have some experience past or present with lectoring at their parish.

“The person(s) who proclaim the word of God during the celebration of the sacrament of marriage must be Catholic and must have completed a diocesan education for lectors and been commissioned by their pastor. A commissioned lector should be asked to proclaim the word of God during the wedding liturgy.” (*Norms for Lectors, 2010*).

When the wedding ritual is within Mass, Holy Communion under only one species as the Body of Christ will be provided for the assembly; there will be no Communion from the Cup provided for the assembly. Holy Communion under both kinds will be given to the Catholic bride and the Catholic groom. The Wedding Assistant, a commissioned Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion will retrieve the Eucharist from the Blessed Sacrament chapel as needed prior to Communion, together with the priest, distribute Holy Communion to the faithful, and will repose the Eucharist after Communion.

On the Wedding Day
The wedding party must arrive on time. The groom, groomsmen and ushers should arrive fully dressed at least one half hour prior to the wedding. The bride and bridesmaids should arrive also fully dressed at least ten (10) minutes before the wedding. There is no place at the Cathedral for persons to change clothes or to dress or undress on the premises. It is common courtesy to the guests, the music ministers and the supervising deacon that the wedding starts on time. If a wedding is late starting, there will be that much time less for pictures afterward. Worship aids, if any, (programs and the like) for the ceremony should be distributed at the main entrance and at the north side entrance.

Facilities
The Cathedral does not have or offer a private room or dedicated space for the bride, groom, or members of the wedding party to dress, change clothing, or wait for the processional to begin. Brides and bridesmaids are encouraged to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the ceremony begins and wait either in their vehicle, in the vestibule, or in the semi-secluded area in the back of the Cathedral. Grooms should arrive 30 minutes prior to the start and wait in the Sacristy. Ladies' and mens' restrooms are located on the left and right sides respectively in the back of the Cathedral.

Miscellaneous Items
The priest or deacon presiding at a wedding is responsible for the design of the ceremony and for conducting the rehearsal.

In the procession, as members of the wedding party (two by two) reach the head of the aisle, they must bow to the altar and go immediately to their pews. There will be no "display" of the wedding party on the sanctuary steps or on the main floor until the rite of marriage. Wedding attendants are seated in the front pews on either side in the nave of the church.

PLEASE NOTE: The consumption of any food, any drink, alcoholic or non-alcoholic, on the Cathedral property prior to or after the wedding is strictly forbidden. Anyone who shows signs of having consumed alcoholic beverages will be asked to leave the premises and to not participate in the wedding and the rehearsal at the absolute discretion of the Cathedral personnel.

Throwing rice, confetti or bird seed and the scattering of petals is strictly forbidden. The use of an aisle runner is not permitted. No signs or decorations of any kind may be affixed in any way to any of the doors of the Cathedral. No vehicles may be parked on the sidewalk in front of the Cathedral.

Participation in the ceremony by a member of the non-Catholic clergy must have the specific approval of the Rector of the Cathedral.

The wearing or display of signs with writing of any kind is prohibited, e.g., The junior ring bearer or any person in the wedding party may not wear a sign around their shoulders or elsewhere, with writing on it.

Notifications
Please call the Cathedral at least thirty (30) days before your wedding with the names of your photographer and florist. If they have any questions they can contact the Cathedral directly.

Wedding Fees
The following fee structure does not include any fees for music or flowers; they are just for the use of the Cathedral space.

For Cathedral parishioners - There is no additional fee or deposit for use by a couple wherein one party has been a financially supporting registered member of the Cathedral for two years prior to scheduling the wedding or wherein one party's parents have been financially supporting registered members of the Cathedral for two years prior to scheduling the wedding. A donation to the Cathedral Basilica, however, would be greatly appreciated.

For Diocesan parishioners - For those who have been financially supporting and active registered parishioners of a parish in the Diocese of Covington, the total fee is **$1,500.00** ($1,000.00 in addition to the $500.00 deposit), balance due one (1) month before wedding date.

For all others - The total fee is **$2,800.00** ($2,300.00 in addition to the $500.00 deposit), balance due one (1) month before wedding date.

The fee paid does not include any compensation to the presiding priest or the presiding deacon. It is customary for the presiding priest or deacon to receive a monetary stipend from the couple.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - This is not a contract.

Please complete and sign below and bring this sheet to your meeting with the Cathedral Rector.

We have received and thoroughly read the Wedding Guidelines for St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, and we agree to abide by the rules and regulations for weddings at the Cathedral without exception, and to take special notice of the sections pertaining to time limitations, photographers, and florists.

_____
Signature of the Bride

_____
Signature of the Groom

_____
Date Signed

_____
Wedding Date and Time

_____
Rehearsal Time