WEDDING GUIDELINES
CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR

75 Sanfordville Road
Warwick, New York 10990
845-986-4028

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? - Normally, the marriage takes place in the bride's parish. Either the bride or groom (or your parents) must be registered parishioners of St. Stephen's, or either bride or groom must have been confirmed here. On occasion, couples from outside the parish (with no connection to St. Stephen's Parish) request the use of our church. If the parish schedule permits, the request may be granted at the discretion of the pastor, given that the couple provide their own priest/deacon to perform the marriage. You must have the Visiting Priest/Deacon Form filled out and signed by your priest/deacon before your date may be confirmed. We will hold your date for one month. Your priest/deacon should be willing to prepare all the paperwork and necessary records, and be available for the rehearsal.

SETTING THE DATE - Only a priest or deacon of St. Stephen's may set a date with you. A 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. If the couple is from outside the parish, the Visiting Priest/Deacon Form must be returned within one month before the date can be finalized. It is the couple's responsibility to secure the date and time with the parish before making other commitments. Sufficient time is needed to complete all marriage preparation requirements. (At least six months are needed).

SCHEDULING THE TIME

Friday - 4:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. - Mass or Ceremony
Saturday – 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. or 2:30 p.m. Nuptial Mass or 3:00 p.m. Wedding Ceremony
Sunday - 3:30 p.m. Mass or Ceremony
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) 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) The party who is not a member of St. Stephen's must contact their parish, inform them that you are getting married at St. Stephen's, and ask for a letter from your Pastor that states that you are free to marry.
d) You must have written permission from your parents if you are under 18 years.
e) In ecumenical marriages (Catholic and non-Catholic), 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.

2) **MARRIAGE PREPARATION** - Marriage Preparation prepares you for your life together after your wedding. The Archdiocese of New York requires that you participate in a Marriage Preparation course. Our parish will give you a booklet with the dates and locations. You may sign up online at www.flrl.org. Sign up well in advance of your wedding date. OR – Catholic Marriage Prep Online is also available. Go to www.catholicmarriagepreponline.com. When you complete your Marriage Preparation course, you will receive a certificate. Please keep it with all of your documents. 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.flrl.org.

3) **MEETINGS** - At least three meetings should be held in order 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.
- Meeting #2 - Discuss your experience at the Marriage Preparation Workshop. This should be done soon after you attend a program and no later then three months before your wedding.
- Meeting #3 - Bring all the required documents and complete the paperwork by filling out the *PMI (Pre-Matrimonial Investigation).* You will also complete the plans for your wedding and set a rehearsal date. Bring the wedding planning booklet you received at your marriage preparation program. This should be done no later then one month before your wedding.

PLANNING THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

PLANNING - You will receive a wedding planning book at the Marriage Preparation Workshop. You may use it to plan your wedding. Bring it with you to your 2nd meeting. The priest/deacon will go over it with you and answer any questions that you may have.

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. Wedding Ceremonies at our parish are celebrated by our Deacons. 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 be present at your wedding if they are trained professionals with experience at Catholic Weddings. Our musicians have provided a Music Sheet as part of this packet. Please fill it out and return it no later than one month before the wedding. Our Parish Organist, Stephen Yates, is available to answer any questions that you may have. Please call him at 845-986-8705. No selections may be played/sung in our church without prior approval of our Organist.

FEES - The fees are due at the rehearsal. The fee for parishioners is $150. The fee for non-parishioners is $250. This can be cash or a check made out to St. Stephen's Church. The fee for the Organist is $100.00 and for the Cantor it is $75.00. 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 he is present or not. His contract requires him to be available for every service at St. Stephen's, which precludes him 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 3:30-4:30 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 final meeting. PLEASE BE ON TIME FOR YOUR REHEARSAL! We are on a tight schedule here at St. Stephen's 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 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 Hospitality Room.
- When the Bride is set, the parents are escorted to either the second or third row 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. If necessary, the second pew is used as well. The Parents sit immediately behind the Bridal Party.
- 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 or three bouquets are allowed. 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 at St. Stephen's due to the slope of the aisle. Other flowers, trees or arches are not permitted. Flower girls may not drop petals in Church. 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 with green carpet). 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. Stephen, First Martyr, Warwick, NY 10990
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. Stephen's 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. (the green carpeted area).

4) Weddings must begin on time. Plan ahead! 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. 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 _____

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Dear Father or Deacon,

This couple has advised us that you will be available to celebrate their Marriage here at St. Stephen'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. 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. Stephen's would be happy to assist you in any of these areas (for example, because of long distance). Please call 845-986-4028.

Signature of Priest/Deacon _____