



**OUR LADY of MERCY
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

701 South Eola Road, Aurora, IL 60504
www.olmercy.com | 630.851.3444

Dear Engaged Couples:

A message from our priests and deacons,

Congratulations on your engagement and desire to be married in the Catholic Church! Please know that the two of you will be in our prayers and the prayers of the wider Our Lady of Mercy parish community. We look forward to celebrating this momentous occasion with you!

We know that your wedding day is a big deal – something you are looking forward to with great anticipation. As you know, there are many details and costs that go in to planning the perfect wedding. We want to do everything we can to help make that day special. We encourage you to also keep in mind that your wedding is one day, whereas your marriage is for a lifetime!! It is with this perspective and spirit that we ask you to engage in your preparation for marriage.

Currently around 40% of marriages in the United States end in divorce. Surely, no one enters marriage with the intention of becoming part of this statistic. Yet, high divorce rates like this have been around for a while. We encourage you therefore to ask the question, "Why will our marriage be different?" By requiring our engaged couples to participate in a church sponsored preparation program, we hope to equip and support you in whatever way we can to provide greater stability and deeper happiness in your life-long commitment to each other.

The following information will walk you through the marriage preparation process and guidelines for your wedding liturgy at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church. May God continue to bless you as you prepare for the beginning of the rest of your lives!

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Michael Kearney
Pastor

Initial steps to be married at Our Lady of Mercy?

Contact the Wedding Administrator:

The Wedding Administrator monitors the paperwork needed for your wedding file. During this initial contact available dates and times for the wedding and the rehearsal will be discussed. **Your wedding date will be tentatively reserved. Wedding dates are not confirmed until you have the initial meeting with a member of clergy and the stipend for the church has been paid.** A Wedding Intake Form will also be completed with basic information and given to a member of clergy so they can contact you.

One to two months prior to your wedding date you will be emailed a Liturgy Planning Worksheet and Readings to select for the wedding.

Meet the member of clergy who will officiate your wedding:

You will be contacted by a priest or deacon to complete a Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire. The Questionnaire confirms that there are no impediments to being married in the Catholic Church verifying that you both are free to be married in the Catholic Church.

He will also answer any additional questions you may have about our marriage preparation program and your wedding liturgy. **Again, wedding dates are not confirmed until you have met with a member of clergy and the stipend for the church is paid.**

A visiting priest or deacon will be witnessing your wedding:

If you have a family member or good friend who is an ordained Catholic priest or deacon, they are welcome to witness your marriage. If they are not a priest or deacon assigned in the Diocese of Joliet, they will be required to provide a Letter of Good Standing to the Chancery Office at the Diocese of Joliet at least a month before the wedding.

Type of Liturgy:

You have two options for the type of liturgy for celebrating your marriage:
Wedding Mass **OR** Wedding Ceremony.

The Wedding Mass includes the reception of Holy Communion for those who are Catholic and properly disposed. Non-Catholics may receive a blessing. A priest witnesses the Wedding Mass.

The Wedding Ceremony omits Holy Communion and can be witnessed by a priest or a deacon. This option is recommended for inter-faith couples.

If you did not inform us if you would like a Mass or a Ceremony, when you reserved your wedding date, please do so within two weeks of receiving this information.

Resident outside of Illinois or the local vicinity:

If your parents are registered members of Our Lady of Mercy but you are living out of state or a long distance from OLM, marriage preparation will take place at your local parish. Once you have completed the marriage preparation requirements required by your local church, they will send your marriage file to their diocese. Once your file is received and approved, the file will be sent to the Diocese of Joliet for review and then forwarded to Our Lady of Mercy.

The Marriage Preparation Process

Please complete the marriage preparation program at least 2 months prior to your wedding date.

The marriage preparation program consists of the following three elements:

1. **FOCCUS Survey/Sponsor Couple:** Approximately six months prior to your wedding you will be set-up to take the online marriage communication tool called FOCCUS and stands for Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study. You will be informed by email when the survey is ready for you to take online. This survey requires you each to have your own email address and will help clarify any potential marital issues you haven't thought to discuss or topics that can be early indications of disagreements between the couple. Honesty while completing the survey is imperative for its effectiveness. It's not a test! This is a tool that will help you grow together as a married couple.

Upon completion of the FOCCUS, you will be assigned a mentor couple from the parish who will review and discuss the FOCCUS results with you. This will be done in two or three sessions at the home of the mentor couple. The mentor couple may ask the priest or deacon who is witnessing your wedding to provide you with additional input.

2. **Natural Family Planning Certificate (NFP):** In NFP, couples are taught to understand, appreciate, and cooperate with the God-given biological processes of fertility. NFP methods promote virtue, mutual respect, communication, and the fullest expression of married love, while also avoiding the moral, relational, and health-related issues that come with contraception. Couples need to complete a course introducing and training them in NFP through a professional NFP facilitator.

A certificate of completion is available to download once you have finished the NFP program. Please have it sent to dianer@olmercy.com at Our Lady of Mercy Church. Afterwards, we encourage you to invest in further training in the Marquette Method of NFP.

Vitae Fertility Education hosts FREE 60 Minute sessions online every third Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm. Additional information regarding the NFP program is available at the end of this packet.

Sign up at:

<https://www.vitae fertility.com/nfp-talk-marriage-prep/>

3. **FORMED "Beloved" Series:** All couples view on their own schedule, the 12 session "Beloved" program on FORMED. Create your free account by going on your web browser to: <https://formed.org/subscribe> Enter your personal information & enter "Our Lady of Mercy Church Aurora" under "Find Your Parish". Click on the "Programs" tab at the top left and click on "The Sacraments." Scroll down until you locate the 'Beloved: Finding Happiness in Marriage' program. After each session you view, write five sentences on what you learned, found interesting, or were struck by. Keep the sentences you write out to review at a later date with the priest or deacon officiating your wedding. Additional information about FORMED is available at the end of this packet.

**Our Lady of Mercy
Wedding Fee Breakdown**

Church

It is customary to give the Church a stipend as a sign of your love reaching out to others in the pastoral ministry of our parish, as well as to help offset the expenses of administrative, utilities and maintenance on the day of your wedding. **The church stipend is due when the wedding date is scheduled.** Fees can be paid via check or cash. We do not accept credit cards.

At the time the wedding is scheduled the church stipend is required. Bride/groom/or parents registered with a history of regular contributions to OLM is \$250. Bride/groom/or parents registered within six months of initial contact with the church and/or with no history of regular contributions to OLM is \$500.

Musicians

OLM Pianist/Organist	\$250.00
OLM Vocalist	\$150.00
Optional Instrumentalists	As Contracted

Additional fees may apply if a rehearsal is needed. Contact the OLM Music Director for more information.

OLM Wedding Coordinator

A gift of \$100.00 to the wedding coordinator would be appropriate and should be paid at the rehearsal.

Gift to the Officiating Priest or Deacon

The suggested gift to the priest witnessing the wedding mass is \$150. If a deacon is witnessing a wedding ceremony the suggested gift is \$100. If there is hardship to pay priest/ deacon, the fee may be waived after a conversation with the celebrant.

Altar Servers Two (2) altar servers will be assigned if you are having a Wedding Mass. A cash gift of \$20 for each server is appropriate. No servers are needed when you are having a Wedding Ceremony.

Please send all outstanding fees to the Parish Secretary for a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to your wedding. Checks should be made payable to the individual providing the service.

SUMMARY OF STIPENDS

	Contributing	New/Non-Contributing
Church	\$250	\$500
Pianist/Organist	\$250	\$250
Vocalist	\$150	\$150
Priest	\$150	\$150
Wedding Coordinator	\$100	\$100
Altar Servers	\$40	\$40
Total	\$940	\$1,190

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED AT LEAST 2 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING DATE

1. Baptismal Certificates.

The bride and/or groom, who have been validly baptized, must submit newly issued baptismal certificates to Our Lady of Mercy dated no more than six (6) months prior to your wedding date. Once your wedding is less than six months away, contact the church where you were baptized and request that a new baptismal certificate that includes any Notations (ie. First Communion, Confirmation). Please have a hard copy of the certificate sent to Our Lady of Mercy via snail mail (Attention: Diane Reiter), or you can deliver the certificate personally to the Parish Office. This is a common request at Catholic Churches. For non-Catholics, your original baptismal certificate or a letter from the church of your baptism is sufficient.

2. Witness Affidavits

When the priest or deacon do not know the bride and/or groom personally, the bride and the groom will each need two people to call and schedule a meeting with a member of clergy to complete a Witness Affidavit. These witnesses should be people who have known the bride/groom for most of their adult life and can attest to the freedom of the bride/groom to marry. Witness Affidavits must be completed in the presence of any priest or deacon at any Catholic Church so long as they are sent to Our Lady of Mercy upon completion. These are usually only about ten (10) minute interviews.

After completing our marriage preparation program, what is next?

Set an appointment with the priest or deacon officiating your wedding to:

1. Review your wedding file to determine if all required documents have been submitted. (ie. Natural Family Planning Certificate, Witness Affidavits, Baptismal Certificates – if you are within six months of your wedding date. He will also go over documents if there is a previous marriage.)
2. Discuss what you discovered and wrote down about the Sacrament and spirituality of marriage in the 12 video session "Beloved" you watched.

PLANNING YOUR WEDDING LITURGY (MASS OR CEREMONY)

One to two months prior to your wedding date you will receive an email with the Liturgy Planning Worksheet and the Readings that you can select for the liturgy portion of the ceremony. Keep in mind that the Wedding Liturgy is a public act of Worship in the Catholic Church and therefore has set rituals and guidelines that may not be changed.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Please acquire a **DUPAGE COUNTY** marriage license issued by the **DuPage County Clerk** (421 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton) and **BRING THE LICENSE TO YOUR REHEARSAL**. The marriage license can be applied for as much as sixty (60) days in advance but must be applied for at least one day before the wedding and require both parties to be present. Be prepared to present proof of age, proper identification, and a license fee of \$35. Marriage Licenses are issued during the week during normal business hours so please plan ahead. For more information, their phone number is 630-682-7035 or visit:

https://www.dupagecounty.gov/elected_officials/county_clerk/licenses.php

WEDDING COORDINATOR

Our Lady of Mercy is very fortunate to have its own wedding coordinators. The Wedding Coordinator can help with any concerns pertaining to the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. An OLM Wedding Coordinator, trained in the protocols of weddings at OLM, will be assigned to assist with the details of your wedding liturgy. She will conduct your rehearsal and be present at your wedding to coordinate the bridal procession as well as assist you with other details of the ceremony that day. The fee for the Wedding Coordinator is \$100 and is to be paid at the rehearsal.

The Lead Wedding Coordinator, Phyllis Anderson, will contact you via email or phone at least two weeks prior to your rehearsal. If you have questions prior to hearing from her, you may send her an email at phyllisanderson5027@yahoo.com.

MUSIC

- Once the wedding date is confirmed, the couple is expected to contact the OLM Music Director at 331-707-5379 or franks@olmercy.com to schedule music during the ceremony. The Music Directors fee is \$250. The fee for a Cantor is \$150.
- The Music Director will provide a packet of music choices to help with the selection process. Assistance can also be provided in locating copies of music, sources for purchase, publishers' addresses, etc.
- In order to assure parish guidelines are followed, choosing from parish musicians is strongly recommended. If other musicians are chosen, they must be made aware of parish expectations, provide their own sheet music and have music selections approved by the OLM Music Director.
- The Parish Music Director can provide information on string musicians and soloists.
- These guidelines apply to all weddings at Our Lady of Mercy, whether within the Wedding Mass or The Wedding Ceremony, even if the Presider is a guest priest or deacon.
- Wedding liturgy is a sacred act of worship therefore music of a secular nature is not permitted for use during a wedding.

CHURCH DECORATIONS

- No flowers are to be placed directly on the Altar or arranged in a manner that inhibits the celebrant. Large floral arrangements may be placed on either side of the altar on the steps in front of the candles. These arrangements cannot be taller than three (3) feet/(36 inches).
- Simple decorations (flowers or bows) may be placed on the end of the pews but must be removed after the wedding. Note that the end of the church pews have no arms on them. Elastic or rubber bands can be used to secure arrangements to the pews, but no tape, wires or hooks may be used. Likewise, no arches, columns, pedestals, trees, candelabras or lanterns are allowed in the aisles or sanctuary.
- If your wedding is during Easter or the Advent-Christmas season, keep in mind that there will probably be seasonal decorations in church. These MAY NOT be removed or altered during your wedding.
- Our center aisle is fifty-six (56) feet long from the steps at the altar to the narthex doors. Aisle runners are optional. If you chose to have a runner, we suggest using a runner that is no shorter than sixty (60) feet so that the wedding party may assemble outside the Narthex doors and proceed down the aisle without tripping on the end of the runner.
- Our Lady of Mercy Church does not supply a unity candle. We do have a stand for the (optional) unity candle with the taper candles attached. Your unity candle should be three inches in diameter to fit the stand. This is an optional part of the ceremony.
- If you wish to place flowers by the statue of Mary and pray for her intercession during the ceremony, let the presider, music director, and wedding coordinator know. This arrangement is not to be removed after the ceremony since it is considered a gift to Our Blessed Lady. This is an optional part of the ceremony.

ALTAR SERVERS

Our Lady of Mercy will assign two servers for your wedding Mass. If you have your own servers, kindly inform the parish office *at least 3 months in advance* of the wedding. It is customary to give the servers a small cash gratuity of \$20 each.

PHOTOS/VIDEOGRAPHY

- Pictures and videography are allowed in the Church during the ceremony as long as photographers use good judgment regarding position.
- Pictures of the bridal party and families can be taken in the sanctuary area of the church immediately following the wedding.
- A map of the church are provided and indicates areas the photographer/videographer are not allowed during the wedding ceremony.
- Only ambient lighting can be used for photos/video during the wedding ceremony; no flash or external lighting can be used.
- Couples have the option for Our Lady of Mercy Church to Live Stream the wedding ceremony for \$150.00 (make check out to Our Lady of Mercy). If interested contact Zara Tan at 331-707-5381 or zara@olmercy.com at least three weeks prior to the wedding date.

Please respect the Church by reminding your videographer and/or photographer of these guidelines.

A Catholic Introduction to Natural Family Planning

Free Online NFP Class

Natural Family Planning Certificate (NFP)

In NFP, couples are taught to understand, appreciate, and cooperate with the God-given biological processes of fertility. NFP methods promote virtue, mutual respect, communication, and the fullest expression of married love, while also avoiding the moral, relational, and health-related issues that come with contraception.

Couples need to complete a course introducing and training them in NFP through a professional NFP facilitator.

Vitae Fertility Education hosts FREE 60 minute sessions online every third Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm. Sign up at:

<https://www.vitae fertility.com/nfp-talk-marriage-prep/>

(or scan the QR code below)

This 60-minute live online video presentation dives into the details of human fertility, the basics of Natural Family Planning (NFP), and explains the theological aspects of why the Church asks Catholic couples to use NFP in their marriage.

A certificate of completion is available upon request. Please have it sent to theresac@olmercy.com at Our Lady of Mercy Church.

Afterwards, we encourage you to invest in further training in your preferred Method of NFP.



SCAN ME



Simply NFP

FAQs

What is NFP?

NFP is short for natural family planning. NFP uses a woman's biological markers, research, and technology to determine the fertile window (this is not your Grandma's rhythm method!) NFP can be used to avoid pregnancy by avoiding intercourse in the fertile window, or to achieve pregnancy. NFP provides insight into your overall health as a woman, not just fertility!

Why is it good for me?

According to the Catholic Church, NFP is part of God's design for marriage and family. Instead of treating your fertility like a disease, NFP gives you the tools to know your fertility, and make decisions accordingly, while keeping God in charge. NFP doesn't have nasty side effects like hormonal birth control, or IUDs. A woman's body is a powerful thing, and God made it perfectly. Women who practice NFP feel empowered living in harmony with their bodies' natural cycles!

How does it work?

There are many different methods of NFP. Some are focused on biological markers, and some on technology. The Marquette Method uses the Clearblue fertility monitor to measure hormones, and provides the user with low, high, or peak fertility, and can also incorporate biological markers. Unlike other methods, the Marquette Method provides subjective and objective data. NFP can be used to diagnose hormonal disorders as well!

Does it work?

The Marquette Method can be used to avoid or achieve a pregnancy. It is 98-99% effective when working with an instructor, and all protocols followed! Marquette can be use when breastfeeding, with hormonal disorders like PCOS, and during perimenopause.

How do I get more info?

simplynfp.com

annie@simplynfp.com, (815) 953-9067

megmkay@yahoo.com (708) 465-3718



Simply NFP

Different NFP Methods

	BILLING'S	CREIGHTON	MARQUETTE	SYMPTO-THERMAL
Cervical Mucus	✓	✓	✓	✓
Basal Body Temp	✗	✗	✓	✓
Hormonal Monitoring	✗	✗	✓	✗
Cervical Changes	✗	✗	✗	✓

The Marquette Method (MM)

The MM incorporates fertility monitoring devices, such as urinary hormone testing and fertility monitors, along with other signs like cervical mucus and basal body temperature (although the charting and tracking of cervical mucus and BBT are optional in this method). Marquette incorporates advanced technology alongside manual charting, while digital tools for charting are also available. MM involves formal training and ongoing support from certified instructors. All Marquette Method instructors are licensed healthcare professionals.

Perfect use effectiveness rate= 98%-99%

Pros: objective, effective, easy for couples to chart together, utilizes technology and hormonal monitoring

Cons: costly (purchase of monitor and test sticks)

Contact: Annie Norton: simplynfp.com, annie@simplynfp.com, (815) 953-9067

Meg Murray: simplynfp.com, meqmkey@yahoo.com, (708) 465-3718

The Billing's Ovulation Method (BOM)

Relies on the observation of cervical mucus to determine fertility. It is a low-tech method that uses visual observations and manual charting. The BOM often requires formal instruction and ongoing support from a certified instructor.

Perfect use effectiveness rate =98.9%

Pros: affordable, effective

Cons: subjective, relies on self-observation

Contact: boma-use.org, boma@boma-usa.org, (651) 699-8139

The Creighton Model (CrM)

Uses cervical mucus observations as the primary indicator of fertility. Creighton may consider additional indicators like pelvic pain or other cycle-related symptoms to help determine fertility. CrM primarily employs manual charting, but digital tools and apps may be available for recording observations. The Creighton Model follows a standardized protocol taught by certified instructors who provide ongoing support.

Perfect use effectiveness rate=98.8%

Pros: effective, can help diagnose hormonal and fertility problems, practitioners work closely with NaPro physicians and surgeons

Cons: subjective, relies on self-observation

Contact: Michelle Sullivan: pqsully@att.net, (815) 995-0480

The Sympto-Thermal Method (STM)

The STM combines various fertility signs, including cervical mucus, BBT, and changes in the cervix. It places significant emphasis on tracking basal body temperature (BBT) to identify the fertile window. STM can utilize paper charting or digital tools for tracking fertility signs. It requires training and education, which can be obtained through classes, instructors, or self-study materials.

Perfect use effectiveness rate= 99.4%-99.6%

Pros: effective, uses several indicators of fertility

Cons: subjective, can get confusing charting many indicators, relies on self-observation

Contact: ccli.org, (513) 471-2000

How to decide on a method

It's important to note that while these methods have some differences in their approach and emphasis, their ultimate goal is to assist couples in understanding their fertility and making informed decisions about family planning based on natural indicators. The best method for a couple depends on their preferences, needs, and lifestyle. Many couples with infertility issues tend to prefer Creighton because they work with NaPro Doctors and help diagnose fertility problems, while postpartum breastfeeding women praise Marquette for the wonderful breastfeeding protocols available. Each couple is different, and each method has something unique to offer.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION USING THE "BELOVED" SERIES



BELOVED: Finding Happiness in Marriage

In 12 stunning sessions, Beloved uncovers the mystery and the meaning of the sacrament of marriage. What if marriage is more than you think it is? What if God has woven into the very fabric of your humanity a purposeful need and desire that can only be fulfilled in your marriage? Beloved invites all couples to experience firsthand the wonder, mystery, and joy behind that first "I do" ... whether you said it last year or many years ago.

Beloved is comprised of two parts:

The Mystery and Meaning of Marriage has 6 sessions and Living Marriage has 6 sessions.

This FREE Video Series Can Be Found on Formed.org

<https://watch.formed.org/beloved-finding-happiness-in-marriage>

First, you will have to create a FREE formed.org account through Our Lady of Mercy:

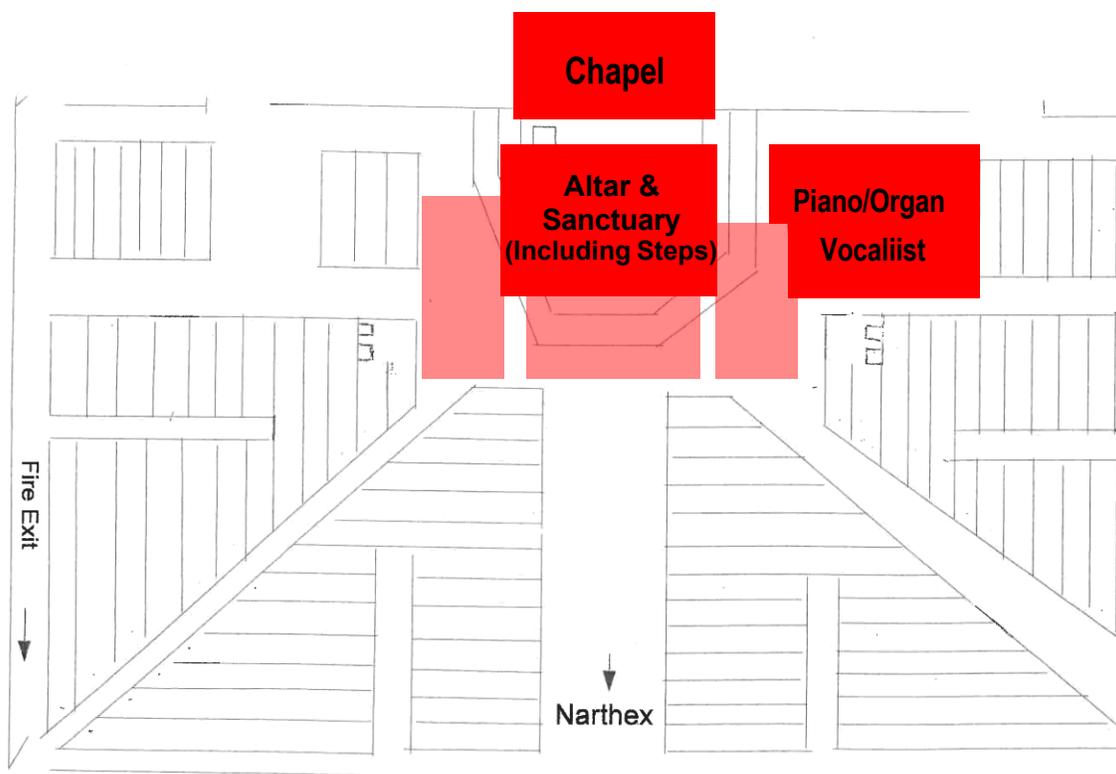
- 1.) Go to <https://formed.org/signup>
- 2.) Enter your personal info
- 3.) Enter "Our Lady of Mercy Church Aurora"
- 4.) Search "Beloved Marriage" and start watching for free

SCAN ME



Our Lady of Mercy Church

Aurora, Illinois



The main aisle in the church is 56 feet.
We recommend purchasing a runner that is a minimum of 60 feet
The runner will be pinned at the base of the sanctuary steps and
taped down at the other end to the floor in the Narthex.

Please share this map with your photographers/videographers.
Photographers/videographers are prohibited from being in the shaded areas.
No flash photography during Mass/Ceremony.