



WEDDING GUIDELINES



Dear engaged couple,

Congratulations on your engagement! We are happy for you and pleased you are considering getting married in the Catholic Church. As God is the author of marriage and the source of all love, both divine and human, there is no better way to begin your married life than by inviting him to be at the center of your relationship and asking his blessing upon your union.

The Catholic Church holds marriage in highest esteem. In marriage, man and woman are made one and called to love one another unconditionally for the whole of life. In doing so, they reveal to one another and to the world the nature of God's love for each and every person. Because of the importance of marriage, the Catholic Church is always eager to help engaged couples prepare well for marriage, assisting them in building a strong foundation for their life as husband and wife.

This wedding planning guide is designed to assist you with both the spiritual and practical aspects of your marriage preparation. Inside you'll find information about meeting with a priest or deacon, marriage preparation classes, planning your wedding liturgy and parish policies and guidelines. We hope it will answer your questions and help you better understand the marriage preparation process.

Please know that our clergy and staff are here to assist you through the process. Feel free to reach out to us with any questions. We pray that this time of preparation will be filled with many graces as the Lord draws you closer to himself and to one another.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Daniel P. Ketter, JCL
Pastor





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Marriage is a relationship unlike any other. At the very beginning of the section on marriage, the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains marriage in this way: “The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 1601; Code of Canon law can. 1055 §1) When lived well, in accord with God’s design, marriage is a profound blessing for the spouses, their children and grandchildren, the Church and the wider civil society.

Given the sanctity and seriousness of marriage, it is essential that engaged couples receive adequate formation, both spiritual and practical, so that they are properly prepared to joyfully and confidently take up the demands of marriage. The program of marriage preparation offered by the Catholic Church aims to provide this formation and give couples the best opportunity for having a holy, happy, life-giving, lifelong marriage.

Marriage preparation in the Archdiocese of Atlanta unfolds over the course of at least six months and addresses a wide array of topics integral to a sound understanding of marriage and family life as taught by the Catholic Church. At Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church, the program of marriage preparation includes the following components:

- a. Meetings with clergy.
- b. Participation in a retreat for engaged couples.
- c. Completion of a pre-marital inventory.
- d. Completion of a course on Natural Family Planning/Fertility Awareness.
- e. Submission of required documentation.
- f. Planning the wedding ceremony.

Each of these components of marriage preparation are described below.

Meetings with clergy

Through a series of meetings, drawing on a variety of resources, a priest or deacon will lead the engaged couple in deepening their understanding of marriage, the theology of Christian marriage, the nature of sacraments in general and the sacrament of marriage in particular, marital sexuality, marital prayer and spirituality, and Christian family life.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION CONTINUED

Retreat for Engaged Couples

With guidance from the priest or deacon leading their marriage preparation, couples will register for one of two retreats approved by the parish and offered at various times throughout the year. These retreats are opportunities for couples to dedicate uninterrupted time to their relationship with one another and growing in their understanding of Christian marriage and family life.

Marital Inventory

Sometimes misleadingly referred to as the “marriage test,” the marital inventory is not intended to predict the outcome of a couple’s marriage but rather to strengthen their relationship by facilitating open communication about a variety of topics pertinent to marriage. The priest or deacon leading the couple’s marriage preparation will review the results of the inventory with them during their scheduled meetings.

Natural Family Planning/Fertility Awareness

Every couple will be required to complete a course on fertility awareness, more commonly known as natural family planning. By acquiring an accurate, scientific understanding their God-given fertility cycles, couples will be able to cooperate with God in discerning how to live out the call to life-giving love that is at the very heart of marriage.



REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

The following documents will be required when completing your wedding file:

1. Baptism Certificates

If you were baptized in the Catholic faith, you will need to request a recent copy of your baptism certificate from the parish where you were baptized. Please request a newly issued baptism certificate “with all notations.” This must be issued no more than 6 months prior to the date of the ceremony.

If you were baptized in another Christian religion, you will be asked to provide a certificate or other proof of baptism, which has been substantiated with affidavits (see section on affidavits).

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION CONTINUED

2. Affidavits of Freedom to Marry

The bride and groom will each be asked to provide two (2) affidavits testifying to their Freedom to Marry. The affidavit forms will be provided to you. These affidavits are usually completed by your parents, but may be completed by anyone who has known you since adolescence. A notary public, priest, deacon, or pastoral minister must witness their signatures and affix the respective seal (notary or church seal) on the document.

3. Marriage License

Every couple wishing to marry in the State of Georgia must obtain a civil marriage license from a county probate court prior to the wedding. In Georgia it is a misdemeanor to celebrate a wedding without a wedding license. Marriage licenses are generally valid for six months. Most probate courts in the State of Georgia offer a discount to couples who provide proof of having completed a marriage preparation program. Couples should speak with the priest or deacon preparing them for marriage if they would like to take advantage of this discount. Once they have their wedding license, couples must give it to the wedding coordinator during the wedding rehearsal. Verbal assurances, photos, scans or photocopies of the wedding license are not acceptable and there will be no rehearsal or wedding without the original wedding license. Couples already civilly married will need to provide the priest or deacon leading their marriage preparation with a certified copy of the civil marriage certificate.

4. Other Documentation

Depending on the couple's situation, additional documentation may be required, such as a decree of declaration of nullity concerning a previous marriage or a death certificate of a prior spouse. The priest or deacon leading your marriage preparation will determine if any additional documentation is necessary and will guide you in obtaining it.



GETTING STARTED

RESERVING THE DATE

Step One:

To begin the process of preparing for your wedding at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church, contact Karen Kotara, Secretary to the Pastor, at (404) 261-7181 ext 128 or kkotara@olachurch.org. Karen will collect some preliminary information and provide you with dates when the church is available for your wedding. NO PLANS SHOULD BE MADE FOR YOUR WEDDING OR RECEPTION PRIOR TO SECURING A DATE WITH KAREN. THE PARISH IS NOT LIABLE FOR ANY LOST DEPOSITS DUE TO THE UNAVAILABILITY OF THE CHURCH.

Step Two:

With dates when the church is available in hand, your next step is to contact the priest or deacon you would like to lead your marriage preparation and celebrate your wedding, and confirm his willingness and availability. Once confirmed, you will then contact Karen, providing her the name of the celebrant and the date of the wedding. You will at that time make the deposit to lock in your wedding date. NO WEDDING DATES ARE SECURE UNTIL YOU HAVE CONFIRMED THE CELEBRANT AND MADE THE DEPOSIT.

Step Three:

If the priest or deacon who will be celebrating your wedding is from outside the parish, he will need to email Karen confirming his willingness and availability for the requested date before your deposit will be accepted and your wedding date locked in. All visiting priests and deacons are expected to follow the policies of the Archdiocese of Atlanta and Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church.

Step Four:

Once you have completed the foregoing steps, you will then schedule your first meeting with the priest or deacon who will lead your marriage preparation. During that first meeting he will review the required components of marriage preparation, answer any questions you have and get your marriage preparation underway. From this point forward, the priest or deacon will be your primary point of contact.

OLA WEDDING COORDINATOR

You will be assigned an OLA Wedding Coordinator (based on the need for your type of wedding) once your wedding date has been secured by deposit. The wedding coordinator is a trained volunteer who will help you with the planning of your wedding ceremony and will ensure your wedding runs smoothly. They will lead your wedding rehearsal and assist at the wedding ceremony. If you have a personal wedding planner, they will need to abide by the parish wedding policies and follow the direction of the OLA Wedding Coordinator, Director of Liturgical Music and the priest or deacon officiating the ceremony.

CEREMONY FACILITIES

LOCATIONS

Main Church

The main church seats **766** guests. You may use the Bride's Room, to get ready and for photos before the ceremony.

Chapel

The Chapel seats up to **25** guests. You may use the Bride's Room, to get ready and for photos before the ceremony.

SATURDAY WEDDING TIMES

<i>Ceremony Time</i>	<i>Prep & Photography</i>	<i>Guests Arrival</i>	<i>Wedding & Photography</i>
11 a.m.	10 – 10:30 a.m.	10:30 – 11 a.m.	11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
2 p.m.	1 – 1:30 p.m.	1:30 – 2 p.m.	2 – 3:30 p.m.

A Wedding rehearsal is scheduled the Friday before the day of the ceremony at 5:30 p.m. Rehearsals are generally no longer than 45 minutes.

The Bride and Groom are responsible for insuring prompt attendance of the wedding party. Those attending should be present at least 15 minutes before the rehearsal time.

Parish Hall

The Parish Hall can seat up to **250** guests. With a dance floor the capacity reduces to **200** guests. Please reach out to Karen Kotara to learn more details for using this space.

FEES

The fees are **payable at the time the wedding reservation is made**. Reservations are not considered confirmed until the fees are fully paid. Methods of payment are cash, checks made payable to Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church, or online through a provided link.

	ACTIVE PARISHIONER	NON-ACTIVE
MAIN CHURCH	\$750 + \$300 Deposit *	\$1,500 + \$300 deposit *
CHAPEL	\$500	\$750
PARISH HALL RECEPTION RENTAL	\$750 + \$300 Deposit	\$1,500 + \$300 deposit
MUSICIAN	STARTING AT \$250**	STARTING AT \$250**
MARRIAGE PREP ONLY-for couples with a ceremony at another location	\$300***	\$300***
ALTAR SERVERS (2) 1 - Service 2 - Mass/Ceremony	\$25 EACH	\$25 EACH

* Fees include Altar Flowers and Marriage Prep

**Subject to music license fees

*** If a Nihil Obstat form is needed for an out of diocese/out of country wedding, these fees that are sent to our Archdiocese will be added to the noted fees above.

OLA reserves the right to cancel the wedding if the legal requirements under the state or Church law are not met. In the event of cancellation for any reason, a refund may be available.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

At least 6 months prior to the date of ceremony: 80% of fee refunded
 Within 3 to 6 months of the date of ceremony: 50% of fee refunded
 Less than 3 months of the date of the ceremony: Fee is non-refundable

PARISH HALL

The Parish Hall can seat 250 guests. With a dance floor the capacity reduces to 200 guests. The Archdiocese of Atlanta considers wedding receptions non-parish sponsored events.

The archdiocesan risk management guidelines require each group to furnish a certificate of liability insurance for a minimum of \$1,000,000 naming Our Lady of the Assumption Parish and the Archdiocese as Additional Insureds. You or your family may not have such insurance; and the premium for a half-day event runs as high as \$600 when food is served. The cost is higher if alcohol is part of the event.

Catholic Mutual (the archdiocese's insurer) has secured Third-Party Special Events coverage through Great American Assurance Company at a cost of \$95 per event. The wedding party is required to complete the Application Form (see your Wedding Coordinator) and submit the form to the Atlanta Service Office of Catholic Mutual Group 15 days in advance of the event. You must also submit to Catholic Mutual a completed Facility Usage Agreement. The individual or group must attach to the application a money order or cashier's check for \$95.00 payable to the Archdiocese of Atlanta .

Coverage must be pre-approved by the Great American Assurance Company. If an application is rejected, the money will be refunded. An event could potentially be denied, if the application and payment is not received 15 days in advance of the activity.

Please call them if you have any questions at 404-876-5995.

An event using the Parish/School facilities and planning to serve alcohol must read the "Policy for Events Serving Alcohol" and fill out the Events Serving Alcohol Checklist and submit to the Parish Office no later than four weeks prior to the event.

SECURITY: For wedding receptions where alcohol is served, we require a policeman to be on duty. The fee is \$100 per hour (with a minimum of 3 hours).

Please reach out to Karen Kotara at kkotara@olachurch.org to learn more about our available facilities.

PLANNING THE CEREMONY

CEREMONY DECISIONS

Step One: Nuptial Mass or Nuptial Ceremony

A **wedding mass**, also known as a nuptial mass, is a special mass during which the sacrament of marriage is celebrated. It includes the liturgy of the word, the nuptial celebration (declaration of intent, exchange of consent, exchange of rings), and the liturgy of the Eucharist. In a nuptial mass, Holy Communion is distributed to all practicing Catholics present for the mass who are properly disposed. Only a priest can celebrate a nuptial mass. A nuptial mass is the preferred celebration when both parties to the wedding are Catholic.

A **nuptial ceremony** is a special liturgy which includes the liturgy of the word and the nuptial celebration (declaration of intent, exchange of consent, exchange of rings). There is no liturgy of the Eucharist and Holy Communion is not distributed. A priest or a deacon can celebrate a nuptial ceremony. A nuptial ceremony is the preferred celebration when only one of the parties to the wedding is Catholic.

Step Two: Choosing Readings and Prayers

The priest or deacon preparing you for your wedding will provide you with a booklet that will help you select various texts for your wedding celebration, most importantly the readings from Sacred Scripture to be proclaimed and the form of the vows you use in the exchange of consent. No texts other than those from Sacred Scripture can be used in a Catholic wedding.

Step Three: Creating Programs

A printed program (optional) or order of service can greatly enhance the assembly's participation in the ceremony. It should include music the assembly will be asked to sing and an outline of the ceremony. Programs are not provided by OLA Church.

Step Four: Choosing Music

All music for the wedding ceremony must be discussed and approved by the OLA Director of Music & Liturgy, Jake Mappes, who can be reached at jmappes@olachurch.org.

Guidelines for music at the ceremony include:

- Only live music is allowed in the sanctuary, no recorded music.
- All music must be suitable for a Sunday liturgy or sacred in nature with no secular text associated with it. Vocal solos are limited to sacred music appropriate for a wedding.
- All musicians, either instrumental or vocal, must perform in the location approved by the OLA Director of Music & Liturgy.
- The OLA Director of Music & Liturgy must approve any guest musicians, instrumental musicians and soloists.

Step Five: Flowers and Decorations

OLA Church provides two arrangements, one for the front of the Altar and one for in front of the Ambo. If you would like to donate toward these flowers, it is welcomed, but not required. With one month advance notice, and no conflicts with a Liturgical guideline (see below), OLA can request the arrangements in your preferred colors. If there are two weddings scheduled on a weekend, OLA will try to order white arrangements for the Altar and Ambo.

Liturgical Seasons/Days to Note (please check Liturgical calendar when booking weddings).

ADVENT: During the 4 weeks of Advent, the Church Sanctuary is decorated moderately in keeping with seasonal guidelines. Greenery arrangements are appropriate. The Advent Wreath should not be moved. Purple banner will be on the Rood Screen (wooden structure behind Altar).

CHRISTMAS: The Sanctuary and Narthex are decorated for Christmas after the 4th Sunday of Advent. Christmas decorations are in place from Christmas Eve until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. All decorations and plants/flowers are provided and should not be moved. White and gold banners will be on the Rood Screen. Please note: the Jubilee central doors are blocked during the Christmas Season with our tree and Nativity and are unavailable for brides to walk through down the aisle.

LENT: No flowers arrangements are allowed during Lent. Personal flowers like bouquets, boutonnieres, corsages are allowed. Rustic burlap and purple banners will be on the Rood Screen.

EASTER: Our sanctuary is fully decorated with white and spring plants and flowers. The Paschal Candle is at the front of the church and should not be moved. Any arranged plants and flowers should not be moved. White banners will be up on the Rood Screen.

PENTECOST: Flower arrangements this weekend are tones of Red to reflect the Liturgical color of the day. Red satin banners will be on the Rood Screen. Large banners with flames and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit will be across the top of the Rood Screen.

Pew decorations and florals must be affixed with plastic clips. Tacks, staples, tape, zip ties or putty are not permitted on the pews, church walls or furnishings. All pew decorations must be removed immediately following the ceremony. You will be held fully responsible for any damage to the pews or other furnishings as a result of the use of this type of decoration. Celebratory items including confetti, bird seed, rice, or flower petals are not permitted.

Step Six: Planning Photography and Videography

It is your responsibility to advise the photographer(s) and videographer(s) of the guidelines. You must stress that they keep in mind the sacred nature of the occasion and conduct themselves accordingly. During the ceremony, the photographer/videographer may not enter the sanctuary around the altar area. The photographer or videographer form must be signed by the vendor and submitted to the Parish Office at least 6 weeks prior to the ceremony.

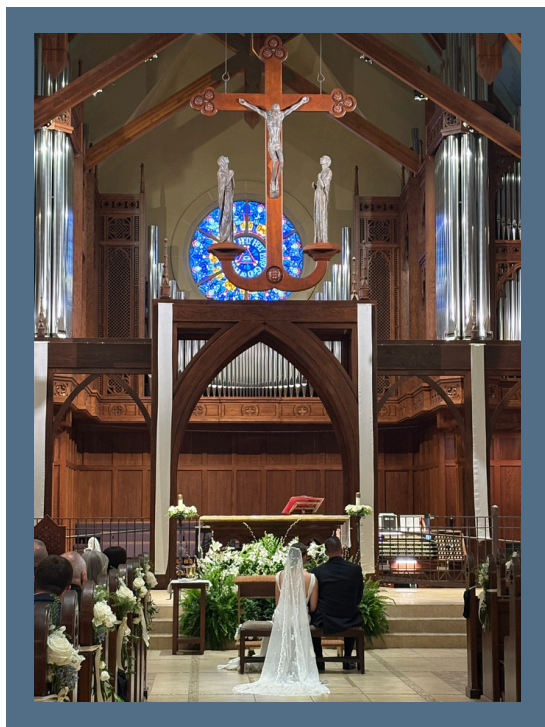
Photography

- Flash photography is not permitted during the ceremony by professionals or guests.
- The photographer is allowed approximately 60 minutes before the ceremony and 30 minutes after for posed photographs.
- Any posed photographs with the officiating priest or deacon are to be taken first.
- All persons providing photographic services are to be dressed for a formal church service.

Videography

The following regulations apply to videotaping weddings:

- All equipment must be set up at least 30 minutes before the scheduled time of the wedding.
- Video equipment must be stationary during the ceremony; roving cameras/drones are not permitted.
- Cameras may not be set up anywhere around the altar.
- No floodlights or any other special lighting may be used during the ceremony.
- No wires may be laid down across any aisles.
- Nothing may be taped, pinned, stapled or otherwise affixed in any way to church walls, furnishings or floors.
- All persons providing videography services are to be dressed for a formal church service.



GENERAL RULES

Bride's Room

The Bride's Room is for the exclusive use of the bride and her bridal party.

- Water and light snacks are allowed in the Bride's Room only, within reason, and with the expectation that the room will be cleaned and left in the condition in which it was found.
- All personal belongings must be removed from the Bride's Room immediately following the ceremony. Please assign someone outside of the wedding party to take charge of personal belongings and secure them. The Wedding Guild cannot accept responsibility for watching possessions during the ceremony. The parish cannot accept responsibility for security of personal items or of items left before, during or after your ceremony anywhere on the church grounds.

Bride's Dress

- The bride and bridal party dresses should be modest and should cover the chest, shoulder, and lower back.

Smoking

- Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the parish buildings.

Alcohol

- Alcohol cannot be brought or consumed on parish grounds at the rehearsal, before the ceremony, at the ceremony, or after the ceremony.

Sobriety

- Wedding participants must arrive for and participate in the ceremony in a sober state. In the event there is a question about the sobriety of the party, the celebrant may refuse to perform the ceremony, or ask the member in question to leave the premises.

For the sanctity of the Church, protection of parish property, security of your guests and for the overall decorum of your wedding, these rules will be strictly enforced. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to assure that your suppliers, wedding party, family and guests are aware of and observe these rules.

WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

A YEAR TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Call the Parish Office to inquire about having a wedding at OLA/fill out an inquiry form.
- Make an appointment with a priest or deacon to begin the process.
- After meeting with a clergy member, call the Parish office to schedule a date.
- Make payment of full amount to OLA for church use.
- Schedule marriage preparation with the officiating priest or deacon.
- Take a pre-marriage Inventory survey and schedule a meeting as a couple to discuss the results.
- Sign up for parish or diocesan marriage preparation retreat (e.g. Joy Filled Marriage, Building Your Marriage Before It Starts, etc.).
- Sign up for a Natural Family Planning course.

BEGIN COLLECTING/COMPLETING PAPERWORK:

- **Baptismal Certificates for Bride and Groom:** Both the bride and groom must contact their church of baptism and request a recent copy of the baptismal certificate “with all notations” to be sent directly to the OLA Parish Office. It should be dated within six months prior to your ceremony. Consult with your officiant if you cannot obtain a baptismal certificate.
- **Bride and Groom’s Freedom to Marry Forms (2 for each):** These are to be completed by someone who has known you all your life. Your parents are ideal, but other relatives or long-time friends are acceptable substitutes pending pastor’s approval. The signatures must be witnessed by a clergy member or notary public. The originals must be returned to OLA Parish Office. **Copies, scans or faxes are not acceptable.**
- **Marriage Preparation Course Certificate:** As soon as the course is completed, the original certificate must be sent to OLA Parish Office.

THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Choose the people who will participate in your ceremony (lectors, gift bearers).
- Select the readings and prayers for your wedding using the *Together for Life* booklet. Inform the officiant and the Parish secretary of your selections
- Meet with the Director of Music and Liturgy to discuss the music and fees.
- Create a program for your wedding, if you desire.

TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Meet with an OLA volunteer Wedding Guild Coordinator to discuss the details regarding your ceremony. You will be contacted 6 to 8 weeks before your scheduled wedding date. You may also email them to set up a meeting.
- Photography and/or Videography Agreement must be submitted to Parish Secretary at least 6 weeks before wedding date.

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Obtain a Georgia Marriage License. OLA is in Dekalb county, but you can go to another Georgia county for the license.
- Meet with the officiating priest or deacon for final session, if applicable.
- Send a copy of your wedding program, if you have created one.

WEEK OF THE WEDDING

- Bring your marriage license to the Wedding Rehearsal. You will give the license to the OLA Wedding Coordinator to keep safe until the wedding has occurred. The Officiant will sign the license and send it in to the Probate Court of the county where it was obtained.
- Bring stipends in separate envelopes for the altar servers, musicians, and cantor to rehearsal for Wedding Coordinator to give hand out.

CLERGY



FR. Daniel Ketter, JCL
PASTOR
JDKETTER@OLACHURCH.ORG



FR. Nicholas Le
PAROCHIAL VICAR
NLE@OLACHURCH.ORG



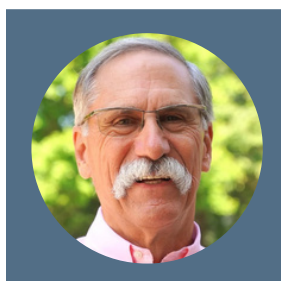
FR. Robbie Cotta
IN RESIDENCE



FR. Peter Pitol, CS
INDONESIAN COMMUNITY
PETERNUMANG@YAHOO.COM



Antonius Anugerah
DEACON
deaconantonius2008@gmail.com



Terry Biglow
DEACON
terry.biglow@cdhpartners.com



Bill Kester
DEACON
bkestereolachurch.org



Mat Mathews
DEACON
mmathewseolachurch.org



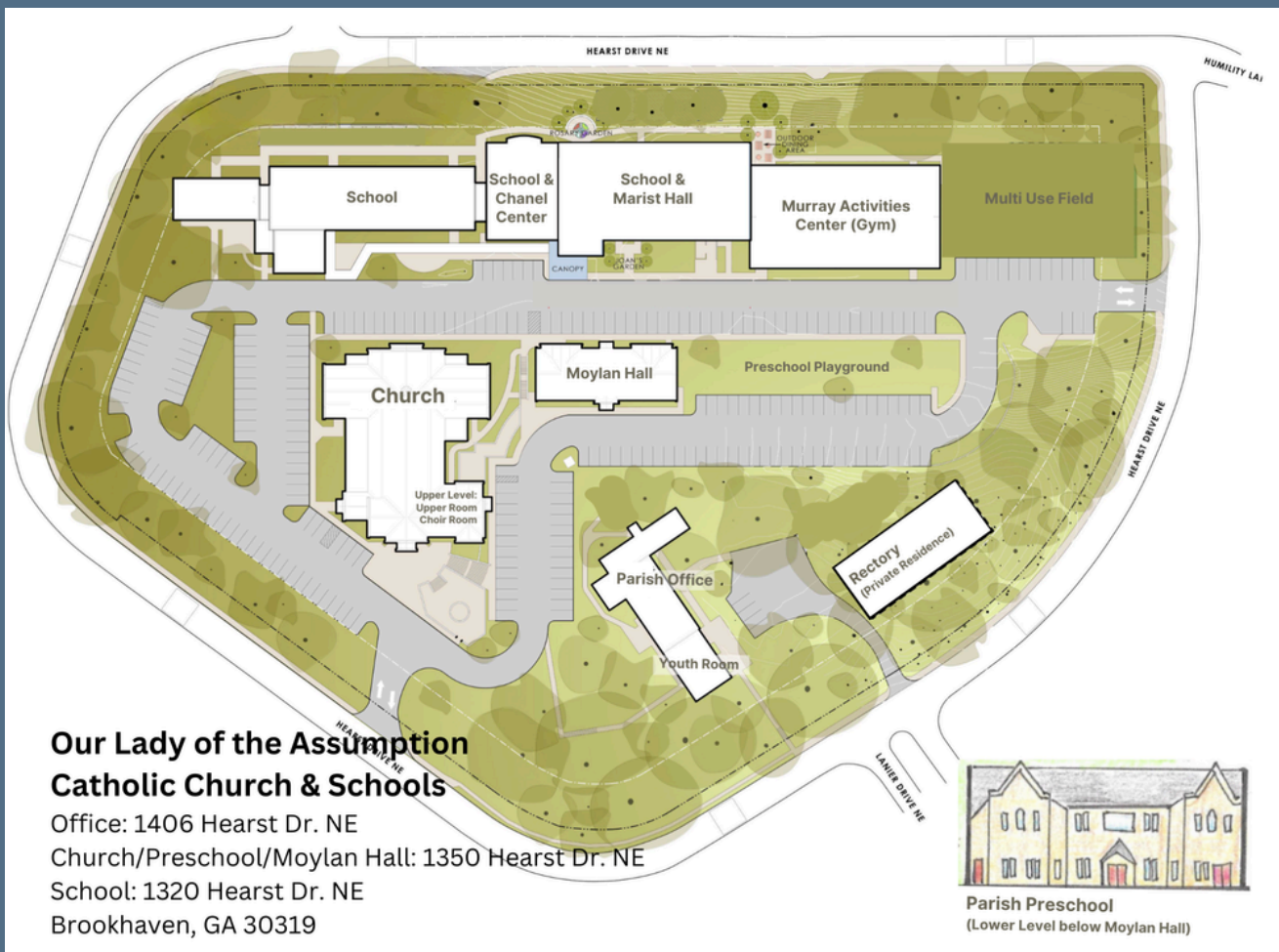
Ed Patterson
DEACON
epattersonolachurch.org

STAFF

KAREN KOTARA
**SECRETARY TO THE
PASTOR**
KKOTARA@OLACHURCH.ORG
404-261-7181 EXT. 128

CHRISTIE SLATON & MARY BLIGH
WEDDING GUILD CO-LEADS
WEDDINGGUILD@OLACHURCH.ORG

JAKE MAPPES
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & LITURGY
JMAPPES@OLACHURCH.ORG





Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church
Office/ Mailing: 1406 Hearst Drive NE
Church: 1350 Hearst Drive NE
Brookhaven, GA 30319

(404) 261-7181
Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Closed on Holy Days of Obligation and most National Holidays.

Follow Us

