

# Sacrament of Matrimony

## General Info

Congratulations on your engagement!

Preparing for your wedding day is an exciting and wonderful time in the life of a man and woman in love. Our faith teaches us that it is a profound joy to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage. The Sacrament of Marriage is a living reflection of God's love. As the bride and groom, you mirror that reflection of love to each other as well as to all God's people as you live this Sacrament for the rest of your lives. Your marriage is a living example of the marriage between Christ and His Church. The guidelines that follow are designed to help you in preparing for this most important event of your life.

We will need some materials from you in the process.

**Baptismal certificates:** These are to be obtained from the parish in which you were baptized, and should be from the past six months. This will show that you were confirmed, and have any information about previous marriages on it. Simply call the church and tell them you need one because you are getting married. Most parishes provide this at no cost.

In some cases we need you to fill out additional forms, especially if we do not know you personally. An example would be a freedom to marry form, where someone (parent, sibling) witnesses that you are indeed free to marry.

If there has been a previous marriage, whether religious or civil, let us know immediately.

## Frequently Asked Questions.

The following information has been prepared to answer some basic questions those considering marriage in the church may have. Please read it carefully and discuss it. Later, if and when you make an appointment, ask the priest or deacon any questions you may have. We recommend that you share this information with family and friends who may be interested in your marriage preparation.

### • Why do we have to go through marriage preparation?

As mentioned earlier, you have requested a sacrament of the Church. Marriage is a vocation, a calling by God to a certain lifestyle that requires thought and reflection before entering. The Church requires the couple to freely enter the marriage, to commit themselves for life, and to be open to life (children). In order to do this honestly, you need a chance to freely and openly discuss your relationship. The marriage preparation process gives you the time and place to do this. While we can never guarantee marital happiness, this process will help you in your relationship.

### • How long does this process take?

This depends on you. It takes a minimum of six months to give the proper time and energy to the process. We recommend, however, that you begin at least one year before you intend to marry.

### • What will you ask us to do?

The marriage preparation process involves several steps. You will meet with the priest or deacon, take an inventory test like FOCUS, attend a retreat, and other things asked you by the pastor.

### • How do we get started?

You already have! When you meet with the priest or deacon, he will give you a booklet that will lead you step by step through the entire process.

### • Can we get married in the Church if one of us has been married before?

If either of you has been previously married in any ceremony, religious or civil, a search of the freedom to marry again must first be conducted before any marriage plans are made. Contact the parish priest or deacon to begin that process.

### • What if one of us is not Catholic?

A Catholic and a non-Catholic can be married in a church ceremony. However, the Church asks that the Catholic party remains a member in the Church and strives to baptize and raise the children as Catholics. At no time is pressure put upon the non-Catholic party to become Catholic.

### • When is a wedding celebrated within the Mass?

When two active Catholics marry, it is usually celebrated with Mass. When a Catholic and a non-Catholic marry the ceremony is usually without Mass. This is a very important issue for you to discuss, both between yourselves and with your families, as well as with the priest or deacon who will be working with you.

### • Can we have a ceremony somewhere else besides the Church?

The celebration of marriage is a liturgy of the Church. As an official prayer experience, there is really no other appropriate place to celebrate weddings. We do not hold outdoor ceremonies.

### • What will the ceremony be like?

The Church has provided us with a ritual outline to follow. There are two basic forms, one with Mass and one outside of Mass. Within the guidelines of the ritual, you have many choices. One of the steps of the marriage preparation process is a liturgy workshop. At that workshop you will receive materials to guide you in preparing the ceremony.

### • Do you have any restrictions on music?

Since the celebration of the sacrament of marriage is a prayer of the Church, all the guidelines for Church music apply. This means that the music must be liturgical in nature. It is there to assist us in prayer, and for that reason no popular songs will be allowed in the ceremony. All music at your wedding is subject to approval. We will assist you as you put together your worship program.

### • What about musicians?

We provide a list of parish musicians. They charge a flat fee for each service. You will need a minimum of one keyboardist (piano/organ) and one cantor (song leader). You may choose to have more singers or other instrumentalists if you wish.

**• Can we bring in other musicians?**

We ask that you hire at least one of our music people. They are aware of how the ceremony is conducted. If you have a relative or friend who wishes to sing, they are more than welcome to work with our musicians. Any departure from this is worked out on an individual basis with our music director. If you intend to ask for a departure from this policy, ask early, before you hire or invite someone to sing.

**• Can we use the Church for pictures?**

Yes. You will have the Church for two hours, beginning one hour before your wedding. That means that you will have a limited time for pictures beforehand in the Church. You will also have a very limited time after the wedding ceremony. It is to your benefit to make a list of the pictures that need to be taken in the Church. You may, of course, use the other areas of the Parish Center that are not in use, both inside and outside.

**• Can pictures be taken during the ceremony?**

Yes, non-flash pictures may be taken by one person. This person needs to be either hired or in some way designated by you. It is obvious that this person is expected to respect the prayer and be as invisible as possible. Video may also be taken by a stationary camera from our designated areas.

**• How big a wedding party may we have?**

The ritual calls for a witness for each of you. These are traditionally called the best man and the maid/matron of honor, although the Church does not specify the sex of the witnesses. If you do choose to have a larger wedding party, there is no restriction on size, except common sense. However, there are many ways to involve friends and family in the wedding ceremony besides being members of the wedding party.

**• May we decorate the Church?**

The Church is already decorated according to the liturgical season. Any decorations we have placed in the Church must be left in place. You may add to our decorations if you wish. Furnishings in the sanctuary are not to be moved. The altar is a sacred and holy table; it must not be used for camera equipment and/or flower bouquets, etc.

**• Are there any restrictions on attire worn by the wedding party?**

Because of the sacred nature of the Church building and the sacrament itself, we ask that the attire of the wedding party be appropriate to the setting. Inappropriate attire may result in a request for last minute modifications.

**• May we include children in our wedding party?**

Children in the wedding party need to be of an age to take directions. They are usually asked to be seated with the parents of the bridal couple.

**• How much does it cost to celebrate a wedding ?**

In general we do not charge to celebrate sacraments, but in the case of a wedding there is significant use of the church and adjacent places, and substantial time spent in preparing the couple and ministering to them. We have developed a multi-tier level of payments, based on the level of active connection with the parish.

For those who are active, contributing members, or have parents who are: \$200

If the connection is through grandparents who are active members: \$350

For those who have no one active in the parish (even if they remain on the roles) but have a family connection (e.g. several generations were married there, etc.) \$500

If there is even less connection, but you convinced the pastor to let you marry there: \$600.

These checks are to be made to the parish and must be in hand a week before the ceremony. The priests in our Archdiocese do not keep stipends; they are to be given to the parish. If you want to give the priest something, a small gift card for gasoline is a nice gift, but it is truly not expected.

Musicians and singers are to be paid in addition to this payment to the church. Talk to them about their fee. Typically it is \$100-\$200 for each the singer and the musician.

**Marriage Checklist**

- Initial appointment with a priest
- Make sure everyone is free to marry
- Marriage for Life booklet
- FOCCUS – the pre-marriage inventory taken online or on paper
- Satisfy any co-habitation issues with the priest
- Set marriage date
- Go on a weekend retreat/workshop elsewhere
- Go over the results of the FOCCUS instrument
- Get the marriage license discount form from the parish
- Natural Family Planning brochure (class highly recommended)
- Go to the Wedding Workshop in our parishes, when available
- Gather baptismal certificates and any other necessary documents
- Fill out Form I with priest or designate

- \_\_\_ Fill out any church forms as needed (check with priest)
- \_\_\_ Line up qualified musicians and cantor (singer)
- \_\_\_ Get approval for music and worship aid/ program
- \_\_\_ Meet with parish wedding coordinator
- \_\_\_ Set rehearsal date
- \_\_\_ Get marriage license from county
- \_\_\_ Payment to the church
- \_\_\_ Rehearsal (Bring marriage license and worship aid)

### **STEP 1: CALL FOR WEDDING INFORMATION**

#### ***One year to 9 months before the Wedding***

Call the Parish Secretary to schedule a wedding.

All of the following must apply before a tentative date can be set:

- Either the bride or the groom or one of the parents must be an active, registered parishioner for at least 6 months before the wedding date may be set, or one of the couple must be living within the parish boundaries
- If either person has been previously married and has not received an annulment no wedding date can be set. An annulment decree must be obtained before any wedding preparation can begin.
- The Church promotes and protects the sanctity of all marriages. Therefore, the Church asks that couples maintain separate residences prior to marriage.

#### **The times for Weddings are:**

- Friday evening at 6:00pm and Saturday at 2:00 pm
- Weddings will not be scheduled during Advent or Lent, on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.

### **STEP 2: GATHERING DOCUMENTS**

#### ***One year to 6 months before the Wedding***

##### **Freedom to Marry Form**

If either person was previously married, contact the priest as soon as possible so that the proper paper work can be started. If the couple is not a personal friend of the priest a parent, close friend, or relative of each spouse must complete a Freedom to Marry form testifying that a previous marriage has never been contracted.

##### **Dispensations**

Interfaith marriages require a dispensation from the Archdiocese or the Diocese in which the couple has permanent residence for more than six months. The Catholic spouse will be asked to sign a promise to baptize and educate any future children in the Catholic faith. According to the Church's Rite of Marriage, In a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized person who is not a Catholic, the rite of marriage outside Mass is recommended.

##### **Baptismal Certificates**

Provide the church with a recently issued (within six months of the wedding date) Baptismal Certificate and evidence of receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. These may be obtained from the church where the baptism took place.

### **STEP 3: CONFIRMING YOUR WEDDING DATE**

#### ***One year to 9 months before the Wedding***

Your wedding date will be confirmed when the following items have been received:

- Signed Contract
- Check for agreed amount.

### **STEP 4: SACRAMENTAL MARRIAGE PROGRAM – MENTORING COUPLE**

#### ***4-6 months before the wedding***

For those being prepared, a married couple from the parish, who will be mentoring you through the preparation process, will contact you. At the first meeting with your Mentor Couple you will take the FOCCUS (Communication Skills Inventory) and review other requirements of the Marriage Preparation Program. For planning purposes, you will meet with them in their homes 3-5 times.

### **STEP 5: REGISTER FOR ENGAGED COUPLES RETREAT**

#### **6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING**

The Archdiocese of St Paul and Minneapolis offer weekend and Evening Engaged Couples Retreats. A registration form for, "Living God's Love: The Sacrament of Marriage," can be downloaded from the Archdiocesan website or you can contact the Archdiocesan Office of Family Life at 651-291-4438.

### **STEP 6: PLANNING THE WEDDING LITURGY**

#### **3-4 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING**

1. Contact musicians

2. Begin looking at scriptures for the Liturgy. You will need a reading from the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Gospels.

3. Schedule your wedding rehearsal day and time. This can be done by calling the marriage coordinator.

**STEP 7: OBTAIN A WEDDING LICENSE**  
**2 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING**

A state marriage license must be obtained at least two weeks before the wedding date. Marriage licenses are valid for six months. The state of Minnesota passed a premarital education bill that reduces the marriage license fee from \$70 to \$20.

Sec. 81. Minnesota Statutes 2000, section 517.08

Subd. 1b. (b) The marriage license fee for parties who have completed at least 12 hours of premarital education is \$20. In order to qualify for the reduced fee, the parties must submit a signed and dated statement from the person who provided the premarital education confirming that it was received. The premarital education must be provided by a licensed or ordained minister or the minister's designee, a person authorized to solemnize marriages under section 517.18, or a person authorized to practice marriage and family therapy under section 148B.33. The education must include the use of a premarital inventory and the teaching of communication and conflict management skills.

Once you have completed the pre-marital counseling and the Archdiocesan required pre-marriage retreat, drop off the retreat certificate to the parish office. The reduced wedding fee form will then be completed by the priest and sent to you.

**Schedule Final Meetings with the priest.**

Bring with you to this meeting:

- Marriage License
- Wedding Planning Sheet

**STEP 8: FINALIZE THE LITURGY – MEET WITH PRIEST**  
**1 MONTH BEFORE THE WEDDING**

Meet with the priest to finalize your wedding liturgy plan.

Bring copy of scripture readings, prayers of the faithful, and the wedding program to the final meeting with the priest.

**STEP 9: THE WEDDING REHEARSAL**  
**THURSDAY OR FRIDAY BEFORE THE WEDDING**

The wedding coordinator will facilitate the rehearsal and will assist the wedding party on the day of the ceremony. Please come 15 minutes early to review things with the wedding coordinator.

All members of the wedding party and all those participating in the liturgy, including the ushers and readers must attend the rehearsal.

Bring copy of scripture readings, prayers of the faithful, and the wedding program to the rehearsal. Bring check and money for wedding.

**STEP 10: THE WEDDING**

Make sure to have Best Man and Maid of Honor sign marriage license