

# WEDDING GUIDELINES, PLANNING, AND PREPARATION



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Dear Friends,

Congratulations on your decision to marry! Marriage is one of the seven sacraments, which are at the heart of our Catholic Faith. Sacraments are not the prayers of individuals alone but of the whole church. In this context, the wedding day does not “belong” to the bride and groom; your wedding is the celebration of a sacrament and thus belongs to the whole church. It is in this context that we invite you to prepare for your wedding at one of our parishes.

What happens at Sunday Mass is really the model and guide to be used in planning your wedding. Therefore, the easiest way for a couple to plan and prepare this liturgy, is to think about what happens at Sunday Mass.

This booklet of information is given to aid you in your preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament of Christian Marriage. We hope that the preparations for the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage will deepen your love and your commitment to each other – and strengthen the church.

As Marriage is a sacrament of the Catholic Church, there are some essential conditions that must be met:

- At least one of you must be an **active** member of the Catholic faith. An active member of the church attends Mass regularly, participates in parish activities, is involved in the ministries in the parish, and is in good standing with the Church.
- In addition to regular participation at Mass, one or both of you should be registered members of either St. Bruno or St. Paul. **(Please note: Either the bride or the groom must be a formally registered member of the parish. Parental membership does not constitute membership for you. We do, however, take into consideration those who are away from the area but still have family here).** In an interfaith marriage, the Catholic party is required to make a promise to continue living the Catholic faith and doing all in their power to have the children baptized and raised as Catholics.

- We do not accept marriages of couples who have no connection to one of our parishes. Having made prior reservations for your reception at a nearby venue does not qualify you to have your wedding here.
- Both of you must be *free to marry*. This means that neither party has been validly married before. If one or both of you have been married previously, you must speak to your pastor about your situation.
- There must be enough time for us to help you prepare for the sacrament. The Catholic Common Policy for the State of Wisconsin requires a minimum of six months. It is not uncommon for couples to contact us one year or more in advance.
- Both of you must be willing to make a permanent commitment to each other that will be open to having children and will include a promise of marital fidelity. You will be asked to make these promises during the wedding ceremony.
- The Sacrament must be celebrated in the parish church in the presence of a priest or deacon, and two witnesses. As such, it can be a very simple ceremony. Church weddings do not have to be elaborate or expensive.
- Diocesan policy does not allow for the Sacrament of Marriage outside of a church. Outdoor weddings at a park or at the lakeshore are not permitted.

## **ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL PHASE**

### **1. REQUESTING A DATE FOR THE WEDDING:**

Please contact the pastor to request a date for the wedding. This needs to be done by either the bride or the groom and not by the parent. At that time he can tell you what dates are available and possibly "pencil-in" your request. **This must be done BEFORE reserving a hall for your reception.** Weddings can be scheduled on any day except Sundays and Holy Days. ***Because of the preparatory nature of Advent and the penitential nature of Lent, weddings and baptisms are only allowed in extreme circumstances during these Seasons.***

### **2. THE INITIAL MEETING WITH THE PASTOR:**

Set up a meeting with the pastor as early as possible, but at least six months in advance of the wedding. At this time, he will explain the major phases of the marriage preparation and will fill out the pre-nuptial questionnaire with the couple. You will be asked to provide certificates noting the date and location of your Baptism and Confirmation. These certificates can be obtained by requesting them from the church where the sacraments were administered. These certificates must be newly issued documents and not copies of an existing certificate.

### **3. MEETING WITH A MARRIED COUPLE:**

After taking the FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study) Inventory, you will be directed to meet either with a married couple from St. Bruno or St. Paul Parish, or with the pastor who will help you discuss the results. This inventory is not a test, but rather an opportunity to see how well you are communicating about important issues and to assess the strengths and growing edges of your relationship.

### **4. ENRICHMENT DAY FOR THE ENGAGED:**

You will also be directed to participate in an Enrichment Day for the Engaged sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and offered at parishes throughout the Archdiocese. An explanation of these and a schedule will be given to you at your initial meeting.

### **5. ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION:**

The pastor may also want to meet with you for additional instruction. If one or both of you have not been practicing the faith on a regular basis, or if one or the other has not received the Sacrament of Confirmation, you may be asked to participate in a program to aid in the growth of your faith and to deepen your spirituality.

### **6. SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:**

With all the excitement of preparing for your wedding, please remember that you are really preparing for the **Sacrament of Marriage**. The most important element of your preparation is your spiritual preparation, because this is what will carry you through as the years go on. We recommend, and strongly encourage you to pray together often and regularly. **Attend Mass together every Sunday.** If this hasn't

been your practice, start a new tradition now. Studies show that couples who actively practice their faith have happier and longer lasting marriages, and better values to pass on to their children. Finally, **receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation** before your wedding. This will help you to have a wonderful and spiritual new beginning. Your pastor will be happy to help you with any of the above. Please ask.

### A SPECIAL NOTE ON COHABITATION – LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE MARRIAGE.

- One should not marry because one is expected to or feels obliged to do so. Marriage must be a truly free choice if it is to be a marriage at all. Living together may not allow either person enough emotional distance and objectivity to make this extremely important life decision.
- Catholic teaching opposes cohabitation before marriage, but it also strongly supports a couple's right to marry. It opposes cohabitation only because it supports sexuality and marriage as sacred and wants couples to achieve marital success and happiness.
- While the Church wants to support the couple and their relationship, it also adheres to religious values that the couple seems to be denying by their choice to live together before marriage. In other words, the couple seems to say that they do not think as the Church does but yet are coming to celebrate something for which the Church stands. As adults we must take responsibility for actions which have specific consequences.
- The following are questions to consider. They are not hard-and-fast rules. If you have been living together, but have a deep desire to prepare your hearts for the full grace in the sacrament of marriage, ask yourselves the following:
  1. How will marriage be different from our present situation?
  2. What will it change in terms of marriage as a sacrament in terms of the marital bond and commitment?

## **THE LITURGY PLANNING PHASE**

### **1. RITUAL PREPARATION:**

Once the FOCCUS Phase has been completed, the couple meets with the priest for preparation of the wedding liturgy. An explanation of the various liturgical options (processions, prayers, Scripture readings, placement, ministers, etc.) is included in "The Wedding Liturgy" section of this booklet and are discussed in detail. All decisions regarding the liturgy are subject to approval by the Pastor and the Director of Liturgy and Music.

### **2. MUSIC:**

It is the policy of our Parishes that the Director of Liturgy and Music and a parish cantor provide music for **all** weddings. All choices of wedding music are subject to approval by the Director of Liturgy and Music. Once you have met with the priest to discuss the liturgy, be sure to arrange a personal appointment with the Director of Liturgy and Music at least two months in advance of your wedding date to help you select music for your wedding. After this meeting, pending approval, you may invite a soloist or instrumentalist to join our musicians for your wedding. **Please do not make any arrangements with other musicians prior to this meeting.**

### **3. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE WEDDING LITURGY AND USE OF ST. BRUNO AND ST. PAUL PARISHES:**

- a. Use of Alcohol and Tobacco:** No smoking is allowed in the church; no consumption of alcohol or other behavior-influencing chemicals is allowed anywhere on parish grounds. Anyone under the influence of such substances will be asked to leave. If the bride, groom, or other attendants are involved, the priest has the right to postpone the marriage. The marriage, if witnessed while the bride or groom has been drinking, could be considered invalid because of the lessening of one's freedom through the use of alcohol/drugs.
- b. Buildings & Grounds:** No rice, bird seed, confetti, flower petals, or other matter is to be thrown. The release of balloons, butterflies, dove's or anything into the air is not permitted. The Bride's Room, church entry area, and the chairs are to be in good order after your wedding. Anything which was moved should be replaced in its original position.  
**The church is available to you 2 hours before the start of the wedding unless you are told otherwise.**
- c. Aisle Runners:** The parish does not allow aisle runners of any kind. The aisles of the church are for the use of all of those gathered, and aisle runners have proven to be hazardous to wedding guests. Insurance restrictions also prohibit the use of runners.
- d. Church Decorations:** Although the church is already decorated for the seasons of the church year, you may choose to bring flowers into the

church. Your church decorations may not conflict with those of the parish and the parish decorations may not be disturbed. **No flowers or decorations may be placed on top of the altar, or in such a way as to obscure it.** No nails, tacks, screws, staples, pins or tape are to be used in any part of the building or on the furniture.

- e. **Unity Candle:** The lighting of a unity candle is not a part of the Catholic rite and is not recommended. If you desire to light the unity candle during your wedding liturgy, you must provide the larger candle, the two smaller candles, and any necessary candle-holders and tapers. Candles must NOT be decorated with any flammable materials. These items will be placed on an appropriate table, provided by the parish, and not on the altar.
- f. **Videography and Photography:** Professional photography and/or video may take place during the wedding liturgy but may not interfere with the liturgy in any way. Neither the photographer/videographer or any of their equipment is allowed in the sanctuary or in front of the first row of pews. Once the ceremony has begun, flash photography or the use of other lighting is prohibited. **All pictures must be completed, the church cleaned up, and vacated by no later than 1 hour after the ceremony.**
- g. **After the Wedding/Clean-up:** Please make sure that all areas of the church building are cleaned up following the wedding ceremony: including the main church, the pews, the sacristies, both entrances, the bride's room, the room for the groomsmen, and the parking lot. Please take everything with you, as we are not responsible for anything left behind.

## **THE REHEARSAL**

Rehearsals are usually scheduled the evening prior to the wedding. The average length of a rehearsal is one hour. Rehearsals may be scheduled on other days of the week, depending on the availability of the priest and parish personnel. The rehearsals are facilitated by the priest officiating at the wedding ceremony or by a Wedding Liaison from the parish.

Please have everyone ready to begin ON TIME. The rehearsal is a time to practice what has already been decided, so make sure that everyone knows their position, responsibilities, etc.

The wedding is primarily a religious ceremony in a sacred place. Proper dress (no t-shirts or shorts) and behavior are expected during the rehearsal and the wedding.

**The use of cellular phones in the church proper and chapel is strictly prohibited.**  
**Please be respectful of the sacred space and make sure your cell phones are off.**

No smoking is allowed in the church; no consumption of alcohol or other behavior-influencing chemicals is allowed anywhere on the parish grounds before, during, or after the rehearsal or wedding.

**Please bring to the rehearsal:**

- **The marriage license**
- **All fees for the church, priest, musicians, etc.**
- **Orders of Worship**

## **THE WEDDING LITURGY**

The Wedding Liturgy is first and foremost the public worship of God. In other words, even though it focuses on the bride and groom, the wedding liturgy is the total community's act of worship, within which the bride and groom's exchange of vows takes place. It is an opportunity for all guests to join the bride and groom in praising God for the gift of love.

In addition, the **BRIDE and GROOM** are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage, while the best man and maid of honor are the legal witnesses. Other than the two legal witnesses (who must be 18 years of age or older), there is no function for other attendants at the wedding. Therefore, please try to keep the number of attendants at a minimum. The participation of children under the age of 6 years in the wedding party is highly discouraged.

The prayers, Scripture readings, the vows, the giving and receiving of rings, the music, the nuptial blessing – all of these will be an expression of both faith in God and in each other. They will also express your confidence that the presence and love of God will strengthen and confirm your love for each other.

May these days of preparation hold many blessings for you.

We look forward to your continued participation in the life of our faith community. We want very much to be a presence in your lives as a couple. Contact the Parish Office and be sure you are registered as a married couple.

May God bless you all the days of your life together.