Congratulations on your upcoming wedding in the Catholic Church!

We are excited that you are preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony with us! It is our hope and prayer that through your journey of preparation, you will acquire a deeper understanding of what God’s plan is for your marriage, and that you will learn the truths and virtues you'll need to live out your new vocation.

**Getting Started:**

- Fill out a registration form
- A priest or deacon will call you to setup an initial interview.
- Read through this Guide to find out more
What is Witness to Love?

*Witness to Love* is a virtues-based, Catechumenate model of marriage renewal and preparation that integrates modern principles of psychology and the virtues to help couples facilitate an authentic dialogue about their relationship.

What makes Witness to Love different?

What makes *Witness to Love* unique is that as an engaged couple you get to choose your own sponsor couple.* This is a couple you both admire and see as a source of faith formation. This sponsor couple gives you a concrete connection and integration into the parish. Through the sharing of the sponsor couples’ own marriage journey, as an engaged couple you inherit a “lifeline” of support in their commitment to Jesus and His Church.

Why Witness to Love

Allowing you to choose your own sponsor couple is key to experiencing the depth of *Witness to Love*.

In the most recent Synod there was a call for a Marriage Catechumenate to address the reality of isolation and lack of parish involvement that is leading to so many divorces of today’s young couples. *Witness to Love* addresses this urgent pastoral issue so engaged couples experience the Church not as strangers, but as a committed and life-giving family of faith. Sponsors who meet the basic requirements of this model become an essential part of the catechumenate team as the “trusted” means of communicating what must be revealed about matrimony through Jesus to the engaged couple. Trust is required to believe that matrimony is a means of salvation that should always be indissoluble, unitive, and procreative. It is within the trusted relationship between the sponsors and the engaged that the marriage remains strong, is formed from love, is strengthened by good catechesis and is nourished by prayers and a sacramental life. Deep conversations, encounters with Christ, and renewal are available consistently for both the sponsors and engaged couple.

* Every Parish may choose to call the married couple either the *Sponsor Couple* or the *Mentor Couple*. Here at St. William we prefer to use the term *Sponsor Couple* but in the Witness to Love material the two terms are used interchangeably.
Steps in the Process

→ Step 1: Welcome and Orientation

Once you have turned in a registration form, you will be contacted by a priest or deacon for an orientation and welcome. At an informal meeting, the priest or deacon will give you an overview of the *Witness to Love* program and start the marriage paperwork with you.

→ Step 2: Tuition

The tuition for our program is **$300**. The **FULL** amount must be paid before you begin the next step with the Relationship Inventory. Please make your payment in the parish office by submitting a check, cash or money order. Checks are made payable to Saint William Catholic Church. Our office hours are Monday-Friday 8:00am-8:00pm and Saturday-Sunday 8:30am-5:00pm. The Natural Family Planning course is an additional charge, and that fee will depend on the method you choose to learn.

→ Step 3: Relationship Inventory (Prepare-Enrich)

The PREPARE/ENRICH Inventory is offered on-line. Once the marriage preparation fee is paid, you will be emailed a code to take the inventory. If you do not have access to a computer or e-mail, you can come to the Marriage Ministry office and we can administer the inventory in our office.

The relationship inventory is designed to give you a reflection of your strengths and growths as a couple at this point in time. It requires that you complete questions concerning 11 critical areas in your relationship. The skill areas that are addressed have been proven to be essential in good, healthy the rite of matrimony. The inventory is not a pass/fail instrument. PREPARE/ENRICH is highly regarded by experts across the country and is a catalyst to make sure that the important issues in a marriage have been addressed. Your coach will receive a report after it has been completed and will conduct follow-up mentoring sessions.

Step 4: Begin *Witness to Love* and reserve wedding date

Once the inventory process has been completed, you will begin the *Witness to Love* program. You are also free to call the Marriage Office at (512) 600-8168 to reserve the church and date of your wedding by following the instructions on the *Fees & Stipends* page. Do not reserve a venue before you have reserved your wedding date. Please choose a wedding date that is **at least** 9 months from the date of your first appointment.
Wedding Planning

Location of your Wedding

A wedding outside a sacred place is becoming one of the most frequently asked questions regarding the Rite of Matrimony. Increasingly, requests are being made to have weddings literally “outside.” Church law is very clear in this regard: “A marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic is to be celebrated in the parish church.” (c.1118.1)

The Wedding Ceremony

If both parties of the couple are practicing Catholics, the Church invites them to marry within the context of the Eucharist. In this case a priest is the ordinary witness of the wedding and presider at the Eucharist. For a marriage between a Catholic and a fiancé of another religious tradition or for convalidations (civilly married), we invite them to marry within the Liturgy of the Word, followed by the Rite of Matrimony and concluded by the Lord's Prayer (without Mass). In this case, a Deacon will serve as the minister.

From the selection of your readings and music, to your choice of attire and attendants, the wedding takes place because of you. You are the ministers of this sacrament. What kind of statement will you make? Which readings will you have proclaimed? What kind of music will mark the occasion? Which special rituals? Who will have a special role? Liturgy is a powerful form of communication. The order in which events occur gives particular meaning to the events. The placement of the Rite of Matrimony after the proclamation of God's word, for example, shows that matrimony is a response of the couple to a call or invitation from God.

At Saint William, the staff is prepared to assist you in your discussions, reflections, and choices for the best expressions of your love and faith. We would like to help you plan a wedding ritual that is both reverent and beautiful. The basic ritual structure is given to us by the universal Church, but pastoral options are available for you to personalize your celebration. You can discuss your options with your wedding liturgy coordinator, Chris Yeager at 512-600-8158.
The Wedding Day

Saint William is our parish home. We ask that you treat our facilities with the respect that you would treat your own treasured home and possessions. We ask that the wedding couple and their friends clean up any areas used during preparation for the wedding. There is NO SMOKING, EATING, or DRINKING in the church building, bridal room, cry room/chapel or the restrooms.

Dress Code

Please keep in mind the virtue of modesty when choosing your dress and the dresses of your attendants, those in the procession, and lectors. You will be worshipping in a sacred place, therefore strapless, spaghetti straps, low-cut, and bare back dresses are inappropriate and NOT ALLOWED for this occasion. If you come dressed inappropriately, you will be required to wear a shawl from the church. You may come with your own beautiful shawl or bolero jacket; these may be lace or sheer. Dresses must also be at least knee length & without any glitter.

Dressing Room Facilities

The church provides a bridal room for the convenience of the bride and her attendants. We do not have dressing facilities for men. The men are encouraged to come dressed for the ceremony. Reminder: please no food, drink, tobacco or gum in the church, bridal room, cry room/chapel or the restrooms. Please designate responsible people to put things in order immediately after the Liturgy. For example: tidy the bridal room, foyer and church; gather the flower boxes, hangers, wrappings, etc.; put all trash in the dumpster in the parking lot next to the office. Please have this task completed by someone you trust by 3:15pm.

Candles

The candles normally used on Sundays are available. We also have two liquid paraffin candelabras (which we fill). You are welcome to use these at no charge. Use of the unity candle is not allowed in the rite of matrimony, but can be used at the reception.
Flowers

Flowers are optional. Flowers or plants used in the sanctuary for the occasion must be live—no artificial or silk flowers (Liturgy Documents, Art and Environment #102). Silk is fine for pew decoration. A spray of flowers may be placed in front of the ambo, lectern or two in front of the altar. Keep in mind there must be room for movement on the altar. If you would like to leave your flowers to enhance the weekend liturgies after the ceremony or reception, they would be appreciated, but this is not obligatory. Flower girls are permitted, but they may not throw petals down the aisle. They may carry a basket of flowers or a bouquet.

Music

As soon as you have booked the church or chapel, please make an appointment to discuss with the Liturgist a program of suitable music for your wedding. Recorded or taped music is not permitted.

As a Sacrament of the Church, the celebration and blessing of the marriage covenant calls for music that will reflect the couple’s understanding of the rite of matrimony within the context of the church. The selection of the wedding music is to reflect the sacred nature and sense of joy that characterize all Christian worship. The music and words chosen for the rite of matrimony are to sustain and support the prayerful nature of the liturgical celebration and be an appropriate complement to the scriptural readings and formal prayer of the rite. The following questions are to be considered in planning the music:

a. Does the musical score evoke a sense of sacred action and call the community to joyful prayer?
b. Does a particular selection emphasize and enhance that part of the liturgical celebration at which it occurs?
c. Does the overall music selection allow for some congregational participation?
d. Does the text express a biblical view of love and marriage?

A "yes" response to the above questions will assure that lyrics will celebrate not only the human love between two persons, but love as a reflection of the God who is love, and the wedding music will emphasize the theme of sacred celebration. Music within a Catholic wedding must be approved by the Catholic Church.

Photography

Photographers are asked to be as invisible as possible and to avoid distracting movement during the celebration. The photographer is strictly PROHIBITED from ascending the altar steps. Movement of any kind is a distraction from the important focal point of the couple and the Liturgy taking place in the sanctuary. Pictures may be taken IMMEDIATELY after the ceremony. The wedding party should return immediately to the altar. It is helpful to
have a photographer assistant—someone who can round up people for each subsequent picture so the photographer does not have to. It would be considerate to have your poses with the priest/deacon taken first so that they may go about their other duties. Pictures may be taken before the wedding if there is time. Pictures may be taken and videography may be done during the Liturgy with much care—please use fast film and NO FLASH during the ceremony.

Seasonal Decorations

Banners, altar cloths and any hangings or decorative setup are an important part of the current Liturgical season and may not be moved or removed. NO EXCEPTIONS.

- Aisle runners are not permitted.
- All doors, pews and aisles are to remain accessible.

Worship Aids

Worship aids or programs are optional. If you choose to use worship aids or programs they must be submitted to the Wedding Coordinator for approval two to three weeks before the wedding ceremony. This is to ensure that appropriate artwork, order of service, and photos used reflect the sacrament being celebrated.

REMINDER

Please DO NOT throw rice, birdseed, confetti, GLITTER, potpourri or any other material or bring animals inside the church, outside the church, or anywhere on the church premises or inside the Parish Hall as they are NOT PERMITTED.
Fees and Stipends

Although religion is a spiritual experience, places of worship are institutions which require financial support. The following are fees for wedding ceremonies at Saint William. To reserve the date of your wedding the **FULL** amount must be paid. When you are ready, call the Marriage Office at (512) 600-8168. Please choose a date at least 9 months from the date you started marriage preparation.

**Church**

*Saturday Wedding 11:00AM or 2:00PM*

Parishioner $1000.00**...........Non Parishioner $1650.00

**Sacred Heart Chapel**

*Saturday Wedding 1:00 PM or ***4:00 PM*

Parishioner $850.00 ...........Non Parishioner $1350.00

**Reception Facilities** (50% deposit required)

(To reserve, email: scheduling@saintwilliams.org)

- **Banquet Hall**
  - Parishioner $6000.00.........Non Parishioner $7200.00
- **Parish Hall**
  - Parishioner $2000.00.........Non Parishioner $3200.00
- **Pavilion**
  - Parishioner $1000.00.........Non Parishioner $1500.00

**Included in the Cost:**

- **Music (Cantor & Accompanist)**
- **Wedding Coordinator (Present at rehearsal and wedding)**
- **Building usage for four hours which include:** 1 hour for scheduled rehearsal, 1 hour before the wedding for set-up, 1 hour for the wedding and 1 hour for pictures & clean up after the wedding
- **Utilities and custodial services**

**A free-will offering for the priest or deacon is not included in the above costs, but is greatly appreciated and can be given to him on the wedding day.**

**  A parishioner is one who is a registered member at St. William.

*** 4:00pm weddings in the Sacred Heart Chapel are limited to deacons or outside priests

**** Weddings on weekdays are very limited and should be discussed when you make your reservation with the Marriage Prep Coordinator. They are subject to the same fees, unless you opt for a no Mass, no music, no coordinator, no rehearsal wedding with a deacon which is free.