



Our Lady of Lourdes Marriage Guidelines



October 2020

MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

1. We are happy to celebrate this momentous occasion in your life with you. God has called you both to this vocation of marriage. These guidelines are meant to assist you in understanding the theology and purpose of the Order for Celebrating Marriage in the Roman Catholic Church.
2. In 1969 the Marriage Rite was revised. In 1990 a second edition was promulgated in Latin and approval of the English edition – the ritual was finished in 2012.
3. While marriage is a sacrament in which you, the couple, are the ministers, it is also a Church event. You, as members of the parish are part of the larger Roman Catholic Church and tradition. We, as a parish community, are here to assist you in your formation for Christian marriage and provide several ministries and services to assist you.

The Fundamental Nature of Marriage

- A. The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.
 - B. For this reason, a matrimonial contract cannot validly exist between baptized persons unless it is also a sacrament by that fact. (1983 Code of Canon Law, Roman Catholic Church)
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4. The vocation of marriage flows from your baptismal commitment and your service to Christ and the Church. Marriage continues the covenant relationship with God and celebrates the

new covenant that you will share through this sacrament until death. This sacrament helps you in gaining holiness.

5. The sacraments make Christ present in our midst. Like the other sacraments, marriage is not just for the good of individuals, or the couple, but for the community as a whole. The Catholic Church teaches that marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament. The Old Testament prophets saw the marriage of a man and woman as a symbol of the covenant relationship between God and his people. The permanent and exclusive union between husband and wife mirrors the mutual commitment between God and his people. The Letter to the Ephesians says that this union is a symbol of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

6. What is a Nuptial Mass and when can a couple have one?

A Nuptial Mass is a Mass which includes the celebration of the sacrament of marriage. It has special readings and prayers suitable to the Sacrament of Marriage. The Sacrament of Marriage between two baptized Catholics should normally be celebrated within a Mass.

If the situation warrants it and the local bishop gives permission, a Nuptial Mass may be celebrated for a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized person who is not a Catholic, except that Communion is not given to the non-Catholic since the general law of the church does not allow it. In such instances, it is better to use the appropriate ritual for marriage outside of Mass. This is always the case in a marriage between a baptized Catholic and a non-baptized person.

7. The Church witness to the Sacrament of Matrimony may be a Catholic priest or deacon. In the state of Texas, the priest or deacon also acts as the official witness for the state. Two ceremonies are not necessary.

8. Initial contact with the priest or deacon should be made **at least one year** prior to the wedding – the earlier the better. Be advised that preparation classes will not be offered until you have been a registered parishioner for at least once year. If you are new please consult with priest or deacon to see when you will be able to attend the marriage preparation classes.

9. The wedding date and rehearsal cannot be solidified until all of the following considerations are met:

- **It is determined that there are no impediments to the marriage**
- The **Church** is able to be reserved and the **priest** or **deacon** witnessing the marriage, the **Marriage Coordinator and Musician** agrees to the date and time.
- **Reservation of the church is done with the priest or deacon by the couple.**

10. While weddings are not prohibited during Advent and Lent (Diocesan Marriage Prep manual V.E p 15) Please be aware that these are penitential seasons therefore flowers and other decorations should be **minimal** due to the nature of these seasons. The color of the season, purple, will be retained. If you have questions about a specific date, please feel free to speak to the priest/deacon with whom you are working.

11. Weddings may be scheduled on **Saturdays at 12:00 p.m., or 1:00 p.m.** These times are subject to the availability of the space and presider.

Preparation and Assisting Ministers

12. Please do not speak with a Liturgy Coordinator until you have met with the priest or deacon for the first time.

a. Also do not secure Venues for reception until dates are confirmed with the Church.

13. If you are planning to have a priest or deacon from outside this community witness your marriage vows, a copy of these guidelines should be given to him as soon as possible.

The Liturgy Wedding Coordinator will be available during your preparation and wedding to provide assistance.

14. The discernment phase, which involves initial evaluation sessions as well as monitoring throughout the marriage preparation process, is meant to be an affirming experience for the couple as they become more aware of their readiness (or lack thereof) to enter Christian married life. “The Church’s role as well as the primary task of clergy and others in marriage preparation... is to assist the couple in making a judgment about their relational readiness and personal faith, not to make those judgments for or about them” (USCC Manual, p. 63).

15. Because the marriage of two baptized Christians is a sacrament, it requires the presence of faith in its recipients. One of the primary goals of marriage preparation is the identification and deepening of the couple’s faith. (Diocesan Guidelines, p. 7)

16. Although there is no possible way to determine definitively a couple’s readiness to marry, there are clear indicators that can predict potential problems or even the eventual failure of the marriage. Because of this knowledge, every engaged couple ought to be given the best possible chance to evaluate their present state of readiness for marriage. (Diocesan Guidelines, p. 7)

Liturgy

17. Liturgy, the prayer of the Church, is by its very nature communal. A parish assembly's celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is the normal way of celebrating any sacrament or other liturgy. Catholic weddings, therefore, are celebrations of the whole Church as well as of the individual couples.

A. In the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Catholic weddings are to take place in *Roman Catholic* churches, however there are occasional exceptions for a Catholic-non Catholic wedding ceremony. In this Diocese the Bishop has stated that **no** weddings will be performed in an outdoor setting. Please ask the priest/deacon who is assisting you with your preparation if you have a question.

18. The general norms for liturgical celebrations are to be followed at a wedding liturgy.

19. The liturgy is one main way we celebrate your union. A priest or deacon will officiate/preside at your marriage, but you will need to obtain the legal papers (*Marriage License*) from the city/state.

20. The Celebrant and Coordinators will assist you with the following:

- **give you an overview of the theology of marriage in the Roman Catholic tradition;**
- **review the official Catholic Church's Rite of Marriage;**
- **plan your marriage service with you;**
- **lead the rehearsal the day before the wedding with the entire wedding party;**
- **witness your marriage;**
- **register your marriage with the Catholic Church;**
- **mail the Texas license for you, you will receive the signed license in the mail.**

21. We ask you to think of parishioners or family members who may proclaim the Word of God well to lector (*proclaim the scripture readings*) at the celebration. You may choose one or two readings and have a person read each. **A booklet (Together for Life) will be given to you to choose readings, prayers, etc. that you feel reflect your beliefs about Christian marriage. Additionally, someone should be chosen to read the Prayers of the Faithful/General Intercessions.**

If gift-bearers are required, those bearing the gifts need to be Roman Catholics in good standing with the Church.

22. We ask you to choose persons to greet your guests as they arrive. During the rehearsal they will be instructed as to some of the other ways they may be of service, such as opening and closing doors, taking a collection for a cause that you may wish to have your guests support, police and clean the rooms and church after the ceremony is over so that no valuables or trash is left, etc. We invite you to consider having your guests being seated any where in the church, rather than having selective seating either on the bride or groom's side. We come to celebrate with you as a couple not as individuals.

23. For the distribution of Holy Communion, only ministers who have been trained and commissioned in the parish may distribute. If you have relatives who are extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion in another church and you would like them to assist, please speak with the priest or deacon assisting you.

DOCUMENTATION

24. **Recent** (within the last six months) copies of Baptismal Certificates with sacramental annotations FOR BOTH PARTIES. A copy does not mean photocopy. the couple will need to contact the church where baptism took place and their staff will transcribe information from that document onto a new one. This is in turn signed and dated by the current pastor of that Church.

25. In case of a prior marriage – marriage license, divorce decree and annulment papers must be provided.

26. In case of death of a former spouse – a copy of the death certificate will be needed.

27. The Marriage license, obtained from the County Courthouse, is presented to the priest or deacon on the night of the rehearsal. The license must be obtained at least 72 hours prior to the ceremony and not be older than 30 days. It is the responsibility of the priest or deacon to return it to the courthouse. The couple receives a copy by mail two to four weeks after the marriage takes place. The license expires at the end of a 90-day period immediately following the date that the license was issued if the marriage ceremony has not been conducted within that period.

28. A church certificate of marriage will be mailed to the couple as soon as possible after the marriage.

MUSIC

29. The couple must work with the Music Director of the Church to arrange the music for the ceremony. You may call the parish office at **409-925-3579**. The music used before or during the liturgy must be clearly identifiable as prayer to all gathered. Secular love songs and ballads that have personal meaning to the couple are best played or sung at the reception. *(Also See Contacts on page 12)*

DECORATIONS

30. Natural flowers are preferred over artificial.

31. The existing art & environment may not be altered in any way. You may however add flower arrangements. These arrangements should not exceed the height of the Altar or Ambo. **Please check for approval from the wedding coordinator prior to ordering any flowers.** Please speak to the priest or deacon for weddings scheduled during Lent or Advent.

32. If extra candles are to be used, please check with the wedding coordinator before final decisions are made. The Unity Candle is not part of the Catholic Wedding Liturgy and should not be used.

33. No tacks, nails, pins or tape of any kind may be used in attaching candles, flowers, reservation signs, etc. to the pews.

34. The use of an aisle runner is not allowed. (*Tripping hazard*)

35. Nothing may be thrown inside or outside of the church before, during or after the ceremony, including flower petals, rice, birdseed, etc.

PICTURES

36. Photos may be taken during the ceremony. Photographers may not enter the sanctuary or cross in front of the assembly during the service without instructions from the celebrant.

37. Videographers are welcome but are asked to follow the same instructions as Photographers. **(No bright lights please.)**

38. Pictures may be posed after the ceremony for **one half hour**.

FEES AND STIPENDS

39. There are many expenses to running a parish and the preparation of your marriage. These are the fees for our parish if you would like the wedding performed here at Our Lady of Lourdes.

40. Church Use Fee

The fees for using the church are :

- a. FREE for registered parishioners and
- b. \$600 for non-registered parishioners. Fees are to be paid no less than one month from wedding date.

41. Madonna Hall Use Fee and Deposit – *See separate documentation for these fees with Secretary*

Music Fees

42. There is not a fee for the Music Coordinator – but you may offer a gift for the services. A normal gift in this Archdiocese is \$100. If additional Cantors are requested this is to be arranged with our music director. The fee is \$75 per Cantor.

If outside musicians are desired, it is your responsibility to attain them. In this case they still need to contact our Music Coordinator to collaborate on the music. The Coordinator will ensure that the Music chosen is proper to the Liturgy.

Mariachi Bands will not be approved for the wedding celebration so we highly encourage you to utilize them at the reception if so desired.

Clergy Stipends

44. You may wish to offer a stipend to the priest or deacon – it is not required. A stipend of \$100 is appropriate. This amount may be increased appropriately if the priest or deacon must travel to another church for the rehearsal or the wedding.

Checklist prior to Ceremony

Documents:

The following documents are required and must be promptly provided to the Celebrant of your wedding. There are no exceptions to these documents; every parish is required to include these documents in the wedding file, prior to any wedding taking place.

- Baptismal Certificate(s) or a Profession of Faith Certificate issued within six months from the Catholic Church of your baptism or where you became a Catholic, with any sacramental notations listed on the back. Certificate for each Catholic groom and/or bride. Original certificates are unacceptable
- Proof of baptism (certificate of baptism or letter from minister or witness) for a baptized non-Catholic intended spouse.
- Two Affidavits of Freedom to Marry each for the groom and bride, provided by the church, completed and returned before last meeting with Celebrant.
- A valid civil Marriage License can be obtained at any County Clerk's Office in Texas and be used anywhere in Texas. Texas law states a marriage license will expire **30 days** from the date it is issued, and it must be secured at least 72 hours prior to the wedding. However, it would be good to get this to your celebrant one week prior to the wedding. **Without a valid civil marriage license, there will not be a wedding.**

The documents for the above checked boxes (except the Marriage License) must be in the parish office within one month after the Initial Couples session.

Other Documents:

- Copy of Marriage Guidelines to Priest or Deacon, if from outside the parish
- Tear out from the end of Together for Life Booklet for readings and desired prayers at final session with celebrant. Can be found online at <http://togetherforlifeonline.com/> - the selections can be emailed from the website to your celebrant – look under heading Selection Form on the webpage.**

Contacts:

- It is your responsibility to get in contact with the Music Coordinator and Liturgy Wedding Coordinator no less than one month prior to the ceremony. This is essential even when obtaining a visiting priest or deacon.**

Contact them at: 409-925-3579

Miscellaneous:

- Catholic groom and/or bride are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the wedding. If appropriate, may be done before or after rehearsal or at any time prior to the wedding.
- Reread all of these guidelines and prayerfully understand what is happening at the Wedding Ritual.
- Contact Florist
- Contact Photographer
- One Week before wedding - Remind the wedding party, family and others to be on time for the rehearsal

- The wedding is a Sacred event – please, no practical joking during ceremony, e.g., signs that say “Help Me” on bottoms of shoes, etc. Proper attire is required for all involved in the Celebration.
- No Alcohol prior to wedding
- The Day of Wedding – **DON'T FORGET THE RINGS!**

MARRIAGE RESOURCES

- Marriage is a vocation; and a gift. Yet, it takes work, sacrifice, compromise, dedication, and a sense of humor. Ask any couple that has been happily married and they will admit they could not make it on their own without the support and assistance of others; family, close friends, religious leader, counselors, other resources.

There are many "self-help" resources available for married couples, and much of this could prove to be helpful, yet for Catholic couples, a resource that takes into consideration the Catholic faith while remaining grounded in everyday reality is a rare find.

The U.S. bishops have undertaken an initiative to assist couples in their marriage, as well as couples considering marriage, engaged or not, as well as young adults discerning if marriage is a foreseeable vocation. This project called "[For Your Marriage](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)" is available online, and offers a wealth of resources from top relationship experts and Church leaders in marriage preparation and ministry.

To learn more, see: <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/>

LITURGICAL PROCESSION

As with any ritual or ceremony that humans engage in, there is usually some kind of order in the processional and recessional (entrance & exit). The Catholic Church in her liturgies has a defined order of procession and recession as well which aids the faithful to direct their focus to the sacred nature of worship. Our order is defined by local and national ecclesial authorities.

Below is the proper order for a wedding liturgy; Any deviations from this order must be approved in advance by the pastor, and should be truly exceptional and worthy of sacred worship.

Seating of Guests

Seating of Grandparents

Seating of Parents (unless escorting bride and/or groom)

OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
Groom (alone, with father and/or mother)	Groom (alone, with father and/or mother)	Groomsmen & Bridal Attendants
Groomsmen	Groomsmen & Bridal Attendants (couples)	Ring Bearer
Bridal Attendants		Groom with Bride
Ring Bearer	Ring Bearer	
Bride (alone, with father and/or mother)	Bride (alone, with father and/or mother)	
OPTION 4		
<p>Allows for Ministers and Celebrant to be in place prior to procession of groomsmen/bridal party and Groom and Bride.</p> <p>This procession can look like any of the above options.</p>		

LITURGICAL RECESSION

Cross Bearer

Altar Servers (if app)

Groom & Bride

Ring Bearer

Groomsmen and Bridal Attendants

Parents

Priest and/or Deacon

Guests