

Wedding Guidelines



**St. Joseph Parish
Key West**

My Dear Couple,

The Church welcomes you with great joy as you have come to love one another and to desire a life together. As you no doubt have already found out, a marriage touches the lives of many persons, including the life of God, who has called you to one another, and wills that your happiness will bring you into the happiness of heaven. Indeed, it is through God's providence that you have come together to bless one another's lives, enrich your community, and someday (God willing) the lives of your children.

The following guidelines are provided as an aid for your marriage preparation, and include some basic good sense that can facilitate your celebration of this Sacrament of the Church in the life of St. Joseph Parish. Please remember that the presence of your parish church and priests are an important way that you witness to others of the sacredness of your relationship with one another and with God, and that we are here to serve you and share with you some of the wisdom of Jesus and 2000 years of lived Christianity. May your marriage and this preparation be marked by the joy and peace that God wills for you both! I remain,

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Michael J. Podhajsky
Your Pastor



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FEES

31. FOR PARISHIONERS, a minimum donation of \$150.00 is requested for use of the Church. The stipend goes toward the cost of lights, air-conditioning or heat, water, etc.

32. FOR NON-PARISHIONERS, a minimum donation of \$300.00 is requested for use of the Church. The stipend goes toward the cost of lights, air-conditioning or heat, water, etc.

33. A separate stipend may be given to the minister who helped celebrate your wedding. Musicians and altar servers are usually offered gifts for their services as well.

CIVIL REQUIREMENTS

34. A civil marriage license from the State of Iowa must be obtained from the county recorder before a wedding can take place. It should be presented to the presider no later than the rehearsal. For information on obtaining a civil license please go to the county courthouse or go to the county recorder information online.

THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

1. Married Christians, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and share in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church; they help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children; and they have their own special gift among the people of God.

Marriage arises in the covenant of marriage which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from the other. This intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on each of them and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them. Christ the Lord raised this union to the dignity of a sacrament so that it might more clearly recall and reflect his own unbreakable union with his Church.

2. Christian couples, therefore, nourish and develop their marriage by undivided affection, which wells up from the fountain of divine love, while, in a merging of human and divine love, they remain faithful in body and in mind, in good times and in bad.

God's love is fruitful, eternal, and faithful. Thus marital love is willed by God to be fruitful – giving new life in the form of children as well as generously sharing love with each other and the community; eternal – a stable, loving relationship that will continue until death; and faithful – an exclusive relationship that is for each a vocation to bring God's love and salvation to one another and the world.

3. Marriage is a serious responsibility but also a great joy. Make no mistake about it, amidst the challenges of life God wants your happiness in marriage. But we must do our part, both in preparation and in living out this commitment. When we live each day in unity with God through prayer, holiness of life, and Christian love God pours out His blessings upon us. It is by these gifts of divine grace that your hearts will be more firmly united as one and your lives will bear abundant fruit in peace and joy.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

4. Couples planning marriage should normally contact the Pastor at least six months before their intended wedding date. No marriage may be scheduled until the Pastor has met personally with the couple.

5. At least one of the parties to be married should be a practicing Catholic. Catholics who are not members of St. Joseph Parish will be asked to get a letter of permission from their respective Pastor prior to the celebration of the wedding.

6. Marriage preparation is more than planning a ceremony; it is preparing for a lifetime commitment to one another. In order to help you prepare for your new life together you will be asked to complete the following:

- Fill out the standard pre-nuptial forms for the Church
- Provide a recent copy of your baptismal certificate (if applicable)
- Complete the FOCCUS inventory and discuss the results with the minister helping you to prepare for marriage
- Participate in a marriage preparation program
- Plan the wedding ceremony
- Other requirements as necessary

7. The priest or parish minister is there to serve you and help you. Please consider them when making plans or decisions. They have a lot of experience in weddings, and may have some good ideas and know some pitfalls to avoid.

8. If you would like a priest or deacon from another parish to witness your vows at St. Joseph's please speak with the minister helping you to prepare for marriage about the necessary requirements.

9. If you would like the priest or deacon to attend the rehearsal dinner and/or wedding reception you must invite him in advance. Priests and deacons have busy schedules, especially on the weekend. While they would be honored to celebrate with you this may not always be possible.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

28. Marriage is not just for a day, but for a lifetime! A married couple is united as one in body and in spirit. Spiritual preparation for marriage is essential to a healthy, holy marital bond.

29. Remember that Sunday is the day to worship God. Regular attendance at Sunday Mass can unite you more closely in faith and love, bring divine blessings, and offers you the support of the Christian community. If you have not been attending Mass regularly there is no time like the present to start!

30. Prayer, our conversation with God, is essential to a healthy relationship with the Lord. Individual prayer as well as your prayer together as a couple is vital for God's blessings on your marriage. Trust in the power of prayer to bring God's grace and blessings into your life together as you grow together in faith, virtue and love.

31. God's mercy in the Sacrament of Penance helps us overcome our faults and show forgiveness to other people. The frequent use of this sacrament will be a great help to you throughout your marriage. The use of our Lord's gift of the Sacrament of Penance is also highly recommended before celebrating your wedding.



22. The couple is greatly discouraged from using an aisle runner. The original purpose of the aisle runner is no longer necessary and aisle runners usually do not “work” as well as one intends, becoming more of a distraction from the liturgy rather than enhancing the liturgy.

23. Music at weddings must be oriented toward God. The minister helping you to prepare for marriage and/or the musicians may have helpful suggestions about appropriate music. **All music** to be used for the wedding ceremony at church (prelude music, liturgy music, and postlude music) **must be approved** by the minister helping you to prepare for marriage. Music that has not been approved for use at the sacred liturgy will not be allowed.

24. Photographers and video cameras may be used during the ceremony. We want you to have wonderful remembrances of this special day! However the photographer and/or video camera should be discrete so as not to interfere with the sacred liturgy. At no time should during the ceremony should the photographer and/or videographer enter the sanctuary (the raised area in the front of church), and flashes should be avoided if at all possible.

25. No rice, confetti, birdseed, etc. should be thrown on Church property.

26. Everything **done** to the church for the wedding must be **undone** before Confessions begin at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday. Please **appoint someone to clean the Church**, pick up programs, remove decorations, etc. immediately following the service. Don't forget to check the bridal dressing room and other areas that were utilized.

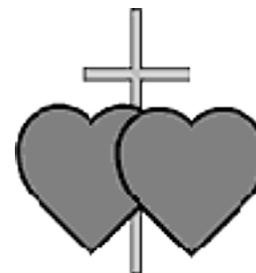
27. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited on Church property. Violation of this policy may delay or cancel the wedding at the discretion of the presider. Please be responsible for your guests!

INTERFAITH WEDDINGS

10. A marriage between a Catholic and a baptized, non-Catholic Christian is called a “mixed marriage.” This requires the permission of the pastor as well as the promise of the Catholic party to retain his/her Catholic faith and to raise his/her children in the Catholic faith. These commitments should be discussed between the couple. The minister helping you to prepare for marriage can answer any questions you may have about these requirements.

11. A marriage between a Catholic and someone who has not been baptized requires a special dispensation. Please speak with the minister helping you to prepare about this.

12. It is possible to include a non-Catholic minister in the wedding ceremony, or to celebrate the marriage in a non-Catholic Church. Please speak with the minister helping you to prepare to discuss these options.



PREVIOUS MARRIAGES

13. Because we believe that marriage is “till death do us part,” the Catholic Church does not recognize divorce. If one or both parties have been previously married, please speak to the minister helping you to prepare about the requirements for you to be free to enter into a new marriage. No wedding can be scheduled until both parties are free to enter into a new marriage.

LIVING TOGETHER

14. Many couples today choose to live together prior to getting married. We recognize this is not only more socially acceptable, but is actually promoted by society as a healthy means of building your relationship. Church teaching and practice disagrees. In fact, our experience and several sociological studies support the idea that not living together is more beneficial to healthy, long-lasting relationships.

15. No one will be denied the sacrament because they are living together. However, we ask that you be open to the advice and recommendations of the minister helping you to prepare for marriage. This may include the possibility of separating prior to the celebration of marriage. It is not our desire to make you feel guilty or to place impossible burdens upon you, but it is our intention to help you understand the Christian ideal of chaste, marital love so that you can establish a happy, grace-filled marriage for life.



THE WEDDING LITURGY

16. While the wedding is a celebration of marital love, the wedding liturgy at Church is always focused upon God – the gift of love that comes from God through faith. Make sure the music, decorations, etc. are appropriate for this celebration of our faith in Jesus Christ, who established the holy Sacrament of Matrimony and unites you together in love.

17. Remember that the Church is a place of sacred worship. While we want you to enjoy your wedding day please be respectful and courteous of God's house and encourage your party to conduct themselves in a similar manner. Our dress and conduct inside Church, both at rehearsal and on the wedding day, should reflect our reverence for God. In particular, no caps should be worn inside and no food or drink should ever be brought inside the Church. The social hall is the acceptable place for food and drink. It is also proper decorum for the members of the wedding not to chew gum.

18. Weddings may not be celebrated after 2:00 p.m. on Saturday so as to avoid conflicts with the Sunday Mass obligation or Saturday afternoon Confessions.

19. Wedding decorations should not interfere with the decorations already in Church. In particular, Lent and Advent are penitential seasons and decorations during these times should be kept very simple. No decorations should be used that would harm the finish on the pews (such as tape) or create a mess inside the Church. Please speak to the minister helping you to prepare for marriage if you have questions.

20. A unity candle may be used during the ceremony. The couple is responsible for providing the candles and the candle stands. Unity sand is not appropriate for the sacred liturgy.

21. If a flower girl is part of the bridal party, she may not drop real flower petals along the aisle. Artificial petals are acceptable, as long as someone is assigned to pick them up after the ceremony.