

*Preparing  
Two  
To  
Become One*

*- Your Marriage in the Catholic Church -*

Congratulations! We celebrate your love with you.

Our Catholic marriage preparation is designed to help you prepare for the reality of two becoming one in the Sacrament of Marriage within a life of faith, regardless of where you are on your faith journey.

Throughout your program you will have the opportunities to examine how your expectations and your future spouse's expectations align and differ. You will also have the opportunity to explore who you are and how that affects your spouse. We will ask you to look at some honest and personal issues and to do it with integrity.

Inside you will also find useful information to assist you throughout your preparation process. You will find guidelines for the preparation process and use of the church and facilities, as well as, all of the contact numbers and people you will need.

### **Why Marriage Preparation?**

Marriage within the Catholic Church is a Sacrament; meaning that it is a visible sign to the world of an invisible Grace and reality. That invisible Grace and reality mirrors and flows directly from God's love for the world and Christ's love for his Church.

When you live your marriage well, each of you makes a true and complete gift of self to the other. For the sake of the good of the other, you help each other towards fulfillment in your lives now and towards eternal life with God. At the same time, by mirroring the reality of the sacrificial love of Christ to each other (and after all, isn't that what your hearts truly desire, that is to be loved unconditionally by the other?) you provide hope to the world.

Just as God's love cannot be contained, it always searches out the other. So too your successful marriage will bring hope to the world and be a benefit to your church and community.

Although we can never prepare the two of you for your whole life of marriage, we can help you build a foundation and provide some basic tools to get you started. We can help you discern societal expectations of marriage against what your heart truly desires and help the two of you prepare to become one in the sacrament.

## **Expectations and a Checklist to Guide You**

Responsibility in preparing for your marriage rests with the couple, from your initial contact with our parish to the day of your wedding. **You will be responsible for fulfilling these expectations, as well as making and keeping all appointments.**

At the end of this booklet is a directory of the pertinent telephone numbers and contact information.

What you get out of this process will rely greatly on the amount of energy and honesty you are willing to put into it. On the following pages you find a brief description of what to expect along the way.

### **Registration in our parish**

If you are living here you should be registered in the parish. It's expected that you are registered and attending Mass regularly. If you've been away from practicing your faith, now is a new opportunity to start.

### **Initial meeting with your priest**

You will meet with a parish priest. Contact the parish office to make this appointment. You will fill out necessary paperwork with the priest and receive valuable planning materials. No wedding date can be set until a couple has this initial meeting. You will receive information and dates for Engaged Encounter and Pre-Cana.

### **Gather the necessary documents**

These include your baptismal certificates and affidavits. The specific documents needed in your case will be explained at the initial meeting with your preparing priest. (Fr. Rod's contact info is on the last page)

□ **Meet with the Pastor for approval on all music**

Marriage within the church is truly a celebration of love. The love we celebrate is first and foremost the love that God shares with us and through the two of you. As a result there are guidelines for music before and during the liturgy. Your priest will help inform you and follow these. All final music choices are at the discretion of the Pastor.

**It is important that this meeting take place immediately following your initial meeting with the priest.** You will receive further help and guides in selecting music for your wedding. It will also help you get your choices to your vocalist and to your accompanist so they have adequate time to prepare.

An essential general guidelines is that all music is classical or liturgical (songs from the hymn books). This includes music before during and after the ceremony.

Vocalists and accompanists are not provided by the church. Your priest can assist you with a list of qualified individuals if needed. These people are contacted and hired by you. Likewise, if you have your own names, please bring that list to this meeting. Your musicians must be able to lead the sung responses of the service or Mass as well as solo music.

□ **Take FOCCUS and Review FOCCUS (up to 4 meetings)**

The FOCCUS© (Facilitating Open, Caring Communication, Understanding and Study) Inventory is designed to help engaged couples appreciate their unique relationship, learn more about themselves, and discuss topics important to their lifelong marriage.

Based on your FOCCUS results, you will engage in conversation with the priest or a trained staff member who will be preparing you.

As an engaged couple, conversation probably comes easily. The two of you enjoy talking about just anything. Just about anything that is, except your disagreements. You can't run away from prickly conversations – for long. If anything, marriage can even accentuate the disagreements you have while dating. They can even become serious problems after you are married. Before you marry, consider “must have conversations” on these topics (FOCCUS will assist you in examining these areas):

Spirituality/Faith

Intimacy/Cohabitation

Conflict Resolution Skills

Children

Careers

Commitment

Finances

**Attend an Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana**

You must attend one of the following two programs as part of your preparation. You may register for them using forms provided for you by the parish.

**Engaged Encounter**

A weekend opportunity to concentrate on building a couple relationship, the weekend offers engaged couples a chance to get a head start on a successful marriage through the process of sharing topics vital to marital happiness.

**Pre-Cana**

A marriage preparation program held in several locations and with varying formats depending on location that highlights areas important to a marriage, such as communication, sexuality, finances and more.

**Set a rehearsal time**

Your rehearsal time should be scheduled with your presiding priest (and preparing priest if they are different) in such a way as to assure that all members of the wedding party and all those performing ministries (lectors, etc.) can be in attendance and can arrive on time. Rehearsals will start on time.

**Meet with the priest who will be presiding at your marriage to finalize plans**

You should meet with your presiding priest at least one month prior to the ceremony to get final approval on all aspects of the liturgy. This is also an opportune time to schedule your rehearsal if you have not already done so.

Please note that if you are having someone else other than a priest assigned to one of the parishes preside one of the parish priests will need to make a final approval of your liturgy plans as well.

**Pay your Facilities Fee (at least one week prior to ceremony)**

There is a minimum fee for the use of the church facilities for your wedding.

The fee is \$300 for a participating member (or child of a member) or \$500 for a

non-member. This offsets costs for your wedding and supports the work of our parish (St. Catherine's members or immediate family members is \$200 or \$500 for non-members).

Your regular financial giving to your parish is even more important as a parish member. Please regularly support your parish, giving financially and of your time and talent.

- Bring your marriage license to the wedding rehearsal**

## **Other Considerations in Your Planning**

### **Time of Day for Weddings**

If your wedding is on a Saturday the latest start time is 1:30 pm. On other days the time for the ceremony is arranged with the priest arranging your marriage. Again, please check with the priest who is preparing you for how you are to gain access to the church, what would happen in the unlikely event that the church would need to be used in the morning for a funeral or the possibility that a wedding may be taking place both in the morning and another in the afternoon.

If, for some reason, you wish to have photography after the ceremony your ceremony start time will need to be moved ahead by one hour to allow adequate time for you and to insure that the church is ready and quiet for those who will come to the Sacrament of Penance and Mass that will probably follow your ceremony

### **Clergy and Other Fees**

A priest or deacon does not charge a fee to marry you. There has been a custom of a gift to the clergy, however, this is not required.

The following fees will be set by those who are offering the services.

- Engaged Encounter / Pre-Cana
- Accompanist (you must hire)
- Vocalist (you must hire)
- Florist (you must hire)

### **Decorations in the Church**

- Pew bows are allowed, however, they must not have metal clips or any adhesive and must be attached in a way that causes absolutely no damage to the pews.
- Aisle runners are not allowed.
- Two large flower arrangements are allowed, one in front of the altar, the other in front of the ambo. They should be short enough that they allow visibility to the altar surface and the ambo. Nothing should be placed on the altar itself.
- As of the beginning of Advent 2016 there is an updated rite for the sacrament of marriage that has been promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Archdiocese. With the implementation of the new rite there is no allowance made for unity candles, and as such, they are no longer permitted during the rite.

Please note that the current seasonal decorations of the church will remain. The regular banners and decorations marking the liturgical season will be left in place.

The general rule for other types of decorative things are these (for example things used to greet the bride and groom as they leave the church or things used in the entrance procession): Anything that goes up and does not come back down (eg. bubbles) are okay. Flower pedals in the procession as well as rice, bird seed or bio-degradable snow outside are not allowed.

### **Children in Weddings**

Children are allowed in the wedding party but should be of sufficient age to walk down the aisle on their own. There can be no use of wagons and there should be an adult responsible for assisting them and removing them from the procession if necessary.

### **Additional Services Offered by the Church**

The following additional services are offered by the church. The fee for facility use does not cover any clean up costs. Please designate someone in your wedding party to assist with the use of the following spaces:

- Space for the wedding party to get ready. Each church will provide a space for the bridal party to dress and get ready. We will assume the groom's party can come already dressed. Please have a personal attendant or designated hostess to make sure this area is clean after its use.
- Space for the entire wedding party to have food and drink prior to the wedding. It is highly recommended that everyone in the wedding party have something to eat prior to the ceremony. This helps with nerves and will prevent anyone from passing out or becoming light headed. Again, please designate someone to be responsible for cleaning up of this area.

### **Alcohol**

No alcohol prior to the ceremony in any way (including in the cars).

### **Access to the church and facilities**

- Each parish will have a different policy regarding your ability to gain access. Please check with your preparing priest for your specific parish. Some churches will already be open for you, while others will require you to check out a key prior to your wedding day.
- Remember, due to the possibility of a funeral on your wedding day your access

time to the church may be as late as noon. A parish must also accommodate funerals as they arise, plan to be flexible in this regard. Please be in contact with your presiding priest regarding this possibility.

### **Photography/Videography**

You will likely want to capture the events surrounding this joyous occasion by photography or video recording. These guidelines will help your professionals and guests honor the beauty of the day and the religious ceremony.

#### **Photography/Videography Guidelines**

- Photography of the wedding party, groom, bride, parents, grandparents, and others is normally scheduled prior to the wedding ceremony in a way that allows for this portion of photography to be finished by 45 minutes prior to the start time of the ceremony. If you are choosing to have photography afterwards you need to discuss this with your preparing priest immediately.
- No food or beverage in church during photography before or after Mass.
- Church is sacred space, proper decorum and reverence is expected.
- During the ceremony we want to do everything we can to create an atmosphere of prayer and worship. In light of that we ask that there be no *flash* photography during the ceremony.
- As a general rule your photographer should stay behind the assembled guests, so as to not distract them during their prayer. They may use the side aisles or center aisle or balcony (if available), always remembering that they must stay behind the people.
- There can be no cameras of any kind in the sanctuary (altar area of the church).

Most photographers will be accustomed to these guidelines and have the necessary equipment to accommodate you and still capture all the special and important moments of the day. We would ask that you share these guidelines with your photographer/videographer.

## Parish Contact Information

### **Priests:**

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