



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church  
16075 N. Evans Rd  
Selma TX 78154

# Sacramental Marriage Guide



Congratulations on your upcoming marriage!

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:

- Read through the Sacramental Marriage Guide
- Contact Veronica Santillan at 210 651-6913 ext.110 or [vsantillan@olph.org](mailto:vsantillan@olph.org) to schedule your initial appointment.



## Marriage Preparation Program

We are a *Witness to Love* parish

### **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 the engaged couple chooses their own mentor couple. This is a couple they both admire and see as a source of faith formation. This mentor couple gives them a concrete connection and integration into the parish. Through the sharing of the mentor couples' own marriage journey, the engaged couple inherits a "lifeline" of support in their commitment to Jesus and His Church.

### **Why Witness to Love?**

Allowing engaged couple to choose their own mentors 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. Mentors 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 marriage through Jesus to the engaged couple. Trust is required to believe that marriage is a means of salvation that should always be indissoluble, unitive, and procreative. It is within the trusted relationship between the mentors 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 mentors and engaged couple.

# Processes and Procedures

## Step 1: Welcome & Orientation

Once you have selected a wedding date contact Bernadette Renteria for details and welcome meeting with the Pastor of OLPH. At your initial meeting, the Pastor will give you an overview of the *Witness to Love* program and start the marriage paperwork with you.

## Step 2: Marriage Prep Bundle

The bundle fee for our program is \$150. The FULL amount must be paid before you begin the next step with the Relationship Inventory and reserve your wedding date in the Church/Chapel. This includes *Witness to Love* Course Work, Retreat, Prepare-Enrich, and Administrative Fees. Please make your payment in the Pastoral Center by submitting a check, cash, or debit/credit payment with Bernadette Renteria. Checks are payable to Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Note: The Natural Family Planning course is an additional charge, which 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 email, you can come to the Pastoral Center 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 marriages. 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 contact Bernadette Renteria at the Pastoral Office at 210-651-6913 or [vsantillan@olph.org](mailto:vsantillan@olph.org), to reserve the church and date of your wedding by following the instructions on the [Church Fees & Stipends](#) page.

**NOTE: It is highly recommended that you not reserve your wedding date at the church. Please choose a wedding date that is at least 6 months out.**

# **Fees & Stipends**

Although religion is a spiritual experience, places of worship are institutions which require financial support. The following are fees for wedding ceremonies at OLPH. To reserve your wedding date a 50% deposit must be made. Once the deposit is made the date will be confirmed and scheduled. **Final payment is due 2 months before the wedding date.**

## **OLPH Church**

Saturday 1:00 PM or 3:00 PM

Parishioner \$550.00  
Non-Parishioner \$700.00

## **OLPH Chapel**

Saturday 1:00 PM or 3:00 PM

Parishioner \$250.00  
Non-Parishioner \$400.00

Included in Fees:

- ❖ Wedding Coordinator (Present at rehearsal and wedding)
- ❖ Sacristan
- ❖ Building usage for the following:
  - 1 hour for schedule rehearsal
  - 2 hours for Bridal Suite
  - 1 hour prior to wedding for set-up
  - 1 hour for wedding
  - 1 hour for pictures and clean-up

NOTE 1: A parishioner is one who is a registered member at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church.

NOTE 2: The stipend for the priest or deacon is a free-will offering NOT included in the above fees.

## **Convalidation Fees**

In Chapel: \$250.00  
In Church: \$550.00

# Convalidation & Annulment

## **Q. What is Convalidation?**

**A.** *Convalidation* is a term the Catholic Church uses to refer to the Catholic marriage of a couple who is married civilly or who was married in a religious ceremony outside the form and guidelines prescribed by the Catholic Church for Catholics. The Church rejoices with couples who choose to marry in the Catholic Church and wishes to prepare them in a commitment. This requires skills in communication, conflict resolution, financial management, as well as a good understanding of what the Church teaches about marriage, sexuality, and children. Marriage preparation is just one small step in what will be a life-long adventure of perfecting skills to keep your relationship strong.

## **Q. Isn't this a lot of stuff to have to go through just to get our marriage "blessed" by the church?**

**A.** Convalidation is not a *blessing ceremony*. Couples and church personnel often refer to this as a "blessing" but it isn't. Similarly, some people say Convalidation is the way to bring a civil marriage into the church." This simply is not the case. The Catholic Church cannot do anything to a civil marriage contract to make it more or less binding or more or less holy. Convalidation couples are getting married the way the Church ask Catholics to marry. Preparation is just as important for couples taking this important step as for those who are simply engaged and preparing for marriage.

## **Q. What is the procedure if the previous marriage for a Catholic person was outside the Church?**

**A.** The Church requires that a baptized Roman Catholic marry before one of its representatives, usually a priest or deacon, unless special permission was granted otherwise. When a catholic does not observe this requirement and marries out of the Church (for example, before a justice of the peace) and eventually divorces, the tribunal process involves two steps. The first step requires securing the Catholic's baptismal record, a copy of an official document indicating the location of the marriage and the name of the person who performed the ceremony, as well as the divorce decree. The second step involves completing a relatively brief form that seeks the above information and asks a few additional questions about circumstances concerning the celebration of the marriage. This form and the supporting documents showing who witnessed the wedding are sent to the diocesan tribunal, which ordinarily processes the application in a few days and returns to the petitioner a declaration of nullity based on what is called a "lack of canonical form." The individual is now free to pursue a subsequent marriage within the Church or to have the Church con-validate a civil marriage which has already taken place.

**Q. What is the procedure if the previous marriage was Catholic wedding or a non-Catholic wedding with special permission to be married before someone other than an ordained Catholic clergyman?**

**A.** The tribunal process in these circumstances is termed a “formal case.” It is more complex than the “lack of form” case mentioned above because it examines what happened in the marriage. The procedure takes longer. In this type of case, the Church researches not merely the location of a wedding, but also the relationship between spouses before and during the marriage. In the United States, a person may start this process only after obtaining a divorce under civil law. The petitioning individual then works through an extensive, printed inquiry that explores the childhood of both persons, their courtship, the early years of the marriage and what the petitioner considers the major cause of the marital breakup. Sometimes cases receive a negative response and petitions are rejected. But a majority of formal cases in the United States receive positive judgments and declarations of nullity are granted.

**Q. Why is a Church tribunal decision necessary?**

**A.** If a Catholic wishes to marry in the Church when there has been a previous marriage, then one of the partners in the earlier union must have died or the Church must have issued a declaration of nullity (frequently called an annulment) of the previous marriage. The Catholic Church views all marriages with respect. It presumes that they are true and valid. Thus, it considers the marriage, for example, of two Protestants, Jews or even nonbelieving persons to be binding in the eyes of God. These unions are covered by the words of Christ about divorce. Consequently, a tribunal process is required to establish that an essential ingredient in the relationship was missing from the start of the previous marriage.

# Wedding Planning

## Wedding Location

A wedding outside a sacred place is becoming one of the most frequently asked questions regarding marriage. Increasingly, request are being made to have weddings outside the church. 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)

## 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 Marriage 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 marriage rite after the proclamation of God’s word, for example, shows that marriage is a response of the couple to a call or invitation from God.

At OLPH, the Pastor, Staff, and Coordinators are 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. Upon reserving your wedding date at OLPH, a coordinator will be assigned to your wedding date. You will then be able to further discuss the details of your ceremony and rehearsal.

## Wedding Day

OLPH 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 and family clean up any areas used during preparation for the wedding. There is NO SMOKING, EATING, or DRINKING in the church building, bridal suite, chapel or the restrooms.

## **Dressing room Facilities**

The church provides a bridal suite in the Pastoral Center for the convenience of the bride and her attendants. We do not have dressing facilities for the groom and his attendants. The men are encouraged to come dress for the ceremony and gather in the Adoration Chapel. As a reminder, please do not have food, drink, tobacco, or gum in the church, bridal suite, or 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 respective trash containers. Please have this task completed by someone you trust by 4:30.

## **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.
- ❖ No flower petals, real nor silk are to be used.

## **Worship Aids**

Worship aids or programs are optional. If you choose to use worship aids or programs they must be submitted to the 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.



- ❖ *Please DO NOT throw rice, birdseed, confetti, GLITTER, potpourri, or any other material. Please DO NOT bring animals inside the church, outside the church or anywhere on the church premises or inside the Pastoral Center as they are NOT PERMITTED.*

## Music

Once you have booked the church or chapel, please make an appointment with the OLPH Music Director, Melissa Durham at [Mdurham1812@outlook.com](mailto:Mdurham1812@outlook.com) to discuss the music for your wedding. Please consider the following as you are selecting the songs for your wedding:

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 marriage 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 marriage ceremony 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 selection 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 the words of the music will celebrate not only the human love between two persons, but love as a reflection of the God who is love and the theme of sacred celebration.

# Engagement

By POPE FRANCIS

Engagement — one hears it in the word — has to do with trust, confidence, and reliability. Confidence in the vocation that God gives, since marriage is first and foremost the discovery of a call from God. It is certainly a beautiful thing that young people today can choose to marry on the basis of mutual love. But the very freedom of that bond requires a conscious harmony in making the decision, not just a simple understanding of the attraction or feeling, for a moment or for a short time ... it calls for a journey.

Engagement, in other words, is the time when the two are called to perform a real labor of love, an involved and shared work that delves deep. Here they discover one another little by little, i.e. the man “learns” about woman by learning about this woman, his fiancée; and the woman “learns” about man by learning about this man, her fiancé. Let us not underestimate the importance of this learning: it is a beautiful endeavor, and love itself requires it, for it is not simply a matter of carefree happiness or enchanted emotion.

The biblical account speaks of all creation as a beautiful work of God’s love. The Book of Genesis says that: “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Only when it is finished does God “rest”. We understand from this image that God’s love, which brought forth the world, was not an impromptu decision. No! It was a beautiful work. The love of God created the concrete conditions for an irrevocable covenant, one that is strong and lasting.

The covenant of love between man and woman — a covenant for life — cannot be improvised. It isn’t made up one day to the next. There is no marriage express: one needs to work on love, one needs to walk. The covenant of love between man and woman is something learned and refined. I venture to say it is a covenant carefully crafted. To make two lives one is almost a miracle of freedom and the heart entrusted to faith. Perhaps we should emphasize this point more, because our “emotional coordinates” have gone a bit askew. Those who claim to want everything right away, then back out of everything — right away — at the first difficulty (or at the first opportunity). There is no hope for the trust and fidelity entailed in the gift of self, if prevailing tendency is to consume love like some kind of “supplement” for mental and physical well-being. This is not love! Engagement focuses on the will to care for something together that must never be bought or sold, betrayed or abandoned, however tempting the offer may be.

God, too, when he speaks of the covenant with his people, does so several times in terms of betrothal. He says in the Book of Hosea: “I will betroth you

to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord” (2:19-20).

The Church, in her wisdom, guards the distinction between being engaged and being spouses — it’s not the same — especially in view of the delicateness and depth of this test. Let us be careful not to disregard lightheartedly the wisdom of this teaching, which also comes from the experience of happy married life. The powerful symbols of the body hold the keys to the soul: We cannot treat the bonds of the flesh lightly, without opening some lasting wound in the spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:15-20).

Of course, today’s culture and society have become rather indifferent to the delicateness and seriousness of this step. Engagement is a path of life that has to ripen like fruit; it is a way of maturing in love, until the moment it becomes marriage.

Pre-marriage programs are a special expression of preparation. Engagement needs to be re-evaluated as a time of getting to know one another and sharing a plan. The path of preparation for marriage should be implemented from this perspective, also with the benefit of the simple but intense witness of Christian spouses. And also by focusing on the essentials: the Bible, by consciously rediscovering it together; prayer, in its liturgical dimension, but also in “domestic prayer” to live out in the home, the Sacraments, the Sacramental life, Confession, ... where the Lord comes to abide in the engaged couple and prepare them truly to receive one another “with the grace of Christ”; and fraternity with the poor and those in need, who lead us to live soberly and to share.

Engaged couples who commit themselves to this path both grow, and all of this leads to preparing for a beautiful celebration of Marriage in a different way, not in a worldly way, but in a Christian way! Let us consider these words of God we have heard, when he speaks to his people as bridegroom to his future bride: “I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord” (Hos 2:19-20). May every engaged couple think of this and say to one another: “I will take you as my bride, I will take you as my bridegroom”. Wait for that moment. It is a moment, it is a path that goes slowly ahead, but it is a path of maturation. The steps of the journey should not be rushed. This is how we mature, step by step.

The time of betrothal can truly become a time of initiation, into what? Into surprise. Into the surprise of the spiritual gifts with which the Lord, through the

Church, enriches the horizon of the new family that stands ready to live in his blessing.