



# St. Catherine, St. Donatus, St. Joseph & Sts. Peter & Paul Churches



## MARRIAGE GUIDELINES



Revised April 2021

Welcome to St. Catherine, St. Donatus, St. Joseph and Sts. Peter & Paul Parishes as you prepare for your marriage. These guidelines are a result of the directives set forth by the National Catholic Bishops Association to be implemented at ALL Catholic wedding ceremonies beginning in January of 2017. The changes made by the Bishops are very minimal, however, they do have a direct effect on the ceremony you will plan.

Marriage is a sacred covenant you are planning to enter into and is one of the Seven Sacraments of the Church. Therefore, it is crucial that you understand the sacredness and holiness of the rite of marriage. Preparation for marriage is a time of spiritual growth with God and with one another. This is a time when you are strengthening your commitment to the Body of Christ, because Marriage and family are at the heart of our Church.

### **PRE-MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS**

#### **Parish Registration**

Marriage involves not only the couple but also the parish. Either the bride or groom **MUST** be registered in a parish where they reside. It is expected that you are practicing your Catholic faith and supporting your parish. Couples may be married in their home (family's) parish even if one or both of you may be living somewhere else. However, at least one of you must be registered in a parish where you reside.

If the couple is not attending Mass on a regular basis before the wedding, you may **NOT** have a wedding **MASS** but may still have a marriage ceremony. If both of you are living elsewhere, you will need to get permission (a delegation) from your parish pastor to be married at St. Catherine, St. Donatus, St. Joseph's or Sts. Peter & Paul. The marriage preparation may be done at the parish where you reside.

#### **FIRST STEPS** - 8 to 12 months out

Eight to twelve months before your wedding, you need to contact the parish priest or deacon for an appointment to discuss the date and time for the wedding and to complete the pre-marriage forms.

Weddings may be scheduled anytime during the week, including Sundays. However, if they are planned for a Sunday, they need to be scheduled at the regular weekend Mass time. If a Saturday wedding is planned at St. Joseph's, the latest time allowed is 1:30 p.m. The church must be free by 3:00 p.m. (Confession for the public begins at 3:00 p.m. on Saturdays.) Weddings are not usually celebrated during the season of Advent or Lent.

A Sponsor Couple Program is required for all couples (information and registration can be obtained from the preparing priest or deacon.)

Couples will be responsible to attend a Pre-Cana session or Engaged Encounter Weekend retreat and complete the FOCCUS questionnaire. Details will be provided by the preparing priest or deacon.

## **MARRIAGE DOCUMENTS**

During the first meeting with the priest or deacon, pre-marriage documents will be discussed and filled out.

Baptismal certificates will need to be obtained from the parish of baptism. These certificates will need to be issued within six months of the wedding date.

Witnesses may be needed to meet with the priest or deacon to testify to the couple's freedom to marry.

Pre-Cana/Engaged Encounter and Sponsor Couple certificates must be presented to the priest or deacon.

A marriage license from the State of Iowa is required and is to be given to the priest or deacon at the wedding rehearsal.

## **THAT DAY AT CHURCH**

**The Procession:** According to the new directives, the parents along with the celebrant (priest/deacon), altar servers, and the wedding party will ALL be part of the procession. The arrangement of the procession can be arranged at the discretion of the bride and groom. The altar servers and celebrant will lead the procession. A significant change is that the SAME music is to be used for the entire procession.

Although only (2) witnesses are required by state law and the church, often wedding parties are much larger. The wedding party may be part of the procession, only the bride, groom, and two witnesses will be allowed in the sanctuary for the exchange of vows.

**Unity Candle & Mary's Altar:** The new Order of Celebrating Matrimony states that the unity candle will NOT be used at Mass and recommends that it be used at the reception dinner. Also the procession to Mary's Altar will NOT be done during the Wedding Mass. Flowers at Mary's Altar may be presented at the rehearsal or shortly before Mass. (Some couples have made note in their Mass program that "Flowers at Mary's Altar are in memory of...or in honor of....")

**Wedding Music:** The Church has a very rich history of beautiful music to compliment the sacred reality of a Sacramental Marriage. Any music selected to be used during the Mass should reflect our religious heritage. Popular, romantic secular music should NOT be used during the Mass. Organist, musicians, singers are arranged by and paid by the couple. All music selections should be approved far in advance.

**Photography:** The photographer is a paid person of your choice and will be a GUEST IN THE CHURCH. As such, pictures may be taken at any time during the wedding but ONLY from the main floor and balcony of the church. Those taking pictures are not to stand on the pews. No pictures will be allowed in the sanctuary. Altar furniture and any church decorations are not to be moved for any reason.

**Ushers:** Ushers are responsible to help clean up after the service. This includes the removal of any flowers, marriage programs, Kleenex, and any items used by the wedding party in the church, basement, and/or parish center. The use of an Aisle runner is not permitted.

**Visiting Clergy:** Visiting clergy, ministers from other denominations and rabbis are welcome to participate. Their involvement should be approved by the preparing priest or deacon. If there are priests or deacons who are family members of the couple and wish to preside at the wedding, they need to have permission of the pastor.

**Wedding Fees:** The Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter registrations are to be paid by the couple, along with the cost of the FOCCUS questionnaire, which currently is \$15. The use of the Church for a practicing parishioner is \$300 at St. Joseph's and \$200 at St. Catherine, St. Donatus & Sts. Peter & Paul. This fee is for the use of the church during rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. For non-practicing parishioners, the fees are \$700 and \$500 respectively. If the parish is to provide altar servers, they are to be paid \$10 each. Of course, the couple may provide their own servers. If the couple wishes to have their wedding ceremony videotaped, St. Joseph has the capabilities to do this for the recommended fee of \$150. At St. Donatus, the parish center is available for rent at a cost of \$50 for wedding preparation.

**Wedding Service Ministries:** The couple selects the readings for their wedding. There are several options of sacred readings and prayers that are available to be used at the Mass. Ask the priest/deacon and they will assist you with this selection. Readings are ALWAYS taken from Sacred Scripture and the choosing of an experienced lector (reader) is very important. Often the parents, God-parents or grandparents are honored when asked to present the offertory gifts. The Eucharistic Ministers may also be selected by the couple but they must be Eucharistic Ministers in their home parishes. As with any Mass, Non-Catholics may not receive Holy Communion.

**Church Etiquette:** The Church is a place for sacred worship and thus please respect this area noting the following; maintain reverence for the Blessed Sacrament in the Church. Conversation and behavior should be respectful and appropriate in this sacred space. No alcohol consumption is ever permitted prior to the wedding ceremony or after the ceremony on church grounds and parking areas. Please do not bring ANY food or drink into the church or vestibule areas. Catholics should remember to observe the one-hour communion fast. NO GUM CHEWING.

**Cohabitation and the Wedding Liturgy:** A man and woman who are publicly living together may sincerely love one another, yet their mutual witness is to a type of love which is tentative, self-directed, and independent of the sacrificial love which Christ has for those He calls His own. The couple who chooses to live together has compromised their ability to reveal the love of Christ to others at a time when their love is at the center of the Church's attention. We strongly urge any couple who has made the decision to live together prior to their Sacramental Marriage to prayerfully reconsider their decision. Jesus calls every couple whom He wills to be married to a much deeper and holier form of love. Apart from a permanent commitment, this refrain from cohabitation necessarily implies abstinence from sexual relations until the marriage vows have been spoken. A man and a woman living together unwittingly limit their ability to freely develop all aspects of their relationship. They also hamper their potential to make a responsible and enduring commitment at the time of their wedding. Statistics show that couples who cohabit prior to their marriage have a significantly higher probability for divorce.

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