

Congratulations on your engagement and approaching marriage! We know that this is a very happy, exciting and busy time for you. We want everything about your wedding day to be beautiful and joyous.

Everyone knows the anticipation involved in a wedding and anticipation itself is part of the thrill and excitement. But how to keep anticipation of the "big day" from becoming anxiety and worry and tension? One of the ways is solid preparation. Everyone will be less anxious and really free to celebrate the event if there has been good planning ahead of time.

Planning your wedding will deepen and strengthen your relationship to each other and to the Church. In planning the ceremony, you want to keep it honest. No pretense. Nothing that will distract people from praying.

What you believe, what you hope and pray for, is the very stuff out of which the wedding should be planned. Sacraments demand such faith. Most of all, try to pray together. Pray the prayers of the marriage ritual during the weeks and months of anticipation. Read and pray over the various scripture passages for weddings. Request your parents and friends to pray for you during these days.

IMPORTANT PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

We are happy to welcome you as you inquire about your marriage. We hope that these months of preparation will be a time of spiritual preparation, along with all the other details of planning a wedding. We want to help make this a peace-filled time, and to help you make your wedding day a spiritual experience, overflowing with an abundance of blessings.

You are asking to pledge your lives one to the other in the holy state of matrimony. You are asking the Holy Catholic Church to witness this exchange of vows before Almighty God, and to bless it, validate it, and proclaim it before the world.

The Church takes this commitment very seriously because marriage is instituted by Christ and because she holds marriage to be a vocation. Every vocation is a calling by God to a life of holiness. You are called by God to marriage as your way to holiness; your means of attaining your eternal salvation.

We assume, then, that you believe God wills you to marry each other and that you are free to do so. Before discussing the details of your pre-marriage preparation; before reserving the church or discussing other details, it is necessary to be assured that you are free to marry and that you understand the spiritual and moral obligations of both engaged and married couples.

The freedom to marry is understood both canonically (legally) and morally.

CANONICAL FREEDOM

1. One must be canonically old enough to marry (18 years of age). In case of couples under 21, parental consent is normally obtained. For couples under 21, the priest may also require a psychological assessment prior to setting a date for marriage.
2. One must not be related to each other by blood.
3. Neither party is already bound by a previous bond of marriage/religious vows or ordained priesthood.
4. Both parties are acting under their own free will and are not entering this bond by force, parental or social pressure.
5. Both parties are open to having children and are, to the best of their knowledge, capable of that.

MORAL FREEDOM:

1. Both parties understand and accept the sacredness of marriage. If both parties are baptized, it is a sacramental union.
2. Marriage makes the couple one. It endures until death and cannot be morally divorced.
3. Because marriage in the Church is first a religious and spiritual commitment, it is not to be entered upon lightly or in the state of sin.
4. The Catholic party should be practicing his/her faith: belong to a parish, attend Sunday Mass regularly, have received both Holy Communion and Confirmation, and practicing a life of prayer.
5. The engagement period is a time to prepare spiritually for this life-long commitment. It is a time of special chastity. The couple should not be engaging in pre-marital intercourse or sexual activity reserved for marriage.

- If there has been a sin in this regard, the Catholic party should be reconciled by the Sacrament of Penance (Confession) as soon as possible, with a firm amendment to remain chaste.

- Engaged couples must not be living together, especially during these months of preparation. They should understand that sexual activity even between engaged couples who love each other is seriously sinful.

- If a couple "feels" it is not wrong and persists in cohabitation, then they are not spiritually free to enter a sacred trust before God and His Church. A priest in good conscience cannot witness a marriage, which would be a mockery of Christ's teaching on the sacredness of sex, marriage and the taking of vows.

- "Economic reasons" in our opinion are not valid reasons to live together. Marriage is a social and public witness, and the engaged couple should be sensitive to the witness to which they are called even now as an engaged couple.

- Engagement should be a wonderful and exciting time of getting to know each other and to love each other on a level beyond the sexual expression. It also teaches that sacrifice, even abstinence at times is a good called for in marriage.

- "Engaged Chastity" is a witness that the couple wanting to marry in the Church should be willing and able to make. It goes contrary to the popular culture and norms of our day....so does Christian marriage!

- One should marry before God and His holy Catholic Church for spiritual reasons, not because the church is pretty and good for pictures, and certainly not because you're expected to.

- If you are a Catholic and not practicing your faith and have no intention of practicing your faith, it would seem that you are not spiritually honest and free to enter into a solemn Sacrament of the Catholic Church at this time.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ENGAGED COUPLES?

- 1) That they attend Mass together and begin the practice of praying together.
- 2) That they are faithful to each other in this engagement period. Dating other people is not an option.
- 3) That they live separately and strive for the virtue of chastity, patience, and mutual forgiveness. (See section on "Moral Freedom" above.)
- 4) That they study (by way of reading, conferences with the priest, Engaged Encounter, etc.) the theology of marriage. (A refresher course in the fundamentals of the Catholic Faith may also be helpful.)

BEFORE THE WEDDING

HOW SOON SHOULD ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE FOR A WEDDING?

- a) The priest should be contacted personally at least six (6) months in advance. Earlier arrangements (up to a year prior) are highly recommended. Appointments with the parish priest are made by the secretary at the parish. You may simply call for an appointment
- b) In case of a previous marriage with the former spouse still living, no arrangements should be made until it is determined by the priest if a new marriage in the Church is permissible. If an annulment of a previous marriage is required, **NO DATE CAN BE SET** until a judgment is received from the Marriage Tribunal of the archdiocese of Los Angeles.
- c) In order for a marriage to take place at least one of the parties must be a practicing Catholic living within the parish boundaries. Exceptions may be granted only by the priest. To register in the parish, you need to fill out a registration card in the rectory office.
- d) Special instructions will be given to the non-Catholic party regarding basic teachings of the Catholic Church in the event of a mixed marriage.
- e) Once the date of your wedding has been scheduled with the priest you should see the parish secretary in order to make your deposit and schedule the wedding in the parish calendar.

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE NEEDED?

- a) A recent copy (not original) of Catholic Baptismal Certificate issued within the last six months. To obtain this, please call the church where you were baptized and request a current certificate of baptism. On the back or bottom of the document are usually notations concerning the reception of any other sacraments. There are no exceptions to this requirement. Non-Catholic parties may submit a copy of the original certificate.
- b) Confirmation and First Communion certificates (if available). Originals or photocopies of these certificates are acceptable.
- c) Pre-Nuptial Witness Forms (Letters of Freedom): Both parties must present sworn statements signed before a priest or notary by the parents, or others having knowledge of the parties to be married, stating that they have never been married previously, either by civil or religious ceremony. The priest will provide these forms. Two witnesses are required for each party.
- d) If couples are not parishioners, a letter of permission from their home parish is required and should be given to the priest as soon as possible.
- e) A certificate of completion of an approved marriage preparatory course of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles or other diocese, with permission. (ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKEND.) Obtain information from the priest.
- f) Certificate of completion from an approved Natural Family Planning (NFP) course. Obtain information from the priest.
- g) A Civil License (see information below for instructions).
- h) Dispensations: When there is to be a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the Church requires that a dispensation be obtained. The Priest will provide the necessary forms.
- i) A Liturgy planning sheet indicating choice of readings, prayers, etc. (priest will provide).

WHEN MUST THE ABOVE DOCUMENTS BE GIVEN TO OFFICIATING PRIEST?

At least two (2) months prior to the wedding for all documents except the license. The license should be submitted at the last meeting with the priest (usually a month prior) and, at the latest, must be submitted 1 week prior. **REMEMBER: NO LICENSE - NO REHEARSAL!!!**

HOW TO OBTAIN YOUR MARRIAGE LICENSE

a) Marriage licenses are obtained from the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. These are the offices closest to us:

LAX Airport Area: 11701 S. La Cienega Blvd., 6th floor
Office hours: 8:30 a.m. ó 4:30 p.m., phone: (310) 727-6142

Norwalk: 12400 Imperial Highway, Room 1002
Office hours: 8:00 a.m. ó 5:00 p.m., phone: (562) 462-2137

Los Angeles: 4716 East Cesar Chavez Ave.
Office hours: 8:30 a.m. ó 4:30 p.m., phone (323) 260-2991

b) The license is valid anywhere in California regardless of the county in which it is issued. The license is valid for 90 days from the date of issuance. NO residence or citizenship requirements exist.

c) Both parties must appear personally and provide adequate identification. Proxies are NOT allowed. A license to marry is issued immediately if all requirements are met.

d) A fee is payable at the time the license is issued. For current fee call the Registrar/Recorder.

e) Only obtain a license at the Office of the Registrar-Recorder. Do not get married there.

WHAT ABOUT FLOWERS?

Flowers and decorations add to the beauty and festivity of the marriage celebration and are very appropriate.

They are the responsibility of the couple and are to be used in a sensible and restrained manner.

Ordinarily, weddings are not celebrated during Lent. However, in the case that an exception is made, only two simple bouquets of flowers are permitted, and these are to be removed immediately following the ceremony.

No additional flowers or other decorations are permitted during Lent. You should also be aware that the seasonal penitential decorations in the sanctuary during Lent cannot be removed during the wedding.

IS ANYTHING NOT ACCEPTABLE?

a) NO taping, nailing, etc. of any floral decorations on the pews. The florist has pew clips (clamps) or rubber bands that can be used instead.

b) NO throwing of rice, confetti, bird seed, petals, etc. inside or outside the church.

c) NO rearranging of sanctuary furnishings or flowers.

d) NO trees, candles in the aisles, arches, etc. inside or outside the church.

e) NO swags tied between the pews. The pews must be open to allow people to freely move in and out.

f) NO aisle runners since they slip and fall out of shape.

PUNCTUALITY

Please emphasize to all parties the importance of being **ON TIME** for appointments, rehearsal and wedding.

Should agree-upon times not be kept, you may find your appointments and your wedding somewhat shortened due to other commitments. Should the bride or groom be late for the wedding ceremony, it is left to the discretion of the priest to omit the Mass and have only a wedding Ceremony outside of Mass. In addition, hymns, readings, etc. will be cut depending on the lateness of the start. In order to avoid any unpleasant experiences, **PLEASE BE EARLY!**

PARISH HALL

Contact office for information

CHURCH ETIQUETTE

The Wedding will take place in the presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, silence and reverent decorum is always to be observed in the church by all participants. Christian modesty is to be observed regarding attire. A wedding is an occasion of celebration and solemnity, one's attire should reflect that. Any type of low-cut dresses, bare shoulder dresses, spaghetti straps, or extremely short dresses are not permitted at any time. A SHAWL OR MATCHING JACKET CAN BE UTILIZED TO COVER THE SHOULDERS.

Here are some websites for ideas of appropriate wedding attire:

www.beautifullymodest.com

www.fairygodmothersbridal.com

www.totallymodest.com

www.templereadygowns.com

The use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages in the church or on the church grounds is **STRICTLY FORBIDDEN**. Evidence of intoxication on the part of the wedding party either at their rehearsal or on the occasion of the wedding itself, will result in the cancellation of rehearsal and/or the wedding. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to explain the sacred significance of the Sacrament of Matrimony to their wedding party. We agree that this is a day of rejoicing and jubilation, but believe it should be reserved for the wedding reception. In addition, smoking or chewing gum either at the rehearsal or wedding is always inappropriate in church and not allowed.

PHOTOGRAPHY

A wedding is not merely a social occasion. It is primarily a sacred celebration. Because of this, we have a responsibility to safeguard the sacred character of a wedding celebration. One (1) photographer and one (1) videographer is permitted. The following directives are to be observed by all photographers participating at weddings at St. Anselm:

- a) The photographer is not to use flash during the ceremony. Limited flash photography is permitted **ONLY AT THE ENTRANCE PROCESSION AND RECESSIONAL**. High-speed film can be used in place of flash photography to obtain the same effect.
- b) No floodlights are permitted at any time by photographers or videographers.
- c) The photographer and/or videographer may operate in the places indicated by the Wedding Coordinator so that he may not be seen (e.g. choir loft, sacristy doorways, side entrances, or pews). Cameras are never permitted to be set up in the sanctuary itself.
- d) Outside of the sanctuary, the photographer/videographer may set up at the sides of the church but always aware not to block the view of the people or to block any aisles.
- e) The photographer and/or videographer is to be as inconspicuous and unobtrusive as possible.
- f) No posed photography of any kind is permitted in the church either before or after the ceremony. However, group photographs are allowed outdoors. Normally, the priest who celebrates the wedding will join the newly married couple outside for one posed photograph immediately following the ceremony. Please clearly inform your photographer and/or videographer of these policies. If they have any questions, please refer them to the priest. Clear planning prior to the wedding will prevent any misunderstandings or hard feelings at the ceremony.

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LITURGICAL MINISTRIES

- a) The presiding celebrant will be a priest of the parish or, with permission, another priest whom you request. At times, due to schedule conflicts, a priest other than the one who prepares you for marriage may be assigned to be the celebrant.
- b) The lector (reader) should be someone accustomed to taking this role in church. He or she should practice the scriptures at the rehearsal. Two readers may be used for the Scripture readings and an additional one for the Prayer of the Faithful.

c) The ushers' principal task is to make everyone welcome and to seat people together in the front of the church. They should also be familiar with the church building so that they can give assistance to any visitors. As regards seating, we discourage the practice of having "friends of the bride " on one side and "friends of the groom" on the other. Ushers should simply be in charge to fill the church from the front, leaving only necessary pews for the family in front.

d) The acolytes (servers) may be young persons or adults. The parish will provide two altar servers unless, of course, you prefer to choose your own. Please discuss this with the priest. If the servers are not thoroughly familiar with assisting at the wedding liturgy, they should be present at the rehearsal.

f) The music at your wedding should enhance the Christian dimension of Marriage. Music for the wedding must follow the appropriate Church guidelines. Solos and instrumental music should be used only when appropriate and should never greatly prolong the liturgy. (SEE MUSIC GUIDELINES below) Please discuss the music you desire with our Music Director at least four weeks prior to the wedding. The parish Music Director is the only one permitted by the parish to coordinate wedding music.

** If you need to speak to the Music Director please contact the Rectory**

CANCELLATIONS

Should you decide to cancel or postpone your wedding please notify the priest immediately in addition to notifying the parish office, organist, etc. of your decision. The \$200.00 deposit is not refundable.

PLANNING THE RELIGIOUS CEREMONY

It is a great joy to plan your wedding, especially since you are the ministers of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The celebrant acts as the Church's official witness and blesses your marriage, but it is you who marry one another. Don't be surprised then that the burden of the responsibility for planning your wedding rests on you.

We must interject a sobering word of caution. The beautiful wedding, like the well-planned liturgy, does not happen by accident. It must be carefully planned in advanced. The very nature of planning implies much celebration. In short this will be an excellent test of one another's maturity, spiritual depth, and everyone's creativity.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION

"WHAT DO WE WANT TO SAY ON OUR WEDDING DAY?"

This is a question you have to answer, for no one else can. Zero in on this question and its meaning because many couples easily start romanticizing and emphasizing all the non-essentials. Place the important aspects of your wedding first, secondary ones will fall into place, and the non-essentials will hopefully fall by the wayside.

SETTING UP PRIORITIES

As priests, one of our constant themes is to remind families that the spirit of a wedding does not stem from the number of limousines, how many bridesmaids, the white carpet down the main aisle, the length of the bridal train, and the many other peripheral considerations that take up all sorts of energy. The qualities that last in the minds and hearts of your guests center around the love and worship, your happiness and love for one another, the personal joy and sense of prayer woven throughout the liturgy, the involvement of everyone in the celebration, and the clarity of your Christian statement. In planning your wedding, these are realistic goals to strive for.

Normally, Catholic marriages take place in the context of the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. However, when there is a mixed-religion couple (Catholic and non-Catholic), it is customary that the

marriage takes place outside of Mass during a Liturgy of the Word. When a member of the couple is non-baptized, the wedding must take place outside of Mass. The sacredness of the church is to be safeguarded by silence and seriousness during the rehearsal and ceremony. All members of the wedding party should be present for the rehearsal and be on time. No more than eight (8) attendants to the bride are allowed: the Maid of Honor and seven (7) bridesmaids. Likewise, there may be eight (8) corresponding male attendants who include seven (7) groomsmen and the Best Man. The ring bearer and flower girl should be at least 5 years old. All children present at a wedding should be well supervised.

REHEARSAL

When you set the date and time of your wedding with the priest, he will give you the name and telephone number of your Wedding Coordinator. The Wedding Coordinator will be your contact person with regard to the details of the wedding ceremony and will schedule the rehearsal (one only) with you. The rehearsal will take place on a weekday (usually Thursday or Friday) prior to the wedding. All those who are members of the wedding party, lectors, etc. are expected to attend the rehearsal. Promptness is required. Please also remember that rehearsal time is not a social time, nor is it a time in which to consume snacks or beverages. Proper dress is required. Please see the section on "Etiquette" above for further instructions. The Wedding Coordinator is in charge of the rehearsal. Normally, the priest does not attend.

CONFESSION AND COMMUNION

It is important to recognize that marriage for baptized persons is a SACRAMENT, an entering of Christ into your life to strengthen your love with His own. Catholics are encouraged to receive Holy Communion often, if not weekly, during this proximate preparation time of 6 months prior to their wedding. If both parties are Catholic, they should receive the Sacraments of Penance (Confession) and Holy Eucharist the week before their wedding Mass to ensure a fruitful reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony, (Priest will instruct). Bride and Groom should encourage Catholic members of the wedding party to receive Holy Communion at the wedding Mass. Confessions here at St. Anselm are Saturdays at 4:00 p.m. and on First Fridays of the month following the 7:00 a.m. Mass. They are also available by appointment as needed. Confessions will not be heard at the rehearsal nor prior to the wedding ceremony itself. You may also go to Confession at any Roman Catholic Church in accordance with their schedule.

WEDDING ENTRANCE

On your wedding day, the first statement you will make about another, the Sacrament of Marriage, and the tone of your celebration will be a visual one. How the entrance procession is arranged will set the mood for the rest of the celebration. There are different possibilities for the procession and welcoming. You may choose any of these:

- a) Bridesmaids and the maid of honor processing down the aisle in single file (with or without the ushers escorting them). The bride and her father then process down the main aisle to the entrance of the sanctuary where they are greeted by the groom. The priest and servers await them in the sanctuary.
- b) Parents escort bride and groom preceded by attendants.
- c) The couple, together along with attendants and families, comes in solemn procession behind the servers with music down the aisle, followed by the priest.
- d) Combination of the above. The Wedding Coordinator will be glad to assist in planning the details of your procession as there are other options available.

READINGS

The Catholic Marriage is celebrated in the context of the Word of God which reminds us of the dignity of men and women, the sacredness of the family, and the love of Christ for His people. Spend time together going over the readings, praying over them, to find the right readings. There are various readings from Sacred Scripture in the rite of marriage: An Old Testament reading, a Responsorial Psalm which the musicians may sing, a New Testament reading, a sung Alleluia which the assembly can participate in, and the Gospel (which is read by a priest or deacon). Let the readings express one theme as much as possible. You will be given a Liturgy Planning sheet as part of the Marriage preparation text. If you feel comfortable, you may also suggest a few ideas for the homily to the celebrant. He will be most appreciative.

MARRIAGE VOWS

Once the readings are picked, you have a base from which to build your liturgy. Let the spirit of the readings influence your choice of the marriage vows.

After the exchange of mutual consent, the rings are blessed and given to one another. The rite offers three options from which to choose. At this point you have the option of exchanging and or receiving the coins, the lasso, veil, the Bible, and rosary.

The "unity candle" is not a part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage and, therefore, its use is more appropriate for the wedding reception. The Celebrant might permit it as an exception if the wedding is celebrated outside of Mass.

PRESENTATION OF GIFTS

The presentation of the gifts is yet another occasion to involve family and friends in your celebration. Before

HOLY COMMUNION

Questions arise concerning the reception of Holy Communion at a Wedding Mass. As Catholics, we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Most Blessed Sacrament under the appearance of bread and wine. The Holy Eucharist for Catholics is the ultimate sign of unity with the total Body of Christ. It is our most profound public statement of our acceptance of the teachings of Christ as enunciated by His Catholic Church.

For these reasons we wish to respect the Holy Eucharist and the conscience of those who belong to other religions. It is not permissible for anyone other than a practicing Catholic to receive Holy Communion at Mass. All others are encouraged to invite the Lord into their hearts according to their own faith. In this way we can be together in mutual respect, reverence and love, to pray for and with the newly married couple.

AFTER COMMUNION

After Holy Communion, you may have many options to choose from. A favorite poem can be read if appropriate. As a Communion meditation: musical solo or duet would also be a beautiful thanksgiving. Perhaps you would prefer to read a personal thanksgiving prayer or the entire assembly can join together in a hymn of praise.

Traditionally, the time after Holy Communion is also a time to bring a bouquet of flowers before the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary asking her for her protection and intercession in the marriage. This is optional.

RECESSIONAL

After the final blessing and dismissal of the Mass, the priest will then introduce you as husband and wife.

This is then the appropriate time for the bridal kiss. The recessional will then follow immediately. Once outside, the couple should go to the place where photographs will be taken (usually the courtyard) with the priest and wedding party. Greeting of guests should be reserved for the wedding reception due to the fact that there is very little time between weddings at this parish.

WEDDING MUSIC GUIDELINES

Music at a wedding should reflect the sacredness of Mass and the Sacrament of Matrimony. All music to be used during the wedding at St. Anselm Parish should be scriptural or liturgical in nature and in conformity with Catholic doctrine. The texts should help the congregation to enter into prayer and should focus on the Christ-like qualities of love between husband and wife and God's involvement in this special relationship. There are many ways in which music can be used in the wedding liturgy. For instance, you may want an organ prelude, processional and recessional, a vocal or choral solo at the Preparation of the Gifts; a

Communion meditation and some congregational singing. Your parish Music Director is prepared to help you with planning. Congregational singing is an area that is frequently overlooked at weddings, and of course you cannot expect your guests to participate as much as at a Sunday Mass. However, they can be invited to join in some simple acclamations and responses. After all, they are present to share actively in your joy, and asking them to express this through singing is certainly appropriate. In order for this to be effective, it is essential to have a good cantor to lead the congregation. Sometimes a soloist can serve as cantor. Your parish Music Director is the best person to consult about this. The music that you choose for your wedding may be either folk or more classic in style. Either way it should be reverent and sacred and never distract from the solemnity of the occasion.

Many couples ask if they may use "popular" songs (esp. from movies, shows, or current hit tunes) that are familiar to you, especially your favorites. The problem is that songs such as "We've Only Just Begun", "I Pledge My Love", "Always and Forever", "Going to the Chapel", "All I want from You", etc., do not contribute to the prayer of the worship service. They do not speak of the Christian dimension of marriage. That is, they leave God out. Keep in mind that your marriage ceremony is a wonderful opportunity to reflect to all those gathered, your values and convictions in regard to Christian Marriage. You are not celebrating a non-denominational rite, but rather a ceremony that should speak our Catholic vision of Holy Matrimony. Many popular songs are very beautiful and could be very nice for the reception or rehearsal dinner. However for the marriage ceremony itself, they just do not say enough of the depth and richness of this moment for us as Catholic Christians and therefore they are not acceptable for a Catholic wedding.

Your parish musician will have other options for you to choose from. It is important to make an appointment with him or her well in advanced of the wedding date. The time when you contact the priest for the first time is a good time to do this. In this way you will avoid last minute confusion and possible disappointment. In case of any doubt regarding appropriateness of musical selections, check with the priest. May the music and prayers you select for this important and joyous day speak not only of the gift of love you will share with each other, but also, may it speak of God who is the Giver of all good gifts.