

# PREPARING FOR AND CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

## *The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory Wedding Guidelines*

Revised 5/26/2021

### INTRODUCTION

*What a wonderful gift it is for a parish community to celebrate the love of a man and a woman in the Sacrament of Matrimony. In witnessing this love, the community is reminded of the love of Christ for His bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:22).*

*In ministering to the engaged couple, and in celebrating their wedding, the Church not only expresses her love and support for the couple, but acknowledges the value of their married life as a help to each other in attaining holiness and in becoming witnesses to the wider community. In forming a family, they become a domestic church. By word and example, they are the first heralds of the faith to their children.*

*In light of the seriousness of the vocation of Christian marriage, the Church has an obligation to do all that she can to preserve the dignity of marriage and offer her members the guidance and support, which will assist them in preparing for the life-long commitment of marriage.*

*Therefore, we rejoice with you, as you prepare to enter into Holy Matrimony. You will be kept in our prayers, so when all seems hectic or even out of control, know that you are being remembered in prayer. We encourage you to do the same. Remember to pray. Attend Mass each week, frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation, read and pray the Scriptures and remember the power of healing and comfort found in the rosary.*

### PROCEDURES FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE PREPARATION

- **A Lifetime Commitment**--The parish community will take responsibility for preparing couples not only for their wedding day, but for the lifetime commitment of living a Christian marriage.
- **Minimum of Six Months of Preparation**--The formal preparation for marriage shall begin at least six months before the anticipated date of the wedding.
- **Setting the Wedding Date**--No firm date for a wedding can be set until the conclusion of the couple's initial contact with either the priest or pastoral associate. If a previous marriage(s) exists, no firm or even tentative wedding date shall be entered in the parish calendar, until freedom to marry has been established through appropriate canonical procedures and documentation.
- **Marriage Preparation Program**--In addition to individual sessions with the parish minister, which includes FOCCUS and Natural Family Planning, couples are asked to register for the Witness To Love Marriage Preparation Program. Part of that program involves choosing a mentor couple as well as attending the Engaged Encounter Weekend or alternative marriage preparation program based on pastor approval.

## A Quick Review of the Marriage Preparation Process

1. **The initial session with the priest, deacon, and/or pastoral associate.** It is the responsibility of the couple to make the contact and to schedule a date and time for all sessions. (If there are children, it is strongly recommended that they not be present for the meetings). At this first meeting, freedom to marry will be verified, the couple will be introduced to the marriage preparation process, including details regarding the Witness to Love program, which includes the Engaged Encounter Weekend or pastor approved alternative.
2. **The second session with the parish minister.** Identify a mentor couple who will participate in the marriage preparation process with you. It is also recommended that you register for the Engaged Encounter Weekend. Couples are required to schedule a meeting with the Music Director after the wedding date has been set. Complete the FOCCUS questionnaire.

*(FOCCUS is an acronym for Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study. FOCCUS explores basic expectations, communication and problem-solving skills and attitudes on money, children, religion, sexuality and in-laws. It is designed primarily to be a facilitative instrument, raising questions and identifying concern areas for couples so that they can think about and discuss them. The Engaged Encounter Weekend focuses on the communication, spiritual and personal needs of engaged couples, as they prepare for the covenant of marriage. Presenting teams of married couples and a Catholic priest present a series of carefully prepared presentations. Couples are given the opportunity to question, examine, and deepen their relationship with one another and with God through personal reflection and couple dialogue).*

3. **The third session with the parish minister/Witness To Love coach couple.** Review the results of FOCCUS program and include the mentor couple chosen by the engaged couple. This session will also cover the details of the Witness To Love program and, specifically the content to be covered in the multiple sessions that are part of the program. From this point on, the routine interactions occur between the mentor couple and the engaged couple, with the parish priest participating as needed, but especially in the fifth session where the theology of the sacrament of marriage is covered in detail (and following the marriage retreat).
4. **The final session with the parish minister.** This session includes reviewing preparations for the liturgical celebration.
5. Other sessions may be necessary, depending on the circumstances of the couple.

## The Scheduling of The Wedding and Fees

- Due to the scheduling for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Saturday evening Mass, a wedding is to be scheduled **no later than 2:00 p.m.** Evening weddings are permitted **no earlier than 7:00 p.m.**
- **Simple Matrimonial Rite Only** (usually reserved for marriage convalidations) may be after Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday evening Masses.
- Weddings are not ordinarily scheduled during the season of Lent, due to the penitential nature of the season.

- Those of the faithful who are not members of the parish must have the written recommendation of their pastor, prior to scheduling a wedding at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory.
- In order to provide for the cost of electricity and other expenses, the following guidelines are to be used to determine the overall fee:

**WEDDINGS**

**Matrimonial Rite Only**

- |                           |   |                          |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1. *Tithing Parishioners: | Church Usage: \$350.00**                            | Church Usage: \$150.00** |
|                           | Music fee: \$200.00 paid directly to Music Director |                          |
| 2. Non-Parishioners:      | Church Usage: \$550.00**                            |                          |
|                           | Music fee: \$200.00 paid directly to Music Director |                          |

\* Tithing means regular financial support of the parish.

\*\* Does not include the customary stipend offered to the priest.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE WEDDING LITURGY**

*Individuals who are involved in the wedding liturgy are integral to the celebration. When selecting those who would like to be involved in your wedding, the following should be considered:*

- The parish wedding coordinator will be available for the rehearsal and wedding.
- A family wedding coordinator, familiar with the Catholic tradition, is selected by the bride and groom for the wedding day and will attend the rehearsal (this can be a family member/friend).
- Altar servers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) are those who are involved in these ministries. According to policies for EMHC in the Diocese of Victoria, they are to serve only in their respective parishes (permission must be granted by the pastor, if not in our parish).
- Lectors are encouraged to be selected from those who have experience or the necessary background to publicly proclaim God’s Word.
- When selecting the number in the wedding party, couples are to keep in mind that the larger the number of attendants, the more difficult it is to coordinate the sacramental celebration.
- Ring and flower bearers are to be capable of comprehending the involvement particular to the nuptial liturgy. It should be noted that children below 5 years old often have a difficult time, in terms of their attention spans and their apprehensions about performing in public. Wagons, or any other mode of transportation in which the children can be placed, are not permitted in the church. **Nothing is to be sprinkled on the floor.**
- Photographers and videographers must consult with the presider/parish wedding coordinator, regarding guidelines and placement in the church before the beginning of the wedding Mass/service.
- Decorators, florists, and photographers/videographers must be informed by the couple regarding parish guidelines and regulations(included in this document).
- A designated person(s) should be selected by the family, to be responsible for collecting leftover wedding items from bride’s room and elsewhere after the wedding liturgy. All items left behind will be thrown away.

## **THE WEDDING**

A Catholic wedding occurs in the context of the Sacred Liturgy. It is part of the Church's praise of God. During the Rite of Marriage, the Church seeks God's blessings for the newlyweds and the couple professes their solemn vows to God and to each other. The Rite of Marriage may be celebrated within a Wedding Liturgy or within the Nuptial Mass. Normally, the Nuptial Mass is celebrated only when both parties are practicing Catholics(OCM, 36).

## **DRESS AND DECORUM**

Care and respect of the church as a place of worship and the house of God is to be given at all times.

- Proper attire should be worn at the wedding rehearsal by all in the bridal party. That means no shorts, halter tops, tank tops or mid-drifts, baseball caps, torn jeans, sunglasses, flip flops or other inappropriate attire.
- Brides should be mindful of the necessary modesty of dress that is appropriate for a sacred place and for sacred worship. Please keep this in mind, when selecting the wedding gown and the bridesmaids' dresses. Low cut dresses, in either the front or the back, are not appropriate for such a setting. Please use good judgment.
- Before, during and after the wedding, a spiritual decorum should be maintained: no running or playing around by children, no loud or excessive talking by adults.
- Cell phones and pagers must be turned off or placed on silent while inside the church.

## **BUILDING USE GUIDELINES:**

- There is to be **NO FOOD OR DRINK BROUGHT INSIDE THE CHURCH.**
- There is to be **ABSOLUTELY NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ON CHURCH PROPERTY.** This includes the parking lot. Anyone with alcohol will be asked to vacate the property.
- In order to facilitate the air-conditioning system in the church building, all entrance doors are to remain closed. Therefore, in order for the wedding guests to enter the church as quickly as possible, wedding guest registry books are not to be placed in the church.

## **DECORATIONS FOR THE WEDDING**

- The church building is available for decorating at 12:00 noon, unless there is a funeral Mass or Quinceañera.
- No pins, tacks, nails, tape, or glue may be used to attach any decorations to the furniture or walls of the church building. Any bows or ribbons used on the pews must be tied, not taped, wired, or pinned.
- A Unity Candle is **not** a part of the official Catholic Wedding Liturgy—i.e., it is not included in the Vatican-approved Rite of Marriage; therefore, if the wedding couple wishes to have one, the parish suggests having it at the beginning of the reception.
- No obstructive decorations should be in the center aisle, such as standing candles, arches, or runners.
- In order to be prepared for the evening Mass, all equipment, personal property, and wedding materials must be removed by 4:00 p.m.

## FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Church floral arrangements, if removed for the wedding, should be returned to their proper place after the wedding.
- Floral arrangements are permitted in the sanctuary, but not on the altar itself.
- The arrangements should not impede the movement of the wedding party or of the ministers. Any free-standing decorations should not block the view of the ambo, the altar, the presider's chair, or the credence table.
- Due to safety and maintenance concerns, the throwing of flowers, flower petals, rice, birdseed, or any other material is not permitted inside or outside of the church building, nor is the use of aisle runners allowed.
- The Ladies Altar Society sets the calendar in December for flower use in the Cathedral. Specific seasons and church events have limited flower options. **Please ask for a contact person to coordinate the flower arrangements for your wedding.**

There are three options for floral arrangements. You must let the contact person know which option you will be using:

1. **Use your own Florist and flowers.** If flowers used during the wedding Mass are to be removed after the celebration, the Altar Society representative should be told, in order for the parish to purchase other floral arrangements for the weekend Masses. If personal flowers are used, the parish does not permit the use of artificial flowers.
2. **Use the Parish Florist and flowers.** Working with the Altar Society contact person, choose the arrangement and share the cost with the Altar Society. These flowers would stay for the weekend Masses. You must go through the contact person, not the parish florist.
3. **Use whatever is provided by the parish for the weekend Masses.** These flowers would stay for the Weekend Masses.

## PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY FOR THE WEDDING

- No photographer/videographer in front center aisle, on sanctuary, or disrupting service.
- No flash photography during the service.
- Photographer/videographer can take pictures from the sacristy, but NOT step out into sanctuary.

## MUSIC FOR THE WEDDING

*The music at a wedding liturgy sets the tone for many levels of experience. It invites the assembly to participate with heart, mind, and spirit. Music is not simply a “nice touch” to the liturgy, but indeed draws the whole person into a spirit of celebration. This can happen through music with words as well as through instrumental music. Usually, both kinds of music are used in the wedding liturgy.*

- Once the wedding date is set, the Music Director, Glenn Hunter, must be notified, to secure his services([olvmusic@olvcathedral.org](mailto:olvmusic@olvcathedral.org)).The Music Fee is payable to the Music Director for direction and/or performing the music, and is due no later than one week prior to wedding.
- Guest musicians are expected to contact the Music Director for needed details concerning the liturgical celebration([olvmusic@olvcathedral.org](mailto:olvmusic@olvcathedral.org)).
- Prelude music may include one or more vocal selections, which should serve to unite the thoughts of the assembly toward the sacrament which is about to be celebrated.

- For the processional, instrumental music is highly encouraged. A hymn which is festive and gives thanks to God is most appropriate as an opening hymn. The "Bridal Chorus" ("Here Comes the Bride") from the opera "Lohengrin" by Richard Wagner is not permitted nor is the "Wedding March" by Felix Mendelssohn.
- It is recommended that the acclamations during a wedding Mass be sung. This includes the Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, the Acclamation after Reception of Consent and the Eucharistic Acclamations such as the Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, and the Lamb of God.
- A program printed specially for the wedding ceremony is suggested, but is not required. This program contains the order of worship, as well as the musical parts to be sung by the assembly.
- The Music Selections for the wedding must be appropriate for liturgical use and expressive of the Christian vision of marriage. The distinction between "sacred" and "secular" can be obscure, often a fine line. Music facilitates prayer at a wedding liturgy and should be chosen so that it draws people into the sacred celebration and fosters their participation in a way that words alone cannot do. The music chosen should be as familiar as possible to those who have gathered, but still have a sacred connotation. Any song/music that has ties to the purely secular or fantastical, such as "A Thousand Years" from the Twilight series, is not appropriate. The Music Director, in conjunction with the Pastor, will have the final say in this distinction.
- The Lord's Prayer is the prayer of the whole assembly. According to the liturgical guidelines of the Church it is either recited or sung by the entire congregation. It is not to be sung as a solo.
- As stated above, music enhances the wedding celebration. Therefore, **taped music is not to be used for a wedding liturgy.**
- Fees for any soloists, cantors, and instrumentalists are paid to those individuals.

#### **SUGGESTED MUSIC OUTLINE FOR THE LITURIGICAL CELEBRATION:**

Prelude—approximately 3 songs or about 15 minutes before the liturgy.

Procession—instrumental

Gathering Hymn—a song within the Catholic tradition may be sung by the assembly

Psalm/Alleluia—sung

Presentation of the Gifts—instrumental, solo, or assembly

Acclamations—sung by the assembly

Communion—instrumental, solo, or assembly

Recessional—instrumental

## RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE AND AFTER THE WEDDING LITURGY

- **The marriage license is to be given to the presider/parish wedding coordinator before the rehearsal.** Please **place a stamp on the envelope**, and after the wedding, the secretary will mail it to the county clerk of the county where it was purchased.
- The family wedding coordinator/organizer must be present at the rehearsal.
- All those involved with the wedding are to be reverent when gathering in the church for the rehearsal and for photographs before, during and after the wedding.
- It is the responsibility of the family wedding coordinator to make sure the Bridal Room is cleared and cleaned after the wedding. **We are not responsible for any items left behind.** No drinking, smoking, or eating is permitted in this room or in the church building. No alcohol is permitted in the church or on church property.

Again, congratulations on your engagement. The time of engagement is an apprenticeship in fidelity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, (#2350), states: *“Those who are engaged to marry are called to live chastity in continence (i.e., self-restraint). They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity.”*

### PRAYER FOR ENGAGED COUPLES

Heavenly Father,

In your great love, you have established marriage as blessing and grace for your people. Bless

and assist those who are preparing to receive this wonderful sacrament.

Give them Your patience during times of stress. Give them reassurance in times of doubt  
and give them joy as the time of their wedding draws near.

Increase their love for one another, for their families and for You.

May the prayerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
the bridal guest at Cana,

be theirs all the days of their lives.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord. Amen.

## The Exchange of Marital Consent

*It is the exchange of consent which brings forth marriage. This consent must be given without any force or pressure of any kind and is to be exchanged as an act of the free will of the parties. Therefore, the vows are an essential element at any wedding. The hope is that the bride and groom will prepare for this important exchange by memorizing the vows and exchanging them lovingly and freely on the day of their wedding.*

***For the Groom:***

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife.  
I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.**

***For the Bride:***

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my husband. I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.**

## The Exchange of Rings

*The wedding ring is a sign of perpetual love. It is easily the most recognizable external symbol of a marital relationship. It is circular, which is a symbol for eternity – it has no beginning and no end. The hole in the center of the ring is a symbol of the gateway, or door, leading the husband and wife, through their marriage covenant, to eternal life with God. It is traditionally worn on the third finger of the left hand, for it is believed that the vein of that finger directly travels from the heart.*

***For the Groom:***

**\_\_\_\_\_, receive this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity.  
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

***For the Bride:***

**\_\_\_\_\_, receive this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity.  
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**