



St. Rita

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

DALLAS, TEXAS

GATHER
WORSHIP
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CONGRATULATIONS!

You are reading this information presumably because you are now engaged to be married and have decided to celebrate this joyful sacrament with your faith community. We welcome you with open arms!

Your period of engagement is a time of planning and preparation, and it is also a time of **discernment**. Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (On the Family), described the marriage preparation period like this.

"The very preparation for Christian marriage is itself a journey of faith. It is a special opportunity for the engaged to rediscover and deepen the faith received in baptism and nourished by their Christian upbringing. In this way they come to recognize and freely accept their vocation to follow Christ and to serve the kingdom of God in the married state." Familiaris Consortio #51

Matrimony, like Holy Orders, is a vocation that you are choosing to live for the rest of your lives. As such it is a time to discern that this is the person with whom you choose to spend the rest of your life. You are specifically committing to this marriage *until death do you part*. With that in mind, we, the Church, offer all the assistance we can to support you in making that commitment.

You will meet several times with a priest or deacon who will help you with your discernment. You will also work with others in the Parish throughout your engagement period.

- A Parish staff member will guide you through the completion of the necessary paperwork required for marriage, both as a civil union and as a Sacrament
- You will complete a marriage inventory which will be used by your Sponsor Couple to help you work through some of the more important issues in your relationship
- Your Sponsor Couple will help you look deeper inside to ensure that the two of you have adequately discussed the many aspects of marriage that are essential to its success.
- We will invite you to attend an Engaged Encounter Weekend, which will help you grow closer together.
- You will then work with the Pastoral Care Coordinator to plan your Wedding day.

Then, on the day of your wedding, the Church will celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony as you exchange your vows. We hope the enclosed information assists you on your journey of love and faith. May God bless you both, and may your choices bring you to eternal life with the Father.

~ Fr. Joshua Whitfield,
Pastoral Administrator,
Clergy and Staff of St. Rita Catholic Community

OVERVIEW – GETTING MARRIED AT ST. RITA

The following is a quick overview of the marriage process at St. Rita. Additional details about each step are provided after you have completed your initial intake meeting at the Parish.

Be aware that marriage paperwork and marriage preparation tasks can take approximately six months (for weddings to take place at St. Rita) to nine months (for weddings occurring elsewhere). If there are impediments to marriage that must first be resolved through the Tribunal or you have missing sacramental documents that must be located, it may be longer than nine months before you are free to marry.

Please do not set a specific wedding date yet until instructed to do so by the Pastoral Care Coordinator or the staff member assisting you with the marriage paperwork. In most cases, you are able to select a wedding date at your initial meeting, but you should be prepared to change the date if impediments exist that are not resolved prior to the date selected.

Diocese of Dallas Information

- Read the “[Getting Married in the Catholic Church](https://www.cathdal.org/Getting_Married_in_the_Catholic_Church.pdf)” document provided by the Tribunal of the Diocese of Dallas. This document answers a variety of questions many newly engaged couples have about getting married in the Catholic Church. This document also discusses “impediments” to marriage that will need to be resolved prior to getting married. [https://www.cathdal.org/Getting_Married_in_the_Catholic_Church.pdf]
- Read “[The Catholic Church and Marriage](https://www.cathdal.org/Catholic_Church_and_Marriage.pdf)” page on the Diocese of Dallas website. [https://www.cathdal.org/Catholic_Church_and_Marriage.pdf]
- Watch the video “[Saying I Do...What Happens at a Catholic Wedding](https://youtu.be/3uAHwtBRg5c)”. [<https://youtu.be/3uAHwtBRg5c>]

Notifying St. Rita Catholic Church of Your Intent to Marry

After reviewing the Diocesan information by accessing the linked website pages above and reading this document, the St. Rita Pastoral Care Coordinator (PCC) is your first point of contact. (Contact information is provided later in this document.)

Selecting the Proper Venue

When a Catholic marries, whether he/she is marrying another Catholic or a person of another faith tradition, the appropriate location for getting married should be determined. The Pastoral Care Coordinator will help you determine the appropriate venue for your wedding.

- Under normal circumstances, a Catholic gets married in the Church of the parish in which he or she lives. It is preferred that at least one party be a registered and participating member of St. Rita parish.
- If both parties are Catholic, the parish of either the bride or the groom may be used.
- Instead of residence within parish boundaries, parish registration might apply if you do not attend the Church of the Parish where you live but are registered at St. Rita instead.
- The wedding can be celebrated in another Catholic church with the approval of the Pastor of their registered parish.
- It is possible for this permission to be extended to a wedding in another diocese but only after the Diocese of Dallas clears that with the bishop of the other diocese. NOTE: If you are a St. Rita Parishioner but are getting married elsewhere, your preparation will begin with St. Rita and coordination will need to occur with the Parish where the wedding will take place.
- If one party is not Catholic, it is possible to arrange for the marriage to take place in his/her church with the minister of that church officiating and two witnesses. This requires a dispensation from canonical form granted by the bishop of the Catholic party.

Free to Marry

There are three basic requirements for a valid Catholic wedding.

- The couple must be a man and a woman who are free of impediment that would prevent them from marrying.
- They each must be able to give and accept marriage with the other freely and irrevocably.
- They must be married according to the laws of the Church so that the Church and the wider community will be certain about the validity of their marriage. This requires that at least one party is Catholic in full communion with the Church.

Impediments to Marriage

There are a number of things that may be considered impediments to marriage, each of which could prevent a valid marriage from taking place. Before a couple can marry in the Catholic Church, any such impediments must be resolved. The Tribunal for the Diocese of Dallas will provide a letter indicating the couple is free to marry once any existing impediments are removed. Below are some questions to help you determine if there are any obvious impediments. Keep in mind there may be other impediments that arise during the paperwork process that are not listed here.

- Has either member of the engaged couple been married previously? This includes marriages within the Catholic Church, outside the Catholic Church, civil marriages and in some circumstances common law marriages.
- If either member of the engaged couple has been married previously, have they fulfilled the requirements of the Tribunal and have been notified by the Tribunal that they are free to marry?
- Have you reviewed the information on marriage provided by the Diocese of Dallas (see page 2) regarding impediments to marriage?
- NOTE: At this point you will not yet be scheduled to get married at St. Rita. Please do not set a specific wedding date until directed to do so by the Parish.

Initial Intake Meeting and Paperwork

- As already noted above, the Diocese of Dallas has established the criteria for determining that both parties are free to enter into marriage. This is primarily accomplished by the completion of paperwork, which will be done at your first scheduled appointment.
- The PCC will provide your contact information to the person who will assist you with pre-nuptial paperwork. He/she will contact you to schedule the initial appointment. When they call to schedule your appointment, they will also discuss marriage preparation fees with you, some of which are due at the initial intake meeting.
- Attend the intake meeting, complete required paperwork, and pay required fees.
- Receive instructions on obtaining required documents and completing the marriage preparation steps
- At this point you **MAY** be able to move on to the Marriage Preparation stage, including the opportunity to select a wedding date at St. Rita.

Payment of Required Fees

At the initial meeting you will be required to pay a number of fees. (Additional fees due at other stages of preparation will be identified during the meeting.) The Tribunal fee is payable if impediments to marriage currently exist. If impediments are discovered after the initial paperwork, the fee is payable at the time of discovery of the impediment.

| Item | Amount | Payable to | Due |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| FOCCUS Profile fee | \$30 | St. Rita Catholic Community | First meeting |
| Parish paperwork | \$50 | St. Rita Catholic Community | First meeting |
| Tribunal (mixed marriage, divorce) | \$50 | St. Rita Catholic Community | First meeting |

Marriage Preparation

- **Do not begin any of marriage preparation tasks until you are instructed to do so. Completing tasks out of order or outside the required timeframe could require you to complete the task again.** Many of these tasks must be completed within a certain timeframe before the wedding, require permission from the Parish first, or have pre-requisites that must be accomplished before this step can be properly done. Please pay close attention to the instructions given at the appropriate time.
- Once you are cleared to marry at St. Rita (or elsewhere, as described above) there are multiple tasks that will be required prior to the wedding. These are mandated by the Diocese of Dallas and/or coordinated through the Parish.
 - a) Set the wedding and rehearsal dates and times with the Parish wedding preparation team (or the parish where you will be getting married). You will be advised during the initial intake meeting if you will be required to wait before selecting a wedding date. Please note that if any impediments or issues arise during the Marriage Preparation stage, any selected wedding date may need to be rescheduled.
 - b) Schedule reception space at St. Rita, if applicable. **(Not currently available during COVID.)**
 - c) Begin to gather your required documents, paying special attention to the timeframe they are needed and the recency of the documents to be provided.
 - i) If the documents are collected too early, they may become invalid if too much time passes between the time they are issued and the date they are required.
 - ii) Documents collected too late may require a change to the wedding date.
 - d) Complete an online marriage preparation profile. This will be used by your assigned Sponsor Couple to assist in discussing areas/topics essential to building a healthy, successful marriage. Do not complete this until instructed to do so.
 - e) Attend the Sacramental Marriage Preparation program facilitated by diocesan and parish trained married couples.
 - f) Meet with the Pastoral Care Coordinator to begin planning the readings for your wedding
 - g) Meet with the Music Department to select music for the wedding
 - h) Collaborate with The Pastoral Care Coordinator wedding rehearsal and wedding day logistics. You will also be provided with a tour of the Church to discuss flowers and décor items, photography/videography, dressing areas, parking for limousines and guests, signage, the order of the wedding, decorum of the wedding party, etc.

Discerning Marriage

- Review the information at the end of this document entitled **OVERVIEW: DISCERNING MARRIAGE**, which gives a brief overview of the topics of *Sacrament of Matrimony* and *Your Engagement*.
- Discuss these topics with your intended future spouse.
- Meet with the Priest that will be celebrating your Wedding.

Attend the Rehearsal

Get Married!

Now that you have reviewed the information provided by the Diocese and read this document outlining the steps in the marriage preparation process, you are ready to make reach out to us at St. Rita Catholic Community.

Please contact the Pastoral Care Coordinator (PCC) by calling **214-451-6568** to discuss your intent to marry at St. Rita. Please remember - this should be done before setting a wedding date. Congratulations on your engagement!

OVERVIEW – DISCERNING MARRIAGE

The Sacrament of Matrimony

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, a man and a woman promise to witness and to make present the living love of Christ for each other. In the course of living out this mystery, they become a source and a sign of God's presence for each other and the community in which they live. In a very real sense, they become a means of salvation for one another.

This is what the engaged couple is seeking by being married in the Church. It not only expresses the love of the couple for each other, but also acknowledges the real relationship with the person of Jesus and His Church to which they belong.

Marriage is a sacrament to be celebrated by mature Christians. Each must bring to it the maturity and ability to blend two separate lives into a united covenant of love. This requires the couple to possess a real vision of faith as they call upon God to witness and seal their pledge to one another. It has been said, "A wedding is for a day; marriage is for a lifetime." It is a life-long commitment to live with Christ as the foundation of the relationship of love.

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, it is the couple who administer the sacrament to each other through their exchange of vows. The Priest/Deacon accepts those vows in the name of the Church assuring the couple of its support and prayer. In this sacrament, Christ himself comes to sanctify and bless the vows and the commitments which signify the couple's love. It is the desire of the pastoral Staff at St. Rita to have each couple (and their families) experience and celebrate this faith dimension of their love on their wedding day. They certainly want each wedding day to be a most joyous and memorable occasion.

Your Engagement

As important as the marriage ceremony is, the days, weeks, and months beforehand are filled with decisions, questions, and certainly stress. The engagement is that step in between dating and marriage where discernment of your vocation as a married couple is undertaken.

We, as Church, invite you to be open to the grace of the Lord during this period. It is a time when you are free to choose to continue the journey together, postpone or defer your marriage to a later time, or discern you are not yet called to the Sacrament of marriage. This discernment period is important, because this is the single most important decision you have made to this point in your lives.

The Church recognizes the significance of this time and helps support you during your discernment. The period of engagement demands that the couple mutually plan and prepare for your future life together. Matrimony, like Holy Orders, is a vocation - a call to a way of life that you are choosing to live. It is also a Sacrament of Service, a call to selfless giving to each other. As with all sacraments, your marriage ceremony is one of the liturgies of the Church that must be celebrated within the parish community and the Church universal.