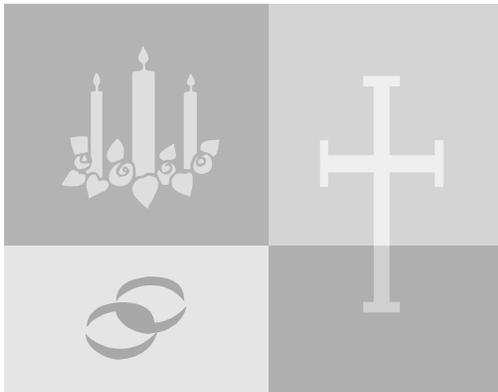


Guidelines for Marriage Preparation

CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
CHURCH OF SAINT ANTHONY
CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN CANTIUS



Congratulations on your wedding!

Our faith understands that Christian marriage is a vocation, a call from God. He has chosen you for a life of love, faithfulness, and unity with your spouse. Day by day, your life together will witness to the relationship of love between Christ and His Church.

That is what we mean when we say that your marriage is a sacrament: it is a living and effective sign of the saving presence of Jesus.

Because marriage is a sacred calling and a life-long commitment to one another in the midst of the Church, we want to do whatever we can to support you and prepare you to answer God's call with confidence and joy. That is the reason for the policies and procedures found in this booklet and others that you might discuss with the person helping you prepare for your marriage.

Getting ready for a wedding can absorb a lot of your time and attention. Although you'll probably hear it many times, it bears repeating: a wedding last a day, but your marriage will last a lifetime. The most important thing you can do in these months before your wedding day is to devote quality time to knowing yourself, knowing your spouse, and knowing Christ Who calls you by name to show forth to the world the power of His love.

The information contained in this brochure is provided to help you plan for the celebration of your wedding in one of the churches of our parish cluster. Much of the information is in common for all the parishes; parish-specific information will be indicated as such. The wedding liturgy is a beautiful expression of your faith. In planning for the liturgy we strive to keep this celebration consistent with that faith, recognizing your relationship with each other, with God and with the faith community.

PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

SETTING THE DATE

Marriage preparation with one of the priests of the cluster is to begin *no less than six months* prior to the desired wedding date; it is advisable to begin even sooner if possible. During this initial meeting the date and time may be scheduled. The diocesan marriage course and individualized discussion of the FOCCUS premarriage inventory is to be completed *three months* prior to the wedding. All wedding dates are considered tentative until the marriage preparation process is completed. Subsequent meetings for marriage preparation will be scheduled with the parish staff person working with you on your preparations.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The preparation process begins with a meeting between the engaged couple and the priest or deacon of one or the other of the couple, usually the priest or deacon where the marriage will take place. This initial meeting will be a time to get to know one another and determine any special needs for preparation.

At this first meeting, or at a subsequent meeting, you will:

- complete the pre-nuptial investigation with your priest or deacon. This form establishes your freedom to marry and supplies basic information for the marriage records;
- review the parish guidelines and diocesan policy;
- complete the FOCCUS premarriage inventory;
- discuss with your priest or deacon the Church's vision of marriage, faith development, human sexuality, and vocation

At least three to six months prior to your wedding, you will:

- attend a marriage preparation course as required by the diocese. Dates and locations will be provided by your parish, or you can call the Office of Marriage and Family for further information and scheduling (1-800-624-9019 or 320-252-4721); you can also visit www.stedio.org/flrl;
- meet with your priest, deacon, or a trained Sponsor Couple to discuss the results of your FOCCUS inventory; this usually takes three or four sessions;
- spend time reading and discussing Bishop Kinney's Pastoral Letter, "Marriage in Christ: The Sacrament of Faithful, Lifelong Love";
- give the priest or deacon a current copy of your baptismal certificate (issued within the past six months) if you are marrying outside your parish of baptism.

In the days prior to the wedding, those who are Catholic are invited and strongly encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation to begin their new life in freedom, peace, and joy. Often, Reconciliation is celebrated after the rehearsal for the convenience of those present.

DAY AND TIME OF WEDDINGS

Weddings are typically held on Friday or Saturday. Saturday weddings must begin *no later than 1:00pm*. In order to have the church ready for parish use, all removal of decorations from the Worship Area and clean-up of the bride's room and kitchen, if used, should be complete by 2:30 p.m. Please assign someone for these tasks.

WEDDING PARTY

When making decisions regarding the wedding party please keep in mind the age and temperament of the younger folks. Are they able to handle the tasks involved? The focus of the Marriage celebration can be easily directed toward something other than witnessing the sacrament.

The use of children as ring bearers and flower girls derives from a non-Christian custom and is discouraged. When these children are young, they are often an unpredictable distraction. If you still choose to have this as a part of your wedding, the children should be at least seven years of age.

The dress of lectors, musicians, and others who participate in your wedding ceremony should be appropriate for a church service and not be a cause for distraction.

REHEARSAL

Please arrange the time of the rehearsal with the celebrant of your wedding. Normally this takes place the evening before the ceremony and lasts 30-45 minutes. Check with the members of the wedding party to assure they can all be present before setting a time. Musicians, readers, ushers, servers, and others involved in the ceremony are welcome at the rehearsal, although it is primarily the couple and the wedding party who will be involved. Individual confessions may follow the rehearsal for the convenience of the wedding party.

LICENSE

You must obtain a marriage license from the State of Minnesota (usually at the courthouse of the County in which the wedding will occur). State law grants a substantial discount on the license for couples who participate in marriage preparation. Ask your priest or deacon to sign the required form before you apply for your license. Also, be sure to bring the license of the parish no

later than one week before the wedding so it can be prepared for the ceremony with the names of the official witnesses (your best man and maid of honor).

OUTDOOR WEDDINGS

Couples sometimes ask if they can be married outdoors – in a park, at a home or farm, by a lake, etc. Only the bishop can grant this permission in church law, and in the Saint Cloud Diocese, the answer is “no.” Marriage is a sacred celebration of the Church, a sacramental ritual that is meant to take place in a sacred place, the parish church of either of the spouses. Further, outdoor weddings are always at the mercy of the weather and other factors – rain, heat, cold, wind, insects, difficulty seeing and hearing, and various other elements can easily mar the celebration and lead to unnecessary frustration. Unless there is an exceptional cause so that no church building is available, permission to be married outside will not be granted. The reception, of course, can take place wherever the couple chooses.

FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND READINESS ISSUES

Because marriage is a sacrament and an essential social institution, both the Church and society have an interest in ensuring that couples enter marriage with the required freedom, maturity, and commitment. During the process of marriage preparation, concerns may emerge that could seriously impact your future married life. While the Church does not refuse marriage to those who are not prohibited by law from entering

married life, there may be circumstances which call for special attention and assistance, and if serious enough, the wedding may be delayed until those circumstances are addressed adequately.

DELAY

The couple is always free to decide to delay the marriage. The priest or deacon may also recommend this for serious reasons. The decision to delay is made with great care after prayerful discernment and appropriate consultation. Referral for counseling will be provided if there is a delay. If a couple wishes to appeal a decision made by their priest not to witness their marriage, the couple may appeal to the bishop or his delegate. A priest or deacon is not permitted to witness the marriage of a couple after another priest has decided not to witness the marriage, unless permission is granted by the bishop.

COHABITATION

If you and your fiancé are living together before marriage, your priest or deacon will discuss your living arrangement with you, and will provide information on the Church's moral and social concerns with this decision. You will be invited to follow the teachings of the Church and begin living separately and chastely prior to the wedding. The priest or deacon will give you time to reflect prayerfully and discuss with one another the pertinent issues surrounding cohabitation. If a couple persists in cohabitation without a sufficiently serious reason, the priest may choose to delay the marriage.

PARTICIPATION IN THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

Ideally, requesting marriage in the Church is an expression of an active, growing faith and a desire to cooperate with Christ to build up His Kingdom, establishing the "domestic Church" that is the Christian home. Sometimes, however, couples approach the

Church to be married for other reasons: the use of a large and attractive building, parental pressure, or custom. The priest or deacon will work with you to explore the depth of your faith commitment, and invite you to grow in your relationship with God through His Church. Those who are not active in their faith and who do not intend to practice their faith should think carefully about whether they are ready for the commitment to marriage in the Church.

ECUMENICAL ("INTERFAITH") MARRIAGE

Marriage between a Catholic person and a member of another Christian denomination is permitted with the permission of the bishop. The priest or deacon will help you obtain this permission through the "Petition for Canonical Permission." For this permission to be granted, the Catholic party must sign a promise to continue practicing the Catholic faith while respecting the freedom of conscience of the non-Catholic spouse; and must also promise that any children that may be born to the couple will be baptized and educated as Catholics. Because this is a significant decision, interfaith couples will want to discuss it openly and carefully before a decision is reached. However, the couple should be aware that the signature of the Catholic party is required for the marriage to proceed.

If the non-Catholic spouse has a strong and important bond with his or her own minister, it is also possible (through the same form) to petition for a "Dispensation from Form" so that the wedding can take place in a non-Catholic church. Essentially, the non-Catholic minister is deputed to witness the marriage on behalf of the Church so that it is considered valid in Catholic law. In this case, the couple still follows the preparation requirements of the Catholic Church, although some of the preparation can also be done by the minister.

VALIDATION

For an interfaith wedding ceremony, the priest or deacon will discuss with you what form the celebration will take to foster family harmony and welcome for all your guests. Often, he may recommend not having a Mass, which in no way affects the dignity or validity of your marriage. Remember that if Mass is celebrated, only Catholic persons may receive the Eucharist.

Ecumenical marriages can be a beautiful way for unity among Christians to grow, as Jesus prayed that “all may be one.” We have much in common, although there are some significant differences. Interfaith marriages hold their own special challenges in terms of active faith practice. Your priest or deacon will discuss this with you.

REMARRIAGE

Couples seeking to be remarried must first establish their freedom to marry in the Catholic Church. If the former spouse(s) of one or both parties has died, the living spouse is free to marry again. If the former spouse is still living, that first marriage must be declared null by the Church before a new marriage can take place. While civil divorce suffices to establish legal freedom to marry, the Church must also declare that no sacramental bond exists. For a person married in a church (Catholic or non-Catholic), this may require the formal annulment process, which can take up to two years or longer. Because there are so many possibilities and variations, your priest or deacon will work with you to understand your situation and help you with whatever process is necessary to establish your freedom to marry, address grief and closure issues, and prepare to enter a new marriage. A diocesan-approved marriage or remarriage course is generally required in this situation.

If a couple has been married civilly or in a non-Catholic ceremony, the marriage is not considered valid in the Catholic Church due to “defect of form.” In this situation, the Catholic party(s) is/are not to receive Communion until their situation is regularized. By expressing their marital consent in the presence of a priest or deacon and two witnesses, the marriage is “validated” in the Church and the couple is free to practice their faith fully once again. The process for validation generally follows the same marriage preparation process described above; however, this depends on the length of the civil marriage bond and the reasons for not being married in the Catholic Church setting. Your priest or deacon will discuss your particular situation with you. Often, a simpler and smaller ceremony is fitting for a validation.

PREGNANCY

If pregnancy is a major factor in the decision to marry, the couple is encouraged to delay marriage until after the birth of the child, since pregnancy and social/family expectations can be factors affecting one’s freedom of choice to marry. A professional evaluation is required before the marriage of an expecting couple proceed; if the evaluation indicates that professional counseling is required, a decision to delay the marriage is made by the priest or deacon.

TEENAGE MARRIAGES

Because marriage is a life-time commitment requiring significant psychological maturity, the marriage of those under the age of twenty requires particular care in discernment. By state law, the priest or deacon is not permitted to witness the marriage of anyone under the age of eighteen. Marriage preparation may begin, but the marriage itself will not take place.

OTHER SPECIAL CONCERNS

A professional evaluation will be required if there is evidence of factors that may prevent the giving of true marital consent or that are likely to cause problems in the relationship. These include: active chemical dependency (alcohol or other drugs); addictions to gambling, pornography, the Internet, or other addictive behaviors; physical, psychological, or sexual violence and abuse; a history of significant emotional or psychological problems; physical or mental disabilities. If the evaluation indicates that counseling or treatment is required, a decision to delay the marriage is made by the priest or deacon.

For other concerns or situations, talk to your priest or deacon who will review applicable diocesan policy with you.

LITURGY PLANNING

After the initial meeting with the priest or deacon, you will plan the liturgy with the Parish Liturgist or another person designated in the parish. Decisions regarding the Scripture readings and appropriate music, as well as who might serve as musicians and liturgical ministers, decorations, and use of the church will be discussed at this meeting.

SIMPLICITY

The marriage ceremony is a liturgical rite of the Church and one of its seven sacraments. The details chosen for the ceremony – the decorations and environment, the music, the dress and behavior of those participating – all of these should reflect the sacred

character of the ceremony and help your guests focus on the mystery of Christ's love present in your lives. The goal in planning the ceremony should be elegant simplicity, avoiding distracting, non-religious elements and "conspicuous consumption." The average wedding now costs about as much as a new car. While you want your guests to be comfortable and your celebration to be worthy of the mystery of Christ, there is often a great deal of unnecessary and burdensome expense. Focusing on communicating the values of the Gospel will help you create a truly meaningful and moving celebration for yourselves, your family and your guests.

MUSIC

Our liturgical music sources include many beautiful selections for use at weddings. Choosing music which will encourage the participation of your assembly is highly recommended. Please read the document titled:

"Wedding Music Guidelines"

for guidance and a list of appropriate music.

LITURGICAL ENVIRONMENT - DECORATIONS

Keeping in mind that the church is a place of worship used by many people, appropriate and festive decorations may be provided for a wedding. The liturgist will discuss with you the size and variety of decorations that would be appropriate and where they can or cannot be placed. Each parish has a variety of live plants as well as other items available to decorate the Church and sanctuary. Additional flowers may be brought in for your celebration; however, the seasonal decorations already in place in the Church cannot be changed.

Church furnishings (lectern, organ, piano, altar, baptismal font, etc.) are considered fixed parts of the environment and must not be moved for photography or the ceremony itself.

If you choose to add decorations to the pews we ask that you use products that will not mar the finish on the wood or stain the carpet (no tape, thumbtacks, or other products that will damage wooden or painted surfaces are allowed). All decorations should be removed as soon as the wedding is finished, unless you wish to leave a floral arrangement for the parish.

LAY MINISTERS

Your ushers serve as greeters and provide hospitality for your guests. Customarily, they escort guests to their pews. Usually, the ushers are also assigned the responsibility of picking up programs and other items that may be left in the pews, cleaning up the rooms used for getting dressed, and in general returning the church back to the order and cleanliness prior to the wedding.

Readers should be carefully chosen. For marriages during Mass, the readers are to be Catholic and preferably those who know the order of the Liturgy; for marriages outside of Mass, a good reader of any denomination can be suitable and provided with instruction by the celebrant or liturgist. Consider age as well; certain Scripture readings may be awkward or embarrassing for a teenage lector. Grade-school age readers are not allowed unless approved by the celebrant.

The Liturgist or other person working with you can discuss any other possibilities of ministerial roles that may be used in the wedding liturgy.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

Pictures or videotaping taken by professionals can record the sacred moments of the wedding ceremony and vows. Professionals have the experience and skill to take pictures without being a distraction or obstacle to the smooth progress of the ceremony. Amateur photographers are discouraged. The appropriate respect for the Blessed Sacrament present in the church is to be shown by all present.

The photography session should take place prior to the celebration of your marriage and must be finished thirty (30) minutes prior to the liturgy. The photographer must consult with the celebrant or Liturgist as to location during the liturgy. Only NON-FLASH pictures are allowed during liturgy. Videography is allowed; however, the celebrant or liturgist should be consulted for appropriate location of the camera. The camera should remain stationary during the liturgy.

UNITY CANDLE

While it is not a part of the Catholic marriage ritual and not required, the unity candle has become increasingly popular as a symbol that marriage makes the two spouses into one, sharing in the light of Christ. If you choose to have a unity candle, it will be placed on a table next to the altar; it is not to be placed on the altar itself. Be sure to designate someone to pick up the candle after the ceremony; it is a fitting addition at your reception as well.

AISLE RUNNER

The aisle runner (“white carpet”) can serve to highlight the entrance procession, but it can also serve as a distraction that unduly prolongs the procession and often ends up wrinkled, torn, or a trip-and-fall hazard. Its use is discouraged.

OTHER INFORMATION

COSTS

Use of facility:	\$100.00 for Members \$400.00 for non-members
Celebrant's honorarium:	at your discretion
Altar Servers:	\$5.00 or more at your discretion
Musicians:	please inquire as to their fees

USE OF THE BUILDING

Each parish in the cluster has policies specific to its own space. Please ask for a copy of the "Facility Policy For Weddings" for the parish where you will celebrate your wedding.

Again, please see that someone is assigned to making sure whatever areas are used by your wedding party and guests are cleaned up after the wedding and that leftovers, coolers etc. are taken.

NO birdseed, confetti or rice may be thrown anywhere on the church grounds or parking areas.

ALCOHOL, ETC.

ABSOLUTELY NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES OR OTHER CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ARE ALLOWED ON THE PREMISES (including the parking lot). If the couple or the witnesses are intoxicated, the wedding will be postponed to another date, since full freedom is necessary for marital consent and testament that the marriage has taken place. It is also a courtesy to your guests to refrain from alcohol and other accompaniments to celebrations until after the wedding.

A FINAL WORD

This booklet has been prepared to answer common questions about marriage preparation and weddings. Although it contains a lot of information and policies that might seem "businesslike," experience has shown that such policies enhance the celebration of marriage, help the couple be prepared, and allow them truly to relax and enjoy the day of their wedding in the joy of Christ.



Best wishes and may the love of God
live always in your hearts!...