



# PREPARING FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

St. Joseph Parish | Grafton, Wisconsin | (262) 375-6500

## What is involved in the preparation process?

**In 1994, the Catholic Bishops of the State of Wisconsin amended their policy concerning the preparation of engaged couples for the Sacrament of Matrimony. St. Joseph Parish adheres to this policy. What follows is a summary of the steps involved.**

As part of your preparation, there are several opportunities for you as a couple to deepen your understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage, as well as deepen your own relationship. The following steps are meant to assist you in this understanding and reflection.

## PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT

**1. Discussions with the Director of Adult Ministry.** The Pastoral Associate will meet with you to discuss the meaning of the sacrament of marriage. She will explain the whole preparation process and what tasks need to be accomplished first. She will also assist you with the following paperwork, which is placed on permanent file here at the parish:

√ **Pre-nuptial questionnaire.** This questionnaire contains basic personal and family information, your own sacramental history (baptism, confirmation, etc), as well as questions to determine that you are free to marry in the Catholic Church;

√ **Affidavits.** If it is necessary, an affidavit for each of you must be obtained from people who know you well and can testify that you are free to marry. The Pastoral Associate will take this testimony. These witnesses can be parents, other family members, or friends but they must be individuals who have known you your entire adult life.

√ **Baptismal Certificates.** You must provide an updated, annotated copy of your baptismal certificate. Each Catholic must obtain a recently issued copy of his/her baptismal certificate (within 6 months of the wedding date). This can be done by phoning or writing the church where you were baptized and asking them to send the baptismal certificate directly to St. Joseph Parish. The original certificate issued at the time of your baptism cannot be accepted, since only a recently issued certificate will include notations of the other sacraments you have received. Other baptized Christians who are not Catholic must present a record of their baptism also. In their case, a copy of an original baptismal certificate is sufficient.

√ **Other documents.** The Pastoral Associate will let you know if any special circumstances related to your marriage require additional documentation. If either one of you has been married before, special paperwork must be processed. If it is determined that a church annulment is needed, this process can take up to 18 months to complete. Church marriages cannot be scheduled until the necessary annulment has been granted.

**2. Archdiocesan Enrichment Program for the Engaged.** This program is offered as a day-long Saturday event or as a Friday/Saturday overnight event. It is your responsibility to register for and attend one of these programs. The program includes some short talks by married couples, with the majority of time given to the two of you to talk and share around specific topics and tasks of marriage. Visit the Archdiocesan website for more information: <https://www.archmil.org/MarriagePreparation>

**3. FOCCUS: Pre-marriage Inventory.** You will be scheduled and contacted to take the FOCCUS questionnaire and inventory and then discuss the results with one of the parish's marriage preparation couples. The questionnaire and inventory is comprised of statements to which you are asked to agree or disagree. Your answers are scored and compared with each other's. The inventory is meant to facilitate an extended discussion between you and the FOCCUS couple about the many joys and challenges in married life. This process is designed to affirm the strengths of your relationship, as well as point out areas that you, as a couple, may need to explore further.

Additionally, you have the obligation to obtain a **MARRIAGE LICENSE** from the county court house in the Wisconsin county in which you reside. If your residence is in another state, the marriage license must be obtained in Ozaukee County, the county in which St. Joseph Parish is located (county offices are in Port Washington). Each of you needs to provide a birth certificate. You must apply for the marriage license between thirty (30) and eight (8) days before your marriage. The license expires after thirty days. You cannot get married in the Catholic Church if you do not have a marriage license.

**The "BANS OF MARRIAGE."** The publication of the banns of marriage is a notice of your wedding in the parish bulletin (on the three preceding Sundays leading up to your wedding date). This is part of a larger process of inquiry through which your freedom to enter the Sacrament of Matrimony in the Church is established. The parish office will see to the publication of these banns.

## **PREPARATION FOR THE WEDDING LITURGY**

The Pastoral Associate will provide you with a booklet that explains the various parts of the wedding liturgy. After your initial discussion, you will need to contact the parish Director of Liturgy & Music to arrange a time to discuss the details of your wedding liturgy.

The following are some helpful questions/answers to get you started.

### **Should our wedding happen within Mass or without Mass?**

Some people seem to think that a couple is not *really* married unless the wedding takes place within a Mass. This is not true. Early in your marriage preparation you will determine if the marriage should be celebrated within Mass or without Mass. It is important first to understand the difference between the two. Every Marriage with Mass consists of three parts: the Liturgy of the Word, the Marriage Rite, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist (including the reception of communion). Marriage without Mass consists of two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Marriage Rite. There is no Liturgy of the Eucharist with reception of communion. If your marriage is celebrated without Mass, one of the parish deacons may be the officiating clergy, or otherwise known as the presider.

Some things to consider in your decision:

- Are both of you Catholic? If not, how does the non-Catholic feel about celebrating marriage with Mass?
- Do you regularly attend Sunday Mass? Has Mass been an important and regular part of your lives?
- Who will your guests be? Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them to be with you and pray with you at your wedding?

### **What planning for the wedding liturgy do we need to do?**

In your discussions with the Pastoral Associate, you will be provided with a marriage planning book to assist you. You will use this book to help plan your marriage liturgy, including options for the scripture readings and the universal prayer.

- √ **Readings.** Besides the suggested scriptural readings, it is also acceptable for other scripture passages to be used. However, non-scriptural passages are never used in place of the scripture. Three readings are normally used: the first one should be from the Old Testament, the second one from one of the epistles (New Testament letters), and the last one is from one of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John). Your readings serve as a foundation from which your music is selected with the assistance of the Director of Liturgy & Music.
- √ **Universal Prayer.** You may use the suggested intercessions or write your own. If you write your own, refer to the format and options given in your wedding planning book. A copy of the universal prayer should be given to the person(s) who will be

conducting your wedding rehearsal at that rehearsal, as well as the person who will be reading it at the wedding.

√ **Decorations/Liturgical Environment.** Please see separate page for details.

### **Who are the ministers for the celebration?**

- √ **You, the couple.** In the Roman Catholic tradition, you, the bride and groom, administer the sacrament of marriage to one another. For all of us who are your guests, you become a sign of God's fidelity and love. We celebrate that sacramental reality with you at your wedding.
- √ **Presider.** Ordinarily, the priests or deacons of St. Joseph Parish will officiate at weddings celebrated in the parish. You may invite a priest or deacon who is a friend or relative to concelebrate with the parish priest/deacon, or even to preside at your wedding by himself without the presence of the parish clergy. In this latter case, you first need to obtain permission from St. Joseph Parish. They will then secure the appropriate ecclesiastical delegation for the visiting presider. In such instances when there is a visiting presider, the preparation process will still ordinarily be completed under the direction of the St. Joseph Pastoral Staff, who will also communicate with the visiting priest or deacon regarding church and parish policy on the celebration of wedding liturgies. In the case of weddings where ministers of other Christian denominations or other faiths are taking part, the appropriate adaptations will be made after consultation with you and the other minister.
- √ **Music Ministers.** The Director of Liturgy & Music at St. Joseph Parish conducts the consultation and planning session with the engaged couple. The usual practice is that musicians from St. Joseph Parish will be the principal musicians at your wedding. In the event that they are not available, the Director will assist you in securing a guest musician. You may invite instrumentalists and soloists from outside our parish to be involved, but you are to discuss this possibility first with the Director of Music and Liturgy during your consulting session before making any arrangements or commitments. Any non-parish musician you bring in is to be remunerated by you.  
The Director of Liturgy & Music will assist you in outlining your order of worship for the wedding (wedding programs). You are responsible for creating, duplicating, and distributing your orders of worship.

**Members of your family and friends should become involved in the liturgical celebration.**

Some suggestions are:

√ **Lectors (Readers).** The lectors proclaim the Old Testament reading, the New Testament reading, and the universal prayer. The priest/deacon will proclaim the gospel. Ordinarily the lectors should be Roman Catholic. In choosing whom you want to read, be sensitive to the following questions:

- Do the persons have experience as a lector?
- Are they comfortable reading in front of a group?
- Do they have the necessary gifts for proclaiming God's Word effectively and reverently? This includes good posture, good eye contact, projection, and the ability to proclaim slowly, with meaning and good diction.

The lectors' presence at your wedding rehearsal is required. This will give them the opportunity not only to practice in the worship space with the sound system, but also to be informed of logistic

√ **Gift Bearers.** If you are having a marriage with Mass, another way for family members and/or friends to participate is by bringing up the gifts of bread and wine for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Two (2) people are sufficient for doing this. Here again, they should plan on being present at your wedding rehearsal.

√ **Eucharistic Ministers.** If you are having a marriage with Mass, you or members of your wedding party, family members, and/or friends who are Eucharistic ministers in their home parishes, may serve in that capacity at your wedding. They also must attend the wedding rehearsal so that they can become familiar with the worship space and logistics.

√ **Ushers (Ministers of Hospitality).** In addition to seating the guests, handing out and picking up the orders of worship, and attending to other physical details, ushers help to offer a warm, welcoming atmosphere for celebration by extending a smile and greeting of some sort to those entering church. This simple gesture helps ease the stranger coming to our church for the first time. Prior to your rehearsal, each usher should be given a copy of Usher Responsibilities. Ushers are expected to be at your rehearsal.

√ **Attendants.** Only two witnesses are actually required for the celebration of marriage. It is strongly recommended that only children over the age of five participate as ring bearers or flower girls.

## **REHEARSAL / WEDDING DAY FAQ'S**

### **▶ When is the wedding rehearsal?**

Usually the evening before your wedding, at a predetermined time – Normally at 6:00 or 6:30 PM. It should take no longer than an hour.

### **▶ What is needed at the wedding rehearsal?**

In addition to the members of your wedding party, readers, gift bearers, Eucharistic ministers, and ushers, you will need to bring the following items:

- copies of your wedding program (orders of worship)
- your marriage license
- any fees for musicians not already given to the Director of Music and Liturgy
- your Universal Prayer (if you have chosen to write your own)

### **▶ Are photography and videotaping of the wedding allowed?**

Yes, with certain restrictions. Please see Photography & Videography document.

### **▶ Is there a bride's room available?**

There is a small room available as a bride's room. Please view this in advance so that you can determine it's suitability for your wedding party. All personal items must be collected after the wedding, any trash disposed of, and the room left in a clean condition.

### **▶ May we use an aisle runner?**

For insurance reasons and the avoidance of tripping hazards, aisle runners are not allowed.

### **▶ May we have a unity candle?**

The unity candle is not part of the Catholic marriage rite and perhaps would be better suited for the reception. Still, you may incorporate it into your wedding ceremony if you choose. The couple is responsible for providing the unity candle, the individual candles to accompany the unity candle, as well as the candle stands for all three.

### **▶ Should we have a receiving line at church?**

Receiving lines seem to be more appropriate at the reception following the wedding. Your time to use the church is limited. Because of this, it is suggested that there be no receiving line at the church.

### **▶ May our guests throw rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, etc. as we depart?**

No. To avoid any hazard to safety and to minimize custodial work, the throwing of any substance is not allowed.

### **▶ May the wedding party consume alcohol at church?**

No. There will be no drinking of alcohol at the church for either the rehearsal or the wedding.

### **▶ What address for the church should we include on our invitations?**

St. Joseph Parish  
1619 Washington Street  
Grafton, WI 53024

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

### **RESPECT FOR SACRED SPACE**

We ask the couple to remind their family and friends involved in the rehearsal and in the wedding that they are in a place of worship and should always conduct themselves in a way that shows reverence for this sacred space. This includes proper attire for the rehearsal as well.

### **FEES / OFFERING TO THE PARISH**

- ▶ \$175.00 facility fee payable to St. Joseph Parish at the time of scheduling the wedding on the parish calendar.
- ▶ Optional honorarium for the presider.
- ▶ Information on fees for musicians is contained in the *Music Guidelines* section

### **AFTER YOUR WEDDING**

If you are planning to live in the area after your wedding, we hope you will be part of our parish community. Please feel free to call on us to help you in any way we can.

As mentioned earlier, as much care should be taken in planning and preparing your liturgy as is taken for planning all the other aspects of our wedding. If you have any questions along the way, feel free to ask any of the parish ministers involved in your preparation. May your celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage truly be a joyous occasion, reflecting God's love for you, as well as your love for God and the community that celebrates with you.

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