

CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE



GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION
IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF TULSA

H O L Y F A M I L Y C A T H E D R A L

HOLY FAMILY CATHEDRAL

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the parish community of Holy Family Cathedral, we congratulate you on your decision to give yourselves to one another in Christian Marriage. In the Gospels, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment of the law is “to love God above all things and to love our neighbor as ourselves.” It is in Christian Marriage that this Good News of Jesus is enfleshed and made real.

As a sacrament of the Church, Christian Marriage reveals how God Himself loves us, through the permanent, faithful and life-giving love of the Lord for His people. It is for that reason that your vocation in the Church is so important and so special.

Because we look upon this moment in your lives with such importance, it is only natural that the preparation for this life long experience is one that we take most seriously as a Church. Certainly, the day of your wedding is one that will hold wonderful memories for you as the years unfold. But it is the life long experience of marriage and the preparation for it that is of uppermost and critical importance for us as a Church. A “wedding is a day, marriage is a lifetime.” It is our hope that the information provided will be of assistance to you in initiating the planning of both your “marriage” and “wedding.”

Finally, marriages never take place in isolation. It is from the nurturing environment of families that we come forth to reach out to continue the cycle of love and life. It is in the midst of the family of faith and the parish community to which you belong that this moment of commitment will be celebrated. It is our hope that your relationship with us will continue beyond this moment so that now, united together in love, you might contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ in our midst.

May the Lord bless you in your love for one another.

The Priests, Deacons and Staff of Holy Family Cathedral



Sacraments, as the external signs of the inner life of God's grace active in our lives, are cherished by the Church. In preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony, as in the other sacraments, reflection and preparation are essential. One does not celebrate the initiation Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist without having first prayerfully and conscientiously reflected on their meaning, with the hope of coming to a deeper understanding of their significance.

Likewise, marriage, as the special intimate bond between husband and wife and the mirror of God's divine love, requires time and reflection to fully appreciate its truly sacred and life-giving character.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Since marriage celebrates the unbreakable commitment between a man and a woman who are free to make this mature decision in the community of believers, certain documents are required to establish your sacramental status within the Church, your freedom from any previous unions, as well as sworn statements attesting to your clear understanding of the nature and responsibilities of Christian Marriage. When a Catholic prepares to marry someone from another faith tradition, a specific document or "dispensation" is also required.

The following are required documents:

1. BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE

A **new** copy of your baptismal certificate is required for those who are Catholic. This can be obtained by contacting the Church where you were baptized and requesting a new certificate. Why does the Church request a new certificate? Whenever a marriage takes place in the Catholic Church, notification of that marriage is sent to the Church of Baptism for the Catholic party. A marginal note indicating the date and place of marriage is placed in the Baptismal register. A new baptismal certificate for the Catholic party **without notations** is consequently a verification that there has not been a previous marriage in the Catholic Church. For those baptized in another Christian faith, a copy of the original baptismal certificate is sufficient.

2. TESTIMONY OF FREEDOM

This is a sworn statement, witnessed by a priest, a deacon, or public notary, attesting that you have never been married before, in either a Church or civil ceremony, and that there is no known impediment to the marriage. This is normally filled out by parents, or it may be completed by others who have known you most or all of your lives.

3. CIVIL LICENSE

The County Court registers all civil documents. Therefore, any questions you have regarding the procurement of the civil license, taking blood tests, or other civil concerns should be addressed to the Court. Licenses are valid for ten days from the date they are issued. This must be given to the wedding coordinator, priest, or deacon no later than the day of the rehearsal. Please note that it is against the law for the ceremony to take place without a civil license. The address of the Tulsa County Courthouse is 500 South Denver, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 74119.

DIOCESAN MARRIAGE PREPARATION



4. PRE-NUPTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

This takes place with the priest or deacon and is for the purpose of determining your freedom and appropriate intentions in your preparation for marriage.

Preparation for Christian Marriage is far more than just the gathering of required documents. At the heart of responsible marriage preparation stands the opportunity for you to seriously reflect in a comprehensive and challenging way on the meaning of this important step in your lives. While reflection and in-depth sharing of your future together has undoubtedly already begun, the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Tulsa offers further opportunities for you to reflect on your life long journey with each other.

In addition to the private preparation conducted by the priest or deacon who will officiate at your ceremony, the Diocese of Tulsa requires completion of one of the following programs:

- Catholic Engaged Encounter Weekend
- Pre-Cana (large group and in-home sessions)

One of the enclosures with this material is a description of these programs. Please read it carefully, select the one program which best suits your particular needs, and call the Family Life Office to register. These programs are a **required** part of the preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church.

You will want to register as soon as possible, since the Diocese requires that each couple complete this preparation prior to their marriage and these programs are generally booked months in advance. You may discuss the particulars of each of the available programs with the priest or deacon arranging your marriage. Upon completion of the program, he will receive a certificate stating such.



SETTING THE DATE AND TIME FOR YOUR CELEBRATION

Wedding liturgies are celebrated at Holy Family Cathedral on Saturdays at 11:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. Times for validations or “Blessings” of civil marriages are arranged at the discretion of the parish priest or deacon. Rehearsals are held at 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Friday evenings and are conducted by our parish wedding coordinator. Weddings and Rehearsals are scheduled through the parish secretary. In accord with long standing Catholic Church practice, the Cathedral does not celebrate weddings in the Lenten Season.

While the scheduling of the date and time of your marriage is obviously a very important part of your preparation, it is the serious responsibility of the priest or deacon to discern mature readiness on the part of the couple wishing to take this important step in the Church.

BEGINNING YOUR JOURNEY IN CHRIST

Our ministry at the parish is to assist you as an engaged couple not so much for a wedding **day** but for the **lifetime** celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. You are encouraged, therefore, to pray for the graces and strength to respond generously to God’s call to the vocation of Christian Marriage. The required steps of marriage preparation should be viewed not so much as goals to be accomplished but as challenges to growth in the practice of your faith.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) is highly recommended for all who share in the Catholic faith as part of your spiritual preparation for Christian Marriage. Confessions are regularly scheduled on Saturday afternoons from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and 10 minutes before each Mass. Kindly note that confessions are **not** celebrated at the time of the rehearsal or the day of the wedding.

THE WEDDING LITURGY

The liturgy of Christian Marriage is rightly a moment of joy and celebration. In our Catholic tradition we hold that the couples themselves minister this sacrament to one another. While it is necessary that an official witness of the Church preside over the celebration, normally this is a priest or deacon together with two witnesses, nevertheless the active involvement of the couple in every aspect of planning this memorable moment is encouraged.

This planning should always keep in mind that the ceremony is first and foremost a moment of prayer for all who are present. All aspects of the celebration should reflect the noble simplicity befitting Christian worship.

Planning

Together with the priest or deacon who will be presiding at your liturgy, you will have a part in planning your ceremony. He will provide you with a guide to planning your wedding, *Together For Life*. On your final meeting with him you will discuss the specific readings from Scripture and liturgical options that you have chosen. He will help clarify any further questions you may have regarding the ceremony at that time.

Mass or Ceremony?

Should you celebrate your marriage in the context of a Mass or a non-Eucharistic service? First, let's understand the difference. Every celebration of Mass consists of a **Liturgy of the Word** [entrance rite, readings, homily, prayers of the faithful] and a **Liturgy of the Eucharist** [presentation of bread and wine, the Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion]. When a wedding is celebrated at Mass, the Rite of Marriage takes place after the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful; the Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows. When a wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, it is celebrated in a Liturgy of the Word in which the Rite of Marriage takes place after the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful. This rite concludes with prayers and blessings.

You should make your decision in consultation with the priest or deacon who is assisting in the preparation of your marriage. You will want to consider:



- What is our relationship to the Sunday Eucharist?
- Are we faithful to the church's Sunday prayer?
- Have we been away from the community's prayer?
- Have we committed ourselves to returning?

In light of your answers to these questions: Is Mass or a Liturgy of the Word the better context for the celebration of your marriage?

If one of you is from another faith tradition and so will be unable to share Holy Communion if the wedding is celebrated during Mass, you may want to consider what this means. Do you want to include something in this celebration in which only one of you will be able to take part? Normally the Eucharist is not celebrated at an interfaith marriage. Consider the following:

- 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?

If many of your guests are from outside the Catholic community, you may want to consider celebrating your wedding in a Liturgy of the Word. This ceremony may be officiated by a deacon.

Some people seem to think that a couple is not really married unless the wedding takes place at Mass. This is simply not true. Be open and honest with the priest or deacon with whom you are preparing your wedding and make the decision which will provide the best context for prayer and celebration.

Rehearsal

An important part of the ritual preparation for the wedding celebration is the rehearsal. The wedding rehearsal is normally scheduled with the secretary at the time when the date for the marriage is determined. Wedding rehearsals are conducted by our parish wedding coordinator and are scheduled for Friday evenings at 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Out of respect for both the wedding coordinator as well as any other rehearsal that may be planned, **please make sure that your entire wedding party arrives on time.**

Ministers of the Celebration

Together with yourselves and the priest or deacon who will have important ministerial roles in the wedding celebration, there are others who will take part in this moment of prayer and commitment. Members of your wedding party, usually ushers, will greet the invited guests in a spirit of hospitality and welcome. Our parish pastoral musicians will provide a musical setting that respects the dignity of this moment and will support sung prayer by all who gather. Beyond these ministries, we ask you to consider individuals who might function in the following special roles in your wedding.

Lectors

Whether or not your celebration takes place in the context of a Mass, the proclamation of God's Word in the Scriptures is an integral part of the wedding celebration. You may select one or two individuals, depending on the number of readings you select, to proclaim God's Word to the community gathered. Those whom you select should first and foremost be persons of faith who actively participate in the liturgy of their church.



Gift Bearers

For those who choose to celebrate Mass, you may invite two people from the assembly to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine, which will be placed upon the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is often the practice that the mothers of the bride and groom be asked to share this function, but others may be chosen. Again, the fullest form of participation is best served by inviting active, practicing Christians to act as gift bearers.

Other Elements



Signs, symbols, and gestures are intrinsic to worship, but an overabundance of them tends to become superfluous and redundant. The primary symbols of your marriage covenant are the exchange of vows and the rings, and if a Nuptial Mass is celebrated, then the sharing in the one bread and one cup as a sign of unity and love. Together with these essential signs, others of a secondary nature are sometimes used.

Unity Candle

While the “unity candle” has no history or tradition in the Roman Catholic Church, it may be used in a wedding celebrated in a Liturgy of the Word.

Flowers to Mary, the Mother of God

This is a gesture of prayer and petition that normally takes place toward the end of the wedding celebration. The newly married couple (never the bride alone) ask Mary, as Mother of the Church and a model of discipleship, to remember them in her unceasing prayer.

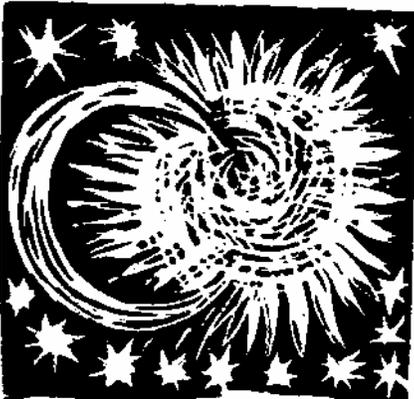
Other Elements

When including any additional elements (i.e. ethnic customs) into the ritual of Christian marriage, couples should be aware that where liturgy is concerned, “less is often more.” Carefully focusing on the key elements will be much more rewarding for both the couple and the assembly as opposed to trying to include too many things at once. Please feel free to discuss these elements carefully with the priest or deacon arranging your wedding before making a decision.

Decorum in the House of God

Because we reverence the place in which the community of the Church gathers for worship, we ask that all your friends and relatives, particularly the wedding party, be aware of the sacredness of the Church building. In each Catholic Church there is reserved the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Tabernacle so that the Eucharist can be taken to the sick and worshipped in prayer. For these reasons we ask that all who enter the Cathedral at any time, whether before, during, or after the rehearsal or during the wedding celebration itself observe these basic principles:

- Silence, respect, and reverence while in the Cathedral
- No food, drink, or chewing gum
- No alcoholic beverages on the church grounds, including the Cathedral parking Lot



MUSIC FOR YOUR WEDDING

How can the bride and groom themselves help create a good wedding liturgy and good music? First, by regarding those who gather not as guests who need to be entertained but as participants in prayer, blessing, and praise.

Even more basic is the couple's view of themselves. They are participants not passive recipients. This aspect should be at the heart of how you plan the liturgy of marriage, including the music.

Marriage is celebrated in the context of worship and therefore should reflect the musical styles incorporated into sacramental celebrations of the Catholic Church. With this in mind, music chosen for the wedding liturgy must be religious in nature, so that a spirit of prayer and celebration can be established to strengthen the expression of faith. No matter how personally meaningful love songs and secular ballads may be to the couple, these are best left to the reception where other dimensions of the wedding celebration prevail.



Selection of music for your wedding can be arranged by contacting the Director of Music Ministries. A brief consultation will be planned and at this time you can arrange for vocalists and additional instrumentalists if desired. In order to meet your needs in the best way possible, please contact the Director of Music Ministries as soon as possible and no later than two months in advance of your wedding. His name and number are listed in the directory enclosed with these guidelines.

At your meeting, the Director will present the fees for the various musicians you might engage for your celebration.

Kindly note that musicians from outside the Cathedral music staff will need to contact the Director of Music Ministries to coordinate the proper timing and function that music plays liturgically within Holy Family Cathedral.

ENVIRONMENT

Of utmost importance on the day of your wedding is your spiritual readiness to begin the task of deepening your bonds of love within the context of a truly Christian relationship. Celebrating this moment of decision far outweighs concerns over pictures, flowers, or decorations. It is often the case, however, that couples have questions regarding the use of these enhancements to the liturgical environment, hence the following guidelines:

Flowers

Floral arrangements, of course, enhance the beauty of any environment, and we welcome your creativity with regard to this area. Please be mindful of the fact that as a sacramental celebration, the principal goal of liturgical environment is to help convey the mysteries of God's saving love, and not merely to decorate space. Please see the guidelines on a separate sheet for further directions on floral arrangements.

Pew Decorations

Pew bows may be attached to the tops of the pews. Please do not attach bows with tape or wire, as these damage the wood surface.

Photography and Videography

Photography by your hired professional and video recordings are permitted during the ceremony. Please see the enclosed guidelines for further information. **NOTE: Any photographer or videographer who becomes disruptive or in any way violates the guidelines will be invited to leave.**

Rice, Confetti, Bird Seed, or Bubbles

The surfaces outside the church building are prone to become dangerous when rice, confetti, bird seed, or bubbles are used. For safety's sake, the use of these items in or around the Cathedral is not permitted. No balloons are permitted inside or on the grounds of the Cathedral.



CATHEDRAL PROTOCOL

For your convenience envelopes have been included in your packet which are properly marked to facilitate the distribution of fees and donations. The following is a brief summary of those fees.

Wedding Coordinator

Our Wedding Coordinator is provided to confer with you regarding any questions about the ceremony and the day of the wedding itself. The Coordinator will also run the rehearsal and be present prior to the wedding ceremony to attend to the bridal party, open doors, assist the florists, photographer, and ushers. Please see the enclosed fee schedule. Questions regarding the wedding ceremony should be directed to the wedding coordinator whose number is listed in the directory.

Priest/Deacon

It is customary for the couple to give a discretionary offering to the priest or deacon. There is no charge for any sacrament of the Church. This offering may be predicated on the amount of time spent counseling, preparation of paperwork necessary for marriage, and your ability to pay.

Altar Servers

The parish can provide two altar servers for each wedding liturgy unless other arrangements have been made in consultation with the priest [for example, you may want a family member who is an altar server to serve the liturgy] and they customarily receive a small stipend.

Musicians

The Cathedral Director of Music Ministries works individually with each couple preparing for the wedding liturgy. All questions regarding music for your wedding should be directed to the Director of Music Ministries.

CHECKLIST

Because of the many details that must be attended to in preparation for the celebration of a Christian Marriage, we have included a checklist that hopefully will be a helpful guide in organizing your planning for this special time in your life.

CONCLUSION

“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated. It is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury. It does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” [1 Corinthians 13: 4-8]

As you begin this journey of preparation for a lifetime of love and commitment in Christian Marriage, may the Lord bless you with peace all the days of your lives.

