Guidelines for Marriage Preparation

 and Weddings



St. Mary Catholic Church

1018 S. Seventh Street

Temple, Texas 76504

(254) 773-4541

The Sacrament of Matrimony

 Congratulations on your upcoming marriage. We are so looking forward to helping you enter into a truly authentic marriage and organize a beautiful wedding ceremony to begin this great adventure. To assist you in your long-range planning for this great event we offer you these guidelines in order avoid difficulties in preparation.

 Please read these guidelines carefully. If you have any questions, please call us at (254) 773-4541. We will be glad to answer your questions.

 In order to avoid unnecessary scheduling conflicts please contact your parish 6 months in advance before setting your wedding date.

What Is a Christian Marriage?

 The Catholic Church believes that Christian marriage is the union of a man and woman who freely enter into a covenant of love with each other in Christ for the purpose of giving and receiving love, and for the procreation and education of children.

 Married couples live their sacrament by the way they care for one another, love one another, and are enthusiastic for one another as husband and wife. In their daily love for each other, their children and the large community, they become a living sign (a sacrament) for all of how much Jesus loves us and wishes to embrace us as His brothers and sisters. As they work their way through marital and family crisis and struggles, they witness to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in all our lives.

 In order to live out this ideal Christian marriage, couples must have the ability to give and receive love and to sustain an intimate relationship. They must also have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church.

In the Beginning …

 Your preparation begins by contacting a priest or deacon at St. Mary Catholic Church. You will be asked to obtain records of your sacramental history:

1. *Recent Baptismal certificates* (issued within the last 6 months) – obtain these by contacting the parish where you were baptized; request the Church of Baptism to include *all notations* on the certificate.
2. First Communion and Confirmation certificates – this information should be noted on the back of Baptismal certificate, but if it is not, then contact the church of your First Communion and/or Confirmation; it is good to have these documents by the time you have your first meeting with the priest or deacon.

At the first meeting you will:

 1. Discuss your plans, prepare your paperwork, and review Marriage Guidelines.

 2. Tentatively reserve the church for rehearsal and ceremony.

 3. Discuss your marriage preparation program.

Sacramental Requirements

Catholics

 A Catholic should have received all three sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation) prior to marriage in the Catholic Church. If a Catholic lacks any of these sacraments, we will try and work with you to receive that sacrament.

Non-Catholics

 Non-Catholics may marry a Catholic in the Catholic Church …

 1. if he or she is not hostile to the Catholic Faith.

 2. if he or she will allow the spouse to continue practicing the faith and be open to

 having their children baptized and reared as Catholics.

 3. if he or she has not been married previously (whether a civil marriage or a church wedding).

 If you have been married previously, whether by a civil magistrate (judge) or in your church, you will need to receive an annulment prior to being married in the Catholic Church. Please talk with your Pastor about your particular situation. Depending on circumstances this process can take up to a year.

Prior Catholic Marriage

 A person may not marry in the Catholic Church if he or she was previously married in the Catholic Church and the first spouse is still living or the prior marriage has not been annulled.

 If a prior church marriage is to be annulled, the process can take up to a year for a decision. No marriage preparation can begin until a favorable decision has been received from the Church Marriage Tribunal and both parties are free to marry. Please talk with your Pastor about the particulars about your case.

Prior Civil Marriage

A baptized Catholic must be married before a priest or deacon and two witnesses. Any attempt by a Catholic to marry before a civil magistrate (judge) or Protestant minister is not recognized by the Catholic Church as a valid marriage.

Legal Requirements of Texas

 A priest or deacon witnesses the marriage on behalf of the Church and state for this reason you will need a Civil Marriage License.

 To obtain this civil license you will need to:

 1. Appear together before the County Clerk.

 2. Present legal proof of age (driver’s license, certified birth certificate, or a passport).

 You will also need your Social Security Number and the money for the fee.

 3. The license is *valid for 30 days*. State law requires that the license be issued *at least*

 *72 hours before the wedding ceremony takes place.*

 4. Give the license to the priest or deacon no later than the day of the wedding rehearsal.

Marriage Preparation Programs

Marriage is a beautiful, lifelong commitment. A life time of love, change, opportunities, and challenges. We want to help you prepare well. We offer many tools to help you in this preparation and we ask you to participate in the following programs. Let us know if there are any difficulties fulfilling these requirements. We can always find other ways to help you prepare for marriage.

1. **Prepare and Enrich Assessment**. This is a questionnaire that helps your director of marriage preparation (often the priest) get to know you and help you get to know yourself. It is taken separately by each party through an on-line service. The results are kept strictly confidential and are only meant to direct conversation. You will be sent an e-mail from Prepare and Enrich, an on-line marriage preparation service, with an access code for your individual session. The session will cost you $35.00 per couple. After you have taken the on-line questionnaire the results have been received by your director who will arrange a few meetings to go over the results.
2. **For Better Forever: Revised and Expanded.** We ask that the couple purchase and read this book written by Dr. Greg and Lisa Popcak. The director will use it as guide for discussion and may ask you to read it with a couple who has several years of experience living the married life. The director may use other books if the situation would be best suited by another resource.
3. **Together in God’s Love Marriage Preparation Retreats.** This is retreat put on by the Diocese of Austin and held at the Cedarbrake retreat center in Belton. They have overnight retreats that run from 7:30 pm on Friday to 12noon on Sunday. The cost for these events is $350 per couple. They also provide the option of attending the same retreat over a series of 4 Wednesday evenings from 7-9pm at Cedarbrake and with a cost of $180.00 per couple. You need to register for these events by going to the diocesan website at <https://austindiocese.org/marriage-prep-calendar-1>. If you are unable to go to any of the scheduled events or the cost is too great a burden please contact the parish office and we will help you with other arrangements.
4. **Natural Family Planning Formation.** Marriage, family, and procreation are intimately united and a healthy marriage appreciates and values all of these elements. The use of artificial means of temporary or permanent sterilization (contraceptive drugs, barrier methods, and surgical sterilization) damages this relationship and corrodes the institution of marriage. Therefore, we ask all couples to take the natural family planning sessions provided by the Vitae Clinic in Austin, Texas. There nurses and doctors can provide personal training in the understanding of each woman’s fertility cycle for the sake of choosing when or when not to bring life into the world, identifying and possibly treating infertility, helping women understand how their health is connected to their cycle, and finally for the couple to grow in knowledge of each other. We ask that the couple attend the introductory session and the follow up sessions to develop a full knowledge of their fertility. You can schedule an appointment by calling them at 512-458-6060 or by going to their website at <http://www.vitaeaustin.com/patients/#creightonmodel>

Guidelines for the Use of the Church

 The decor of the church is a part of the atmosphere for a joyful wedding celebration. We wish to give couples as much freedom as possible in choosing decorations – keeping in mind that they are in a Sacred Space.

 When choosing a wedding date, remember that the church will be decorated for liturgical seasons. You are invited to work with the color appropriate for that season. Candles, statues, and furniture in the sanctuary should not be rearranged for the sake of decorations. In general, decorations should not block the flow of activities or impair the congregation’s ability to see the events. The Pastor has the final say about the appropriateness of decorations so please contact the office if you are trying to do something out of the ordinary. We are always open to discussing different possibilities in order to help you make this a truly beautiful event.

 Please contact the parish office to see whether the church is being used for other celebrations before you begin decorating the church.

 As a reminder, because the church is a Sacred Place, we ask that there be no food, drinks, tobacco, or gum in church. *Real flower petals, rice, confetti, and bird seed may NOT be used in the church*. Please inform your wedding party and guests of these guidelines.

Candles

 Candelabras and other candle arrangements can be used in the sanctuary but not on the altar. If candles are used on the pews, they need tobe dripless and self-contained. Take every precaution to ensure that wax does not end up where it is not wanted.

 The utility candle is not part of Catholic liturgical tradition, and while we don’t encourage their use, we are open to including it somehow in the events.

Flowers

 You may select either fresh or artificial flowers and they should be placed in such a way that they do not get in the way of the activities in the sanctuary or impair visibility. They should not be placed on the Altar or in front of the tabernacle. Flower arrangements set up in the sanctuary may be moved for the wedding but everything must be returned after the celebration. The priest or deacon may move the flowers if they are not placed in the appropriate place.

 In attaching bows or flowers to the pews, *NO tape, tacks or staples of any sort may be used, including masking tape*. Pew bows and flowers may be attached with ribbon, string, or plastic clips that fit over the side of the pew.

 Couples being married at St. Mary are encouraged to leave the floral arrangement(s) as an offering to the church. All flowers left as an offering will be used in the Sunday Masses following the wedding.

Dress Code

 We wish to give the bride and groom as much freedom as possible in choosing your bridal attire while keeping in mind that the Church is a Sacred Space. We encourage you to seek the highest expression of modesty for this holy occasion.

 Shoulders and chests must be covered. If your gown is strapless, a shawl or jacket will be required for bride and all attendants. No deep V-necklines, mid-drifts, high slits, bare back, miniskirts, jeans, t-shirts or hats will be allowed.

Dressing Room

 The bride and bridal party may use the O’Reilly Building for dressing and preparation prior to the wedding. The parish is not responsible for any items left by the bride or bridal party during or after the ceremony.

 The O’Reilly Building should be cleared of personal items and cleaned immediately following the ceremony. We may have another wedding or Mass following your wedding. For this reason, we request that you appoint someone to be responsible for checking these rooms while the wedding pictures are being taken.

Rehearsal

 The rehearsal is very important for your wedding to go smoothly. Please ask all bridal party to arrive 15 minutes early. All principal members of the wedding party should attend the rehearsal. It is recommended that any children in the wedding be party be over the age of five.

Photographs

 Photographers and videographers are welcome during the wedding ceremony, but they must always remember that a church wedding is a sacred ceremony. They must take care not to interfere with the religious nature of that ceremony. Photographers should arrive well ahead of time and consult with the presiding priest or deacon on his specific guidelines and requirements.

 Please inform friends and relatives that they may not take photos during the wedding ceremony. This will help maintain the *sacredness* for the ceremony and protect your official photos.

 Flood lights are not permitted during the ceremony. The photographer/videographer may never be in the sanctuary during the ceremony.

 Pictures are usually taken immediately after the wedding. Therefore, the wedding party will need to return to the altar area as soon as possible after the recessional. We ask that pictures with the priest or deacon be taken first. The entire picture-taking session should not go over half an hour. (It helps to have a preplanned list of photos that you give to your photographer ahead of time.)

Music and Musicians

 A church wedding is a sacred act of worship. All music must be sacred in nature and reflect the common faith of the whole church. The words of any vocal music used either before or during the ceremony must reflect the context of faith. Songs that are secular in origin or which are simply about romantic love are better suited for the reception. No country/western or rock music may be used during the wedding ceremony. All music to be used at a wedding ceremony must be approved by the parish music coordinator.

 It is recommended that the parts of the Mass be sung and the parish music coordinator can help you arrange those parts. Please be sure your musicians are aware of the above guidelines.

Guidelines for the Use of the Church

Church

 There is no fee required for the use of the church. However, you are free to give a donation in order to help cover air conditioning or heating costs. It is also a good act of gratitude to give a gift to any ministers (Altar Server, Lectors, Musicians, Deacons or Priests) who volunteered to make this event possible for you.

 *A $400.00 deposit will be required and will be returned to you if the church is left clean and orderly following the wedding. If any of the above rules or guidelines are broken or if the church is left dirty, the deposit will NOT be refunded.*

The O’Reilly Building

 The O’Reilly building can be reserved for any reception after the wedding. A fee of $400 must be paid in advance to reserve the building. A $150 will be returned if the building is left clean and orderly.

Ave Maria Building - Regina Caeli Room

The Ave Maria Building is also available for the reception following the wedding. This room will hold approximately 100 people. A $200 fee for the Ave Maria Room and a $250 fee for the Regina Caeli Room will apply if they are reserved for the event and reception afterwards. Half of this fee will be returned if the facility is clean and in excellent condition after the event.

 Please check with the parish secretary to see whether these facilities are available.

*May God bless you and guide you as you prepare for your lifetime commitment to one another and to God in the Sacrament of Matrimony.*

Agreement with St. Mary Catholic Church

 We have read the above *Guidelines for Marriage Preparation and Weddings* and we agree to abide by these guidelines. We understand that *any* violation of these guidelines will result in the loss of our deposit.

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 Bride Groom

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 Date

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 Priest’s or Deacon’s Signature