

THE WEDDING GUIDELINE

SAINT MARY IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Congratulations on your upcoming Sacramental Marriage in the Catholic Church!

We are delighted that you are preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony with us. It is our hope and prayer that through your journey of preparation, you will acquire a deeper understanding of God's plan for your marriage, and you will learn truths and skills to help you live out your new vocation.

When a couple in a sacramental marriage keeps their vows, others are a witness to that love and commitment. The love you share will bring God's presence into the world. Through your marriage, you will represent the very relationship between Christ and His Church. What an honor and a blessing!

Preparation of marriage is a process is a mutual process of responsibility. Both of you are required to fulfill different steps of the requirements of the Church in order to help you to have long lasting marriage.

STEPS FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION IN THE DIOCESE OF AUSTIN.

Although we recognize that all of your life has been preparing you for this new journey in faith, we believe that the seriousness of the marriage commitment requires an equally serious time of immediate preparation set aside before the sacramental celebration. We are not preparing you for a wedding day; we are preparing you for a life-long marriage.

Today engaged couples in the United States live in a social and cultural setting that has undergone so much change over the past 50 years that the very understanding of marriage has radically changed. In our post-industrial society many factors -- such as longer life spans, lower fertility rate, higher education, the rising status of women, high mobility, and changing economic realities -- have combined to alter the primary goals of marriage in our society. People today expect more from their spouse than ever before."

(Texas Catholic Conference)

"Preparation for marriage, for married and family life, is of great importance for the good of the Church. In fact, the sacrament of Marriage has great value for the whole Christian

community and, in the first place, for the spouses whose decision is such that it cannot be improvised or made hastily. Marriage preparation constitutes a providential and favourable period for those oriented toward this Christian sacrament, and a Kayrs, i.e., a period in which God calls upon the engaged and helps them discern the vocation to marriage and family life. The engagement period is set within the context of a rich evangelization process. In fact, questions that affect the family converge in the life of the engaged, the future spouses. They are therefore invited to understand the meaning of the responsible and mature love of the community of life and love which their family will be, a real domestic church which will contribute toward enriching the whole Church.

Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo

President of the Pontifical Council for the Family

"What is needed is a profound pastoral reflection in order to promote the dignity of Christian marriage, the reflection and realization of Christ's love for His Church. It is important to help couples to achieve the human and spiritual maturity necessary to undertake... their mission as Christian spouses and parents, reminding them that their love is unique, indissoluble, and that marriage contributes to the full realization of their human and Christian vocation."

Pope Benedict XVI

October 19, 2007

Marriage is more than a wedding day; it is a life-long vocation that requires careful discernment and preparation. The Diocese of Austin has particular guidelines for couples preparing for marriage to assist couples in building happy, life-long relationship.

1. A couple should contact the parish office at least 6 months to talk to a priest about their upcoming wedding.
2. Priest will conduct the Prenuptial Questionnaires interview a couple.
3. A couple will take a premarital inventory, FOCCUS or PREPARE. After a priest got a result, the couple will meet with a priest for discussions and talks.
4. A couple will take a formal marriage preparation course, such as "Together in God's love" or another course approved by the diocese. Course will be offered by one of our deacons at the church or at their own resident. A couple can also attend a weekend retreat of this course at Cedar Break Retreat Center in Belton, which **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED**. It is the best time spending together for preparation of marriage. Dates will be provided when a couple meets a priest.
5. Couple must take at least a one-hour introduction to Natural Family Planning. However, full course referred. If you attend the retreat, it will be included.

LOCATION OF YOUR WEDDING

- If you are getting married at St. Mary's Church, or any church within the diocese of Austin, you should allow yourselves at least 6 months for your preparation.
- If you are getting married outside of the Diocese of Austin, please allow yourselves at least 9 months for your preparation, as all packets leaving our diocese must do so

through the Office of Canonical and Tribunal Services within 3 months of wedding date.

WEDDING OUTSIDE OF SACRED SPACE

- A wedding outside a sacred place is becoming one of the most frequently asked questions regarding marriage. Increasingly, requests are being made to have weddings literally “outside.” Due to this influx of requests, priests, deacons and pastoral ministers involved in marriage preparations are reminded about Church Law in this regard: “A marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic is to be celebrated in the parish church.” (c.1118.1)

PREPARING FOR WEDDING LITURGY

- **Wedding with Mass:** If **both parties of the couple are practicing Catholics**, the Church invites them to marry within the context of the Eucharist. In this case a priest is the ordinary witness of the wedding and presider at the Eucharist.
- **Wedding with the Liturgy of the Word:** For a **marriage between a Catholic and a fiancé of another religious tradition or non-baptized**, They can be married within the Liturgy of the Word, followed by the Rite of Marriage and concluded by the Lord's Prayer (without Mass). In this case, a Deacon can also be served as the minister.
- **Wedding music:** Music enhances the liturgy but not need for Mass or the Liturgy of the Word. However, if a couple chooses to have music, the music must be lived, and not from the recorded CDs. St. Mary’s Church does not have an organist or pianist, nor choir for liturgical music. If you are planning to bring choir from outside, please discuss with a priest during marriage preparation. No secular music of any types is allowed in the liturgy of the Church.
- **Dress code:** Please keep in mind the virtue of modesty when choosing your dress and the dresses of your attendants, those in the procession, and lectors. You will be worshipping in a sacred place, therefore **strapless, spaghetti straps, low-cut, and bare back** dresses are inappropriate and **NOT ALLOWED** for this occasion. If you come dressed inappropriately, you will be required to wear a shawl from the church. You may come with your own beautiful shawl or bolero jacket; these may be lace or sheer. Dresses must also be at least knee length. Following pictures are acceptable dresses.



- **Unity Candles:** some couples desire to use Unity Candles. The unity candle, however, is not part of a Catholic Wedding service. There is not need to have one. You can always use it at the reception.
- **Decoration:**
 - Flower: Flower must be flesh flower in the Church. Due to the size of the Church, maximum of three vases are allowed. two flower vases is recommended and placed on both side of the altar of Tabernacle. It cannot be overpowered the Tabernacle. One is placed before the main altar. If there are two weddings on the same date, and both couples do not agree with the color of the flowers, the first wedding must remove the flowers 30 minutes of the ending of the service. It is NOT uncommon that the couple will leave the flower arrangements in the Church. If you intend to do so, please inform the Church so that the parish will not order additional flowers for weekend. Spraying or painting of flowers or other items is NOT to be done within the church or on the church property. Flowers may be delivered to the church in the presence of the wedding party. The church will not be responsible to receive delivery.
 - Pews decoration: **Nothing is to be pinned, nailed, taped, wired or otherwise affixed to the altar or church furnishings, including pews.** Pew bows are permitted with the bows as long as they are not affixed to the pews. The parish does not provide these bows. If there is another wedding following within the same day, pew decoration must be removed in 30 minutes.
 - No rice, bird seed, confetti, bubbles, flower petals, aisle runners or other like material will be used or thrown, either inside or outside the church building. There are NO exceptions to this rule.
 - The liturgical seasons: of Advent (the four weeks prior to Christmas) and Lent (the period from Ash Wednesday until Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday) are penitential/preparatory seasons in the liturgical worship calendar of the Catholic Church. While flowers (subdued arrangements) may be used, with permission, during Advent, **NO** flowers are allowed during the Lenten season, in keeping with the penitential spirit of the liturgical season. We ask that you restrict your floral selections during Lent to a limited amount of greenery. Pew bows are not permitted during the Lenten season. Remember also that you may not displace the liturgical environment (flowers, banners, etc.) already present in the church; this applies to any liturgical season. The restriction with regard to flowers during Advent and Lent does not apply to the flowers carried by the bride and bridesmaids.
- No food or drink in the Church.
- **Photography:** Only one photographer and one videographer are permitted. However, it can only be done from the right side of the sanctuary at the floor level, at piano. They are NOT permitted to move around, especially in front of people, during the Mass. No photographer may enter the sanctuary space to take photos. (The sanctuary is an area that is raised above the main floor). **No artificial lighting** other than the

Church's lighting is to be used and the use of flash photography **is prohibited** during the ceremony. Time permitting; the priest will stay for one or two pictures immediately following the Mass.

CHURCH'S FEE

- **Dressing Room facility.** We do not have dressing facilities for men and women in the Church. If you need to rent the room in the parish center, the cost is \$300.00 and deposit is \$50.00 for cleaning if the room is not in original setting.
- **Fee of the church:**
 - Parishioner/ member of St. Mary's Church in Mexia is \$300.00. The member should be registered at least 6 months prior to the beginning of this registration.
 - Non- parishioner is \$400.00
 - In order to reserve the Church for the date of your wedding, you must pay the deposit of \$100.00. **ONLY** a priest may reserve the Church for wedding date.
 - **All wedding fees must be paid in full at least ONE WEEK** in advance of the wedding date. **NO EXCEPTION.**
 - Stipend for the Priest: Please note that the stipend for the priest or deacon is a free-will offering. It is **NOT** included in the above cost, but it suggested.

CANONICAL PAPERWORKS

- Pre-nuptial Questionnaire
- **NEWLY ISSUED** copies of your baptismal certificate with notations of other sacraments that dated within 6 months of your wedding. You may call the church of baptism to obtain these copy with notation.
 - If you baptized in a war torn country, or the church no longer exists, you may have an Affidavit of Baptism filled out by your parents or Godparents.
- Affidavits of Free Status: one form per person that state you are free to marry in the Catholic Church. This form must be signed by persons, ideally should be family members or friends who have known the bride/groom, who have known for at least 10 years. It can be faxed or email to the Church.
- Copy of marriage license (if applicable for convalidation)
- Copy of divorce decree/annulment paperwork letter (if applicable)
- Dispensation forms and delegation letter (if applicable, for priest uses only)

