

A Guide to Sacramental Weddings at Corpus Christi Catholic Church

THE CHURCH'S MARRIAGE PREPARATION

We are so glad that you have expressed an interest in celebrating your wedding at our parish! Through spiritual formation and teaching, the Church's ministers seek to help young couples who are preparing for marriage to accomplish certain fundamental goals:

- Discovering God's gift of faith,
- Renewing one's prayer and sacramental practice,
- Learning mature love through chastity,
- Entering into a dialogue that results in true and honest knowledge of one another and each others' qualities,
- Coming to know the essential elements of married love with a particular focus on the ends of marriage—the mutual good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children,
- Growing in freedom so that the exchange of vows can be a truly free act of love.

Couples who approach marriage in the Catholic Church should expect to be invited to fully cooperate in activities aimed at these goals. These goals are important because they help couples arrive at their wedding day properly prepared to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony and the graces that flow from the sacrament.

WORKING WITH THE CHURCH'S MINISTERS

The ministers of the Church who help to prepare engaged couples for marriage include, but are not limited to, the priests, deacons, mentor couples, parish staff, and liturgical ministers. All are compassionate and concerned for engaged couples, encountering the couple in whatever circumstances in which they find themselves as individuals and as a couple. Kindness, understanding and forgiveness will be the response to those who are away from the practice of their faith or who find themselves in the midst of difficult or problematic situations.

Above all, the ministers of the Church are committed to helping couples move along the way to holiness and to lay the best possible foundation for their married love. Sometimes this will involve lovingly confronting couples with the issues that affect the faith, knowledge and freedom with which they approach their upcoming marriage.

Couples who come to the Church for marriage are expected to embrace the Church as Mother and Teacher, and to submit themselves to the Church's spiritual and moral guidance.

MARRIAGE IS A SACRAMENT

For the Catholic Church, marriage is one of the seven sacraments which “are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1131) In a sacramental marriage, the couple is consecrated to Christ and the marriage is centered on Christ. This union is formed and strengthened by mutual love, but it essentially depends on the exchange of consent. While in the Latin/Roman Rite, the spouses minister the sacrament to each other with the priest or deacon as witness, the Church is responsible for the proper celebration of the sacraments, including marriage, and ensuring that those preparing for sacraments do so properly. Couples who are seeking the Sacrament of Matrimony in the Catholic Church enter into the marriage with complete freedom, to be married for the whole of life, and to bring children lovingly into the world. Once this choice is made and consent is exchanged, the marriage is irrevocable as a sacramental bond in which no human power can dissolve. To prepare for the Sacrament

MARRIAGE IS AN EXPRESSION OF FAITH

of Marriage, there are three key areas that are clearly evident in the couple: **faith, knowledge and freedom.**

In addition to assenting to the truth the Catholic Church proclaims to be revealed by God through Jesus Christ, faith entails living a life that is visibly in communion with Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. Integrating prayer into each





Active participation in the sacraments, especially Sunday Mass, would be the normal expectation of those to be married in the Church. It is very helpful for the priest(s) if you could make yourselves known when you come to Mass. Living a moral life and giving witness to Christ by what one says and does is also the normal expectation of one properly disposed to receive the sacramental grace of marriage.

In this regard couples are called to refrain from pre-marital sexual intercourse and to give witness to the propriety of their intentions by not living together before marriage. Also, living one's life and placing one's priorities on serving others, especially the poor and needy, would be a sign of the faith that properly disposes one to marriage. Since marriage is a Christian vocation, making choices that reflect the desire to serve the common good, the proper stewardship of money and possessions, temperance in one's lifestyle as well as compassion and empathy for those who suffer are important expressions of faith. When one of the parties to a Catholic marriage is a non-Catholic, the expectation is that he or she would manifest the same attitudes of faith within the context proper to one's own religious tradition. In addition the non-Catholic party would be expected to be appropriately open to the Catholic's expression of devout faith and at least not be hostile to the idea of raising their children to live in the communion of the

MARRIAGE REQUIRES KNOWLEDGE

Catholic Church.

To give consent to a partnership of the whole of life with

another person, one must know that person very well. While normal boundaries of individual privacy are maintained in marriage, no area of life can be kept secret from the other person. This is especially true of certain vital areas such as one's moral character, family background or basic beliefs. The knowledge of each other that disposes one to marriage must be based on more than sharing each other's life stories. One's knowledge of the other must go beyond the superficial. One should have experienced the other person and the important qualities that make them who they are. This should happen in such a way that one can articulate to others fully and accurately that one knows the other person and is not mistaken about his or her true identity, personality, or character.

One must also have a true and comprehensive knowledge about marriage: its rights and duties, its nature and properties. One must know the structure of marriage as defined by God in the creation. God established marriage in the natural order and our human nature corresponds to marriage as it is created by God. Couples must know that they cannot personally or jointly change the definition of marriage by picking this element or excluding that element.

The choice for marriage must be a choice for all of what essentially constitutes marriage as defined by God. Here the Church's teaching on marriage helps the couple in knowing marriage. But once again the knowledge of marriage cannot be a superficial knowing or simply an intellectual comprehension of the institution of marriage.

To be properly disposed to marriage one must have a well discerned knowledge of what marriage means to oneself and to one's life. Not just marriage in general, but *this marriage* involving *this person*. One must be able to weigh carefully several questions: What challenges and sacrifices will this marriage entail? What will each person have to do to make this marriage work? How will we have to give of ourselves if this marriage is to prosper, be joyful and last forever? The knowledge of marriage should come from concrete examples of married people whom the couple wishes to emulate. It should also be grounded in the

MARRIAGE REQUIRES FREEDOM

Once one truly knows the person one intends to marry and his or her basic qualities and knows too what essentially constitutes marriage as defined by God, being properly disposed to marriage means one must make a radically free choice. One must be capable of and actually make a free choice to exchange the consent that brings about marriage. No other human power can substitute for true marital consent. In the same way, one cannot be led to this consent by any other reason but an internally free choice motivated by love. What this means is that marriage must be the act of a mature human person who is capable of exercising his or her own will undetermined by external forces or pressures.

Young people are encouraged to continue for prolonged periods in the state of adolescence. Often long into chronological adulthood they are not truly independent adults but remain overly dependent upon their parents and are unduly influenced by family, peers or cultural trends.

This freedom is also hampered by the emotional dependence that comes when couples give way to temptation and engage in premarital sexual intercourse and other unchaste behavior. The lack of freedom is only exacerbated by the practice of cohabitation prior to marriage where in addition to emotional dependence the couple's finances become co-mingled. This arrangement makes it very difficult to choose another path to marriage without risking serious economic hardship. The use of alcohol and drugs can also deteriorate the freedom one needs to be properly disposed to marriage. However, as elusive as this freedom may be in our particular cultural stances, it must be present if marriage is to be valid.

The Church ministers must help couples confront obstacles and carefully cultivate free decisions to enter into marriage.

SPECIAL ISSUES

Prior Marriage(s): The Church attempts to be completely faithful and compassionate to Jesus' command concerning divorce. If one of the parties was married before and ended with divorce, the previous marriage must be resolved in light of the Church's canon law. This can often take up to a year or longer. The priest or deacon assisting with your marriage preparation can also assist with the annulment procedure. Under no circumstances may a date for a Catholic wedding be set until a final Declaration of Nullity is issued.



Pregnancy: Normally couples will be encouraged to delay their marriage until after the birth of a child conceived prior to marriage.

Marriage of Minors: Normally, both parties should be at least 18 years of age.

Cohabitation Prior to Marriage: Normally couples who are

living together before marriage will be asked to live separately for the period of preparation and to plan the Church Ceremony with sensitivity to the potential for scandal or harm to the Church's teaching.

Marriages when one is non-Catholic: Such marriage may involve a non-Catholic Christian or a person of a non-Christian religion. If a Catholic marries a non-Catholic Christian this is referred to as a ***mixed marriage***. If the Catholic marries a non-Christian it is called an ***inter-faith marriage***.

Mixed marriages: The preparation of Catholics and non-Catholic Christians will be handled with sensitivity to the Christian tradition of the non-Catholic party. Special permission is required for these marriages. Normally these marriages are not celebrated at Mass but in a Wedding Without Mass.

Inter-Faith Marriages: The wedding preparation of a Catholic and a non-Christian will be handled with sensitivity to the faith tradition of the non-Catholic party. The preparation will necessarily address issues that arise from the disparity of religion. A dispensation is required for these marriages and special care must be given to planning a ceremony that is respectful of both religious traditions. Interfaith Marriages are not celebrated with a Mass, but rather a Wedding Without Mass.

Inactive Catholics: Normally Catholics who have lapsed in the practice of their faith will be asked to return to full practice well before the celebration of marriage.

Non-believers: The marriage of a Catholic and a person who has no history of faith or religious belief, or who has abandoned religious faith will require careful discernment and generally requires more time in preparation.

Convalidation of an Existing Marriage: Couples who have been married outside the Church who wish to have their marriage officially recognized by the Church will be asked to undergo preparation suited to their particular situation. The liturgical celebration in these circumstances is generally simple in nature and requires a new and valid act of consent to marriage.

SUMMARY

The Church's marriage preparation focuses on very important realities which form the foundation for the couple's desire to live their lives together in lasting joy and mutual fidelity. The Church's ministers assist couples with the spiritual and moral guidance that allows them to be properly prepared for marriage through appropriate faith, knowledge and freedom.

Couples approaching marriage preparation should see the Church as Mother and Teacher and be willing to submit to the spiritual formation and teaching offered by the Church through its ministers.

The Church of Corpus Christi is here to help you not only prepare for your wedding day, but more importantly a life-long marriage, united in Christ's love.

MARRIAGE FEES

TOTAL FEES* **\$550.00**

**Costs for an additional soloist or instrumentalists are by private arrangement*

Fee is requested to be submitted no later than the Wedding Rehearsal. Please note that no one is denied the Sacraments, including Marriage, due to the inability to pay the fees listed above. If there is a particular circumstance, please discuss this with the priest or deacon who is working with you.

STAGES IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Schedule a meeting with the Priest or Deacon: At this meeting you will begin marriage preparation and have a priest or deacon assigned to act as your spiritual guide. This meeting will allow the priest or deacon to get to know you, and explain the marriage preparation process.

Submit Sacramental Information: A recent baptismal certificate for both parties will be needed. This must be obtained from the church of baptism within 6 months of the intended marriage and must show all notations. The Parish Staff can assist you with contacting your church of baptism.

Premarital Inventory (PMI): You will meet with a mentor couple from our community who will work with you to discern the realities of married life. Before you are introduced to this mentor couple, you will take Premarital Inventory which is a tool that will be used to dialogue with one another and discuss your readiness for marriage. The PMI is **not a test** but rather a tool that provides the opportunity for discussion of important areas to consider before marriage.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Meeting the Priest or Deacon: The priest or deacon will discuss your upcoming nuptials with you and answer any questions you may have. He will then administer the Premarital Inventory (PMI) and explain the preparation process to you.

Meetings with a Catholic Sponsor Couple: When your PMI has been completed you will be assigned to a Catholic sponsor couple to discuss the results of the inventory with you. These couples help to provide you a forum to consider carefully your married life together and to benefit from the experience and faithfulness of a happily married Catholic couple. Once your PMI has been processed and returned to the parish, the priest or deacon will contact you to arrange an appointment to discuss your upcoming marriage.

Natural Family Planning: As part of your marriage preparation, an introductory session of Natural Family Planning is highly recommended. The Parish Staff can assist you with contacting a local instructor. Couples should plan on having completed their Natural Family Planning Session at least 3 months prior to your wedding.

Diocesan Preparation Program: The Diocese offers options for marriage preparation. The *Journey to Matrimony* is a **weekend** spiritual retreat designed to provide couples with an opportunity to plan for marriage by encouraging open dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives together. Most couples find this extremely enriching and beneficial. Another option is the Pre-Cana, which is a **one-day** conference. Please do not put off registering for one of these programs. Retreats are usually filled 6 to 8 weeks in advance. Couples should plan on having completed their *Journey to Matrimony* at least 3 to 6 months prior to your wedding date.

THE WEDDING DAY

Rehearsal for the Wedding Mass / Ceremony: Normally this is scheduled the evening preceding the wedding. Everyone who has any role in the ceremony should attend the rehearsal. Since it is not uncommon for a number of rehearsals to be held on one evening, it is very important that everyone arrives early for the rehearsal so that it can begin on time.

The Wedding Ceremony: Weddings are usually scheduled on Saturdays at either 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. Parties should be aware that a number of other services may be scheduled in the Church for the same day as your wedding ceremony. Floral decorations and other arrangements should be planned with this in mind as well as the liturgical season. Please plan to have everything ready so that we can begin your wedding on time!

Wedding Within Mass: The Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated with the appropriate music, readings, prayers, and nuptial blessing. Holy Communion is offered for the Catholic faithful.

Wedding Without Mass: While the Liturgy of the Eucharist is not celebrated, the sacrament of marriage takes place with the appropriate music, readings, prayers and nuptial blessing. Holy Communion is not offered.

Thank you for your interest in a wedding at Corpus Christi! We hope that this brochure answers most of your questions about a Catholic wedding and a wedding at Corpus Christi. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us at 813-933-1593.

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