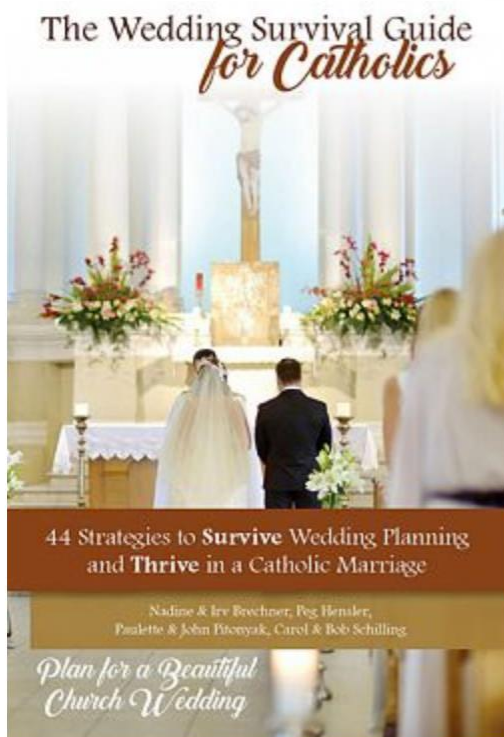




Book helps couples plan for Catholic weddings

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"The Wedding Survival Guide for Catholics: 44 Strategies to Survive Wedding Planning and Thrive in a Catholic Marriage," Irv Brechner, Nadine Brechner, John Pitonyak, Paulette Pitonyak, Bob Schilling, Carol Schilling, Peg Hensler; paperback, \$17.95

By Linda Petersen

Intermountain Catholic

A newly released book aims to take much of the stress out of planning a wedding for Catholic couples and their families. The Wedding Survival Guide for Catholics: 44 Strategies to Survive Wedding Planning and Thrive in a Catholic Marriage is written by three long-married couples — Nadine and Irv Brechner, Paulette and John Pitonyak and Carol and Bob Schilling. Co-author Peg Hensler is associate director of Marriage Ministries for the Diocese of Trenton, N.J.

Hensler conceived the idea for the book after John Pitonyak asked her to review a different wedding survival book.

"After reading it, I realized their secular version had a tremendous amount of timely and helpful information, but it wasn't right for Catholics," Hensler writes in the forward of The Wedding Survival Guide. So Hensler challenged Pitonyak to write a new book combining that information with additional Catholic content.

Pitonyak accepted the challenge and began working with his co-authors to produce what eventually became The Wedding Survival Guide for Catholics.

According to Hensler, the book has four major goals: to show Catholics the importance of a Catholic Church wedding, to teach them how to minimize wedding planning stress, to provide couples with guidance in communications, collaboration and compromising skills and to demonstrate

how the marriage preparation process for Catholic couples can dramatically increase marital success and decrease divorce.

With sections rather than chapters, the format of the book can be confusing. However, the authors emphasize that it is not designed to be read from beginning to end; readers can go immediately to the pages with the information they need most.

Although the title refers to "44 Strategies," the book contains a lot more information that couples preparing for marriage will find helpful. It is divided into an introduction that covers Catholics marriages, followed by 44 "Stress Reducer" sections and an eight-section vendor stress reducer section. It concludes with a section titled "Words of Wisdom from Wedding Planning and Marriage Experts and Catholic Clergy," which includes several essays written by clergy members, counselors and even marriage advice from Pope Francis.

The introduction outlines the roles of those involved and provides information on the three components of a Catholic wedding, the type of wedding, remarriage in the Church and even convalidation. The 44 Stress Reducers cover everything from dealing with hostile, divorced parents on the wedding day to planning for guests to have adequate transportation to and from the church and reception. Each of the vendor stress reducer sections contains just about every conceivable question to ask the professionals involved with the wedding and reception to ensure no misunderstandings arise. Peppered throughout are Scripture verses that aim to give couples a Gospel perspective, such as “Let us then pursue what leads to peace and building up one another.” (Romans 14:19) There also are reflections from couples or parents who have dealt with the various issues while planning their weddings.

The book covers just about every foreseeable aspect of a Catholic wedding, from contacting the parish to arranging for the transportation of gifts – and for those unforeseen situations that come up it offers advice on making the best of those situations.

Having helped my three daughters plan their weddings, I would have found this book extremely valuable in navigating the ins and outs of that special day for them. Although each wedding turned out beautifully, employing just a few of the ideas from *The Wedding Survival Guide for Catholics* would have definitely reduced the stress for both me and the bride during the whole planning process.