

Planning a Wedding and Preparing for Marriage



Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church

Marriage Guidebook

Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church

Roseville, Minnesota

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“Marriage is an act of will that signifies and involves a mutual give, which unites the spouses and binds them to their eventual souls, with whom they make up a sole family- a domestic church.”

Pope Saint John Paul the Great

Congratulations on your engagement!

God has drawn you together, and you have made an important decision to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage. This is a very blessed time in your life. These guidelines are intended to help you prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage at Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church. Please carefully read our Holy Matrimony Guidebook to understand the marriage preparation process. The clergy, staff, and mentor couples at Saint Rose of Lima are here to help you not only have a beautiful wedding day, but a holy and joyful life together as husband and wife. May God bless you as you take this next step in your following of Jesus Christ, the bridegroom of his spouse the Church.

General Information

ELIGIBLE WEDDING COUPLES

To be married at Saint Rose of Lima, at least one of the bride or groom must be Catholic and registered as a member of Saint Rose of Lima parish.

1. If Saint Rose of Lima is the home parish of the bride or groom, but the wedding will be celebrated elsewhere, couples can opt to complete their marriage preparation at Saint Rose.
2. If a Catholic is marrying a non-Catholic Christian, the wedding may be celebrated either at Saint Rose or in the church of the other party with its minister, with permission.
3. If a Catholic is marrying an unbaptized person, the wedding may be celebrated at Saint Rose, however it is not a *sacramental* marriage.
4. Couples who are already civilly married are encouraged to have their marriage *convalidated* through the Rite of Holy Matrimony, so that they can receive the grace of Christ offered in the sacrament. Contact the parish office to learn more.

Scheduling your Wedding at Saint Rose of Lima

5. Couples must call the Parish Office ***before setting a wedding date*** or making any other arrangements regarding your reception, venue, etc. Wedding dates are only scheduled and confirmed by parish clergy after having met the prospective couple. Saint Rose can guarantee that your desired wedding date is available.
6. Marriage preparation at Saint Rose requires a minimum of six months; most couples book their weddings about twelve months ahead. If you have special circumstances, e.g. a military deployment or another urgent need, please note it when you contact the parish.
7. Weddings at Saint Rose of Lima are typically celebrated on Fridays and Saturdays. The latest time for a Saturday wedding is 1:30 PM.

The Sacredness of the Celebration of Holy Matrimony

8. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is a sacred ritual through which God binds together man and woman in a lifelong, indissoluble union of life and love. Because the *nature of Christian marriage makes present the saving love of Jesus Christ in the world*, its celebration is also sacred. Every Catholic wedding is part of the great tapestry of the Church – not only the domestic church of the bride and groom’s circle of family and friends, but also the parish community, and even the universal church spread throughout the world. Therefore, every wedding at Saint Rose expresses the solemnity and tradition of the Catholic faith. While couples naturally personalize their wedding day in various ways, their choices of music, decoration, and festivity must be consonant with Catholic faith and worship.

Who Celebrates The Wedding

9. If your wedding celebration happens in the context of the Mass, the pastor will celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy and receive your vows. If the wedding is not celebrated within Mass, a priest or a deacon can officiate.
10. Catholic clergy from outside Saint Rose of Lima are welcome to participate in the Rite of Holy Matrimony. Please inform the parish office as soon as possible if you are considering this as an option.
11. All visiting priests and deacons must follow Archdiocesan guidelines concerning the celebration of the Rite of Marriage and the minister’s suitability for ministry within the Archdiocese. We are unable to make exceptions. To preside at a wedding at Saint Rose of Lima, a priest or deacon must be in good standing with his diocese/religious community and provide proper documentation to Saint Rose of Lima through the Office of the Chancellor at the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

Why Marriage Preparation Is a Substantial Investment

12. Marriage preparation within the Catholic Church takes a substantial investment of time and energy. It involves much more than scheduling the wedding, scheduling the rehearsal, and planning the music. Marriage preparation is a time of personal formation, growth, discernment, and discipleship. Meetings with the parish clergy, conversations with parish mentor couples, and retreats about how to create and sustain a holy marriage all have a part in the preparation process. Below are some reasons why investing in this process is worth it:
 - Marriage Preparation is a special time to rediscover God’s love for you, or to take the next step in your relationship with God.
 - Marriage Preparation connects you with an experienced mentor couple, who you get to know personally for wisdom and support.
 - Marriage Preparation helps you become part of the larger parish community.
 - Marriage Preparation helps your transition to married life by reducing unrealistic expectations of marriage.
 - Marriage Preparation helps you know your fiancé better.
 - Marriage Preparation helps you know yourself better.
 - Couples who invest more time in marriage preparation have better outcomes regarding marital satisfaction and marital integrity.

The Pillars of Marriage Preparation at Saint Rose of Lima with scheduling timeline

PILLAR	DESCRIPTION	COMPLETE BY DATE	CHECKLIST
Meetings with parish clergy	The priest or deacon will meet with you several times to get to know you, to schedule a wedding date and rehearsal date, to teach about the meaning and vocation of marriage, and to prepare you to make your vows. The number and length of meetings varies.	Varies	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage Mentoring via PREPARE / ENRICH	After meeting with the priest or deacon, you will be paired with a trained mentor couple from the parish. Over the course of several meetings, you and your mentor couples share informal discussions about different areas of marriage and family life.	Complete final session at least 3 months prior to the wedding.	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Living God's Love Retreat	All couples marrying in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis attend this 1 ½ day retreat. Schedule your retreat at: archspm.org/marriage/marriage-preparation	Return certificate of completion to Saint Rose at least 3 months prior to the wedding.	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Natural Family Planning Course	Natural Family Planning is a holistic and holy way to avoid or achieve pregnancy. Sign up for one of the many taught-in-person NFP classes listed on the CCLI.org class schedule and look through NFP literature. Online-only classes will not be accepted.	Return certificate of completion by Saint Rose at least 3 months prior to the wedding.	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Baptismal Certificate	Contact the church of your baptism and ask the staff to mail a baptismal certificate directly to the parish. Copies or certificates previously issued cannot be accepted.	No earlier than 6 months prior to your wedding.	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>

Request Marriage License Discount Form from Saint Rose	Couples in Minnesota can reduce the Marriage License fee from \$115 to \$40 by participating in eligible premarital counseling. Marriage preparation at Saint Rose includes this component by default. Call the parish office to receive a notarized form that can be taken to the courthouse when you apply for your Marriage License.	After your final meeting with your mentor couple but before applying for your Marriage License.	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Apply for Marriage License	A Marriage License can be obtained from any County Court House in the State of Minnesota. Both persons should be present with photo identification to apply for the license. Visit the relevant Minnesota government web sites for more information about requirements.	No earlier than 6 months prior to your wedding	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Meet with Director of Music	Our Director of Music meets with engaged couples to plan the details of the actual wedding day. (See Appendix for contact information)	Contact the Director of Music no later than 3 months prior to the wedding	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Talk with the Parish Wedding Coordinator	Our parish Wedding Coordinator handles all the fine details of the wedding day so that everything is just right.	Our Coordinator will contact you 4-6 weeks prior to the wedding	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Present Marriage License to Saint Rose	The Marriage License should be submitted to the parish office two weeks prior to your wedding to be processed and ready for the wedding day.	2-4 weeks prior to the wedding	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
Celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation	Catholics should celebrate the sacrament of mercy in order for the graces of matrimony to be the most fruitful. The pastor or any priest can hear your confession.	1-2 weeks prior to the wedding day	Target completion date: _____ Completion date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>

Fees

1. The total cost for celebrating a wedding at Saint Rose of Lima is \$950. The cost breakdown can be seen in detail below. All fees are payable to Saint Rose who subsequently disperses to individuals.
2. The following fees are required unless otherwise noted. Our fee policies ensure that weddings at Saint Rose are of the highest quality and that our staff is compensated for the additional duties they take on. If you are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to pay the fees, please contact the parish office. **All fees are due no later than the day of the rehearsal.**
 - Deposit to hold a wedding date: \$200 (non-refundable; counts towards Building fee)
 - Building Fee: \$350 (\$200 deposit + \$150)
 - Saint Rose Musicians:
 - Cantor & Accompanist: \$400
 - Other instrumentalists: Based upon availability and individual musician rates. Payable to Saint Rose who subsequently disperses to the musician.
 - Saint Rose Wedding Coordinator \$200
 - Optional: Saint Rose Livestream operator: \$150

Saint Rose of Lima Wedding Coordinator

1. Saint Rose of Lima provides an onsite parish Wedding Coordinator to assist with the rehearsal and the day of the wedding. The Wedding Coordinator is different from a wedding planner in that his or her main role is to facilitate a smooth wedding day itself, not to personally assist in planning the ceremony or festivities themselves.
2. The Coordinator can do things for you such as:
 - Assist at the rehearsal practice and preview church facility options
 - Unlock the church
 - Assist the florists, musicians, and photographers with set up
 - Help the pre-wedding timeline to run smoothly and problem-solve last minute issues
 - Tidy up the bride and groom's vesting rooms and pack items for the reception
 - Work with the ushers to provide smooth seating
 - Help with post-wedding transitions to the reception
3. The parish Wedding Coordinator will contact you four to six weeks before your wedding to discuss specifics for your ceremony and will ask you to fill out a questionnaire about your wedding day choices.

Planning for the Wedding Ceremony

1. Music and Liturgy

- The priest or deacon will provide you with a *Together For Life* booklet that contains the Biblical readings for the wedding liturgy. Once these are chosen the rest of the ceremony can be planned.
- About three months prior to the wedding day, you will meet with the Saint Rose of Lima Director of Music, who will guide you through the process of selecting liturgically appropriate music for your wedding ceremony.

2. Wedding Party

- The Best Man and the Maid or Matron of Honor do not have to be Catholic. By Minnesota State Law witnesses must be at least 16 years of age.
- They are required to stand next to the bride and groom to witness the vows and they must sign the Marriage License after the wedding.

3. Children

- If you plan to include children in your wedding party, please be prudent. If children under 3 years of age are present, it may be best for them to be held by an adult.

4. Flowers, Aisle Cloth, and Unity Candle

- To decide your floral choices for the church, ask what liturgical or seasonal decorations/flowers will be in the sanctuary at your wedding time. Our parish is decorated with particular colors and styles depending on the time of year.
- If you attach anything to the pews, use only ribbon or padded clamps, not adhesives. The church has a set of holders for bows. Please remind the florist that no tape or other stick-on products are allowed and if aisle candles are used they must be picked up immediately after the wedding.
- If you choose to use an aisle cloth, you must purchase it either from the florist or a party goods store. The necessary length is 100 feet.
- A unity candle is not part of the Catholic marriage rite, however if a couple strongly desires to use it, one may be obtained from a candle shop or religious goods store. The parish has a crystal holder for the central candle; it fits a 3-inch diameter candle only.

5. Photography and Videography Policy

- **All photographs taken indoors should be taken before or during the ceremony and not afterward.**
- **All photography and videography must respect the sacredness of the church as the temple of God. Vendors should not be obtrusive or constantly in motion. Vendors are encouraged to become familiar with the Catholic rite of marriage so they can capture the best shots without irreverence.**
- Formal group pictures in the sanctuary are allowed before the liturgy with the expectation that the sacredness of the church is respected.
- Arrival and preparation for picture taking can be discussed with the Wedding Coordinator. Pictures prior to the ceremony should be completed 30 minutes before the wedding start time.
- Flash photography and rapid movement by photographers are not allowed during the ceremony except for the processional and recessional. This applies to professional photographers,

videographers, and guests. Print that no flash photography is allowed if printing a program.

- Videographers are asked to remain stationary during the wedding.

Rehearsal

1. The rehearsal will be scheduled when meeting with the priest or deacon. Rehearsal is 45-60 minutes.
2. All members of the wedding party should be present: parents, readers, ushers, gift-bearers, etc.. Musicians are not present at the rehearsal.
3. The Wedding Coordinator will let you know what items to bring to the rehearsal.
4. **Any remaining fees owed to Saint Rose of Lima are due at this time.**

The Wedding Day

1. Before the Wedding
 - The bride's party uses the "Bethlehem Room" in the back left of the church during wedding day.
 - The groom's party uses the "Nazareth Room" in the back right of the church during wedding day.
 - Restrooms, including handicap accessible, are available on the main level behind the choir area. Additional men's and women's lavatories are located in the Lower Level.
 - We suggest you bring simple food and drinks for the wedding party and others that need to be at church early. No-fuss sandwiches, fruit or snack items, non-alcoholic drinks and other non-staining items.
 - *No alcohol or drugs are permitted to be consumed in the church building or on the immediate grounds of the parish before, during, or after the wedding.*
 - *Intoxication of any bride, groom, or member of the wedding party prior to or during the wedding ceremony is grounds for the marriage to be null and void. If any of these persons is noticeably intoxicated, the officiant will immediately halt and postpone the wedding.*
 - Smoking is not allowed inside any parish building. If you choose to smoke outdoors, please keep clear of the entrances.
 - The bride's attendants are to see that the Bethlehem Room is cleaned up. All trash should be deposited in the appropriate receptacles.
 - Purses, wallets, or other valuables should not be left in the Bethlehem and Nazareth rooms before, during, or after the wedding ceremony. This will protect you from the possibility of theft or loss. If you have special items to be secured during the ceremony, they can be locked in the sacristy's music room during the liturgy.
2. After the Wedding
 - Ushers are asked to see that the Church and entryways are cleaned up after the wedding. This includes the aisle cloth, programs, decorations on the pews, etc.
 - The throwing of rice, confetti, or bird seed is prohibited because it is a tripping hazard for parishioners and because it damages the flooring of the church. Bubbles and bells may be handed out to the congregation after the wedding liturgy.

Conclusion

Please be assured that beginning with this time of Marriage preparation and continuing throughout your lives you will be in the prayers of the entire parish community of Saint Rose of Lima. May God bless you and your marriage!

Couple's Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have read and understand the Saint Rose of Lima Marriage Guidebook, and agree to abide by its terms as I plan my wedding ceremony and begin the marriage preparation process. I also acknowledge that my wedding and my marriage is not only a vocation for me and my intended spouse, but is also connected to the wider Saint Rose parish community, the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and the universal Church.

Groom (Print) _____ (Sign) _____

Date: _____

Bride (Print) _____ (Sign) _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1: Parish and Staff Contact Information (Current as of May 2022)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Father Marc Paveglio
2048 North Hamline Avenue
Roseville, MN 55113

Office: 651-357-1201
frpaveglio@saintroseoflima.net

Deacon Glenn Skuta
2048 North Hamline Avenue
Roseville, MN 55113

Office: 651-470-7572
gskuta@q.com

Brigid Kostka
Administrative Assistant
2048 North Hamline Avenue
Roseville, MN 55113

Office: 651-357-1200
bkostka@saintroseoflima.net

Alex Schindler
Director of Music
2048 North Hamline Avenue
Roseville, MN 55113

Office: 651-357-1203
aschindler@saintroseoflima.net

Claudia Stepnick
Wedding Coordinator
651-245-3465

Ruth Gangl
Stewardship Coordinator and
Accounting Office

Office: 651-357-1206

SAINT ROSE OF LIMA SOCIAL NETWORK

<https://www.saintroseoflima.net/>

<https://www.facebook.com/saintroseoflima.net>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrVVceiFlmA5Ha67GHezaow>

Appendix 2: Marriage Resources by Topic

MARRIAGE: LIFE AND LOVE IN THE DIVINE PLAN

A Pastoral Letter by the Catholic Bishops of the United States (Abridged Version)

WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

Marriage is a natural institution established by God the Creator. It is a permanent, faithful, fruitful partnership between one man and one woman, established by their free mutual consent. It has two purposes: the good of the spouses, called the unitive purpose, and the procreation and education of children.

Marriage is not merely a private institution. It is the foundation of the family, where children learn values and virtues that make them good Christians as well as good citizens. Marriage is important for the upbringing of the next generation, and therefore it is important for society.

Men and women are equal as persons. As male and female, they are two different ways of being human. These differences relate them to each other in a total and complementary way. They make possible a unique communion of persons in which spouses give themselves and receive each other in love. This communion of persons has the potential to bring forth human life and thus to produce the family. No other relationship symbolizes life and love as marriage does.

The two purposes of marriage are inseparable; they are two aspects of the same self-giving. The unitive purpose of marriage means that husband and wife participate in God's own self-giving love. The two become one flesh, giving mutual help and service to each other through their intimate union.

The procreative purpose recognizes that married love is by its nature life-giving. The children who result from this union are the supreme gift of marriage. Some couples experience the tragedy of infertility and may be tempted to think that their union is not complete; however, it remains a distinctive communion of persons.

CHALLENGES TO MARRIAGE

Contemporary society poses fundamental challenges to the meaning and purposes of marriage. Four of these challenges are discussed here.

(1) Contraception. Each act of intercourse must be open to procreation, because the whole meaning of marriage is expressed in each marital act. Contraception closes off the possibility of procreation and separates the unitive and procreative meanings of marriage. This is objectively wrong and is essentially opposed to God's plan for marriage and proper human development. Deliberately separating these two meanings can damage or destroy the marriage and bring many other negative consequences, both personal and social. Natural family planning (NFP) methods enable a couple to plan their family in accord with God's design.

(2) Same-sex unions. Male-female complementarity is essential to marriage. It makes possible authentic union and the generation of new life. Attempts to make same-sex unions the equivalent of marriage disregard the nature of marriage. Since marriage and same-sex unions are different realities, it is not unjust discrimination to oppose the legal recognition of same-sex unions. These unions pose a serious threat to the fabric of society that affects all people.

(3) Divorce. Marriage is meant to be a lifelong covenantal union, which divorce claims to break. Troubled couples as well as divorced persons are encouraged to rely on God's help and to use the resources of the Church for support and healing. An annulment is a possibility for some divorced persons. This is a finding by a church tribunal, or court, that no valid marriage bond was formed because the requirements for valid consent were not met at the time of the wedding.

(4) Cohabitation. Many couples live together in a sexual relationship without marriage. This is always wrong and objectively sinful because the complete gift of self can only take place within the public, permanent commitment of marriage. Cohabitation can have negative effects on couples themselves, as well as any children who are part of the relationship.

MARRIAGE AS A CHRISTIAN SACRAMENT

Although marriage remains a blessing from God, Original Sin has had grave consequences for married life. As a break with God, it ruptured the original communion between man and woman.

Jesus healed this rupture when he raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. In marriage a man and woman become one flesh. They love each other as they love themselves and cherish each other's bodies as their own. This union is an image of Christ's love for his Church. Spouses are called to give themselves to each other as fully as Christ gave himself to his Church.

When the baptized spouses exchange their promises of loving and permanent fidelity before the Church, their marriage covenant becomes a participation in the unbreakable covenant between Christ and the Church. The Holy Spirit binds the spouses together and enables them to perform acts of self-giving love to the benefit of themselves, their families, and the whole Church. In this way their marriage does more than symbolize Christ's love; it makes that love present in the world.

In order to imitate Christ's love for his Church, the relationship between man and woman needs healing. Their relationship is not a one-sided subjection of the wife to the husband, but a mutual subjection of husband and wife, following St. Paul's charge to "be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21).

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: A COMMUNION OF LOVE

The Christian married couple, with their children, form an image of the Trinitarian God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Marriage and family life images the Trinity in two ways. First, like the Trinity, marriage is a communion of love between co-equal persons, beginning with husband and wife and extending to all the members of the family. Second, just as Trinity's love is life-giving, a married couple's love conceives and cares for children.

In addition to reflecting the Trinity, the family is a microcosm of the Church. The ancient expression "domestic church" accurately describes the family because it is a small communion of persons that

draws its sustenance from the larger Church and reflects its life in unique ways. Within this domestic church, parents have a special responsibility to teach children the faith and help them to grow in virtue. The family matures as a domestic church by participating in the life and worship of the larger Church, especially Sunday Eucharist. In the Eucharist, members of the family are most fully united to Christ, to one another, and to their brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Christian spouses in a mixed marriage (between a Catholic and a baptized person who is not Catholic) witness to the universality of God's love, even without sharing the Eucharist. They can make an important contribution towards Christian unity. Sometimes, Catholics marry

non-Christians. These marriages are not sacramental, although the parties do commit to fidelity, permanence, and openness to children. Both types of unions face particular challenges, especially the religious upbringing of children. The Catholic party needs to take seriously the promise to maintain his or her Catholic faith and to do all in his or her power to have the children baptized and raised Catholic.

Marriage is a vocation, or divine call, as necessary and valuable to the Church as other vocations. Discernment of and preparation for marriage is a process that begins early in life and continues through the engagement period. Because marriage is for the good of the Church and the entire community, the Church and the state have an obligation to help support and sustain marriage.

GROWTH IN VIRTUE

With God's grace, couples are called to grow in holiness. A holy marriage is made up of many virtues. Fundamentally, the couple lives out the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Love is the heart of the vocation of marriage. It calls spouses to imitate Jesus by their willingness to sacrifice themselves in everyday situations for each other and their children. Couples must also grow in the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

Two virtues that are sometimes overlooked are chastity and gratitude. Marital chastity means that the couple's love is total, faithful, exclusive and open to life. It protects a great good: the communion of persons and the procreative purpose of marriage.

Marriage is a school of gratitude, in which husband and wife are thankful for the gift of each other. They express their joyous gratitude in giving themselves completely to each other. Their gratitude leads them to be open to children and to be generous towards others.

Growth in virtue is a lifelong journey, in which the spouses become more like Christ so that they can more perfectly love each other as Christ loves his Church.

THE EUCHARIST

In the Eucharist Catholic couples meet Christ, the source of their marriage. This encounter moves them to reach out in love to the broader Church and to the world. The Eucharist nourishes the virtue of marital hospitality and helps the couple to recognize God's image in others. This hospitality builds up the Church and makes it a stronger witness to Christ's love in the world.

A marriage that is truly in Christ is a sign of the Kingdom that is coming. At the end of time, at the celebration of the heavenly wedding banquet, the love to which the spouses have been called will find its completion when the entire Church is assumed into the glory of the risen Christ.

COHABITATION

Adapted from <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/cohabitation/>

It's no secret that many couples are cohabiting, that is, living together in a sexual relationship without marriage. Currently, 60% of all marriages are preceded by cohabitation, but fewer than half of cohabiting unions end in marriage. Many couples believe – mistakenly – that cohabitation will lower their risk of divorce. This is an understandable misconception, since many people are the children of divorce, or have other family members or friends who have divorced. Other reasons for living together include convenience, financial savings, companionship and security, and a desire to move out of their parents' house.

WHAT SOCIAL SCIENCE SAYS ABOUT COHABITATION

- On average, marriage preceded by cohabitation is 46% more likely to end in divorce.
- The risk is greatest for “serial” cohabitators who have had multiple relationships.
- Some studies indicate that those who live together with definite plans for marriage are at minimal risk; however, there are no positive effects from cohabiting.
- Cohabitation puts children at risk. Forty percent of cohabiting households include children. After five years, one-half of these couples will have broken up, compared to 15% of married parents.

COHABITATION AND CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHING

Every act of sexual intercourse is intended by God to express love, commitment, and openness to life in the total gift of the spouses to each other. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage cannot express what God intended. Rather, it says something false – a total commitment that the couple does not yet have. This total commitment is possible only in marriage. The Catechism of the Catholic Church points out that some couples claim a right to live together if they intend to marry later on. Although the couple may be sincere in their intention, the Catechism stresses that human love is not compatible with “trial marriages.” Rather, “it demands a total and definitive gift of persons to one another.”

COHABITATION AND MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Pastoral ministers may encourage cohabiting couples without children to separate for a period before marriage as a sign of their free, loving decision to follow the Church's vision of marriage and sexuality. Couples are also encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. People have a right to marry; therefore, cohabiting couples cannot be denied marriage in the Catholic Church solely because they are cohabiting. However, cohabitation may raise questions, for example, about the couple's freedom to marry, which need to be explored.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

Catholic teaching on contraception and in-vitro fertilization:

Ascension Presents and Father Mike Schmitz:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOmWQKCoLd4>

Adapted from: foryourmarriage.org/family-planning

WHAT DOES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACH ABOUT MARRIED LOVE?

Marriage is an intimate, lifelong partnership in which husbands and wives give and receive love unselfishly. The sexual relationship expresses their married love and shows what it means to become “one body” (Genesis 2:24) and “one flesh” (Mark 10:8, Matthew 19:6). The sexual union is meant to express the full meaning of a couple’s love, its power to bind them together “the unitive aspect of marriage” and “its openness to new life” the procreative aspect.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH CONTRACEPTION?

The Church believes that God has established an inseparable bond between the unitive and procreative aspects of marriage. The couple has promised to give themselves to each other, and this mutual self-giving includes the gift of their fertility. This means that each sexual act in a marriage needs to be open to the possibility of conceiving a child. “Thus, artificial contraception is contrary to God’s will for marriage because it separates the act of conception from sexual union” (United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p. 409).

A couple need not desire to conceive a child in every act of intercourse. But they should never suppress the life-giving power that is part of what they pledged in their marriage vows.

ARE COUPLES EXPECTED TO LEAVE THEIR FAMILY SIZE ENTIRELY TO CHANCE?

No. Serious circumstances “financial, physical, psychological, or those involving responsibilities to other family members” may affect the number and spacing of children. The Church understands this, while encouraging couples to take a generous view of children.

WHAT SHOULD A COUPLE DO IF THEY HAVE GOOD REASON TO AVOID HAVING A CHILD?

A married couple can engage in intercourse during the naturally infertile times in a woman’s cycle, or after childbearing years, without violating the meaning of marital intercourse. This is the principle behind natural family planning (NFP).

WHAT IS NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING?

Natural family planning is a general name for family planning methods that are based on a woman’s menstrual cycle. NFP methods are based on day-to-day observations of the naturally occurring signs of the fertile and infertile phases of the menstrual cycle. It takes into account the uniqueness of each woman. A man is fertile throughout his life, while a woman is fertile for only a few days each cycle.

during the childbearing years. A woman experiences clear, observable signs that show when she is fertile and infertile. To avoid pregnancy, the couple abstains from intercourse during the fertile phase. Couples can also use NFP to achieve pregnancy because it identifies the time of ovulation.

WHO CAN USE NFP?

Any married couple can use NFP. A woman need not have regular cycles. The key to successful NFP use is cooperation and communication between husband and wife.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS NFP?

NFP can be very effective, depending on how strongly motivated the couple is and whether they follow the rules of the method. Couples who carefully follow all the rules to avoid pregnancy can achieve a success rate of 97-98%.

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION, METHODS, AND COURSES:

Couple to Couple League <https://ccli.org> Creighton Method <http://www.tcnfp.org>

Marquette Method <http://www.marquette.edu/nursing/natural-family-planning.php>

Use of Natural Family Planning (NFP) and Its Effect on Couple Relationships and Sexual Satisfaction: A Multi-Country Survey of NFP Users from US and Europe (*Frontiers in Public Health*: March 13, 2017)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5346544/>

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PURPOSE

Birth control is a persistent global health concern. Natural family planning (NFP) comprises methods to achieve or avoid pregnancy independent of mechanical or pharmacological intervention. The sympto-thermal method (STM) of NFP employs daily observation of cervical fluids and measurement of basal body temperature. This multi-country study was undertaken to describe the characteristics of STM users, understand their perceptions of NFP, and its perceived impact on relationships.

METHODS AND RESULTS

...A total of 2,560 respondents completed the online questionnaire (37.4% response). Participants were married (89%) and well educated, and their self-perceived financial status was described as “good” or “very good” by 65% of the respondents. Forty-seven percent had previously used contraceptives. Ninety-five percent of women and 55% of men said using NFP has helped them to know their body better. Large majorities of men (74%) and women (64%) felt NFP helped to improve their relationship while <10% felt use of NFP had harmed their relationship. Most women (53%) and men (63%) felt using NFP improved their sex life while 32% of women and 24% of men felt it was unchanged from before they used NFP. Seventy-five percent of women and 73% of men said they are either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their frequency of sexual intercourse...

“CHILD-FREE” MARRIAGE

Adapted from <https://bulldogcatholic.org/2016/01/15/married-without-children/>

Q: I heard that a couple has to want to have kids in order to get married in the Catholic Church. My fiancé and I don't, why won't the Church let us marry each other?

A: That is a very good question, and I am glad that you asked. The first thing we need to clear up is what you mean when you say that you don't want to have kids. Do you mean “never ever”, or “not right away”? There is a big difference between the two. If you and your spouse simply want to wait to have children for some serious reason, that doesn't automatically affect the validity of your proposed marriage at all. It does raise some questions like, “If you aren't ready for a kid, do you think that you are really ready for a spouse?” The same kind of self-sacrificing love that it takes to love a child is required for loving a spouse...if you or your fiancé aren't “ready to sacrifice”, not only are you not ready for kids, you aren't ready for each other. I don't say that as a judgment, but simply as a minimal criteria to judge one's own readiness for marriage. If you doubt your fiancé's ability to be responsible enough to raise a child, is he really responsible enough to commit to loving you “in good times and in bad”?

Now, if either of you (yes, even just one of you!) enters the marriage consciously intending to never have children, then we have a different issue. That would, in fact, make the marriage “invalid” (e.g. no Sacrament would take place). But why?! Why is the Church so hung up on people having children?

Now, I know that this may sound weird, but the Church actually believes that being open to children is an essential part of what marriage is. It isn't an “add on”, it is part of the essence. Basically, if a couple makes a positive act of the will to never have children, they are making a positive act of the will not to have a marriage.

Someone could easily ask, “But where do you get such a crazy idea?” Two sources: nature and God's revelation. First, the most obvious and basic: nature. If an outside observer were to arrive on planet Earth and monitor our behavior, this observer would notice that, objectively speaking, this very particular relationship called marriage seems to have two purposes automatically built into it. The good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. I think that all of us can see that. The marriage relationship is ordered toward the good of the spouses. Sometimes that doesn't appear to be the case...sometimes it isn't the case. And we would surely say that, if a person entered into marriage for the enslavement or for the ill of the other, this would render the marriage bond null. Whatever kind of relationship they entered, it was not a marriage.

In a similar way, if a person consciously intended to have as many children as possible, but not provide for them once they were born, again this would be some kind of relationship, but not a marriage relationship. Along these same lines, to enter marriage while consciously intending not to have an intrinsic aspect of marriage...is not to enter a marriage.

As Catholics, we also have God's revelation of Himself to guide our behavior. The Church has consistently taught, and the Saint John Paul the Great explicitly stated, that marriage is much more than a contract between two people who "really like each other". In fact, John Paul clearly taught that marriage makes visible the hidden truth about God. I don't think we realize this. What is marriage?

Marriage is an image of the Trinity. What does that mean? Among other things, it means that if we get marriage wrong, we get God wrong. How we treat marriage not only has ramifications on our relationships with each other, but also dramatically changes our perception of God. So, who is God?

We know through revelation that God is an eternal exchange of love (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). God's love has four qualities: it is free, total, faithful, and fruitful. If marriage is meant to be an icon of this inner life of God, marriage must have these qualities as well. If I work directly against any of these qualities, I distort marriage and disfigure the image of God in this world. For the most part, we all agree on this (for example, we recognize that no one can be "forced" into a marriage...they must freely enter into it). But when it comes to the quality of "fruitfulness", we seem to stop thinking like Christians.

Instead, we think like the world, which divorces marriage from children because it doesn't understand who God is.

All this being said, if a couple makes the positive act of the will to achieve a "child-free" marriage, they are not entering into the relationship that images the Trinity...and therefore are not entering into a marriage.

Last thing. "What if a couple cannot have children? Does that mean they are not married? I mean, there is no "fruitfulness", right?" Wrong. Remember, it is not the having or not having children that images the Trinity, but the "positive act of the will". If a couple is open to children, even if they cannot physically have children, their choice (their positive act of the will) is to be an image of the Trinity. They are placing themselves in God's providential care. As such, they are a profound witness to the world of the self-emptying love of God. Having made no choice to act against the marriage covenant, they participate in the fruitfulness of Christ's Cross.

PORNOGRAPHY

Adapted from: foryourmarriage.org/pornography (with several resources for education and recovery)

Henry seemed to have it all – a loving marriage, four young children, and a solid middle-management position with a local financial corporation. He and his family lived in a good suburban neighborhood and were active in their local parish, where Henry was involved in the music ministry. At 35, he was poised for a promotion to a more lucrative upper-management post.

He always worked long hours, both at the office and at home, but in recent months he had shown signs of wearing down. To his wife and children, he seemed distant, irritable and gloomy, and he was spending longer and longer hours at the computer. He often missed out on family outings, saying he needed to work. Even his co-workers noticed a change for the worse in his mood, efficiency and productivity. He simply wasn't himself anymore.

Everything came crashing down late one evening when Henry's 11-year-old daughter, Hannah, walked in on him as he watched an Internet video of men and women engaging in sexual acts. Horrified, Hannah ran and told her mother, and this now-disillusioned family suddenly had some very serious issues to face.

Tragically, Henry's situation is not unique. While pornography has been around for centuries, the problem of addiction to pornography has increased dramatically in recent years largely due to its vast presence on the Internet.

Dr. Patrick Carnes, who in 1983 first advanced the idea that a person could become addicted to sex, calls the addiction to Internet pornography "the crack cocaine of sexual addiction." Like crack, it doesn't take long for an Internet porn user to become hooked, often a matter of just a few weeks.

And like crack, habitual viewing of online porn creates an intense cycle of addiction that is extremely difficult to break without expert assistance.

- These are some of the devastating effects of Internet pornography upon marriage, the family and the individual:
- It destroys the trust and intimacy within the husband-wife relationship and often leads to the end of the marriage itself.
- It creates obstacles to real communication and personal interaction with one's spouse and with others.
- It stimulates within the porn addict a distorted view of sexuality that can lead to the desire for riskier, perverse and even criminal sexual behaviors.
- It draws focus away from one's family life and relationship with God and sets a destructive example for one's children.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Adapted from: foryourmarriage.org/domestic-violence

Some abused women or men believe that Catholic Church teaching on the permanence of marriage requires them to stay in an abusive relationship. They may hesitate to seek a separation or divorce. They may fear that they cannot remarry in the Catholic Church.

In *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*, the Catholic bishops emphasize that “no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage.” Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage. The abuser has already broken the marriage covenant through his or her abusive behavior. Abused persons who have divorced may want to investigate the possibility of seeking an annulment.

Abusive men may take a text from the Bible and distort it to support their right to batter. They often use Ephesians 5:22 (“Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord”) to justify their behavior. This passage (v. 21-33), however, refers to the mutual submission of husband and wife out of love for Christ. It means that husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church. The Catholic bishops condemn the use of the Bible to support abusive behavior in any form. Men and women are created in God’s image. They are to treat each other with dignity and respect.

Men who batter also cite the Bible to insist that their victims forgive them (see, for example, Matthew 6:9-15). A victim then feels guilty if she cannot do so. Forgiveness, however, does not mean forgetting the abuse or pretending that it didn’t happen. Neither is possible. Forgiveness is not permission to repeat the abuse. Rather, forgiveness means that the victim decides to let go of the experience, to move on with life and not to tolerate abuse of any kind again.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 [thehotline](http://thehotline.org)

PRENUPTIAL AGREEMENTS

www.thecatholictelegraph.com/a-question-of-faith-does-a-prenuptial-agreement-invalidate-a-sacred-marriage/55768

The existence of a prenuptial agreement is not automatically considered a reason for a marriage to be declared null by a Catholic tribunal, but a “prenup” can be problematic from a Catholic perspective. Such contracts usually secure property and financial rights in case of divorce. Since entering into a prenuptial agreement can indicate a predisposition to see marriage as temporary and not “till death do us part,” the reason a couple entered into a prenuptial agreement is essential to understanding the potential impact on the marriage’s validity...

To be married validly, the couple must intend marriage the way the church does: that marriage is a partnership of the totality of life in which the spouse offers all of himself or herself to the other. Entering into a prenuptial agreement may indicate that the spouse is not giving all to the other – and instead, thinking not of “ours,” but “mine” and “his or hers.” Couples entering into “prenups” also might not intend marriage as indissoluble, considering the possibility of divorce by putting certain safeguards in place to protect their property if the relationship ends. Prenuptial agreements can also potentially show that one of the spouses has placed a precondition on the marriage (i.e., “I will marry you, if ...”) and any marriage subject to a condition about the future is not valid (Code of Canon Law, 1102.1). Prenuptial agreements do not render a sacramental marriage null, but the presence of a prenuptial agreement could show that something was missing in the union that caused it not to be a valid, sacramental marriage...

Despite concerns about prenuptial agreements, the church does not always discourage them. In some cases, a prenuptial agreement may be in accord with a Catholic understanding of marriage. For instance, in the case of a second marriage between spouses with adult children, the contract might be necessary to maintain inheritance. Such an agreement might not envision a future divorce but might assure the legal claim to property in the case of the death of one of the spouses. In this case, the agreement does not necessarily envision the possibility of separation or divorce. Alternatively, a prenuptial agreement may be required if one spouse is the owner of a business or is a major stockholder in a company, no matter personal belief about, or commitment to, the marriage’s indissolubility.

Entering into marriage with the intention to give entirely of oneself helps marriages to flourish. Studies have shown that unions with joint financial accounts and which are open to children, for instance, are more likely to thrive. The church encourages couples to enter into marriage with the graces of the sacrament, trusting in the Lord to help the couple be faithful to the vows they have spoken: giving of themselves completely “all the days of their lives.”

HOW DO WE PRAY TOGETHER?

David and Jan Stoop | adapted from FocusOnTheFamily.com

Now that we have the plan, what do we do as a couple when we pray together? A basic premise to keep in mind is the importance of praying for each other. Although the Bible doesn't say directly, "Husbands and wives, pray *for* each other," it does say in James 5:16 that we are to "pray for each other so that you may be healed." That certainly includes husbands praying for wives and wives praying for husbands. One couple said, "Every time we pray together, we begin by praying a blessing over each other. We do this to edify our spouse and make them feel loved."

One of the things we do is find different prayers in the Bible and then agree to pray them for each other. For example, one of our favorites is a prayer Paul prayed for the Philippians in chapter 1, verses 9 and 10. He writes:

This is my prayer; that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. We've found this prayer to be a beautiful expression of what we want to experience in our marriage. We often use it as our theme verse for the couples' retreats we lead. Here's the way Dave would pray this for Jan:

"Father, I pray this for Jan, that her love will abound more and more in both knowledge and depth of insight, so that she will be able to discern what is the best, and will be pure and blameless until the day Christ returns."

You might want to read through Paul's letters, and other books of the Bible, looking for prayers that you can pray for each other. This can be a very meaningful way to pray for your spouse. If you don't use these prayers when you actually pray with your spouse, then show your spouse the passage and explain that you are saying that prayer for him or her.

Pray silently together. All too often, couples believe that they are praying together only if they are praying out loud. Remember that the key is to intentionally pray together. When we are talking about this with couples' groups, we suggest that they begin by praying silently. Here are the guidelines: First, sit down together and hold hands. A number of couples have commented on how important it was to be touching each other as they prayed together. Next, talk together about some of your mutual concerns as a couple. Then, as you finish the conversation, one of you should say to the other, "Let's pray about these things." Finally, spend some time in silent prayer together. Whoever finishes first should squeeze his or her partner's hand as a way of saying, "I've finished." When the other person finishes, he or she squeezes back. Congratulations! You've just prayed together. After doing this for a time, you might say "Amen" out loud as you finish and squeeze your partner's hand, and then wait for him or her to say "Amen."

Finish silent prayer aloud. The second way you can pray together is an extension of the way we have just described. It takes us a step further in becoming more open and more comfortable praying together. Instead of simply ending your silent prayer with a verbal "Amen," agree that after a squeeze of the hand, the other person will finish their silent prayer out loud. This does not have to be profound. Simply say something that expresses thanksgiving and praise for the knowledge that God is present with you and that he not only hears your prayers but also knows and hears the deeper needs of your hearts. Or thank God for being present with you, in both your time of conversation and your time of prayer.

Write out your prayer. First, write out a short, simple prayer that is meaningful to you. Do this apart from your partner. Then come together and read your prayer to your partner. After you both have finished, you may want to discuss your positive responses to each other's prayers, and how it felt for you to hear one another talk to God. Or read together some of the prayers we have included at the end of each chapter.

Pray as you talk. This approach to praying together simply means we back up in our conversation and consciously include God in the process. As a couple, you can simply stop in the middle of your conversation and suggest, "Let's pray a moment about this." If you're at the silent stage of praying together, pray silently about what you've just been talking about.

If you are verbalizing your prayers, you can simply acknowledge that God is a part of your conversation. For example, when we are talking about a concern we have, one of us might simply say, "Lord, you are here listening as we talk, and we want to acknowledge your presence and ask for your help with this situation." Even this can be simplified, or the other person may add a sentence or two in prayer. We seldom say "Amen" when we do this—we just go back to our conversation.

Over time, God's place within your conversation will become more natural, and you will become more aware of his presence.

Pray out loud, together, daily. This is the same as our earlier suggestions, except that you are now comfortable enough with the process that you can verbalize your prayer in the presence of your spouse. In our questionnaire, we asked couples to tell us how they moved from praying silently together to praying out loud (meaning, was it difficult?). We wanted to know if couples talked about it beforehand, or if it just happened. We were surprised when a number of them such as the couple we mentioned earlier, replied, "We opened our mouth and said..." We laughed, but it really does boil down to that approach—opening our mouths and saying out loud what we are praying inside.

Over the years, as we've become more comfortable with verbalizing our prayers together, we have expanded our evening prayer time to other times of the day. When we are together, one of us may feel the need to pray, so we stop and pray. It is more just a part of our conversation, even though we are still purposely stopping to pray together.

Practice "vulnerable" prayer. This type of praying together is what we think most husbands (and some wives) fear is what we have in mind when we talk about praying together. It is difficult, and we certainly don't suggest starting this way. In vulnerable prayer, we pray about ourselves in the presence of our spouse. Along with praying "Lord, help us," or "Lord, help them," we pray "Lord, help me." When we pray this way, we are comfortable enough with each other that we can bring forward, with candor and honesty, our weaknesses, our failures, and our struggles, and talk openly with God in the presence of our spouse.

This type of praying together is listed last, not because it is the best, but because it is the most difficult. Some couples may never pray this way, while others become very comfortable praying this way and feel that it is this type of praying together that really enhances their spiritual intimacy. Remember, however, the goal is not to pray vulnerably together; it is simply to pray together, consistently.

Notes:



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