

PREPARATION FOR CATHOLIC MARRIAGE

For Catholics, marriage is more than a civil contract between a man and a woman. It is a **sacramental commitment** between you, Christ and the Church, much like a baptism. The marrying priest's archdiocese dictates the requirements of how to be married in a Catholic church. Preparations can take at least 6 months to complete prior to a Catholic wedding ceremony, and in some Churches, a year is required, as well as Pre-Cana classes.

1. **Call the Parish Office:** 6 - 12 months in advance of your desired wedding date. At this time you may check the availability of the church to see if the date you would like is open. (Date will not be finalized until you meet with the parish marriage representative). **Request Wedding date & time** (date will be confirmed **ONLY** after the initial meeting with parish clergy).
2. **Meet with a parish Pastor or Deacon.** You will need to confirm that you and your fiancé are eligible for a Catholic wedding ceremony. Only one of the two participants needs to be a confirmed Catholic.
 - a. **Eligibility for a Catholic marriage.** You and your fiancé will need to complete a prenuptial investigation questionnaire, and participate in the Foccus Test (which Test your faith readiness for a Catholic marriage).
 - b. Provide your baptismal and confirmation certificates
 - c. Request any necessary dispensations or permissions. (If necessary, get copies of an affidavit of free status, annulment papers or the death certificate of a previous spouse.)
 - d. Ask for a copy of "Together for Life," a handbook for planning liturgical readings and music for the wedding ceremony to help you plan your wedding ceremony.
3. **Attend a parish-approved pre-marriage counseling program, also known as pre-cana.** Couples are asked to attend a pre-cana class offered within our collaborative and if that is not possible due to extenuating circumstances, attendance at a Joy-Filled Marriage weekend retreat is required. An approved pre-marriage counseling program covers topics such as the role of faith and prayer, finances and family planning. You will receive a certificate of completion to present to the marrying priest upon finishing the course. It may be possible to take an online course, check with pastor or deacon to confirm.
4. **Meet with Pastor:** The Pastor would like to get to know each one of you better and also discuss other marriage preparation matters. Inform him of your liturgical reading and music choices for the ceremony. The priest will also suggest that you and your fiancée go to confession prior to taking your vows.
5. **Rehearse the Catholic wedding ceremony along with the other members of the wedding party and the priest 1 - 2 days before.**
6. **Stipends.** It is customary to stipend the priest and parish for his time and use of the facilities. The suggested stipend is \$250-\$300 for use of the church paid to parish office and \$150 to priest and/or deacon.



St. Mary's Visitation Parish
 2459 146th Ave * Byron Center, MI 49315 * 616-681-9701
Request for the Sacrament of Marriage



Bride Information			
Name (Current Legal)		Date/ Place of Birth	
Current Residence		Sacraments Received	<input type="checkbox"/> Never been baptized <input type="checkbox"/> Baptized <input type="checkbox"/> 1 st communion <input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation
Phone number		Father's Full Name	
Email		Mother's Maiden Name	
Religion		If Not Catholic -- Are you interested in becoming Catholic or want more information	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is this your first marriage?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Groom Information			
Name (Current Legal)		Date/ Place of Birth	
Current Residence		Sacraments Received	<input type="checkbox"/> Never been baptized <input type="checkbox"/> Baptized <input type="checkbox"/> 1 st communion <input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation
Phone number		Father's Full Name	
Email		Mother's Maiden Name	
Religion		If Not Catholic -- Are you interested in becoming Catholic or want more information	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is this your first marriage?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Requested Date of Marriage	

CHURCH REQUIREMENTS

- Baptismal Certificates dated within six months of the wedding date
- Initial interview with officiating clergy at least six months prior to the planned marriage date
 - Completion of Pre-Marital Inventory
- Certificate of Attendance from a formal qualified Marriage Preparation Program
 - Pre-Marital Affidavits (in some cases)

CIVIL REQUIREMENTS · Certified copies of Birth Certificates from the Bureau of Vital Statistics and Marriage License