

St. Timothy Catholic Church

The Sacrament of Marriage: Frequently Asked Questions

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General Information

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Wedding arrangements begin with an interview of the couple by representative from of the parish. To schedule an appointment, please call the Rectory (310-474-1216) and ask for the parish priest.

MUST WE BOTH BE CATHOLIC?

At least one of the parties must be a baptized Catholic.

MUST AT LEAST ONE OF US BE A ST. TIMOTHY PARISHIONER?

No. Couples who are not St. Timothy parishioners are welcome to contact the Rectory to inquire if the church is available. Preference is given to those who either live within our parish boundaries or have been active, registered parishioners of St. Timothy for at least one year. The qualification can be met by the bride or groom or an immediate family member.

WHEN DO WE SET THE DATE?

Provided there are no special circumstances that arise at the first meeting, a date and time of the ceremony may be set tentatively. Normally, there is at least a six-month preparation time required for marriage, which is a policy of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Please discuss the need for exceptions with the parish priest. If special circumstances arise, it may not be possible to set a wedding date until the specific circumstances are resolved.

WHAT ARE THE TIMES AVAILABLE FOR WEDDINGS?

Weddings are usually celebrated on Saturdays at 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM. The 2:00 wedding must start on time to avoid conflicts with the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession), which begins at 3:30 PM every Saturday. Weddings at other times or on other days may be possible depending on the availability of clergy and the availability of the church.

Parking: Available on most Saturdays and Sundays. Street parking only during the school year on weekdays. Please note that parking is very limited during the week due to parking restrictions along Pico Boulevard in the afternoon and the use of the church parking lot as the school playground. In these circumstances, parking is normally available in the surrounding neighborhood.

MAY A CATHOLIC PRIEST OR DEACON FROM OUTSIDE THE PARISH PRESIDE?

Yes, this is possible, but please discuss this during your first meeting. If permitted by the pastor, the visiting Catholic cleric must provide adequate documentation confirming that he has current faculties **as well as a letter of good standing** to witness marriages.

WHO WILL ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WEDDING ITSELF?

The questions which specifically deal with the liturgy itself, i.e., the choice of readings, whether or not to have a "full Mass" or a "ceremony", etc., will be answered by the Wedding Coordinator and the priest or deacon you have chosen to witness your marriage.

Questions concerning things like music, floral arrangements and decorations, photographs and the like will be answered by our parish Wedding Coordinator. Our parish Wedding Coordinator provides an invaluable service, which includes helping to develop the ceremony, leading the rehearsal, and making sure everything runs smoothly the day of your wedding.

WHAT IF WE ARE GETTING MARRIED ELSEWHERE?

For those couples who are members of our parish and are being married in a Catholic Church outside the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, we are happy to assist you with your marriage preparation. Please refer to the accompanying schedule of stipends for marriage preparation for ceremonies held outside the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

We will (1) refer you to a marriage preparation class, (2) administer the FOCCUS communication study tool, (3) have you meet with a priest or deacon, (4) complete the Pre-Nuptial Inquiry and (5) collect the Required Documents from you. If required, we will send them, along with the Pre-Nuptial Inquiry, to the Los Angeles Archdiocese for their approval and preparation of Testimonial Letters to the Diocesan Office where you are to be married. There is a separate fee for Testimonial Letters payable to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

DO YOU OFFER WEDDINGS, REHEARSALS AND MARRIAGE PREPARATION IN SPANISH?

No.

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Required Documents

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED TO BE MARRIED?

Marriage celebrates the unbreakable commitment between a man and a woman who are free to make this mature decision in the community of believers. As a result, certain documents are required to establish your sacramental status within the Church, your freedom from any previous unions, as well as sworn statements attesting to your clear understanding of the nature and responsibilities of marriage. When a Catholic prepares to marry someone from another faith tradition, a specific document or "dispensation" is also required.

The following items are required documents:

1. BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE

A newly issued copy of your baptismal certificate (with notations regarding sacraments and prior marriages) is required for those who are Catholic. This can be obtained by contacting your church of baptism and requesting a new certificate. For those baptized in another Christian faith, a copy of the original baptismal certificate is sufficient.

2. PRE-NUPTIAL WITNESS FORMS (PROVIDED BY THE PARISH)

This is a sworn statement, witnessed by a priest, deacon, minister or notary public, attesting that you have never been married before, in either a Church or civil ceremony, and that there is no known impediment to the marriage. If you have been married before, this witness form will help us determine how to proceed.

Parents normally fill this out, but others who have known you most or all of your life may complete it. Two letters are required for each party to the marriage. You will be provided with copies for your use.

This requirement may be waived by the clergy with whom you meet depending on your circumstances.

3. PERMISSIONS AND DISPENSATIONS (PROVIDED BY THE PARISH)

In the case of an ecumenical marriage (i.e., the union of a Catholic and a person baptized in another Christian faith), a "Permission for Mixed Marriage" form must be completed by the priest or deacon and either signed or witnessed by the parties.

In the case of an inter-religious marriage (i.e., the marriage of a Catholic and a person that has not been baptized in another religious tradition), a "Petition for Dispensation From Disparity of Worship" must be completed by the priest or deacon and either signed or witnessed by the parties.

In both cases, the parties are expected to demonstrate a willingness to commit themselves to honest dialogue concerning their respective religious traditions, and to make sincere efforts to understand and respect each other's beliefs. As part of the process, the Catholic party signs a declaration stating that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of falling away from the faith and promises to do all in his or her power to have all the children baptized and brought up in the Catholic church. The non-Catholic party acknowledges an awareness of the obligations of his/her Catholic spouse to preserve and profess his or her faith and to do all possible to baptize and educate the children from the marriage in the Catholic faith.

4. CIVIL LICENSE

The Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk registers all civil documents. Therefore, any questions you have regarding the procurement of the civil license or other civil concerns should be addressed to the Registrar-Recorder. See: <https://lavote.gov/home/county-clerk/marriage-licenses-ceremonies/general-info/about>

You must have a wedding license. Licenses are valid for ninety days from the date they are issued. The marriage license must be given to the Wedding Coordinator no later than the day of the rehearsal. Please note that it is against the law for the ceremony to take place without a civil license.

Once the marriage license has been signed by the priest or deacon, the marriage is recognized as valid by the State of California and a civil ceremony is not required. Similarly, there is no need to get married civilly prior to the church wedding.

If you have already been married civilly and are convalidating your marriage in the Catholic Church, only a copy of the marriage license is required.

5. PRE-NUPTIAL INQUIRY

This takes place with the priest or deacon and is for the purpose of determining your freedom and appropriate intentions in your preparation for marriage.

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Wedding Coordination

IS A WEDDING REHEARSAL REQUIRED?

Yes. It represents an important part of the preparation for the wedding celebration. The rehearsal is scheduled with the Wedding Coordinator prior to the wedding. As many of the wedding party as possible should be present for this rehearsal as well as any individuals whom you have selected to proclaim the Scripture readings during your celebration. Out of respect for everyone involved, as well as any other rehearsals that may be planned about the same time, please make sure that your entire wedding party arrives on time. Your rehearsal time is limited to one hour. Please call the Wedding Coordinator no sooner than 5 months prior to your wedding date to schedule your rehearsal date and time.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS REGARDING FLOWERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS?

While the most important thing on the day of your wedding is your spiritual readiness to begin the task of deepening your bonds of love within the context of a truly Christian relationship, couples usually have questions regarding flowers, photographs and the like. We therefore provide the following guidelines.

FLOWERS

Floral arrangements enhance the beauty of any environment, and we welcome your creativity with regard to this area. As a sacramental celebration, the principal goal of the liturgical environment is to help convey the mysteries of God's saving love, and not merely to decorate space. The following guidelines should be followed:

- a. **Wedding couples will use the church's florist.** In the event of multiple weddings on the same day, brides may contact each other and the florist to share expenses. We encourage couples to share these expenses whenever possible. Please check with the Wedding Coordinator for names and phone numbers of other wedding couples.
- b. The flowers are considered a gift to the church. We ask that, at a minimum, two arrangements be left for use by the church during the following week. Typically, these are the two arrangements on the rear altar.
- c. Flowers or bows may be tied on the end of the pews with rubber bands or plastic clips. No tape of any kind is to be used. Swaging of ribbons on pews that blocks access is not permitted.
- d. Church decorations or furniture may not be moved for a wedding. Flower arrangements may be placed on the shelves behind the altar, in front of the altar, or on the side altars. Please be respectful while working in the sanctuary area. Please refer to the Wedding Plan for exact locations.
- e. The church environment is decorated according to our liturgical calendar. There are certain colors used during the different seasons which will be prominent, and which may influence your decision as to arrangements. The Wedding Coordinator can discuss these with you.
- f. Garlands and aisle runners are not permitted.
- g. Candles may not be used on the pews due to fire safety concerns. Candelabras are not permitted on the altar or in the aisles. A unity candle stand is permitted in the sanctuary. Please discuss this with the Wedding Coordinator.
- h. Bubbles, flower petals, birdseed, rice or doves are not permitted.

MAY WE TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE CEREMONY?

We want to make sure that your wedding is a day that you remember and a day that you can view again. A Catholic wedding ceremony or Mass is primarily a celebration of a couple's love in union with our worship of God as an act of thanksgiving for this love. While we catch this moment on film, we must also keep the primary emphasis in focus. For this reason, the following guidelines must be followed by your photographer. Please provide them with a copy these requirements.

- a. All photo/video work must be done with the available light during the Mass or ceremony. No flood, strobe or spotlights are permitted during the Mass or ceremony.
- b. Your photographer may use a flash for the seating of parents, the Processional (entrance of the bridal party and bride), and the Recessional (the bride and groom exiting the church).

These same requirements apply to your guests. Prior to the start of the liturgy, the Master of Ceremonies will remind everyone that flash photography is prohibited.

- c. Posed pictures using flash photography may be allowed in the church before or after the ceremony if other weddings are not scheduled. Please discuss this in advance with the Wedding Coordinator. There are also areas around the church **that** serve as very nice backgrounds for photographs (e.g., the front lawn of the Rectory and the front steps).
- d. Video cameras (without floodlights) are permitted only in certain areas. Discuss this with the Wedding Coordinator prior to the wedding.
- e. **e. All photographers and videographers are not allowed in the sacristy and sanctuary. They may enter the crying room. Failure to comply will result in expulsion of photographer and/or videographer.**
- f. All photographers and videographers must check in with the Wedding Coordinator prior to the ceremony to receive any specific requirements of the presiding clergy.
- g. Please remind the photographer not to rearrange the furniture in the church.

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The Liturgy of Marriage

The liturgy of marriage is a moment of joy and celebration. In our Catholic tradition, we hold that the couples themselves minister this sacrament or the vows to one another. While it is necessary that an official witness of the Church preside over the celebration (normally, a priest or deacon), the active involvement of the couple is essential in every aspect of planning the celebration. This planning should always keep in mind that the ceremony is first and foremost a moment of prayer for all who are present. All aspects of the celebration should reflect the noble simplicity befitting Christian worship.

HOW DO WE PLAN THE WEDDING?

Together with the priest or deacon who will be presiding at your liturgy and the Wedding Coordinator, you will have a part in planning your ceremony. When you meet with the Wedding Coordinator, you will outline the basics of the wedding ceremony. On your final meeting with the Wedding Coordinator, priest or deacon, you will discuss the specific readings from Scripture and liturgical options that you have chosen. This will help clarify any further questions you may have regarding the ceremony at that time. You will also need to schedule a meeting with the Wedding Coordinator regarding music.

SHOULD YOU CELEBRATE YOUR MARRIAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF A MASS (NUPTIAL MASS) OR A NON-EUCHARISTIC CEREMONY?

When a wedding is celebrated at Mass, the Rite of Marriage takes place after the Liturgy of the Word and the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful. The Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows. Only a priest can preside at a Mass. When a wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, it is celebrated within the context of a Liturgy of the Word in which the Rite of Marriage takes place after the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful. This Rite concludes with prayers and blessings. Either a priest or deacon can preside at a wedding celebrated outside of mass. You should make your decision in consultation with the Wedding Coordinator, priest or deacon who is assisting in the preparation of your marriage. You will want to consider the following points:

What is our relationship to the Sunday Eucharist? Are we faithful to the church's Sunday prayer? Have we been away from the community's prayer? Have we committed ourselves to returning?

In light of your answers to the above questions, is Mass or a Liturgy of the Word the better context for the celebration of our marriage?

If one of you is from another faith tradition and therefore unable to share Holy Communion and the wedding is celebrated during Mass, you may want to consider what this means. Do you want to include something in this celebration in which only one of you will be able to take part? Who will your guests be? Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them be with you and pray with you at your wedding?

WHO ARE THE MINISTERS OF THE WEDDING CELEBRATION?

In addition to you (who as a couple are the ministers of the sacrament or vows of Marriage) and the priest or deacon, others will have important ministerial roles in your wedding celebration. Members of your wedding party, particularly ushers, will greet the invited guests in a spirit of hospitality and welcome. Musicians will provide a musical setting that respects the dignity of this moment and that will support sung prayer by all. Beyond these ministries, we ask you to consider individuals who might function in the following special roles in your wedding:

Lectors. Whether your celebration takes place in the context of a Mass or a non Eucharistic ceremony, the proclamation of God's Word in the Scriptures is an integral part of the wedding celebration. You may select one or two individuals, depending on the number of readings you select, to proclaim God's Word to the community gathered. Those whom you select should first and foremost be people of faith who actively participate in the liturgy of their church.

Gift-bearers. For those who choose to celebrate the Nuptial Mass, it will be necessary to invite two people from the assembly to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine, which will be placed upon the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Again, the fullest form of participation is best served by inviting active, practicing Catholics to act as gift-bearers.

Communion. Distribution of the Body of Christ in the form of the host is the most practical method of receiving communion during a wedding liturgy. Communion under both species (i.e., body and blood in the form of host and wine) may be requested for the bride and groom. Please discuss the distribution of communion under both species for your guests with the parish staff member who is assisting in the planning of your wedding liturgy.

MAY WE HAVE A UNITY CANDLE, FLOWERS TO MARY, A VEIL AND CHORD OR ARRAS AND LASSO?

Signs, symbols and gestures are intrinsic to worship, but an overabundance of them tends to become superfluous and redundant. The primary symbols of your marriage covenant are the exchange of vows and rings, and if a Nuptial Mass is celebrated, this includes the sharing of the one bread and the one cup as a sign of unity and love. Together with these essential signs and symbols, others of a secondary nature are sometimes selected. A Unity Candle can be chosen. Flowers to Mary, the Mother of God are done as a gesture of prayer and petition that normally takes place toward the end of the wedding celebration. These are presented by the couple, never the bride alone. Veil and Cord or Arras and Lasso are used in Filipino and Hispanic cultures to symbolize mutual support and unity in love.

In determining to include additional elements in the ritual of marriage, couples should be aware that where liturgy is concerned, "less is often more." That is, focusing on doing the key elements well and with care will be much more satisfactory for both the couple and the assembly than trying to do too many things at once. Please feel free to discuss these elements carefully with the Wedding Coordinator arranging your wedding before making a decision.

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Marriage Preparation

WHAT KIND OF PREPARATION IS REQUIRED FOR MARRIAGE?

Preparation for marriage is far more than just the gathering of required documents. At the heart of responsible marriage preparation stands the opportunity for you to seriously reflect in a comprehensive and challenging way on the meaning of this important step in your lives. While reflection and in-depth sharing of your future together has undoubtedly already begun, we offer further opportunities for you to reflect on your lifelong journey with each other.

First, we require each couple to complete a communication study tool called FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study) and meet to review the results. This inventory is designed to assist you in being attentive to the areas in your relationship which need development, and to affirm you in those areas of strength. You should plan to take FOCCUS at your initial meeting with the Wedding Coordinator, priest or deacon. We then we ask that each couple review the results of the questionnaire. This appointment should be scheduled upon completion of the FOCCUS questionnaire. Couples may need to meet up to three times to address issues raised by FOCCUS.

Second, we require each couple to participate in a marriage preparation class sponsored by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. These can either be one-day workshops or an Engaged Encounter Weekend Retreat. The one-day workshops are generally offered on Saturday while the Engaged Encounter Weekend Retreats generally run from 7 p.m. Friday through 3 p.m. Sunday. These marriage preparation courses are held at various locations in the Los Angeles/Santa Barbara area. Because of their popularity, they are generally booked up two to three months in advance. You should make arrangements to complete the workshop or retreat as soon as possible, but no less than three months before your planned wedding date. You can view future marriage preparation class dates at:

<https://familylife.lacatholics.org/marriage-preparation>

WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE BE DOING TO PREPARE BEST FOR OUR SACRAMENT?

Our ministry at the parish is to assist you as an engaged couple. The most important part of your preparation for marriage is your own relationship with Christ the Lord, who leads and guides you through life. You are encouraged, therefore, to pray for the graces and strength to respond generously to God's call to the vocation of marriage. The required steps for

marriage preparation should be viewed not so much as goals to be accomplished but as challenges to grow in the practice of your faith.

Because of the importance of this sacrament for the Church and realizing the many tensions and conflicts which arise in our busy lives today, participating in the life of the Church by being faithful to Mass is necessary for a healthy and lasting marriage. The Lord taught us, "without me, you can do nothing." Our entire happiness and security are always found in being faithful to the Lord.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) is highly recommended for all who share the Catholic Faith as part of your spiritual preparation for marriage. Confessions are regularly scheduled on Saturdays as listed in the parish bulletin. Please note that confessions are not celebrated at the time of the rehearsal.

DO YOU OFFER MARRIAGE PREPARATION IN SPANISH?

No.

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Schedule of Offerings & Stipends

The following paragraphs offer information on offerings and stipends for a marriage being celebrated at St. Timothy Church. Unless otherwise noted, they should be payable to **St. Timothy Catholic Church**.

WHAT IS THE FACILITY AND MARRIAGE PREPARATION OFFERING?

The offering for the use of St. Timothy Church is \$1,500. **\$500 is due as a non-refundable deposit for the parish to confirm the date.**

WHAT ARE THE STIPENDS FOR THE INDIVIDUALS WHO ASSIST WITH YOUR WEDDING?

The following is a list of individual stipends. Please make individual checks payable to the Wedding Coordinator, cantor, organist, **minister/priest or other services rendered. These checks should be given to the Wedding Coordinator at the wedding rehearsal at the latest.**

Administrative Fees: \$500 includes:

1. Collecting, preparing & processing of documents: \$100
 2. Presider: \$200 stipend
 3. Wedding Coordinator: \$200 This includes the services related to planning the liturgy, leading the rehearsal and day of the wedding.
- \$500 deposit due upon approval of wedding date.
 - Balance due two months prior to wedding.

Organist: **Must use our musicians or pay bench fee (which may vary depending on what equipment will be used/borrowed); exception may be made in consultation with the Music Director, but bench fee is still required.** Varies. (Check payable to the Organist or cash)

Cantor/Soloist: **Must use our cantors or pay bench fee (which may vary depending on how many people are needed); exception may be made in consultation with the Music Director, but bench fee is still required, and must still work with our musician regarding content.** Varies. (Check payable to the Cantor/Soloist or cash)

WHAT IS THE COST FOR ENGAGED ENCOUNTER OR OTHER MARRIAGE PREPARATION CLASSES?

These are separate fees from the church fees.

1. Information on the Engaged Encounter or marriage preparation classes can be obtained from <https://familylife.lacatholics.org/marriage-preparation> or <https://ceeofla.org/>.
2. Information on FOCCUS Marriage Inventory can be obtained here <https://www.foccusinc.com/>.

WHAT IF WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE MARRIED AT ST. TIMOTHY BUT ARE PREPARING FOR OUR WEDDING AT ST. TIMOTHY?

If you are celebrating your marriage elsewhere, we can assist in preparing the required paperwork to generate Testimonial Letters and the administration and review of the FOCCUS Marriage Inventory. The fee for a wedding elsewhere yet preparing at St. Timothy's is \$500. Certain documents will be out of pocket, such as Testimonial Letters, are issued by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Archdiocesan processing fees are payable to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and are approximately \$40. Please note that there is an additional charge of \$30 if rush processing is required (i.e., if you submit your paperwork closer than 30 days before the wedding) or if you are being married outside of California or the United States. These fees will be confirmed by the parish.

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