

# Holy Cross Catholic Church

## Marriage Policy and Guidelines

- 1) The engaged couple should contact the pastor/deacon at least 6 months before the anticipated wedding date. Reception halls should not be booked before clearing the proposed date with the pastor/deacon and making sure that he and the Church are available on that particular date.
- 2) At the first interview with the pastor/deacon, it would be helpful to have *recent copies* of your Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation certificates. The reason we ask for *recent copies* of those records is that they give up-to-date information (including past Church marriages) which would not be noted on original certificates. If you are Catholic, all of your Sacramental certificates should be able to be obtained from your Church of Baptism.
- 3) At the initial meeting with the pastor/deacon, the engaged couple is given instructions on how to register online for one of the marriage preparation programs offered by the Catholic Diocese of Lafayette ("Foundations" One Day Program, "Engaged Encounter" Weekend Program, "Online Catholic Marriage Prep" Program). The website address of the Catholic Diocese of Lafayette Marriage and Family Life is: [www.diolaf.org/marriage](http://www.diolaf.org/marriage)
- 4) Engaged couples are also required to take the "Prepare and Enrich" Online Pre-Marital Assessment Survey. The pastor/deacon will discuss the results of this online survey with the couple in hopes that additional helpful insights into the couple's relationship can come to light.
- 5) During the penitential season of Lent, the decorations in the Church building are barren to help us call to mind Jesus' 40-day battle with the devil in the desert (cf. Matt 4: 1-11). Weddings, because of their festive nature and decorations, are discouraged during the season of Lent.
- 6) Louisiana law requires that the civil marriage license be obtained from the local Clerk of Court's Office. The license must be purchased at least 24 hours prior to the ceremony. It expires 30 days from the date of issuance. Please mark your calendar and make plans to purchase your civil marriage license. Please call the Clerk of Court beforehand to ask what they require for the purchase of a marriage license or visit: <https://www.lpclerk.com/departments/marriage.cfm>
- 7) If the bride and/or the groom is a registered, active, financially-supporting parishioner of Holy Cross Parish, there is no set "fee" required by the Church to celebrate your wedding. If you wish to make a financial donation to the Church to help us pay our sizable monthly bills, we would be very grateful to receive it! If you would like to make a personal donation to the priest celebrating your wedding, it should be clearly earmarked as "personal." Otherwise, all donations received will go into the general operating fund of our Church.
- 8) Non-parishioners will be charged \$500 to use our Church to help defray our sizable monthly operating expenses.
- 9) If you wish to have an out-of-Parish priest/deacon come in and celebrate your wedding, that is fine. After a wedding date is set with the pastor/deacon, the visiting priest/deacon should contact the pastor/deacon to coordinate the couple's preparation process.

- 10) Oftentimes, in a marriage ceremony involving two Catholics, a Mass with Holy Communion will be requested. **IF** the pastor/deacon sees the couple actively attending Mass each weekend, this option will be permitted. Your attendance or lack of attendance at weekend Masses will be an indicator to the pastor/deacon how important receiving Jesus' Body and Blood in Holy Communion is to you. The request for a wedding Mass with Holy Communion will be evaluated at the final meeting with the pastor/deacon.
- 11) Any decorations or flowers used for the wedding must be removed immediately after the wedding ceremony is concluded. The couple should have a "clean-up crew" on standby who will pick up right after the ceremony is completed so that we can prepare for the next event taking place in our Church. Please check with the pastor/deacon before moving or re-arranging any flowers, decorations, or furniture that is already set up in our Church.
- 12) Catholic Church marriages are a sacred religious event. Photographers and videographers are allowed to *discretely* move about the sanctuary during the ceremony but are not allowed to stand behind the altar. If desired, couples may gather in the sanctuary after the wedding ceremony for a few quick photos but, since there is usually something directly following the wedding, this should be done quickly.
- 13) Because of the small size of our Church's sanctuary, the maximum number of bridesmaids/groomsmen is 10 couples. Any more than that creates crowding in the sanctuary at the time of the vows.
- 14) The style of the bride and bridesmaids' dresses should not be revealing (*low-plunging top or high slits in the skirt*) so that the focus of the congregation can be where it should be ... on prayer to God. Strapless/sleeveless dresses with bare shoulders are discouraged.
- 15) The latest time for a Saturday evening wedding Mass is 1 pm. Anything later than that interferes with the upcoming 3 pm Confessions and 4 pm Mass.
- 16) Because it presents a trip hazard (especially to women wearing high-heel shoes), an aisle runner is not allowed down the main aisle.
- 17) If candles are used for the wedding, each should have a drip cup so that the melted wax does not spill on the carpet.
- 18) If a unity candle is desired, it should be purchased by the couple beforehand at a store that sells such items. The couple is free to take the candles with them at the conclusion of the ceremony as a souvenir of their wedding day.
- 19) Our Church has an appointed layperson who conducts the wedding rehearsals and instructs the wedding party as to how the ceremony will proceed. Because priests/deacons do many weddings per year and have to know the structure of the ceremony by heart, there is no way that he can keep track of requests that each wedding is done a little differently. The services of a "wedding planner" could best be used to plan the reception and other events outside of the official Church wedding ceremony.
- 20) A stipend of \$100 is paid by the couple to our Holy Cross wedding rehearsal leader. The wedding rehearsal leader would conduct the wedding rehearsal and be present for the wedding to help with the flow of the ceremony.

- 21) Marriage is the most sacred and solemn commitment a person will ever make in his/her life. If the bride or groom or any of the wedding party is visibly intoxicated, the wedding will not take place. If a person needs alcohol to "calm his/her nerves," maybe it is a sign of a serious problem that needs to be looked at. No alcoholic beverages of any kind are allowed on Church grounds.
- 22) If any bows, flowers or other decorations are fastened to the ends of the pews, they are to be attached with thin florist's wire and not with tape on thumb tacks-which pulls off the finish on the pews and damages the wood.
- 22) Archways were originally used by some people at outdoor weddings to give an impression that the couple was in some sort of a "building." Since your wedding will be celebrated inside of the Church building, archways are not allowed as they block the vision of the altar, the tabernacle, and of Jesus Christ on the crucifix-which should be our central spiritual focus.
- 23) Small children are not be pulled down the main aisle in a wagon (believe it or not, this request is becoming more and more common)!
- 24) The wedding party should dress appropriately for a sacred event (no tennis shoes, camouflage clothing, cowboy hats, etc...). Those might be fun ideas for the reception following the wedding.
- 25) If music is desired for the ceremony, it is the couple's responsibility to contact the musicians. If you would like some names and phone numbers of qualified musicians, the pastor/deacon can provide these for you. For guidelines in choosing appropriate music for your wedding, refer to the "Music Planning Sheet" that the pastor/deacon will give to you.
- 26) Ushers and lectors should attend the wedding rehearsal so that they know what to do on the wedding day. If pre-recorded music is to be used, the person in charge of operating the system should come to the rehearsal with his/her equipment. Also, each song should be cued up properly so that they can be quickly and easily located when needed.
- 27) No rice, birdseed or flower petals are to be thrown inside or outside of Church as this creates a janitorial problem and, more seriously, a danger of someone slipping and hurting themselves.
- 28) After taking part in the pre-marriage seminar and obtaining a certificate of attendance, it is the couple's responsibility to call the pastor/deacon to schedule one more meeting with him to discuss the details of their ceremony.
- 29) Because there is usually an event immediately following your wedding and your rehearsal, it is important that we begin the wedding rehearsal and the wedding on time.

# Marriages between Catholics and Non-Catholics

- 1) A wedding Mass with Holy Communion is an appropriate way for two practicing Catholics to celebrate the fullness of their spiritual union in Jesus Christ. If the bride or the groom is not Catholic, a wedding Mass would be very awkward because the non-Catholic spouse would not be able to partake of Holy Communion. The word "Communion" can be broken down into the words: "common" and "union." When one receives Holy Communion in the Catholic Church, he/she is making the statement that he/she shares a "common union" of belief with us. Unfortunately, Christianity has splintered into tens of thousands of groups who believe a variety of things about crucial issues of faith and doctrine. In Scripture, Jesus requested His followers to reconcile with one another before coming to the altar to worship: *"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift"* (Matt 5: 23-24). May all Christians work for reconciliation and unity among ourselves so that we can soon fulfill Jesus' wish that "[we] may be one as [He and His Father] are one" (cf. John 17: 22).
- 2) In a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the Catholic spouse signs a promise that they will do their best to present their Catholic faith to their children and have them baptized as Catholics.
- 3) Every now and then we will get a request for a minister from another Church to "say a few words" at a wedding being celebrated in our Church. We have had mixed success with this practice. On one hand, we have had some ministers come and, within a couple of minutes, offer to the couple and the congregation a few spiritual thoughts and his/her blessings. On the other hand, we have had some ministers come and give a second sermon (*which was longer than the original one*) and even give a subtle "pitch" for Catholics in attendance to abandon their Catholic faith and consider joining his/her Church. If you feel that it is important for a minister from another Church to take part in your wedding ceremony, he/she will be allowed a few minutes to come up and offer a prayer for the couple.