

MARRIAGE PREPARATION GUIDELINES

Our Lady of Victory Parish

INTRODUCTION

Your wedding day is a very important event for you as a couple, for your families, and for your parish community. In planning this day you are spending countless hours making decisions about so many things -- the wedding gown and tuxedos, the attendants, the reception, the photographer, and so on. While all these facets are important in making your wedding day memorable, the most important part of the day is when the two of you present yourselves before the Altar of God and ask Him to consecrate your new relationship as husband and wife.

The union of man and woman in marriage was ordained by God, our Creator, so that married partners would provide loving care for God's children. Every marriage is to be holy, and according to Catholic belief, Jesus, our Divine Lord, instituted marriage as a Sacrament for those who are baptized. Holy Matrimony is a beautiful gift of God to humankind.

In conferring the Sacrament of Matrimony upon each other in the presence of the Church's witnesses and the family of faith, a Christian man and woman give themselves totally to each other. All that they have and all that they are is given freely and without reservation for as long as they both shall live. They enter into a solemn and sacred covenant, a vowed life with each other and with God. They accept the responsibilities inherent in the founding of a new family, the basic unit of both society and Church.

The Sacrament of Matrimony is one of seven Sacraments whereby God continues to be present and active in His Church and world, making us holy. Sacraments belong not just to the individual, but to the whole Church. That is why the Sacrament of Matrimony is celebrated and lived out within the context of the parish community.

By celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony, Catholic parties signify that they intend to remain faithful members of a parish community. This means regular participation at Mass on Sundays and celebrating God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The couple gives evidence of their faith in their daily life, especially by sharing their Catholic faith with their children. They contribute time, talent and treasure to the work of the parish.

It is assumed that Catholics preparing for marriage have already received the Sacrament of Confirmation. If you are not confirmed, Confirmation should be conferred before the wedding if at all possible.

Requesting the Sacrament of Matrimony while you are not practicing the Catholic faith is contrary to the very nature of the Sacrament. Sometimes for one reason or other adults become lax in the practice of their faith. If you have fallen into the trap of regularly missing Mass on Sunday, you are expected to assume your role as a mature Christian in the Church. If you have been away from the Sacraments and the Church for a period of time, you are encouraged to use this wedding preparation time to become a participating member of your Catholic faith community. The priest or deacon assisting you with your wedding plans will want to discuss these religious issues with you. If you have been away from the Church, you will be welcomed back without judgment and with open arms.

The rules that follow are intended to help you carefully plan your wedding and to assist you in preparing to live out the Sacrament of your Marriage in Christ. We wish to help you prepare not only for a wedding but also for a marriage that will be a lasting joy for each of you. The union of a Christian husband and wife is a sign to the community; their sacramental relationship signifies and participates in the union of Christ and His Church. To protect this holy union and to help husband and wife fulfill their responsibilities, certain laws, both civil and religious, have long existed. The Church, therefore, has adopted certain guidelines to help couples toward a full awareness of the sacredness and responsibilities of their vocation in Christian marriage.

CHURCH RULES AND PARISH GUIDELINES

1. Both parties must be eligible to marry in the Catholic Church.

To be eligible, both bride and groom must never have been married before. If one of you has been married earlier, that party must provide proof of the death of the former spouse or proof that their former marriage has been annulled.

2. At least one party is to be a practicing Catholic and a registered and participating member of Our Lady of Victory parish.

A registered member is a person who has on file in the parish office a current census form. Participating members attend Mass regularly, engaged in parish activities, and help on parish projects. Participating members also help the parish financially.

Catholic parties whose parents are registered and participating members of Our Lady of Victory may request that their wedding be celebrated here, provided that the pastor of the parish where they are registered gives permission. Every adult Catholic should be registered in a parish where he/she has residence.

3. Both parties are to be at least 21 years of age.

If either party is under 21 years of age, the Bishop's permission for the wedding is required. Parents of the under-21 party will be asked to complete a questionnaire, supplied by the Diocese, regarding the couple's maturity and readiness for marriage.

4. Interfaith marriage.

In an interfaith marriage the Catholic party is required to reaffirm his/her faith in Jesus Christ and that he/she will continue living that faith in the Catholic Church. The Catholic party promises that he/she will do everything possible to have the children baptized and raised as Catholics.

5. Allow at least six months for the period of your preparation. Most couples contact their pastor a year or more before their proposed wedding date. The engaged couple will meet with the priest at least four times, in accord with the outline provided below. Further, prior to the wedding both parties are required to complete one of the two marriage preparation programs currently available.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The priest or deacon assisting you with your marriage preparation will provide more information about the choice of programs, and how you may register for one of them.

1. The Sponsor Couple Program is a “like to like” ministry whereby a trained married couple from Our Lady of Victory parish is matched with an engaged couple. It entails four sessions, each lasting about two hours. These meetings take place in the home of the married couple or in another suitable place.
2. The Weekend Marriage Preparation program, developed by the Diocese, is the second option for marriage preparation. In this format married couples conduct the program for a group of engaged couples. The participants, however, commute to the site for both days, Saturday and Sunday. Only one Weekend per year is scheduled in our area, in Bettendorf, but the Weekend is also held in Muscatine, Williamsburg, and other locales. For registration information, go to www.davenportdiocese.org and click on Faith Formation under the Offices tab, and scroll down to Marriage Preparation Weekends. Click on that and registration information is provided.
3. Other options -- to be discussed with your pastor:

If you are a student at a university with a Catholic Student Center and your fiancé is nearby, part of your preparation may be taken there.

If you are living independently away from Davenport and your fiancé is nearby, you may arrange for part of your preparation in a parish in the town where you reside.

MEETINGS WITH THE PRIEST OR DEACON

Five meetings are outlined, but sometimes two meetings are combined into one session.

The first meeting enables the couple and priest to become acquainted, after which the wedding date can be scheduled on the church calendar. The purpose of this meeting is to ascertain the engaged couple’s relationship with the parish and why they wish to be married in the Church. The priest will ask about their freedom to marry and will provide an overview of the couple’s preparation program.

During this first meeting the couple will complete the first half of the pre-nuptial investigation forms. The priest or deacon will advise the couple about documents to be submitted. If permission or dispensation is required for the wedding, the appropriate request will be explained.

In the second meeting the couple begins the FOCCUS Inventory (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study). The Inventory identifies the couple’s strengths and weaknesses of their relationship and their level of communication. It reports areas of agreement and disagreement regarding numerous issues and attitudes.

The third meeting entails a presentation and discussion of the results of the FOCCUS inventory, which may be continued in the fourth meeting.

The fourth meeting is devoted, if necessary, to completing the discussion of the FOCCUS Inventory. The prenuptial investigation forms and permission/dispensation forms are completed. Planning the wedding liturgy is also a topic, and any questions regarding the rehearsal and wedding ceremony are addressed.

The fifth meeting finalizes the liturgy plan and provides the opportunity for addressing any other concerns or questions.

DOCUMENTS NEEDED FOR THE WEDDING

1. **Baptismal documents.**

Catholic parties need to submit to the priest or deacon assisting them with wedding plans a recent issue of their baptismal certificate. *Recent* means that the date on the document is within the last six months. When requesting this document from the church where the baptism occurred, ask that all notations regarding additional sacraments be included.

In an interfaith marriage, the party who was baptized in a church other than Catholic is to present to the priest or deacon a copy of his/her baptismal information, including the date of baptism and the name and address of the church of baptism.

2. **Marriage License**

An Iowa Marriage License is required. The license can be applied for at the Scott County Courthouse or in any Iowa county of your residence. Call ahead to insure the accuracy of this information. You will need to have a witness at the time of application. There is a waiting period of at least three workdays between the day of application and the day for obtaining the license. Please bring the license and the return envelope to the rehearsal so that the priest can inspect it. He will complete it accurately before gathering the signatures of bride and groom and the two witnesses on the day of the wedding.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

1. **Place of Marriage**

Catholic marriages are celebrated in the Church in the presence of the priest or deacon and two witnesses.

If yours is an interfaith marriage, the wedding may be celebrated in a Protestant church. If this is your intention, please inform your priest at your first meeting since he must arrange for a dispensation to be granted by the Bishop of the Catholic party.

Our Parish Center may be suitable for your reception. Please contact the Parish secretary for further information and its availability.

2. Marriage within Mass or Marriage without a Mass

When both parties are Catholic, a Nuptial Mass is recommended.

In an interfaith marriage it may be preferable to celebrate marriage without a Mass. The decision rests with the couple in consultation with the priest.

The wedding of a Catholic with a non-baptized person is celebrated without Mass.

3. Date and Time of the Wedding

The date and time of the wedding celebration is set only by the pastor, who will call you within a few days after you contact the parish office to schedule your wedding. Dates are reserved on a *first come, first served* basis.

Most weddings are celebrated on Saturdays, but weekday weddings are also permitted, in consultation with the pastor. A Saturday afternoon wedding must begin no later than 2:00 PM. The wedding party and guests must vacate the church by 3:30 PM due to the weekend liturgical schedule of the parish.

Weddings ordinarily are not celebrated on Sundays, and certainly not during Holy Week (the week preceding Easter). A wedding scheduled during the Seasons of Advent and Lent will comply with the regulations and spirit of the Season.

4. The Rehearsal

A rehearsal of all participants is usually held the evening before the wedding. A parishioner usually volunteers to assist as a coordinator of the rehearsal and wedding. If you wish this service, please contact Maureen Mosse at 386-8658.

Allow 45 minutes to one hour for your rehearsal. It is common courtesy for all those involved to begin the rehearsal on time. If you wish to invite the priest or deacon to the rehearsal dinner, please extend the invitation well in advance.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE WEDDING

1. Celebrant of the Wedding

Normally the celebrant is the pastor or deacon of the parish in which the couple is being married. If yours is a wedding without the Nuptial Mass, the pastor may delegate a deacon to oversee the marriage preparation and perform the ceremony. If a bride or groom has a relative who is a priest or deacon, you may invite your relative to be the celebrant. He also may help with the wedding preparation program you undertake. A priest friend of the couple is welcome to concelebrate your wedding.

In an interfaith marriage, the non-Catholic party may wish to invite his/her minister to participate in the ceremony. We welcome your minister's involvement. Simply provide the minister's name, address, and phone number to the pastor so that your minister can be invited to take part in the ceremony.

2. Witnesses

The laws of Church and State require two qualified witnesses. The best man and maid of honor typically fulfill the role of witnesses. The witnesses do not have to be Catholic since their function when they sign the official documents is to attest to the fact that your marriage took place.

3. Readers

The couple may choose family members and friends, who are good public speakers, to proclaim the Scripture readings and the Prayers of the Faithful. It is recommended that they attend the rehearsal and practice their parts.

4. Flower girls/Ring bearers

Flower girls and ring bearers are permitted, but children should be at least five years of age and possess enough self-confidence to take part in a dignified ceremony. Flower girls are not to drop petals, real or artificial, during the procession.

5. Altar Servers

If your wedding is taking place within the context of Mass, it is desirable to have two Altar Servers to assist the priest. You may select relatives who have been trained as servers, or you may arrange for servers by contacting our parish office at (563) 391-4245.

6. Organists, Musicians, and Soloists

You may employ musicians as you wish for your wedding: organist or instrumentalists, soloist or choir. They are to provide music that reflects the joy, solemnity and holiness of Christian marriage. It is the couple's responsibility to contact the musicians and schedule their services. Fees for the organist, musicians, and vocalist are to be arranged with them when you schedule their services.

If you wish to have organ music and do not have a name of an organist, you may contact Andy Kuennen, the accompanist for our parish, at (563) 723-2958. Andy can also advise you regarding wedding music, and he can identify other musicians and vocalists for your wedding.

Soloists familiar with our wedding services include Connie Creen (386-3645), Kathy Peterson (388-5192), John Wagner (391-2805) and Emily Pries (563-940-2596).

RULES REGARDING THE CHURCH ENVIRONMENT

1. Church Decorations

Our church is naturally beautiful, and the sanctuary is adorned with seasonal and liturgical decorations. These decorations are not altered for a wedding.

Couples often wish to have floral arrangements for their wedding. Please know that you are welcome to use the silk flower arrangements, which are available at no additional fee. Simply contact Maureen Mosse at 386-8658 to learn what is available.

Any candles other than the candles for Mass are to be furnished by the wedding couple. Candelabras may be used, but with dripless candles only. The use of a Unity Candle is no longer allowed by Diocesan rules as of 2011. The “Sand Ceremony” is not allowed per diocesan regulations.

No decorations of any kind are placed upon the main altar.

Nothing is to be attached to the pews, which may damage the wood (from tape, glue, etc.), but you may use the parish’s pew hangers, which do no damage.

The use of a runner is discouraged.

2. Bride’s Room and Groom’s Room

There is a room in the church designated as the bride’s room, available to the women in the wedding party who wish to dress there. The groomsmen may use the servers’ room.

Light snacks of finger food and bottled water may be brought into these rooms for the wedding party. Sodas and greasy fast foods are not to be brought in because they easily stain clothing and carpet.

All valuables should be secured prior to the start of the wedding, and all personal items are to be removed from these rooms immediately after the wedding.

The bride and groom are to designate persons to tidy these rooms and remove all garbage, which is to be taken to the dumpster located at the southeast corner of the parking lot.

3. Photography and Video Recording

Still and video pictures are permitted. Photographers are requested to use discretion and avoid interference with the progress of the wedding ceremony. Photographers are not to be in the sanctuary during the wedding ceremony itself, and guests should be discouraged from taking flash pictures during the ceremony, especially during the exchange of the vows.

Pictures may be taken before or after the wedding. For a Saturday afternoon wedding, it is recommended that most shots be taken before the wedding since the wedding party and guests must leave the church by 3:30 PM, the time when the Sacrament of Reconciliation begins.

4. Alcohol

No alcoholic beverages of any kind are to be consumed on church premises. Wedding rehearsals and ceremonies are subject to cancellation if alcohol is brought to church or consumed there.

5. Smoking

Per Iowa law, smoking is not permitted in any area of the church building, on the grounds of Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church, or John F. Kennedy Catholic School.

6. Rice, Birdseed, and Confetti

Rice, birdseed, confetti and similar material are not permitted because they are messy and create a safety hazard. Please inform the wedding party and guests concerning this rule.

7. Clean-Up

To ready the church for the next service, please appoint family members and friends to put the church, bridal dressing room, and server room back in order after the wedding. The Church and dressing rooms are to be restored to the condition in which they were found.

WEDDING FEES

The following fees have been established for weddings taking place at Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis for those who may not be able to afford them for whatever reason.

For your convenience, before the completion of your wedding preparation you will be given up to four envelopes to use for the fee payments. The altar server fees are omitted, of course, if your wedding does not include Mass. All fees are to be submitted at the rehearsal, along with the marriage license.

For the Parish: \$150 for a registered and participating member of the parish.
 \$300 for non-participating and non-members.

This fee includes parish-based marriage preparation and wedding planning materials.

For the Priest \$ 50 - \$100 is typical, but whatever you wish to give
Or Deacon:

Altar Servers: \$ 10 minimum for each Server.

Organist/Vocalist: As predetermined with your organist/vocalist.

We hope that you find these pages of information helpful for your planning. We want to assist you as best we can for that day when you will enter into Christian Marriage, a relationship of mutual love. May God bless you during your time of preparation. May God continue to be with you as you embark upon a most beautiful and fulfilling journey of faith as you live your vocation of Christian Marriage? If we can assist you in any other way that is not mentioned here, please let us know.

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