

## **PREPARING FOR AND CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE** *Our Lady of Victory Cathedral Wedding Guidelines*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*What a wonderful gift it is for a parish community to celebrate the love of a man and a woman in the Sacrament of Matrimony. In witnessing this love, the community is reminded of the love of Christ for His bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:22).*

*In ministering to the engaged couple, and in celebrating their wedding, the Church not only expresses its love and support for the couple, but acknowledges the value of their married life as a help to each other in attaining holiness and in becoming witnesses to the wider community. In forming a family, they become a domestic church. By word and example they are the first heralds of the faith to their children.*

*In light of the seriousness of the vocation of Christian marriage, the Church has an obligation to do all that it can to preserve the dignity of marriage and offer its members the guidance and support, which will assist them in preparing for the life-long commitment of marriage.*

*Therefore, we rejoice with you, as you prepare to enter into Holy Matrimony. You will be kept in our prayers, so when all seems hectic or even out of control, know that you are being remembered in prayer. We encourage you to do the same. Remember to pray. Attend Mass each week, frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation, read and pray the Scriptures and remember the power of healing and comfort found in the rosary.*

### **PROCEDURES FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

- **A Lifetime Commitment**--The parish community shall take responsibility for preparing couples not only for their wedding day, but for the lifetime commitment of living a Christian marriage.
- **Minimum of Six Months of Preparation**--The formal preparation for marriage shall begin at least six months, before the anticipated date of the wedding.
- **Setting the Wedding Date**--No firm date for a wedding shall be set until the conclusion of the couple's first meeting with either the priest or permanent deacon of the parish. If a previous marriage(s) exists, no firm or even tentative wedding date shall be entered in the parish calendar, until freedom to marry has been established through appropriate canonical procedures and documentation.
- **Marriage Preparation Program**--In addition to individual sessions with the parish minister, which includes FOCCUS and Natural Family Planning, couples are asked to attend an Engaged Encounter Weekend.

## **A Quick Review of the Marriage Preparation Process**

1. The initial session with the priest and/or deacon of the parish. It is the responsibility of the couple to contact the priest and to schedule a date and time for all sessions. Couples are also required to register for the Engaged Encounter Weekend.
2. The second session with the parish minister. Complete the *FOCCUS* program and register for the *Engaged Encounter Weekend*.

(*FOCCUS* is an acronym for *Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study*. *FOCCUS* explores basic expectations, communication and problem-solving skills and attitudes on money, children, religion, sexuality and in-laws. It is designed primarily to be a facilitative instrument, raising questions and identifying concern areas for couples so that they can think about and discuss them. The *Engaged Encounter Weekend* focuses on the communication, spiritual and personal needs of engaged couples, as they prepare for the covenant of marriage. Presenting teams of married couples and a Catholic priest present a series of carefully prepared presentations. Couples are given the opportunity to question, examine, and deepen their relationship with one another and with God through personal reflection and couple dialogue).

3. The third session with the parish minister is to review the results of *FOCCUS* program and includes information on *Natural Family Planning*.
4. The fourth session with the parish minister. This session includes reviewing preparations for the liturgical celebration.
5. Other sessions may be necessary, depending on the circumstances.

## **THE SCHEDULING OF THE WEDDING AND FEES**

- Due to the scheduling for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Saturday evening Mass, a wedding is to be scheduled no later than 2:00 p.m. Evening weddings are permitted no earlier than 7:00 p.m.
- Weddings are not scheduled during the season of Lent, due to the penitential nature of the season.
- Those of the faithful who are not members of the parish must have the written recommendation of their pastor, prior to scheduling a wedding at Our Lady of Victory Cathedral. In order to provide for the cost of electricity and other expenses, a donation of \$500.00 is requested for the use of the church.
- There is not a set fee for parishioners but, in order to defray the cost of utilities, parishioners are encouraged to offer a gift to their parish, for the use of the church building.
- It is customary to offer the officiating minister(s) and altar server(s) a stipend, for the assistance offered to the couple in preparation for and in the celebration of their wedding.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE WEDDING LITURGY**

*Individuals who are involved in the wedding liturgy are integral to the celebration. When selecting those who would like to be involved in your wedding, the following should be considered:*

- Ring and flower bearers should be old enough to comprehend the involvement of the liturgy. It should be noted that children below 5 years old often have a difficult time in terms of their attention spans and their apprehensions about performing in public. Wagons, or any other mode of transportation in which the children can be placed, are not permitted in the church.
- When selecting the number in the wedding party, couples are to keep in mind that the larger the number of attendants, the more difficult it is to coordinate the sacramental celebration.
- Lectors should be selected from those who have experience or the necessary background to publicly proclaim God's Word.
- Altar servers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) are those who are involved in these ministries. According to policies for EMHC in the Diocese of Victoria, they are to serve only in their respective parishes.
- A wedding coordinator, familiar with the Catholic tradition, is to be selected.
- Photographers and video operators must consult with the presider, regarding guidelines and placement in the church before the beginning of the wedding Mass/service.
- Decorators and florists must be informed by the couple regarding parish regulations.
- A designated person(s) should be selected for cleaning the church after the wedding liturgy.

## **THE WEDDING**

A Catholic wedding takes place in the context of the Sacred Liturgy. It is part of the Church's praise of God. During the Rite of Marriage, the Church seeks God's blessings for the newlyweds and the couple professes their solemn vows to God and to each other. The Rite of Marriage may be celebrated within a Wedding Liturgy or within the Nuptial Mass. Normally, the Nuptial Mass is celebrated only when both parties are practicing Catholics.

## **SAMPLE OUTLINES FOR THE WEDDING LITURGY PROGRAM:**

### **PROGRAM OUTLINE (WHEN MASS IS NOT CELEBRATED):**

#### **INTRODUCTORY RITE**

Greeting and Opening Prayer

#### **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

1<sup>st</sup> Reading (Old Testament)

Responsorial Psalm (normally sung)

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading (New Testament)

Gospel Acclamation (sung)  
Gospel  
Homily

#### RITE OF MARRIAGE

Consent  
Exchange of Vows  
Blessing and Exchange of Rings

#### CONCLUDING RITE AND FINAL BLESSING

Our Father  
Nuptial Blessing & Dismissal

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##### INTRODUCTORY RITE

Greeting and Opening Prayer

##### LITURGY OF THE WORD

1<sup>st</sup> Reading (Old Testament)  
Responsorial Psalm (normally sung)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reading ( New Testament)  
Gospel Acclamation (sung)  
Gospel  
Homily

##### RITE OF MARRIAGE

Consent  
Exchange of Vows  
Blessing and Exchange of Rings

##### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer

##### COMMUNION RITE

Our Father  
Nuptial Blessing  
Holy Communion

##### CONCLUDING RITE AND FINAL BLESSING

#### **DECORATIONS FOR THE WEDDING**

- If flowers are used, the parish does not permit the use of artificial flowers.
- No pins, tacks, nails, tape, or glue may be used to attach any decorations to the furniture or walls of the church building. Any bows or ribbons used on the pews must be tied, not taped, wired, or pinned.

- Floral arrangements are permitted in the sanctuary, but not on the altar itself. The arrangements should not impede the movement of the wedding party or of the ministers. Any free-standing decorations should not block the view of the ambo, the altar, the presider's chair, or the credence table.
- Church floral arrangements, if removed for the wedding, should be returned to their proper place after the wedding.
- Excessive use of candles and candelabra should be avoided.
- No obstructive decorations should be in the center aisle, such as standing candles, arches, or runners.
- In order to facilitate the air-conditioning system in the church building, all entrance doors are to remain closed. Therefore, in order for the wedding guests to enter the church as quickly as possible, wedding guest registry books are not to be placed in the church.
- Due to safety and maintenance concerns, the throwing of flowers, flower petals, rice, birdseed, or any other material is not permitted inside or outside of the church building nor is the use of aisle runners allowed..
- In order to be prepared for the evening Mass, all equipment, personal property, and wedding materials must be removed by 4:00 p.m.
- The church building is available for decorating at 9:00 a.m. The air-conditioning system will be turned on at 10:00 a.m. and the lights at noon. It is recommended that photographs, prior to the wedding, be scheduled from noon and conclude no later than 1:30 p.m.
- If flowers used during the wedding Mass/service are to be removed after the celebration, the Parish Office should be contacted, in order for the parish to purchase other floral arrangements for the weekend Masses.
- The use of the Unity Candle is discouraged. It is not part of the liturgical ritual for weddings. A better use of it would be at the reception.

#### **BUILDING USE GUIDELINIES:**

Care and respect of the church as a place of worship and the house of God is to be given at all times.

There is to be **NO FOOD OR DRINK BROUGHT INSIDE THE CHURCH.**

There is to be **ABSOLUTELY NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ON CHURCH PROPERTY.** This includes the parking lot. Anyone with alcohol will be asked to vacate the property.

There are to be no concealed handguns or weapons brought inside the church buildings.

Cell phones and pagers should be turned off and placed on mute when inside the church.

Before, during and after the wedding, a spiritual decorum should be maintained: no running or playing around by children, no loud or excessive talking by adults.

Proper attire should be worn at the wedding rehearsal by all in the bridal party. That means no shorts, halter tops, tank tops or mid-drifts, baseball caps, torn jeans, sunglasses, flip flops or other inappropriate attire.

Brides should be mindful of the necessary modesty of dress that is appropriate for a sacred place and for sacred worship. Please keep this in mind, when selecting the wedding gown and the bridesmaids' dresses. Low cut dresses, in either the front or the back, are not appropriate for such a setting. Please use good judgment.

## **MUSIC FOR THE WEDDING**

*The music at a wedding liturgy sets the tone for many levels of experience. It invites the assembly to participate with heart, mind, and spirit. Music is not simply a "nice touch" to the liturgy, but indeed draws the whole person into a spirit of celebration. This can happen through music with words as well as through instrumental music. Usually, both kinds of music are used in the wedding liturgy.*

- Musicians are asked to contact the Parish Office for needed details concerning the liturgical celebration.
- Prelude music may include one or more vocal selections, which should serve to unite the thoughts of the assembly toward the sacrament which is about to be celebrated.
- For the processional, instrumental music is highly encouraged. A hymn which is festive and gives thanks to God is most appropriate as an opening hymn. The "Bridal Chorus" ("Here Comes the Bride") from the opera "Lohengrin" by Richard Wagner is not permitted nor is the "Wedding March" by Felix Mendelssohn.
- It is recommended that the acclamations during a wedding Mass be sung. This includes the Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, and the Eucharistic Acclamations such as the Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, and the Lamb of God.
- A program printed specially for the wedding ceremony is suggested, but is not required. This program contains the order of worship, as well as the musical parts to be sung by the assembly.
- The Music Selections for the wedding must be appropriate for liturgical use and expressive of the Christian vision of marriage. The distinction between "sacred" and "secular" can be obscure, often a fine line. Music facilitates prayer at a wedding liturgy and should be chosen so that it draws people into the sacred celebration and fosters their participation in a way that words alone cannot do. The music chosen should be as familiar as possible to those who have gathered.
- The Lord's Prayer is the prayer of the whole assembly. According to the liturgical guidelines of the Church it is either recited or sung by the entire congregation. It is not to be sung as a solo.
- As stated above, music enhances the wedding celebration. Therefore, taped music is not to be used for a wedding liturgy.
- Fees for the organist, soloists, cantors, and instrumentalists are set by the individual musicians and should be discussed with them.

## **SUGGESTED MUSIC OUTLINE FOR THE LITURIGICAL CELEBRATION**

*Prelude*—approximately 3 songs or about 15 minutes before the liturgy.

*Procession*—instrumental

*Gathering Hymn*—a song within the Catholic tradition may be sung by the assembly

*Psalm/Alleluia*—sung

*Presentation of the Gifts*—instrumental, solo, or assembly

*Acclamations*—sung by the assembly

*Communion*—instrumental, solo, or assembly

*Recessional*—instrumental

## **RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE AND AFTER THE WEDDING LITURGY**

- The marriage license is to be given to the presider at the rehearsal. **Please place a stamp on the envelope** and, after the wedding, the secretary will mail it to the county clerk of the county where it was purchased.
- The wedding coordinator/organizer must be present at the rehearsal.
- All those involved with the wedding should be reverent when gathering in the church for the rehearsal and for photographs before and after the wedding.
- It is the responsibility of the wedding coordinator to make sure the Bridal Room is cleaned. No drinking, smoking, or eating is permitted in this room or in the church building. No alcohol is permitted in the church or on church property.

Again, congratulations on your engagement. The time of engagement is an apprenticeship in fidelity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2350), states: *“Those who are engaged to marry are called to live chastity in continence (i.e., self-restraint). They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity”*

### **PRAYER FOR ENGAGED COUPLES**

Heavenly Father,

In your great love you have established marriage as blessing and grace for your people.

Bless and assist those who are preparing to receive this wonderful sacrament. Give them your patience during times of stress. Give them reassurance in times of doubt and give them joy as the time of their wedding draws near.

Increase their love for one another, for their families and for You.

May the prayerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the bridal guest at Cana, be theirs all the days of their lives.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord. Amen

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION INFORMATION

Date of wedding: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of wedding: \_\_\_\_\_ (No later than 2pm)

Rehearsal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Rehearsal Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Presider: \_\_\_ Pastor \_\_\_ Parochial Vicar \_\_\_ Deacon \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Concelebrating Visiting Priest: \_\_\_\_\_

### INFORMATION OF THE BRIDE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parents: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

### INFORMATION OF THE GROOM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parents: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### INFORMATION FOR THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION

Celebration with: \_\_\_ Eucharist \_\_\_ No Eucharist (Wedding Ceremony Only)

Music Provided By: \_\_\_\_\_

Altar Servers: \_\_\_ Provided by Family \_\_\_ Provided by Parish

Eucharistic Ministers: \_\_\_ Provided by Family \_\_\_ Provided by Parish

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Marital Investigation Packet Completed</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Baptismal Records Received</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Engaged Encounter Weekend</i> Attended</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>FOCCUS</i> Completed</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Explanation of Procedures and Guidelines</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Civil Marriage License Obtained</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Wedding Liturgy Prepared</li></ul> |
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Prepared by: \_\_\_ Pastor \_\_\_ Parochial Vicar \_\_\_ Deacon \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Check List for Wedding Ceremony**

- ✓ Official Witnesses (*Two are required*)

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- ✓ Altar Servers (*One to three are needed*)

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- ✓ Gift Bearers (*Two are needed*)

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- ✓ Lector(s) (*One or Two*)

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- ✓ Eucharistic Ministers (*Three are needed, unless a deacon or other priests will be present*)

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- ✓ Organist/Cantor

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- ✓ Wedding Coordinator

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## **Check List for Needed Documentation**

- ✓ Newly issued baptismal certificates for groom and bride.
- ✓ Affidavits of free status
- ✓ Marriage license. Please bring it to the rehearsal, with a stamp on the envelope for mailing after the wedding.

## **The Exchange of Marital Consent**

*It is the exchange of consent, which brings forth marriage. This consent must be given without any force or pressure of any kind and is to be exchanged as an act of the free will of the parties. Therefore, the vows are an essential element at any wedding. The hope is that the bride and groom will prepare for this important exchange by memorizing the vows and exchanging them lovingly and freely on the day of their wedding.*

### **FOR THE GROOM**

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.**

### **FOR THE BRIDE**

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.**

## **The Exchange of Rings**

*The wedding ring is a sign of perpetual love. It is easily the most recognizable external symbol of a marital relationship. It is circular, which is a symbol for eternity—it has no beginning and no end. The hole in the center of the ring is a symbol of the gateway, or door, leading the husband and wife, through their marriage covenant, to eternal life with God. It is traditionally worn on the third finger of the left hand, for it is believed that the vein of that finger directly travels from the heart.*

### **For the Groom**

**\_\_\_\_\_, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

### **For the Bride**

**\_\_\_\_\_, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

*(Approved 10/14/13)*

