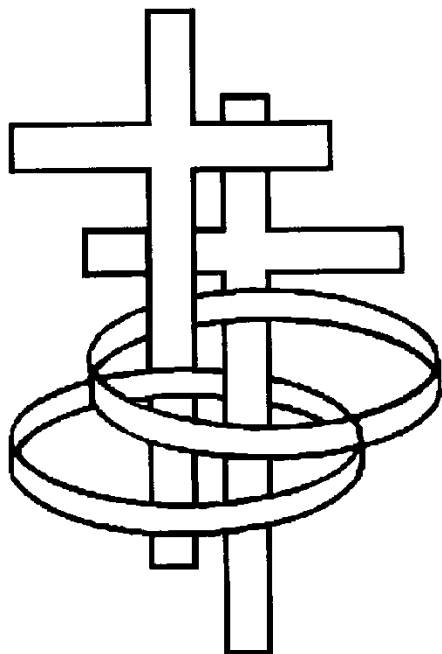


**Instruction on Nuptial Masses
and the
Celebrations of Holy Matrimony
Outside of Mass**



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Introduction

The loving family of at this church extends to you sincere congratulations and best wishes for your marriage. Holy matrimony is a sacred occasion in which you exchange consent to marriage before God, a clergyman and the assembled congregation of family and friends. You will publicly vow your faith and your love to each other and your desire to be united for life.

Our prayer is that you will enjoy planning your nuptial Mass or the celebration of holy matrimony outside of Mass. We hope working with the musicians, florists, tailors, caterers and everyone else will be a pleasure. This day is important and will hold many memories for you. May it be as holy and lovely as you wish!

This day is not as important, however, as the quality of the rest of your life as you live out a holy marriage. Our church family wishes you the best each day of your married life and that the love you have on your special day will be but a flicker compared to the love and holiness that will grow and mature in the years ahead until death do you part!

Because of the sacredness of this occasion and the daily-married life you begin, the following instructions will help you. All of them are designed to make your liturgical celebration truly prayerful and to send you off into a special relationship with each other and God in holy matrimony.

This is an instruction booklet and not a rulebook. Feel free to discuss any of these matters with the clergyman preparing you for marriage. If you do not discuss those things you would like to do differently, it is presumed that what is said here is acceptable to you.

It is the policy of the dioceses in Louisiana that you begin your premarital preparation by meeting with a clergyman at least four to six months before the anticipated date of your marriage. This allows time for you to look at your relationship in the new

light of a lifetime commitment together in holy matrimony. In addition, it allows for the clergyman and you to come to know each other better.

The setting of the date and time of your wedding by the clergyman is a legal matter. Once it is set, then you may hold the clergyman to that date and time in the church in which the marriage is scheduled. Preparation for marriage is a time for you to conclude whether you are properly prepared, rightly disposed and appropriately marrying at this moment in time with the assistance of the clergyman. Therefore, the date and time of your marriage is not set until it is evident that these essential elements of readiness have been thoroughly considered. You may **not** announce your wedding until the clergyman has agreed with you that these requirements have been met in accord with diocesan and universal law.

On the last page of this Instruction is a handy “TO-DO” list. There are also pages for you to make a list of questions as you go. Please make certain that you re-read the sections of this booklet from “The Rehearsal...” through “Photographs...” the day of your rehearsal.

Prepare

In the initial stages of working together, you will meet with the clergyman and take a kind of opinion survey known as *Prepare*. From the results, a program is designed to facilitate open communication between you and your future spouse.

This process has been created with the realization that you have strengths and weaknesses, as do all couples, in the way in which you relate to each other and to those around you. The *Prepare* program is useful in helping the two of you identify areas of your relationship in which you have strengths and weaknesses.

Prepare is not a pass/fail test, but rather an opinion survey that provides a snapshot of how each of you thinks and

what each one feels with regard to a set of issues which may come up in your future together.

Your opinions are compiled and returned to you. As a couple, you and the clergyman will set up a minimum of three (3) follow-up visits to do a series of communication and goal setting exercises to help you learn the results of the survey. You can then take appropriate steps to celebrate your strengths and build up your weaknesses. The *Prepare* and the follow-up appointments should be completed within the first two months after your initial meeting with the clergyman.

Other Preparation

One of these:

[Catholic Marriage Prep Online](http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com/online-pre-cana-info/online-course-content)

<http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com/online-pre-cana-info/online-course-content>

One-on-one Catholic, interactive, mentor-led Pre-Cana program

[Engaged Encounter](http://www.engagedencounter.org/index.php/district-3)

<http://www.engagedencounter.org/index.php/district-3>

Spend a weekend with your future spouse in private dialogue in a couple-guided program

and also this with one of the above:

Symptopro Fertility Education

<http://www.symptopro.org/>

Even medical doctors say they did not know what this on-line, mentor-led course teaches

Catholic Baptismal Certificates

If you are a Catholic, you **must** request a **new** copy of your baptismal certificate from the church in which you were baptized. (If you were baptized here in Sacred Heart Church, the clergyman will obtain it for you.) This certified copy **must** be issued within six months of the date of your marriage.

You may simply phone the church where you were baptized to obtain a copy. You should call during normal business hours. It is sufficient to ask for it from the secretary who answers the phone. You will need to provide your name, date of birth and parents' names. If you have an older copy of the certificate, you can also give the date of baptism, and the volume and page number of the baptismal register where your baptism is recorded. If you find that the church parish no longer exists, ask the clergyman preparing you for marriage to help you obtain a copy. Do not try to track down a certificate without help.

When requesting the certificate, please inform the person answering the phone that this baptismal certificate is being requested as part of preparation for marriage and **all notations** are important. Please have the baptismal certificate sent to the clergyman preparing you (see front cover).

Baptismal Certificates for All Others

If you are baptized, it would be great to have a copy of that certificate. It does not have to be a recent one. A photocopy of any certificate will do. If you do not have one, there are several options. If you can remember your own baptism, it is sufficient that you yourself complete an affidavit provided by the clergyman. Alternatively, one or both parents can complete affidavits of baptism.

In any case, your parents, or someone who has known you nearly as well all of your life, **must** complete an affidavit that you have never been married to anyone in anyway prior to your proposed marriage.

The clergyman will provide a form for the affidavits when you meet for preparation.

Music, Musicians, Vocalists

(Yes, the following means that it would never cross our minds that it would cross yours to have your wedding with recorded music in a Catholic church since you have never seen a formal service with it.) The church documents on music state that “Music, when it is done well, takes the liturgy to another level.” While music and singing are not required, the addition will enhance your wedding and contribute to the beauty of the liturgy and provide lasting memories. Our director of music is an accomplished organist, pianist, and vocalist, and will assist you in selecting parish musicians and vocalists that are familiar with Catholic music. Secular music selections are best utilized at the reception. Other Catholic musicians from outside the parish can also be used; they would need to be approved prior to your wedding date.

You are responsible for the fees for musicians and vocalists. If they are required to audition or come to the rehearsal, any additional fees or other costs are also your responsibility.

The Rehearsal and Your State Marriage License

The rehearsal is an important event and helps set the tone of the celebration. Due to the fact that there may be another rehearsal the same day, please be on time for the rehearsal. Remember that during the rehearsal we are in a sacred place. So, dress and act accordingly. There also may be others nearby who wish to pray as you rehearse.

You as bride and groom have total responsibility for everyone's conduct at the rehearsal! As a Christian bride you should not practice superstitions. Brides do walk and participate fully in the rehearsal. Good worship takes serious preparation.

From *Together for Life* (included with this booklet) you plan your ceremony **as a couple**. There are two versions: one for a nuptial Mass and the other for ceremonies without Mass. If your plans change, ask for the other booklet! Fill out the planning sheet and bring at least three copies of it to the rehearsal.

If your marriage is to be celebrated at Mass between Saturday at 4 PM and Sunday at midnight during the Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter seasons, you must use the readings and Mass prayers assigned for the Sunday. The same may be true of holy days or other special days. Ask about this possibility when you talk about your marriage date with the clergyman.

Make sure everyone who has a role in your ceremony knows the order of procession and sequence of events during the ceremony **before** the night of the rehearsal. You should have also decided how each person will enter and where each one will stand.

At the rehearsal the clergyman will speak with the **bride** about any decisions to be made regarding the ceremony. A coordinator (usually an older friend or relative of the bride) at the main entrance of the church is essential.

Decorations should **not** be put in place on the evening of the rehearsal and certainly not during it. Coordinate the proper timing with the clergyman preparing you.

Your state marriage license must be obtained in accord with Louisiana law. You have a choice between the standard marriage license and the covenant marriage license. While the clergyman can sign the affidavit the state requires for covenant marriages, Catholics should obtain the standard license since can be a marriage in contemplation of divorce!

Neither type of state license is signed during the celebration of holy matrimony. They will be signed during the rehearsal except the clergyman's signature that will occur after the ceremony.

You will be given one copy of the real state license and the pretty, but non-legal, state certificate after the nuptials are celebrated. The clergyman will then send the other two copies of the state license to the appropriate clerk of court.

A church certificate of celebration of holy matrimony will be mailed to your new home shortly after your nuptials. When you receive it, this may be a good time to request a certified copy of the state license from the courthouse where you obtained it. It is most important for you to have proof that your marriage has been recorded there.

All copies of the state marriage license and three (3) copies the appropriate version of the planning sheet from *Together for Life* must be brought to the rehearsal.

Church Flowers and Decorations

Please speak with the Parish Manager, 318.445.2497 x14. She will show what is available through our parish family. Kneelers are automatically provided and are also free of charge.

Our church has a variety of candelabras that can be used in decorating. Fee for use of candelabras will be the cost of

replacement of the candles. Candelabras are not needed, however, especially during the daytime. Greenery may be used from the church greenhouse free of charge.

Generally, one main flower arrangement with two smaller ones flanking the tabernacle will be beautiful and plenty to decorate our church. Less (flowers, candles and money) in this case is more!

So that the entire parish community can share in the joy of the wedding, we ask that the altar flowers be in place before the Saturday Mass and left for the weekend Masses. An announcement of your marriage will be placed in the parish bulletin indicating, "Mr. and Mrs... have donated the flowers this weekend in honor of the holy marriage of Mr. and Mrs...." or something similar as you direct. Please provide the printed copy for the bulletin in advance!

See what the Parish Manager, 318.445.2497 x14 can do for you for these three arrangements.

In any case all flower arrangements must be fresh and be provided by a florist. However, there is a problem that many florists often make arrangements that are either too small or of flowers that will not enhance the beauty of the wedding.

Furthermore, no flowers may be placed in front of the tabernacle or altar; access to the aisles may not be completely blocked by pew arrangements. Nothing should be placed on the floor at the ends of the pews to become footballs when people exit the pews. No candles or flowers may be placed on top of the altar. Artificial flowers or arches of any kind may not be used. Church furniture cannot be rearranged.

To avoid the possibility of scratching or otherwise damaging the pews, bows and other objects may be placed on them only with a special hook designed for this purpose. **Absolutely no tape** (no matter what it is claimed that it will not do) **and no wire, nail or other kind of hook may be used.** In this case and all others ask for help from the Parish Manager,

318.445.2497 x14. Please do not become frustrated trying to find the right thing; ask.

Green plants such as ferns may be placed at the base of the candelabra as decoration. No small forests, please. All plants and arrangements should not leak water and be provided with a plastic drip pan!

Because of safety and other concerns, do not block access to the pews or doors. Do not use rugs, aisle runners or carpets inside or out. Please do not drop anything on the floor (such as real or artificial flower petals etc.) **or throw anything anywhere** (such as rice, birdseed, confetti etc.).

No birds, pets etc. should be brought into the church or displayed outside of it.

Please speak with the Parish Manager, 318.445.2497 x14 about our wedding coordinator. Services provided include: being present during rehearsal in the church, setting up the guest book provided by the wedding party, setting up the kneelers, turning on the microphones, setting up the credence table, preparing the gifts, turning on and off lighting, air-conditioning/heat and opening and closing the church.

A wedding coordinator is an absolute must. You may want to have several depending on the size of your wedding.

You may also want to have assistance beyond your wedding party while you are dressing. Moreover, the gentlemen might also need assistance. Often, they do not know how to wear formal clothing properly. Their boutonnieres are always a problem with which they need help.

Customs at Weddings

It should be pointed out that holy matrimony can be celebrated without renting or buying anything including special clothes and decorations. The typical decorations, customs, photos and videos are often driven and expanded by a huge, sales-oriented market.

Read the information which follows knowing that things are negotiable. The clergyman preparing you and many others can help you sort through your many options. Every effort will be made to help you plan a beautiful liturgical celebration so that you are satisfied and proud of it.

The greatest compliment that can be paid to you is that your celebration and everything about it reflected who you truly are and showed the values you have. A simple, but elegant liturgy is very touching for everyone, and easier and less expensive for you. A show is always seen for the thin veneer and little substance it is.

Please distinguish between what is appropriate for each of the following: (1) the liturgical celebration of a Nuptial Mass or Catholic Rite of Marriage outside of Mass; (2) a wedding; and (3) a reception or party. Each one is a very different type of event.

Start your ceremony on time. Other services may follow. It is also a courtesy to your guests.

There is no place in a Catholic nuptial Mass or a celebration of holy matrimony outside of Mass for the “unity candle”. In the Catholic ritual, the exchange of consent brings about your marital unity and a token of it is the exchange of rings. More than one sign of unity diminishes the importance of each. Furthermore, the sign of unity of a couple who are both Catholic is the reception of the Eucharist together as spouses.

Also not in the Catholic ritual is “the kiss.” However, a couple should always kiss at the sign of peace. Of course, this loving act should not appear lustful, suggestive or too dramatic.

Please make certain that no cars are decorated in the parking lot. This wonderful custom may take place at the reception.

Bride's Room (located in the Youth Center) and Groom's Room (located in the Community Center)

Someone from your party must be responsible for clearing out everything including trash from these rooms **before** leaving for the reception. This is necessary so that the services that will follow yours can use the rooms for other purposes. Your coordinator might be the person delegated this important responsibility.

Use of Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco

It is important to remember that it is the practice and the law of the Catholic Church that marriage vows can be exchanged only between persons who can exercise a truly free will at the time of consent. This means that the bride and groom must be free of all drugs or alcohol in order to have a free exchange of their consent. In addition, no one in your party can be under the influence of alcohol or drugs if the marriage is to take place. Anyone, even if it is you yourself, appearing to be even slightly "under the influence" shall be asked to leave. If he/she fails to comply, he/she will be escorted immediately from the premises by the police.

Absolutely no alcohol or controlled substance may be brought or consumed on the property at anytime before the ceremony by anyone. Smoking is permitted outdoors and away from the buildings only!

Photographs and Videotapes

These provide a lasting record of your nuptial Mass or celebration outside of Mass. It is also essential that everyone not interfere with the sacredness of the liturgy. We ask, if posed pictures are to be taken before the ceremony -- a good idea, that they be completed at least 30 minutes before the liturgy is to begin.

Once the Mass or ceremony has begun, take all the photos and video you want from the nave (pew level) only. In other words, no one other than the wedding party is to be on the "stage" area or any other elevation in the church at any time whatsoever. Please note that flash bulbs and video lights are not to be used during the ceremony because they might distract or blind the clergyman or you. In addition, we request that no one stand or place equipment on the pews.

Please respect your guests at the reception and the need to clean and set up the church for other services. Limit your photographer to no more than 30 minutes of post-ceremony pictures in the church. Better yet, take these, or most of them, at the reception hall after you have had a bite to eat and something cool to drink. Everyone will look a lot more relaxed and feel better!

No Cost for the Celebration of Sacraments

There is no fee for the church for your nuptial Mass or celebration of holy matrimony outside of Mass. There is no charge for use of the church, the bride's room or the groom's room. The services of the clergyman are free.

Your questions for the clergyman:

Your “TO DO” list:

Both bride and groom participate in the following:

Initial appointment with the clergyman (bring this Instruction with you): _____

Prepare follow-up appointments(s): _____

Other marriage preparation plans: _____

Other plans:

Choose your Scripture and prayers: _____

Meeting(s) with organist/musicians: _____

Fill out the wedding planner and make three copies of the final draft: _____

Meeting(s) concerning the rehearsal dinner: _____

Meeting(s) concerning hall rental: _____

Meeting(s) concerning catering _____

Any required approvals of the clergyman two (2) months before wedding: _____

Final appointment with the clergyman if needed: _____

Re-read the sections of this booklet from “The Rehearsal...” through “Photographs...” the day of your rehearsal.

Rehearsal: _____

Our married life begins: _____

The loving family of our church wants your special day and the rest of your life in holy matrimony to be wonderful. This *Instruction* was developed with your best interests and the common good of all in mind!

May God bless you, your family and friends as you celebrate marriage in the Lord Jesus.

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