

Part 1: MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The time between your engagement and wedding is one of the most precious times in your life. Far from being merely a time of waiting, it offers an opportunity to lay the building blocks of a rich, life-long relationship of love.

To help you with this, we require that both of you actively prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage. You are expected to use the following steps as part of this preparation.

1. Initial interview to obtain basic information about you and your faith life, to explain the preparation program, and answer your initial questions. We will set the date for the service at this meeting.

2. PREPARE -- a personal and relationship inventory to increase awareness of relationship issues in order to stimulate communication. This instrument measures how well you are communicating in eleven important areas and helps us to tailor the program to your benefit.

If the results show any special needs, these will have to be given extra attention.

The cost is \$35. Please pay when you take it. This fee is direct to Life Innovations Inc.

3. Engaged Couples Conferences A trained lead couple will meet with you in their home five times to share their experience of marriage with you. A session on the sacrament of Marriage will be conducted by Patrick or Father.

4. Engaged Encounter A weekend designed to give you an opportunity to talk honestly and intensively with each other about your relationship and prospective life together. This should be scheduled any time after #2. (Number 4 is optional and not required if you do the couple to couple classes.)

5. Natural Family Planning NFP A natural and extremely effective method to either achieve or avoid pregnancy within marriage. NFP has proved to be a valued means of growth and enrichment in the love relationship of couples who use it. Attend the introductory NFP session any time after #1. Patrick will give you several option to complete this requirement.

6. Meet with Patrick to discuss wedding ceremony possibilities and liturgical music. Also fill out official papers.

7. Meet with Patrick to finalize your selections for the wedding ceremony.

TO HELP KEEP YOUR PERSPECTIVE, REMEMBER THAT: any adult desiring to join our Faith through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist is in preparation for about a year, sometimes more. A teen preparing for Confirmation must go through a year and a half of preparation. Marriage is also a sacrament and the preparation for it takes time. Sacramental Marriage is a lifetime commitment which requires faith. We believe it is essential to prepare extensively in order to sincerely make such a solemn commitment.

Part 2: THE RITE OF MARRIAGE

The celebration of the Rite of Marriage is of its very nature a communal event. This celebration is deeply symbolic for both the couple and the entire Roman Catholic Church with its body of tradition.

This event is symbolic of the intimate love of Christ for his Church, of the mutually loving relationship of one person for another, and of the joy which results among the people of the worshipping community.

There are two levels of this communal celebration: the personal and the social. At the personal level, two individuals promise their fidelity to each other in a permanent union. At the social level, marriage speaks to the continuation of the human race and the welfare of family and society.

The Rite of Marriage is at once a solemn exchange of vows and an act of worship as the man and woman celebrate this rite before the assembled Church community.

Because Christian marriages are celebrated in the midst of a community of believers, it is important that everyone present participate actively in prayer and song. Christian sacraments are celebrated by the congregation, not observed by spectators. Actions, prayers, songs -- all aspects of the Rite of Marriage and the Eucharistic celebration -- have as a basic foundation the principle of community participation.

The church is not simply a building where Christian marriage takes place. Rather, the Church is the community of believers in which a couple initiates a new relationship. As the man and woman promise their fidelity to each other, they challenge the entire Church to renew its commitment to the Lord Jesus. As they begin their married life together, they ask the community to support them by prayer and example.

A well-prepared and well-celebrated marriage liturgy balances these two aspects: a public event in the Church community and the personal commitment of the couple. Good weddings become good liturgy when a couple expand their focus and concerns beyond "doing their thing" and invite all who are present to share as fully as possible in their special celebration.

THE FOUR PARTS OF A CATHOLIC WEDDING

- 1. The Entrance Rite:** The bride and groom are escorted to the sanctuary with beauty and honor in a formal procession. A gathering song is then appropriate, followed by an opening prayer.
- 2. The Word of God:** We sit and listen to God's Word in the Scripture readings you help choose. The congregation respond in prayer and song.
- 3. The Marriage Ceremony:** Before the gathered assembly you express your intentions and your consent, and exchange rings.

4 a. **The Eucharist:** Having made your marriage a sign of love in the community, you join the assembly in our greatest sign of love and unity, the Eucharist.

OR

4 b. **Ecumenical Prayer:** If either party will not be sharing in Holy Communion (e.g. one is not a Catholic), then the Eucharist probably should not be celebrated. The communion of one party alone is not a sign of unity.

Part 3: PLANNING THE WEDDING

1. **Decoration:** Simplicity is the key to beauty.

a. The sanctuary is decorated appropriately for the liturgical season and these decorations are not to be disturbed.

b. If you want candelabra (to be rented by you), use dripless candles and put plastic on the floor underneath.

c. If you want flowers, a single arrangement on one side or one on both sides of the sanctuary works well. There is not enough room to put flowers in front of the altar or on the altar.

d. Aisle runners are NOT allowed.

e. If the guest register is at the church, it should be removed 5 minutes before the time set for the wedding.

f. Attendants: please, no more than five couples including the best man and maid/ matron of honor.

g. Flower person and ring bearer are not necessary, and if used, they must be at least 5 years old and should be functional, not decorative. Flowers may NOT be sprinkled on the aisles.

h. There is a room near the parish center where the bride and her attendants may dress.
PLEASE ASSIGN SOMEONE TO PICK UP AFTERWARDS.

i. We recommend taking pictures before the ceremony. Remind yourself and the photographer that the church is not a photographic studio. Pictures must be completed within a half-hour before or an hour after the wedding.

2. **Scheduling:**

a. While not forbidden, weddings have traditionally been discouraged during Lent.

- b. The best times for weddings at St. Robert's are:
 - Friday evening
 - Saturday morning
 - Saturday afternoon as late as 1:30 PM.
 - B Saturday evening around 6:00 PM
- c. The church is used for confessions from 3:00 to 3:30 PM every Saturday, and for Mass from 4:00 to 5:30 PM every Saturday.
- d. Rehearsals are usually scheduled on the previous evening at 6:00 PM.

3. Music

- a. The music program must be approved by the parish director of music, who can also assist you in planning the music.
- b. We recommend (but do not require that you use musicians from St. Robert's who know parish procedures and customs.
- c. The instrumentalist(s) generally plays preludes before the ceremony, a processional and recessional, in addition to accompanying the cantor and congregation.
- d. The cantor may sing one or two songs before the ceremony, an appropriate response to the first scripture reading, a song following exchange of rings, and a Communion song (if there is Mass), and leads the people in (e) below.
- e. If there is Mass, the Holy, Acclamation, Amen.
- f. You should make an offering to your musician(s) and cantor. Ask them what amount is agreeable and bring this to the rehearsal.

4. The Celebration

- a. Ushers seat the family and guests beginning in the middle section. People should be seated soon after they arrive to avoid congestion in the entryway. Parents and the wedding party should stay away from the main entrance until it is time to line up for the procession. Patrick will have you gather in the parish hall.

b. Solemn Entrance Father meets the wedding party in the Vestibule.

As the processional begins:

- 1) Father leads.
- 2) Attendant couples follow, several rows apart
- 3) Groom (with his parents)
- 4) Flower/ring persons
- 5) Bride (with her parents)

Other Options: Bride and Groom walk in together

Parents seated by ushers

Groom walks in with Father

Reader, with book, in procession

c. The liturgy continues with greeting, welcome, and opening prayer.

d. All are seated to listen to God's Word. You choose the readings from the suggestions in the marriage booklet. You may have as many as three readings including the Gospel.

1st Reading (Old Testament) _____

Reader _____

Psalm Response, generally sung

If recited, Reader _____

(without Mass, only one reading is required)

2nd Reading (New Testament) _____

Reader _____

Gospel Acclamation (sung) _____

Gospel Reading (Father) _____

e. The marriage rite itself takes place after Father's homily.

The couple face each other in the center of the front of the sanctuary.

Attendants are gathered beside them.

Father and the whole community are witnesses as the couple administers the sacrament.

Father will have you repeat after him offering your consent (vows) to each other.

f.. General Intercessions: the couple may write four or five petitions for these prayers--for themselves, married couples, family, guests, peace, causes they care about, etc.

Choose someone to read your petitions or the Cantor can read them.

h. If there is to be a celebration of the Eucharist, the following occurs:

1. Offertory Procession: two, three or four persons bring the bread and wine to the altar. An offertory song may be sung either by the cantor or congregation.
2. Eucharistic Prayer by Father, at which all sing the Holy, Acclamation and Amen.
3. The Lord=s Prayer: we recommend speaking it so all can take part. It may NOT be sung as a solo at this time.
4. The Sign of Peace: the bride and groom kiss, receive the greeting of peace from Father, and may then go to both sets of parents. You should go together to each set.
5. Communion is given to you under both kinds. If you wish the whole congregation to receive from the chalice, choose special ministers of Communion. During Communion a hymn is usually sung.
6. The prayer after Communion is prayed.
7. The bride and groom may light a Unity Candle at this point.
8. The final blessing is given, the couple is presented and the party leaves to the Recessional music.

k. If Eucharist is not celebrated, the following occurs:

1. The Our Father is recited by the congregation.
2. A sign of peace is given.
3. The Nuptial blessing is given.
4. A Unity candle may be lighted by the bride and groom and an appropriate song may be sung.
5. Closing blessing, presentation of the newly married couple and recessional.

l. After the recessional it is best for the wedding party to move to the parish hall after the service.

m. Rice or other seed is not allowed. Please make this known to friends and relatives. Sidewalks and pavement become dangerously slippery.

n. Flower person may not scatter flowers, real or artificial, in the aisle.

- o. Pictures may be taken during the ceremony only if the photographer stays out of the sanctuary and no noticeable flash is used. Pictures may be taken before or after, if schedule permits. Discourage family amateur photographers during the ceremony since it disturbs moments of prayer and can ruin the official photographer's shots.

- p. Clean-up. We depend on you to pick up and put away boxes, papers, ribbons, candles, etc. The church has already been cleaned for the wedding, and there is no one to come and take care of these items.

5. Alcohol Prohibition

Alcohol is NOT permitted anywhere on the property of the church on the day of the wedding or rehearsal unless the rehearsal dinner is being held here. No one may bring or consume any alcohol prior to the wedding. If you are having the rehearsal dinner here at the church, the prohibition is lifted for the dinner alone.

6. Offerings and Costs

We do not charge for weddings but we do recommend an offering to the church.

(some things to consider as you decide on the amount of the gift: the costs for operating a building our size; eg. Heating, air conditioners, lighting etc, would generally be \$400-\$500 and the costs for the marriage preparation materials is around \$65. Churches in our diocese often charge \$1500 or more.)

We recommend, but do not require, that you give a gift to Father for the celebration of the sacrament and to Patrick for being your coordinator and for his work in preparing you for the sacrament.

Musicians and soloists are paid by you directly at rates you and they have agreed upon.

August, 2016