

**PREPARING FOR YOUR WEDDING AT  
ST. JOSEPH IN STRINGTOWN  
HOLY CROSS CHURCH IN WENDELIN  
ST. JOSEPH IN OLNEY**

These guidelines have been prepared for you, the engaged couple, as you consider God's call to married life and to make arrangements for your wedding ceremony. This is a happy and blessed time in your lives. The staff and the people of our parishes offer you their congratulations on your engagement and their best wishes for a joy-filled wedding day and a truly happy married life.

We hope that this web page will answer some of your questions and relieve all your worries. We offer you our support and assistance in every way possible. Our aim is to enable you to make the most of this important time to grow as a couple in a deeper love for God and for each other. Our prayer is that you will be able to focus on the challenges as well as the joys that lie ahead.

The USA culture has a multibillion industry with weddings. The average wedding is now beyond \$27,000. These are even being referred to as "starter marriages". Excess and vanity are never the center of sacrament -- Jesus Christ is. Half of all marriages end in divorce; one out of five, if married in a church or synagogue, end in divorce. See, your blessings have already increased. If a couple prays daily together, the success rate of the marriage goes up to one in one thousand-plus on the chance of their marriage ending. In following Christ, we are not statistics but the church in action. The stronger your marriage; the stronger the church. The domestic church is the home you are to build on rock.

The Wedding is a day; marriage is a lifetime. We want both to be holy and wonderful. A good rule of process for these is focus your first six months on the relationship/marriage; focus the second six months on the wedding. Even though these overlap, the engagement period does have stages of growth. This is natural order.

Marriage is based in good and holy communication. Communication must be good with God, within yourself, and with each other. The church has introduced the period of preparation following the arranged marriage times of society. In our post-arranged marriage society people dated and married. The church has used this preparation time to reintroduce the engagement journey with the couple.

A Roman Catholic wedding is awesomely beautiful; it is simple and straight forward: public consent and vows! Once. Forever. The bride and groom are treated as the presiders reigning over the day in God's love made manifest. These pages are to help you plan a truly Roman rite liturgy.

Weddings in our churches have become secularly orchestrated. We are doing Hollywood weddings in Catholic Church buildings. Weddings in our culture are Soap opera style. In using these models (who are not exactly Christian heroes) to imitate our clothing choices, lifestyle, and partying manners, we lose our sacramental focus.

Beyond the long aisle and stained-glass windows, is a longer aisle of married love in the eternal Bridegroom. Bless this journey of grace in the holy sacrament of matrimony in your Roman Catholic Church. This is God's time and we are honored to be part of it all with you at Holy Cross Parish. May God bless you with His grace and peace!

### **Meetings with the Priest**

The marriage preparation program at our parishes will consist of approximately five or six meetings with the parish priest. After you initially contact the parish office expressing interest in

celebrating your wedding at the Church, you will be contacted by the pastor to meet at the parish office at a mutually convenient time. Because your time of preparation will also include programs outside the parish, such as a Pre-Cana day or Engaged Encounter, it is important that you allow yourselves a full six months to benefit the most from these sessions. Your lives are very busy at this point, yet it is important that you devote time to talking about and thinking about being emotionally and spiritually ready to make the serious commitment that you want your marriage to be.

*Wedding is a day,  
Marriage is a lifetime*

## **Marriage Preparation Sessions**

These may vary in number and length. Below is a sample outline:

### **Session I. Initial Meeting**

This will include completion of the diocesan questionnaire by each of you. The questionnaire consists of the gathering of basic needed information about you and about your freedom to enter into a Roman Catholic marriage at this time. You will be asked to provide certificates of Baptism and Confirmation from the church or churches at which you were baptized or confirmed. The Baptism certificate must be dated within the past six months.

### **Session II. Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter**

With other engaged couples from the diocese, you will gather for a day of Pre-Cana or for an Engaged Encounter Weekend conducted by trained married couples who want to assist you in planning for your lifetime together. Pre-registration is necessary. You can log onto [www.diobelle.org](http://www.diobelle.org) for dates and contact information.

### **Session III. PREPARE**

The PREPARE inventory gives you insights into your relationship and provides topics for discussion in follow up meetings. This can be done in the parish office or if you have access to the internet, this session could be done at a time and place of your convenience. Please be as honest and truthful as possible when answering the questions. Remember if you cannot be truthful before the wedding, how can you be truthful after.

### **Session IV. Discuss PREPARE Results**

We will get together to discuss the results of your PREPARE inventory. This is only an assessment for you of how you as a couple face and discuss important issues critical to a healthy and happy marriage. All your answers and the results of the assessment are kept in strictest confidence. We will discuss any concerns you want to bring up about the PREPARE, the Pre-Cana, changes in your relationship, how you view marriage, issues surrounding sexuality, and your faith life now and in the future. We will talk about how we can make the liturgy of the Sacrament of Matrimony meaningful to you and expressive of your faith.

## **Session V. Planning the Wedding**

You will meet to review the rite of marriage, the proper processing in and out, and the movement that takes place during ceremony. Remember, please, that you are in a holy place during this time.

Experience the sacredness of the sanctuary and realize how the beauty of the church and the presence of God affect your feelings about the upcoming ceremony.

*And God said:  
"The wedding was lovely.  
Invite me to the marriage."*

## **OUR WEDDING**

### **Parish Policy regarding Church Use for Roman Rite Ceremonies**

St. Joseph Church-Olney, St. Joseph-Stringtown and Holy Cross Church facilities are available to: Catholics who are presently registered members of the parish or who are sons or daughters of presently registered members of the parish. Non-Parish members may get married here with written permission of their pastor. They may do the marriage preparation in their parish.

### **The Marriage Rite of the Roman Catholic Church**

The Church offers you the beauty and simplicity of a marriage ceremony conducted according to the Roman Catholic rite for the sacrament of Matrimony. The rite is part of a centuries-old tradition for recognizing God's presence to us in the sacraments. The rite allows us to focus on the sacramental, grace-giving nature of the sacrament.

Our culture is experiencing Hollywood weddings in celebrity clothing using Roman Catholic Church buildings. Additions to the form of the rite, then, clouds that focus. Over the years, traditions or customs such as the lighting of a unity candle, and the exchange of roses have crept into the marriage ceremony. These nonintrinsic practices are not allowed during a Catholic wedding. They make the ceremony more theatrical and less liturgical.

For the same reason, celebrity-style dress is discouraged. Our clothing reflects our attitude. Church should always be a place of modesty. This is in keeping with the beauty and simplicity of the Catholic rite.

### **Church Environment and Etiquette**

The Church is a sacred space to the members of the parish who worship here. You are not renting a building. You are using our parish worship space. It is the common gathering point of the faith community who come together here as a family to pray and to worship. An atmosphere of reverence and respect must be maintained in the church at all times. Loud talking, smoking, eating, drinking and boisterous behavior are unacceptable in the church at any time. Your decision to be married in the Church means that you are on "holy ground" treating it as such.

## **THE WEDDING LITURGY**

At a Catholic wedding, the bride and the groom are the ministers of the Sacrament. It is in their consent to freely give themselves to one another and in their vows to make of their love a life-long commitment that God is present to them in each other. The priest or deacon is present only as the Church's official witness who presides at the ceremony and blesses the couple in their new life together.

### **Bride and Groom are both Catholic**

In the tradition of the Catholic Church, the exchange of vows between two Catholics is to take place within the context of a Mass. (If one is Catholic in name only not being catechized or communed, the wedding is not the time for First Communion. No mass would be appropriate.)

### **One Party not Catholic**

If one of the parties is not Catholic, the marriage rite outside of Mass is the prescribed norm. This offers the couple being married the opportunity to join the two families together at the wedding liturgy without fear of excluding members of the congregation who would not be invited to Communion.

## **The Ceremony**

A resource to assist you in selecting Scripture readings and prayers that will make your wedding ceremony a beautiful and personal celebration can be found at [www.catholicweddinghelp.com](http://www.catholicweddinghelp.com) and [www.foryourwedding.org](http://www.foryourwedding.org). If you do not have internet access, a booklet will be given to you.

You may want to prepare a worship aid or booklet that will enable guests to follow the ceremony. Such a worship aid would introduce the wedding party, participants in the liturgy (priest or deacon presider, musicians, lectors, gift bearers, servers, Eucharistic ministers, etc.) and would include the main parts the wedding rite.

Please consider adding the following to the printed wedding program that is prepared for the assembly.

To ensure the sacramental presence of the church, and to maintain the prayerful nature of the wedding ceremony, please turn off all cell phones, pagers, etc., or switch them to a silent mode. Limit photos and videotaping to the procession and recession only. Flash photography can ruin the photos of professionals; they have been hired to cover the ceremony under the specified norms.

Applause is encouraged at times in our rites; please refrain from cheering, shouting or whistling. Your prayer with us today is a most appreciated gift.

If a Mass is celebrated, the program must also include the following, verbatim:

Roman Catholic Communion in the form of bread and wine is for Roman Catholic members who are in practice with the Faith. We enjoy the presence of all gathered in prayer.

## **The Music**

Schedule a time to meet with a Church Organist. They will guide you through the selection of fitting music that will personalize your ceremony. You must receive the approval of the priest for an

organist from outside of the parish or any instrumentalists or cantors you use. Remember that good liturgical music includes the assembly and expresses its joyful prayers for you.

Keep in mind these simple guidelines in selecting your songs and music. No recorded music is ever permitted in Roman Catholic liturgy. All music is to be sacred Church music. Popular tunes will better suit your reception. For processional and recessional pieces, the Wagner and Mendelssohn selections are discouraged because of their unsuitable context in the classical repertoire. They both mock marriage. Wagner himself was dumbfounded to hear the USA was using his march inside church settings.

## **Photographers/Videographers**

“Great care should be taken to ensure liturgical celebrations, especially the Mass, are not disturbed or interrupted by the taking of photographs.” -Instructions on Worship of Eucharistic Mystery, Vatican II

- The liturgy must be protected as sacred and not become a “Kodak moment.” The lower the profile on photography is kept during the liturgy, the better. Professional photographers and those videotaping should be appropriately dressed and are asked to not move around during the liturgy. They are not to interfere with or move the furnishings of the church.
- Everyone involved must maintain respect for the space. Nothing is to be set on the altar.
- Photographers/videographers are not allowed in the sanctuary during the service but should keep to the side aisles.
- During the processional and recessional, photographs may be taken from the pews by anyone in the assembly.
- No cameras of any kind are allowed in the sanctuary during the service.
- Video cameras should be stationary. A tripod may be set up. The balcony is the best location for this.
- No taping of cords to the floor is allowed. No tape on wood is allowed. No taping to the tile is allowed.

## **Florists**

- Roman Catholic liturgical norms require that the church environment remain through the liturgical season. That is, altar appointments and floral arrangements may not be removed for a wedding. Seasonal arrangements such as Christmas poinsettias or Easter lilies and other parts of the environment stay undisturbed. During the Season of Advent and Lent, no floral arrangements are to be used in the Church with the exception of the bouquets carried by the bridesmaids.
- Other arrangements may be added if you desire.
- Unity candles are not part of the Roman rite. Their use is encouraged at the reception rather than during the ceremony.
- Ornamentation such as arches or trellises is not permitted because of the integrity of the space and their hampering of mobility.
- Pew candles are discouraged. If used hurricane lamps are necessary for safety. They are lit before the ceremony and not during the procession or rite.
- Everything brought in is to be removed immediately following the rite. If you are leaving floral pieces for the church, they may be left in the sacristy.

- Please remember to provide your photographer and florist with a copy of these norms. It is your responsibility to be sure that they adhere to these norms.
- Pew ornamentation may not be taped. Elastic works well.

## **Church Fees**

- Many couples have music, cantors and soloists at their wedding ceremony. They will set their own fees with you.
- If a priest/deacon from outside the parish comes to perform a wedding at the request of the family, with the approval/delegation of the pastor, the family is responsible for appropriately compensating the guest priest/deacon. Please speak to them about this matter.
- You may also wish to make a donation to the church of your wedding.
- The altar servers can be relatives of the couple, even if they are from another parish. If a mass is celebrated, two servers are necessary and Holy Cross will obtain them if necessary. A gratuity of \$5:00 to \$10 is proper for each server.

## **GUIDELINES FOR WEDDING CEREMONIES Wedding Times**

- A Wedding can be scheduled no later than 2:00 PM on a Saturday afternoon.
- Talk to your priest or deacon about other days and times during the week.
- Weddings are not scheduled during Holy Week and the Octave of Easter (the Saturday before Palm Sunday through the Sunday following Easter) as well as Christmas and its Octave. The church will be open 4 hours before the scheduled time on your Wedding Day, unless a funeral is to be celebrated
- You must be clear of the church by 4:00 PM and free of all items used in your Wedding.

## **Wedding Party**

- The number of attendants should be no more than six couples, not including the bride and groom. This is in keeping with the sacred nature of the ceremony.
- Having children in the wedding party, as flower girls or ring bearers, can be a negative experience for the little ones. This is often too much pressure on a child. If children are in the procession, they may be placed with an adult and may be seated during the ceremony. Usually seven years or older is a safe age for realistic expectations.

## **Marriage License**

- Your marriage is also a legal civil union. If the wedding occurs at Holy Cross-Wendelin, you must obtain a marriage license from the Clay County Clerk in Louisville to be legally married there. If the wedding occurs at St. Joseph-Olney or St. Joseph-Stringtown, you must obtain a marriage license from the Richland County Clerk in Olney. The license should be obtained not more than 60 days before the wedding. Once the license has been procured, drop it off at the church office. It must be on file before the rehearsal begins. A priest or deacon violates the law if he witnesses a marriage without the license.
- Both of you must apply in person for the license. Proper proof of identification and age are required, and there is a cash-only fee to apply.

## Visiting Priests & Deacons

- You are welcome to have your marriage witnessed by a priest or deacon who is not associated with Holy Cross-Wendelin, St. Joseph-Olney or St. Joseph-Stringtown. Please let us know at your first meeting if you wish to have a friend or family member preside. Clearance regulations on this can be major. Act on it immediately.
- Details need to be worked out regarding who will be responsible for handling the marriage papers and preparatory sessions.
- Your visiting priest or deacon must obtain written delegation from the pastor for validity of the marriage.
- All church norms contained in this booklet remain the same with guest clergy.

## Maintenance

Rice, birdseed, confetti, balloons, bubbles, etc. are not permitted. Please make your guests aware of this. Your regard for the safety and maintenance of the church as well as for those attending the service is greatly appreciated.

## Alcohol, Drugs

The informed consent of both parties is an essential requirement of a valid, licit, sacramental marriage. **PLEASE BE AWARE THAT IF ALCOHOL IS PRESENT OR IF PERSONS APPEAR DRUNK OR DRUGGED, THE WEDDING CEREMONY MUST BE AND WILL BE CANCELED. This applies to rehearsals as well as to ceremonies.** This is a non-negotiable policy.

## ONE FINAL WORD

**THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS** has issued norms for couples who are either a) cohabitating or b) where one of the parties have been previously married. The bishops state that the wedding celebration in the church is to be simple and modest in its profile.

Know that our prayers are with you on your wedding day. Pray for each other and with each other as you near the day of your wedding. This is a wonderful opportunity to invite God into the life you are about to share. Put yourselves at peace with God by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of your marriage preparation.

One of your weekly dates should be Church, attending Mass together regularly and becoming involved in a ministry that enables you to channel your love to others. Know that we want to help you live a happy and blessed Catholic life after you are married. Remain connected to your parish. Spend time together as a couple.

Look for ways to support other newly married couples. Be grateful to God always for the gift that you are to each other.