



Guide to Sacramental Marriage



Congratulations on your upcoming wedding in the Catholic Church!

We are excited you are preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony with us! It is our hope and prayer that through your journey of preparation, you will acquire a deeper understanding of God's plan for your marriage, and that you will learn the truths and virtues you will need to live out your vocation as husband and wife.

Getting Started:

- Complete a Wedding Registration Form.
- A priest or deacon will call you to setup an orientation and welcome.
- Read through this guide to understand the Wedding Process.



Marriage Preparation Program

by Joseph D. White, Ph.D. and William R. Cashion III, M.T.S.

Imprimatur from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

The celebration of marriage as a sacrament is not a one-time event, but a lifelong vocation. Marriage and family have been the cornerstones of society in cultures throughout the world and across time. It is, therefore, no small task to help people enter into this lifelong commitment.

Together in God's Love uniquely combines cultural perspectives, modern psychology, and Catholic theology as couples prepare to become one in Christ through matrimony. Using very practical, multi-sensory, and active learning techniques, the program focuses on the areas of Faith, Communication, Sexuality, and Stewardship to express marriage as a communion of persons, just as the Holy Trinity is a communion of persons. It is attentive to various learning styles as well as cultural diversity through the use of language, games, role playing, and self-assessments.

“Together in God's Love is of excellent quality. I am very, very pleased to see it finished. I have high hopes for this program's ability to make a difference in marriages.” —Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Archdiocese of New Orleans

In addition to addressing all the key areas called for in the U.S. bishops' latest document on marriage, *Together in God's Love* effectively combines Church teachings, such as Theology of the Body, with current, relevant, scientific research about healthy marriages that affirms and expands upon the insights of our Catholic Faith.

Steps in the Wedding Process

→ Step 1: Welcome and Orientation

Once you have submitted an online Wedding Registration Form, you will be contacted by a priest or deacon for an orientation and welcome. At this informal meeting, the priest or deacon will give you an overview of *Together in God's Love*, the program used by the Cathedral, and start the marriage paperwork with you.

→ Step 2: Relationship Inventory (Prepare-Enrich) and reserve wedding date

The PREPARE/ENRICH Inventory is offered online. Once the PREPARE/ENRICH fee is paid, you will be emailed a code to take the inventory. If you do not have access to a computer or e-mail, you can come to the Cathedral office and you can complete the inventory on one of the Cathedral's computers.

PREPARE/ENRICH leads the way in helping couples explore and strengthen their relationships. The main component of the program is an online survey you each complete in about 30-45 minutes. PREPARE/ENRICH is not just any survey. The items you respond to are based on research and are intended to help you identify the unique strengths and potential growth areas of your premarital or married relationship. You'll meet with a priest or deacon trained to provide feedback by helping you understand your results and learn important relationship skills.

PREPARE/ENRICH will help you:

- Identify strength and growth areas
- Explore personality traits
- Strengthen communication skills
- Resolve conflicts and reduce stress
- Compare family backgrounds
- Comfortably discuss financial issues
- Establish personal, couple, and family goals

→ Step 3: Begin *Together in God's Love*

Once the inventory process has been completed, you will need to register for a *Together in God's Love* class. You are also free to call the Wedding Coordinator at (512) 476-6182, Ext 166 to reserve the Cathedral for your wedding by following the instructions on the *Fees & Stipends* page. **Do not reserve a venue before you have reserved your wedding date.** Please choose a wedding date that is **at least** nine (9) months out from the day you begin preparing for marriage.

Wedding Planning

Location of your Wedding

A wedding outside a sacred place is becoming one of the most frequently asked questions regarding the Rite of Matrimony. Increasingly, requests are being made to have weddings literally “outside.” Canon Law, or Church Law, is very clear in this regard: “A marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic is to be celebrated in the parish church.” (c.1118.1)

The Wedding Ceremony

If **both parties of the couple are practicing Catholics**, the Church invites them to marry within the context of the Eucharist (Wedding Mass). In this case a priest is the ordinary witness of the wedding and presider at the Eucharist. For a **marriage between a Catholic and a fiancé of another religious tradition or for convalidations** (civilly married), we invite them to marry within the Liturgy of the Word, followed by the Rite of Matrimony and concluded by the Lord's Prayer (without Mass). In this case, a Deacon will serve as the minister.

From the selection of your readings and music, to your choice of attire and attendants, the wedding takes place because of you. You are the ministers of this sacrament. What kind of statement will you make? Which readings will you have proclaimed? What kind of music will mark the occasion? Which special rituals? Who will have a special role? Liturgy is a powerful form of communication. The order in which events occur gives particular meaning to the events. The placement of the Rite of Matrimony after the proclamation of God's word, for example, shows that matrimony is a response of the couple to a call or invitation from God.

The clergy of Saint Mary Cathedral are prepared to assist you in your discussions, reflections, and choices for the best expressions of your love and faith. We would like to help you plan a wedding ritual that is both reverent and beautiful. The basic ritual structure is given to us by the universal Church, but pastoral options are available for you to personalize your celebration.

The Wedding Day

Saint Mary Cathedral is our parish home. We ask that you treat our facilities with the respect that you would treat your own treasured home and possessions. We ask that the wedding couple and their friends clean up any areas used during preparation for the wedding. There is NO SMOKING, EATING, or DRINKING in the church building, bridal room, narthex or the restrooms.

Dress Code

Wedding gowns, attendant dresses and guest attire should be modest in nature befitting the sacred character of the wedding celebration in the Cathedral. Gowns and dresses with bare midriffs, short dresses/skirts, high slits, skin-tight outfits, plunging necklines, or backless gowns are not dignified or appropriate for the wedding rehearsal, Marriage Rites and/or Mass.



Shawl needed



Shawl needed



No shawl necessary



No shawl necessary

Dressing Room Facilities

The Cathedral provides a bridal room for the convenience of the bride and her attendants. We do not have dressing facilities for men. The men are encouraged to come dressed for the ceremony. Reminder: please no food, drink, tobacco or gum in the Cathedral, bridal room, narthex or the restrooms. Please designate responsible people to put things in order immediately after the Liturgy. For example: tidy the bridal room, foyer and church; gather the flower boxes, hangers, wrappings, etc.; put all trash in the trashcan. Please have this task completed by someone you trust within 30 minutes of the end of the wedding ceremony.

Candles

The use of candelabras are not permitted.

Flowers

Flowers are included and two arrangements will be placed on the high altar as part of your Wedding Fee.

Music

As soon as you have booked the church, please make an appointment to discuss with the Organist a program of suitable music for your wedding. Recorded or taped music is not permitted.

As a Sacrament of the Church, the celebration and blessing of the marriage covenant calls for music that will reflect the couple's understanding of the rite of matrimony within the context of the church. The selection of the wedding music is to reflect the sacred nature and sense of joy that characterize all Christian worship. The music and words chosen for the rite of matrimony are to sustain and support the prayerful nature of the liturgical celebration and be an appropriate complement to the scriptural readings and formal prayer of the rite. The following questions are to be considered in planning the music:

- a. Does the musical score evoke a sense of sacred action and call the community to joyful prayer?*
- b. Does a particular selection emphasize and enhance that part of the liturgical celebration at which it occurs?*
- c. Does the overall music selection allow for some congregational participation?*
- d. Does the text express a biblical view of love and marriage?*

A "yes" response to the above questions will assure that lyrics will celebrate not only the human love between two persons, but love as a reflection of the God who is love, and the wedding music will emphasize the theme of sacred celebration. Music within a Catholic wedding must be approved by the Cathedral Organist.

Photography

Because a wedding is worship, we ask that all who work at Saint Mary Cathedral, including photographers and videographers, act in a professional manner, respecting the sacredness of the ceremony and the assembly gathered in prayer. During the ceremony, picture-taking should be unobtrusive and respectful. If videotape equipment is used, it should be set up in a stationary place out of the sight lines of the assembly. Photographers may not use the balcony.

Respecting the schedule of other weddings or church functions, the church can be made available for picture-taking after the ceremony. We recommend that photographers and videographers visit the church prior to the ceremony to become familiar with the surroundings and lighting conditions. During the procession, photographers/videographers must be unobtrusive and not obstruct or hold up the movement of the minister and wedding party.

During the ceremony, those taking pictures may not:

- be in the sanctuary (the altar area)
- stand in front of the first pillar on the side aisles
- stand in front of the last occupied pew in the center aisle
- be positioned between the couple and the priest
- stand on the pews or chairs
- use flash or flood lights during the ceremony
- use any theatrical spotlights already positioned in the church without prior written approval

Post ceremony photographs are limited to twenty minutes immediately following the conclusion of the wedding ceremony, flash and additional lighting may be used during this time. Photos that include jumping, posing in staged positions are strictly prohibited inside the Cathedral Church. These photos are appropriate for the reception venue, alternate location or outside the Cathedral Church.

Liturgical Decor

Banners, altar cloths and any hangings or liturgical environmental enhancements are an important part of the current Liturgical season and may not be moved or removed. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

- *Aisle runners are not permitted.*
- *All doors, pews and aisles are to remain accessible.*

Worship Aids

Worship aids or programs are optional. If you choose to use worship aids or programs they must be submitted to the Wedding Coordinator for approval two to three weeks before the wedding ceremony. This is to ensure that appropriate artwork, order of service, and photos used reflect the sacrament being celebrated.

NOTICE, PLEASE READ.

*The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, **GLITTER**, potpourri or any other material or bringing animals inside the church, outside the church, or anywhere on the church premises or inside the Cathedral facilities is **NOT PERMITTED.***

*The use of props are **NOT APPROPRIATE** in the Cathedral and are better utilized at your reception venue.*

Fees and Stipends

Although religion is a spiritual experience, places of worship are institutions which require financial support. The following are fees for wedding ceremonies at Saint Mary Cathedral. To reserve the date of your wedding the **FULL** amount must be paid. When you are ready, call the Wedding Coordinator at (512) 476-6182, Ext 166. Please choose a date **at least** nine (9) months from the date your started marriage preparation.

Wedding Fee

Saturday Weddings at 2:00 pm, 4:00 pm (Liturgy of the Word & Convalidations) and 7:30 p.m.

Parishioner	\$1525.00*	Non Parishioner	\$2500.00**
Out of Diocese \$4,000.00			

Included in the Wedding Fee:

- *Music (Cantor & Organist)*
- *Altar Flowers*
- *Wedding Monitor (Present at rehearsal and wedding)*
- *Building usage: 1 hour for scheduled rehearsal, 45 minutes before the wedding for set-up, 1 hour for the wedding and 20 minutes for pictures & clean up after the wedding*
- *Utilities and custodial services*
- *Complimentary parking in Capitol Towers Garage*

4:00pm Weddings will be celebrated with Liturgy of the Word and Exchange of Nuptials. There is not sufficient time for a full Mass. Should you and your fiancé decide you'd like to celebrate your Marriage Rite within the context of a Mass, you should look at 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. availabilities.

Stipends

The stipend for the priest or deacon is a free-will offering, and is **not** included in the above costs, but is suggested.

*A parishioner is one who is a registered and active member at Saint Mary Cathedral.

**Not a registered parishioner of the Cathedral however resides within the Diocese of Austin.

Your Engagement

By POPE FRANCIS

Engagement — one hears it in the word — has to do with trust, confidence, and reliability. Confidence in the vocation that God gives, since holy matrimony is first and foremost the discovery of a call from God. It is certainly a beautiful thing that young people today can choose to marry on the basis of mutual love. But the very freedom of that bond requires a conscious harmony in making the decision, not just a simple understanding of the attraction or feeling, for a moment or for a short time ... it calls for a journey.

Engagement, in other words, is the time when the two are called to perform a real labor of love, an involved and shared work that delves deep. Here they discover one another little by little, i.e. the man “learns” about woman by learning about *this* woman, his fiancée; and the woman “learns” about man by learning about this man, her fiancé. Let us not underestimate the importance of this learning: it is a beautiful endeavor, and love itself requires it, for it is not simply a matter of carefree happiness or enchanted emotion.

The biblical account speaks of all creation as a beautiful work of God’s love. The Book of Genesis says that: “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Only when it is finished does God “rest”. We understand from this image that God’s love, which brought forth the world, was not an impromptu decision. No! It was a beautiful work. The love of God created the concrete conditions for an irrevocable covenant, one that is strong and lasting.

The covenant of love between man and woman — a covenant for life — *cannot be improvised*. It isn’t made up one day to the next. There is no “marriage express”: one needs to work on love, one needs to walk. The covenant of love between man and woman is something learned and refined. I venture to say it is a covenant carefully crafted. To make two lives one is almost a miracle of freedom and the heart entrusted to faith.

Perhaps we should emphasize this point more, because our “emotional coordinates” have gone a bit askew. Those who claim to want everything right away, then back out of everything — right away — at the first difficulty (or at the first opportunity). There is no hope for the trust and fidelity entailed in the gift of self, if prevailing tendency is to consume love like some kind of “supplement” for mental and physical well-being. This is not love! Engagement focuses on the will to care for something together that must never be bought or sold, betrayed or abandoned, however tempting the offer may be.

God, too, when he speaks of the covenant with his people, does so several times in terms of betrothal. He says in the Book of Hosea: “I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord” (2:19-20).

The Church, in her wisdom, guards the *distinction between being engaged and being spouses* — it’s not the same — especially in view of the delicateness and depth of this test. Let us be careful not to disregard lightheartedly the wisdom of this teaching, which also comes from the experience of happy married life. The powerful symbols of the body hold the keys to the soul: We cannot treat the bonds of the flesh lightly, without opening some lasting wound in the spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:15-20).

Of course, today’s culture and society have become rather indifferent to the delicateness and seriousness of this step. Engagement is a path of life that has to ripen like fruit; it is a way of maturing in

love, until the moment it becomes matrimony.

Pre-marriage programs are a special expression of preparation. Engagement needs to be re-evaluated as a time of getting to know one another and sharing a plan. The path of preparation for marriage should be implemented from this perspective, also with the benefit of the simple but intense witness of Christian spouses. And also by focusing on the essentials: the Bible, by consciously rediscovering it together; prayer, in its liturgical dimension, but also in “domestic prayer” to live out in the home, the Sacraments, the Sacramental life, Confession, ... where the Lord comes to abide in the engaged couple and prepare them truly to receive one another “with the grace of Christ”; and fraternity with the poor and those in need, who lead us to live soberly and to share.

Engaged couples who commit themselves to this path both grow, and all of this leads to preparing for a beautiful wedding in a different way, not in a worldly way, but in a Christian way! Let us consider these words of God we have heard, when he speaks to his people as bridegroom to his future bride: “I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord” (Hos 2:19-20). May every engaged couple think of this and say to one another: “I will take you as my bride, I will take you as my bridegroom”. Wait for that moment. It is a moment, it is a path that goes slowly ahead, but it is a path of maturation. The steps of the journey should not be rushed. This is how we mature, step by step.

The time of betrothal can truly become a time of initiation, into what? Into surprise. Into the surprise of the spiritual gifts with which the Lord, through the Church, enriches the horizon of the new family that stands ready to live in his blessing.

Convalidation & Annulment

Q. What is convalidation?

A. Convalidation is a term the Catholic Church uses to refer to the Catholic marriage of a couple who is married civilly or who was married in a religious ceremony outside the form and guidelines prescribed by the Catholic Church for Catholics. The Church rejoices with couples who choose to marry in the Catholic Church and wishes to prepare them in a suitable way based on their current state in life. The Church believes matrimony is a lifelong commitment. This requires skills in communication, conflict resolution, financial management, as well as a good understanding of what the Church teaches about matrimony, sexuality, and children. Marriage preparation is just one small step in what will be a life-long adventure of perfecting skills to keep your relationship strong.

Q. Isn't this a lot of stuff to have to go through just to get our marriage "blessed" by the church?

A. First of all let's be clear. Convalidation is not a blessing ceremony. Couples and church personnel often refer to this as a "blessing" but it isn't. Similarly, some people say convalidation is the way to "bring a civil marriage into the church." This simply is not the case. The Catholic Church cannot do anything to a civil marriage contract to make it more or less binding or more or less holy. The Rite of Matrimony in the Catholic Church is something entirely different and unique. Convalidation couples are getting married the way the Church asks Catholics to marry. Preparation is just as important for couples taking this important step as for those who are simply engaged and preparing for matrimony.

Q. What is the procedure if the previous marriage of a Catholic person was outside the Church?

A. The Church requires that a baptized Roman Catholic marry before one of its representatives, usually a priest or deacon, unless special permission was granted otherwise. When a Catholic does not observe this requirement and marries out of the Church (for example, before a justice of the peace) and eventually divorces, the tribunal process involves two steps. The first step requires securing the Catholic's baptismal record, a copy of an official document indicating the location of the marriage and the name of the person who performed the ceremony, as well as the divorce decree. The second step involves completing a relatively brief form that seeks the above information and asks a few additional questions about circumstances concerning the celebration of the marriage. This form and the supporting documents showing who witnessed the wedding are sent to the diocesan tribunal, which ordinarily processes that application in a few days and returns to the petitioner a declaration of nullity based on what is called a "lack of canonical form." The individual is now free to pursue the Rite of Matrimony within the Church or to have the Church con-validate a civil marriage which has already taken place.

Q. What is the procedure if the previous marriage was a Catholic wedding or a non-Catholic wedding with special permission to be married before someone other than an ordained Catholic clergyman?

A. The tribunal process in these circumstances is termed a "formal case." It is more complex than the "lack of form" case mentioned above because it examines what happened in the marriage. The procedure takes longer (currently about 18 months). In this type of case, the Church researches not merely the location of a wedding, but also the relationship between spouses before and during the marriage. In the United States, a person may start this process only after obtaining a divorce under civil law. The petitioning individual then works through an extensive, printed inquiry that explores the childhood of both persons, their courtship, the early years of the marriage and what the petitioner

considers the major cause of the marital breakup. Sometimes cases receive a negative response and petitions are rejected. But a majority of formal cases in the United States receive positive judgments and declarations of nullity are granted.

Q. Why is a Church tribunal decision necessary?

A. In simplest terms, if a Catholic wishes to marry in the Church when there has been a previous marriage, then one of the partners in the earlier union must have died or the Church must have issued a declaration of nullity (frequently called an annulment) of the previous marriage. The Catholic Church views all marriages with respect. It presumes that they are true and valid. Thus, it considers the marriage, for example, of two Protestant, Jewish or even nonbelieving persons to be binding in the eyes of God. These unions are covered by the words of Christ about divorce. Consequently, a tribunal process is required to establish that an essential ingredient in the relationship was missing from the start of the previous marriage.