

St. John Nepomucene Catholic Church

Marriage Preparation Guidelines

St. John Nepomucene Community shares in your happiness, and we pray that God will bless you abundantly during this time of preparation for marriage and throughout your married life.

PARISH GUIDELINES BEFORE MARRIAGE

Overview: Marriage preparation is a process. The priest, deacon, and/or delegate will be concerned about discussing issues such as: the freedom and readiness for marriage of both parties, the level of maturity, the knowledge of responsibility in marriage, the understanding of and the compatibility in personality and temperament, the understanding to make a permanent commitment, the level of faith and the value of religion in your life as an individual and as a couple, the possible areas of religious differences (especially in mixed marriage), and the understanding of marriage as a sacrament.

I. Initial Interview

First Step: **An appointment** needs to be made with the Director of Adult Education as soon as the couple makes a decision to marry, (at least six months before the wedding). The wedding usually takes place in the parish of the bride; one, either the bride or the groom should be a registered, active, contributing member of the parish. If neither is a parishioner, the couple should meet with their parish priest to complete the marriage preparation file in the parish in which they reside. The parish priest will forward the file with permission to St. John Church.

- A wedding date and time will not be set until after the couple meets with the priest and sets an appointment to see the required counselor.

II. Forms and Issues to be Considered

- **Baptismal Certificates and Dispensations:** A Baptismal Certificate for both parties is necessary. This must be a recent (issued within 6 months of the wedding) certificate and can be obtained by calling or writing the parish church of your Baptism.
 - In the case that one of the members of the couple is baptized but was not baptized Catholic, some **proof of Baptism** still needs to be shown. In addition, **permission for a marriage of mixed religion** is necessary.
 - If one of the prospective spouses has never been baptized, a **dispensation from disparity of worship** must be obtained.
 - If either the permission or the dispensation is needed, it can only be obtained through appeal to the bishop. Certain other circumstances may also require appeal to the bishop or other forms before marriage can be contracted.

- In the tradition of the Catholic Church, the exchange of vows between two Catholics is to take place within the context of a Mass. Only a priest can celebrate.
- In a **mixed interfaith marriage**, a **form** needs to be signed by the Catholic party promising to raise the children in the Catholic faith. 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 the fear of excluding members of the congregation who would not be invited to Communion. A deacon or priest must witness this rite.
- **Affidavits:** These need to be provided by each couple. These are signed proofs of freedom to be married. The forms need to be filled out by someone who has known you since childhood. These need to be signed by a witness before a staff member or be notarized.
- **Previous marriages:** If you have ever been married before, you must bring this to the attention of the priest/deacon/delegate during the first appointment. If you were married before or are thinking of marriage to someone previously married, please let us know the situation in order to see if there is a possibility of being married in the Catholic Church. We cannot set even a tentative date in such circumstances until we see you. The Catholic Church recognizes the first marriage of any two non-catholic persons to be a valid marriage regardless of where it took place.
- **Marriage license:** Your marriage is also a civil union. You must obtain a marriage license from the Courthouse. The license must be obtained at least 72 Hours and no more than 30 days before the wedding. Once the license has been procured, drop it off at the office at least one week before the wedding.
- **Facilities Use Request:** After you have met with the priest and set up an appointment with the counselor (see below), you need to fill out a Facilities Use Request form in order to schedule the date of your wedding. This form may be found at the Parish Office and on the parish website. Your date will not be set until this form is submitted and approved.

III. Marriage Preparation: These are the steps that need to be taken in your formal marriage preparation. All of these steps are intended to give you a strong foundation for your life together as husband and wife. As such, each of these steps will focus on different aspects of married life and will provide you with tools to live your married life well.

- **FOCCUS:** The first step that you should take is for both the prospective bride and the prospective groom to take the FOCCUS test. This is an evaluation of your level of agreement on certain matters and of where you are at in communicating with one another. Contact the Parish Office to set up a time to take this evaluation.

- **Meeting with a Priest:** After taking the FOCCUS, you may set up an appointment with a priest here in the parish. In this meeting, Father will discuss any issues that he feels need to be discussed.
- **Evaluation of FOCCUS:** The next step to undertake in your marriage preparation is to have the FOCCUS test evaluated by the person to whom you are directed. This will require a meeting with the evaluator to discuss its results. There will be a fee for this meeting. Follow-up meetings may be required.
- **Natural Family Planning:** Another requirement is that you successfully complete training in Natural Family Planning (NFP).
- **Marriage Preparation classes:** You must also attend Marriage Preparation classes here in the parish. They are held for three months in a row. You must attend all three classes in order and complete all assignments.
- **Engaged Encounter:** The final formal requirement of the Marriage Preparation process is to attend an Engaged Encounter weekend. This is a two day retreat centered on practical matters like communication and dealing with one another's families.

IV. Spiritual Preparation

- **Prayer:** Prayer for and with each other can be a wonderful opportunity to grow in your relationship with each other and with God. In praying together, we open up who we are to each other and get to know each other in ways that nothing else can provide. Part of your duty as a spouse will be to pray for your husband or wife, so why not start now? Additionally, marriage is hard enough to live that we are going to need the help of God to make it work. Ask Him for his help.
- **Discernment:** In the period of engagement, you are not yet fully committed to one another. It is still possible to back out. After you are married, that is not true. You will not be able to back out of it at that point. So take this time to truly reflect on what it is that God wants of you. Is this the path that He is really calling you to to become closer to Him and to be more loving people?
- **Reconciliation:** It 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 a part of your marriage preparation.

V. Ceremony Details

- **Planning the Liturgy:** Liturgy planning can help couples and their families to articulate the themes underlying their desire to enter sacramental marriage, and assist them in choosing the most appropriate Scripture readings, prayers, blessings and music.

- **Guest Celebrants:** You are welcome to have your marriage witnessed by a priest or deacon who is not associated with St. John Parish and who may have a special significance. Please let the office know if you plan to have a visiting priest. Clearance regulations on this can be major. Your visiting priest or deacon must obtain written delegation from the pastor of St. John for validity of the marriage.
- **Reverence in Church:** St. John Church is a sacred space to the members of this parish who worship here. You are not renting a building, but are using parish worship space; an atmosphere of reverence and respect must be maintained in the church at all times. Loud talking, cell phones, eating, drinking, and boisterous behavior are unacceptable in the church at any time, including the rehearsal.
- **Time of Weddings:** Weddings at St. John Church are held at 2:00 PM on Saturdays. Weddings are not held during Advent and Lent.
- **Wedding Party Attire:** Remember that marriage is a sacrament. This means that everything in the ceremony, including the way we dress, should reflect the reverence and holiness of the sacrament. In particular, bride's gowns and bridesmaids' dresses must be modest and should not be strapless or show the shoulder. **Pictures of the dresses must be brought to the Parish Office for approval before the dresses are purchased.** If their dresses are immodest, the bride and the bridesmaids will be required to wear a shawl or other covering during the ceremony.
- **Wedding attendants:** The number of attendants is the choice of the bride and groom. Please limit to 8 couples.
The ringer bearer and flower girl are permitted; however, having children in the wedding party can be a negative experience. Please be realistic about the age. To prevent falls, flower girls are not allowed to drop flower petals as they process in or out of church.
- **Wedding Rehearsal:** The time of the rehearsal is usually 6:00PM or 7:00PM of the Friday evening prior to the wedding. Everyone who will be participating in the wedding must be present. A Wedding Coordinator will be present at the rehearsal and will walk you through the ceremony. The Wedding Coordinator will also be there at the ceremony to assist.
- **Music at your wedding:** As the church wedding is a sacred rite, it follows that any music used in connection with the ceremony must mirror the dignity of the sanctuary and the religious significance of the service. Wherever music is employed, and by whatever instruments or voices, it must be representative of high quality in the art of composition. The music and texts selected must, in general, reflect the praise of God. Therefore, no recorded music may be used. Likewise art songs, popular and theatrical love songs are also deemed inappropriate. All music must be approved for the ceremony a month in advance. You should contact our Music Minister at least 3 months prior to your wedding.
- **Pictures:** The wedding pictures are an important part of this occasion. Since the wedding is a religious service in a sacred place, all photographers are asked to reverence the ceremony and the place. Please show this respect as pictures are taken **before** and **after** the ceremony. Pictures may be taken for 30 minutes

before and 30 minutes after the ceremony. Any pictures taken during the ceremony should be taken without flash photography and the photographer should not be in the sanctuary or moving around to disturb the service.

- **Flowers and decorations:** Roman Catholic liturgical norms require that the church environment remains through the liturgical season. Seasonal arrangements such as Christmas poinsettias or Easter lilies and other parts of the environment stay undisturbed. Wedding flowers may be purchased from the florist of your choice. Wedding flowers are to remain in the church for weekend liturgies.
- **Candles:** Only Candelabras from the church may be used. Call Evelyn Zmolik, president of the Altar Society 972-875-2791 for the fee. Unity candles are not part of the Roman rite. Their use is encouraged at the reception rather than during the ceremony. When they are used at church, bring them to the rehearsal.
- **Fees:** A person considered for the parishioner fee is a registered, active, contributing member of the parish.
 - The parishioner rate for the complete service is \$450.
 - Non-parishioner rate is \$650.
 - If any dispensations are needed or if prenuptial paperwork must be sent to the Diocesan Tribunal for any reason, the Diocese will charge a \$50 fee. You must pay this fee to St. John Nepomucene, and it will be forwarded to the Diocese.
 - All fees must be paid a month prior to the wedding.
 - These fees do not include the organist and/or vocalists or a stipend for the priest.
 - These fees do include a stipend for one altar server and the Wedding Coordinator as well as marriage preparation expenses and church utilities, maintenance, etc.
- **Maintenance:** Rice, birdseed, confetti, 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. A contact person who will be responsible for clean-up needs to be assigned. We ask, please, that you leave the church in the condition in which it was found.

VI. "Is everything done?" Appointment

- Make an appointment with the Parish Office at least **a month and a half** before the wedding date to make sure that everything is complete and in order. All paperwork should be turned in at or before this appointment. PLEASE DO NOT WAIT TO THE LAST MINUTE. If your paperwork needs to go to the Tribunal, the Tribunal must receive it 30 days before the wedding. In marriages where Diocesan approval is required, we cannot hold the ceremony without this approval. At this appointment, you will write down your choices of readings and other details regarding the wedding ceremony, so you should have these choices made before arriving for the appointment.

Checklist for Marriage Couple

St. John Nepomucene Catholic Church

Marriage Preparation Requirements:

1. Meet with Seth _____
2. FOCCUS Test _____
3. Meet with Father _____
4. Set the date for your wedding (after setting appointment with counselor) _____
5. FOCCUS Review with counselor _____
6. NFP course _____
7. Marriage Preparation Class _____
8. Engaged Encounter _____

Required Forms and Activities:

1. Provided Baptismal Certificate
Bride Turn-in Date _____
Groom Turn-in Date _____
2. Provided Affidavits (Free Status Forms)
Bride Turn-in Date _____
Groom Turn-in Date _____
3. Convalidation Yes No
If yes, Marriage license Date _____
4. Set date _____
5. Rehearsal Form Turn-in Date _____
6. One month before wedding make appointment
Date _____ Pay Fees _____
7. Marriage license in office one week prior to wedding
Turn-in Date _____
8. Other forms (individual basis)

Signed _____