

The Sacrament of Matrimony

Formation & Policies for Candidates for Marriage

Holy Family Parish
Caledonia, Michigan

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How to Contact Us

Holy Family Parish
9669 Kraft Avenue SE
Caledonia, MI 49316
Tel. 616-891-9259
Fax 616-891-1346
www.holyfamilycaledonia.org
Facebook Pages: Holy Family Catholic Parish
Catholic Faith Formation, Holy Family Caledonia

Pastor:

Rev. Mark Bauer
revmbauer@holyfamilycaledonia.org

Director of Faith Formation, Coordinator of Marriage Preparation

Christine Shafer x 224
cshafer@holyfamilycaledonia.org

Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry:

vacant

Wedding Coordinator:

Assigned approximately 4 months ahead of wedding; record contact info here:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Sponsor Couple:

Assigned at a later date; record contact info here:

Names: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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Introduction

Congratulations on your engagement to be married! The community of Holy Family Parish finds joy in celebrating this special time with you in your journey of faith. This handbook has been written to provide formation for you as a couple seeking the Sacrament of Matrimony in the parish community of Holy Family, and to inform and assist you as you prepare for this Sacrament. Answers to many common questions are gathered here for you.

Although beginning a marriage is a very special event for an engaged couple, it is also more than the personal exchange of vows and rings. Weddings are public rituals of the community, celebrated with family, friends and the rich traditions of our faith. By choosing to be married in the Catholic Church you are seeking a particular celebration in a particular spirit. Two people approaching the Church with the request to be married often come with conflicting ideas. For example, some people are afraid of the Church and its regulations regarding the Sacrament of Matrimony. Others are resentful that the Church would dare say anything about “my” wedding. Some see their wedding as a sign of the covenant between Christ and the Church, a sign of love and a sharing of the ministry of that love. Still others feel that all they want is a “nice church” for the ceremony. The special event marking the beginning of your married life is your wedding. You have found each other; and now you are ready to marry each other. Therefore, this wedding ceremony should be marked with words, gestures, and music that are meaningful to you. However, your marriage also belongs to Christ and the Church. When you come to the Church to be married, you are asking the Church (the community of the faithful) to accept you and allow you to share in its vocation and the Sacrament of Marriage. The Church welcomes you and rejoices that another couple wants to mature in faith by living the Sacrament of Marriage.

The Christian community will support you with their prayers for the rest of your life! It is this combination, you and the community, that makes Marriage in the Church so different and so holy. The Sacrament of Marriage presumes that a couple believes in the message of Jesus Christ, and that this belief shapes their values, influences their attitudes, and motivates their behavior. Our parish community prays that Christ, who was a wedding guest at Cana, be the guest of honor in your heart and your home.

The Sacrament of Matrimony

Sacraments of Service

Two Sacraments are ordered towards the salvation of others: Holy Orders and Matrimony. If they contribute as well to our personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. (CCC 1534) In the Catholic vision of living together as husband and wife, you both agree that the essential purpose of your marriage is to help each other reach your goal of eternal life. You're helping each other get to Heaven.

Holy Orders

Holy Orders is the Sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to His apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time. (CCC 1536) Bishops, priests and deacons who receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders serve to build up the people of God. Why talk about Holy Orders in a marriage class? As Pope John Paul II said "Marriage and virginity or celibacy are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the covenant of God with His people. When marriage is not esteemed, neither can consecrated virginity or celibacy exist; when human sexuality is not regarded as a great value given by the Creator, the renunciation of it for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven loses its meaning." In other words, when marriage is not honored—look at divorce rates, which are equally disturbing among Christians — neither are those who receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders and vice versa. God created this order for our good — Being our creator He knows what's best for us. Just as a note — look at the time a priest spends preparing for Holy Orders! Years! Compared to the short period of time an engaged couple spend preparing for marriage!

Sacrament of Matrimony

The Sacrament of Matrimony is defined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as: "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a Sacrament." (CCC 1601)

We're going to break this up and explain what it means.

The matrimonial covenant...Marriage is a sacred covenant. A covenant is entered into with God. God created marriage to image and participate in His own covenant with His people. Through the marriage covenant spouses are called to share in the free, total, faithful and fruitful love of God. When you get married in the Catholic Church you enter into a covenant with one another through God. A covenant is different from a contract. In a contract, each party knows exactly what is expected and each party spells out specific obligations. But a covenant is a solemn promise of continued love, friendship and loyalty no matter what is involved. In a contract, you focus on the specific conditions, whereas in a covenant, you focus on the person unconditionally. Your marriage is a solemn, life-long covenant. You have hopes and dreams for your future life together, but you don't know what that future will hold. In a marriage covenant you say, "I pledge my faithfulness to you regardless of what the future brings." In a covenant, a man and a woman embrace the mystery of their future out of love and not out of obligation or convenience. Love always chooses freely to sacrifice oneself for the good of the spouse.

The unconditional love of God for us, "His Covenant," should be mirrored in the love of the spouses. Living a marriage covenant is a way of life that keeps God at the center of all that you will do as a couple. It is a unique and irreplaceable way of living. Marriage requires that you trust God in good times and in bad times, that you make sacrifices for one another as Jesus did, and that you surrender yourself for the greater good of your spouse.

When you truly live the marriage covenant, your marriage reveals God's loving presence. It is very important to understand the significance of the Sacramental covenant. It's the way you're choosing to live your lives every day.

By which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life... A man and a woman, a husband and a wife, are joined by God in an unbreakable bond of love. This relationship

is the closest and most intimate of human relationships. It's a total giving of oneself to your spouse. St. Paul, in the letter to the Ephesians, says "This is a great mystery". It's only through the graces we received in the Sacraments that a marriage "works". We can't do it by ourselves. We have to have God in our marriage. We are called to give selflessly to our spouse through a life long partnership that demands faithfulness of heart, mind and action to your one and only spouse.

Is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses... In Genesis 2:18 the Lord said "It is not good for the

man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." God is the creator of marriage. For marriage to be what God intended it to be, marriage needs to be governed by laws. These laws are given to us through the Church. It's for the spouses benefit, for the spouses' salvation, that God gives us guidelines for marriage.

And the procreation and education of offspring... Married love goes beyond oneself to create a greater good. Marriage, as part of its definition, is a sexual relationship. Children are a gift, a blessing, a sign of fruitful love. Marriage is called to be fruitful. God said "Be fertile and multiply" Gen. 1:28.

Getting married without the intention of having children is not a Sacramental marriage.

The second part of this phrase says that parents are "the principal and first educators of their children". (CCC 1653) It's the honor and responsibility of the parents to be able to raise them in the Catholic faith.

This covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a Sacrament...

Specific holy actions, outward signs that have a profound spiritual meaning, were defined as "Sacraments". These are actions that Jesus Himself instituted for the holy purpose of giving us the gift of His grace. There are 7 Sacraments in the Catholic Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to nurture and deepen God's presence in us in a unique way.

As you enter into the Sacrament of matrimony, you become a visible sign of God's faithful love for humanity. Christian marriage is the Sacrament that reflects Christ's covenant love for His Bride, the Church. As Christ's love for the Church is unconditional, so too is your love for each other, in union with God's life within you.

All Sacraments consist of some material object (water, bread, wine, rings) and some external act (like the exchange of wedding vows). They bestow Christ's redemptive power into our souls and actually confer His grace. They are the visible signs of Christ's work in us. In the Roman Catholic Church the priest or deacon does not bestow the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. He witnesses the man and woman exchanging their vows before God. It is you, the couple, who "minister" the Sacrament to one another.

God's Grace in Marriage

In order to help you live the covenant of marriage, God gives you, in the Sacrament of matrimony, a special gift – the gift of His grace. God's grace is God's divine life dwelling within you. God's grace will help you to witness to God's love for you and all humanity. More specifically, some of the graces of the Sacrament of Matrimony are love, patience, forgiveness, and intimacy. These graces will give you the strength, on a daily basis, to make sacrifices in love like laundry and cleaning, dishes and mowing the lawn. It's God's grace that will help you forgive when you're hurt;; help you compromise in a never-ending disagreement; help you to see the other's point of view. This will happen if you allow it, if you take the graces and "use" them. The graces are always there for the

“taking”. If hurt feelings and unforgiving attitudes linger and you refuse to use the graces God’s giving you, then you’re choosing not to live a Sacramental marriage. Each day you will choose to live this special covenant as an expression of your love for each other, God’s love for you, and the Lord’s desire to dwell within you as husband and wife. Through the graces given to you in the Sacrament of matrimony you will be able to receive the strength and joy to face the challenges you will encounter in your life as a married couple.

Sin

In the story of creation, God creates man and woman out of love. We were created in love, to love. God says this is very good. God blessed this love and called it to be fruitful. The two are no longer two, but one flesh. The sin of Adam and Eve, however, ruptured this original relationship between a man and woman. The union of one flesh is now threatened by sin. God said that they would die if they ate the fruit. Obviously they didn’t die a physical death. It’s the spiritual realities that were altered. It became spiritual chaos. The consequences of original sin are discord within the relationship. Sin is a failure of love for God and neighbor caused by our selfishness. It’s something that no one likes to talk about. Sin wounds our relationship with God — it wounds ourselves and those around us. It is a love of oneself, through the self-centered choices we make. Living together, using contraception, not attending Mass on Sunday and Holy Days, being unfaithful, and not telling the truth are all grave sins within a relationship. We’re not here to judge! We’re here to inform. These are things that need to be reflected on in prayer.

Though it may seem that the Church has a list of “do’s” and “don’ts”, these are here to protect our relationship with each other and with God. In order to restore, to heal the wounds of sin, man and woman need the help of the grace of God. God knows we can’t do it on our own...He wants us to depend on Him.

No one is perfect and God knows this. His mercy is unending! That’s why He gives us His forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Through this Sacrament, we receive the graces we need to heal the brokenness. God comes running to us! He loves us so much!

Whose Rite Is It Anyway? Catechesis on the Marriage Rite

Wedding season is slowing down and when it comes to looking at liturgical catechesis for the rite of marriage, we need to ask, “Who is doing the catechesis?” Is it the media, which promotes images of the wedding Liturgy that invite couples to replicate what they see? Is it the professional wedding planner who brings his or her own ideas of what a beautiful ceremony should look like? Is it from other ecclesial communities that couples want to borrow unique and creative ideas for their own ceremony? Talk to any priest or parish musician about some of their wedding experiences and you will know what I am talking about. The question of whether **we** are **forming the rite** or the rite is **forming us** comes to the forefront.

The new *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)* devotes three pages (143–45) to the major points of catechesis for the Sacrament of matrimony. The first emphasizes the ecclesial nature of the Sacrament: catechesis “encourages the care and concern of the whole Christian community for married couples by public recognition of couples planning marriage, modeling by couples in successful marriages, and support of couples in challenged marriages.”

The NDC also directs that there should be instruction on the rite of the Sacrament which we do as a community beautifully. Catechesis on the rite should unfold how the ritual realizes the Catholic understanding of marriage. Our Pre-Cana program is well known as a great resource for catechesis on the rite trying to help to overcome a disconnect that sometimes exists between catechesis “on” marriage and the celebration of the Sacrament or the rite. The liturgical celebration of marriage should lift up the Sacramental or sacred commitment for the entire community. One of the weakest aspects of liturgical catechesis on the rite of marriage concerns its ecclesial nature and the role of the community. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL)* reminds us that “*Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church.... Therefore liturgical services involve the whole Body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it*”(26). How well has our

catechesis emphasized this principle with the celebration of marriage? The goal is not to take anything away from the couple and their family and friends. It is indeed a special day for all of them, but it is also a special occasion for the entire community. It is not without reason that the first directive in the *NDC* begins with catechesis and “encourages the care and concern of the whole Christian community”(143). Thus Fr. Mark shares the information to the congregation over the weekend liturgies to share in their joy and commitment to the sacred call of matrimony. The privatization of marriage is oftentimes the result of the consumerism associated with wedding preparations. Couples become quickly and deeply involved with decisions about renting a hall for the reception, choosing and buying the bridal gown, picking the colors and dresses for the bridesmaids, sending out invitations, selecting food for the reception, buying rings, scheduling fittings for tuxedos, selecting flowers, etc. The cost and details of the preparations on the part of the families only serve to heighten the feeling that this wedding belongs to them. Citing *Familiaris consortio*, the second edition (issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments on March 19, 1990) points out that the liturgical care for spouses and their families concerns the bishop, the pastor and his assistants, and the entire ecclesial community. It stresses the communal character of marriage, which is meant to increase and sanctify the people of God and, thus, calls for the participation of the parish community. Liturgical catechesis should promote the ecclesial dimension of the Sacrament or rite while, at the same time, unfold for couples the Catholic understanding of marriage as a vocation, bond, covenant, sacred *relationship*, etc. (See the catechetical principles listed in the *NDC* on pages 143–145.) We already have at our disposal the means for accomplishing these tasks but still seem to get caught up in the general culture forgetting our call. It’s useful to examine the liturgical catechesis we provide on the actual rite for celebrating marriage. The entrance rite, for example, is designed to reveal that the Church shares the joy of the couple celebrating marriage (*Rite of Marriage* [RM] 19). “If there is a procession to the altar, the ministers (servers/deacon) go first, followed by the priest, and then the bride and the bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses. Meanwhile, the entrance song is sung”(RM20). In other words, the entrance rite is a **liturgical action**; it is more than an opportunity to display the wedding party. Preparing the entrance rite with the couple provides me an opportunity to speak to them about the way the Church gathers as the body of Christ and begins its prayer in song, which unites us. Having the Processional be a sung hymn such as *O God Beyond All Praising* or *Praise to the Lord the Almighty* has a sense of reverence and pomp for the entrance of both the representative of Christ (the priest) and the Sacramental couple. Musically, the wedding is first and foremost **a Mass** or for Marriage ceremonies a Liturgy of the Word. The congregation is called upon to participate fully in support of the couple. Finally, liturgical catechesis on the rite gives us an exceptional opportunity to explore with couples the meaning of marriage as a Sacrament or sacred bond. We see as a Universal Church that catechesis on the Sacramental nature of marriage remains weak. This, sadly, becomes apparent in the lack of understanding of the annulment process of the Church. A Sacramental marriage is **more** than a wedding to be celebrated or an attitude that we are getting married in church; it is **more** than a legal bond giving people legal rights. The Rite of Marriage is a fundamental source for developing a catechesis on the *Sacramental nature* of marriage. It involves more than walking through the ritual at a rehearsal. Do the Bride and Groom truly understand the consent, exchange of rings, and nuptial blessing and their meaning to them as well as to us as a community? Do couples understand the consent as more than “this is where you say your vows to one another”? How well have they explored the religious depth of the meaning of the covenant, not only for their life together, but within the context of their mutual covenant to Christ? When they profess their love and fidelity in the exchange of rings, are they aware that they reveal and celebrate Christ’s love and fidelity with the Church? And when we pray in the nuptial blessing that they be given “strength which comes from the Gospel so that they may be witnesses of Christ to others”(RM33), do they understand their call to discipleship? And when they celebrate the Sacrament of matrimony, do they know that they do not do this **just for themselves** but that their Sacramental celebration speaks to all of us? It reveals who God is for us as a community. I know that Fr. Mark and the Marriage preparation committee have worked very hard in this catechesis. Knowing it as a parent or as a potential bride/groom is just one more opportunity for better understanding and catechesis in this beautiful Rite of the Church. Just remember to ask yourself, “Whose Rite is it anyway?”.

Preparation

The Catholic Church takes marriage very seriously. Requirements for your marriage preparation are not arbitrary, but come from the universal Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Province of Michigan, the State of Michigan, and our local church in the Diocese of Grand Rapids. A couple is expected to demonstrate evidence of our Catholic Christian faith being present and practiced in their lives and must show a willingness to take the time and make the necessary effort for proper religious preparation for the reception of the Sacrament.

In our world today, many people treat engagement as the time needed to prepare for a wedding day. Much of a couple's time and energy will be caught up in sending invitations, renting facilities, choosing a cake, hiring a limousine, etc., etc. In the Catholic Church, engagement is seen as that special time in your life when you will focus on each other and the commitment you are to make. The Church requires at least six months of engagement before your wedding day; our parish community encourages one year or more. We will not provide you with a six month (or more) program. However, we do ask that you take this time seriously and deepen your bond of love in the Lord.

There are many dimensions to preparing for this Sacrament. Spiritual preparation for the Sacrament of Christian Matrimony demands more time, thought, prayer and discussion than the material preparations for the wedding day itself. While these material things must be arranged, they have no effect on the outcome of the marriage. They are merely incidental to it.

The wedding day is just one day; the marriage is the true focus of these preparations. As part of your preparations for the marriage, we cannot encourage you enough to pray together regularly. Collaborate in selecting the scripture readings and other elements of the wedding Liturgy. Working together to prepare the "event" will support working together on the marriage itself.

Ultimately, your preparation time will need to include:

1. Prayer and Worship Together:
 - If you are both Catholic, make a commitment to attend Mass together. Let God's Word and Sacrament strengthen you.
 - If you are of different faith traditions, let your engagement be a time in which you more deeply explore each other's churches.
 - If you are Catholic, but have been away from the Church for a period of time, celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and return to Sunday Mass to prepare yourself for the marriage vocation.
 - Pray for your fiancé every day.
 - Don't forget to also pray daily *with* your fiancé as part of your relationship.
2. Parish Registration: Just as you are making material plans for your life together, you must also be making plans for your spiritual and faith life together. You will need to be discerning a place for you as a couple to begin your married life together, and becoming active in a parish community.
 - If you are Catholic and not already registered and active in a parish that you can call your spiritual home, you will need to register during your engagement. You will register as a single person.
 - If you are Catholic and are presently registered in a parish under your parents, register as a single person during this time of engagement.
 - You will need to update your registration after your marriage by contacting the office of that parish, and indicating to them that you are now one household so that the parish can combine your records.

- As a courtesy to a parish you are leaving, please contact them to remove your “single” name/s from their records.
- 3. Six Months Preparation: As this will be one of the most important decisions of your life, a responsible decision for marriage can only be made within a clear understanding of the responsibilities of married life, as well as an in depth understanding of yourself, an appreciation of the blessing and insights that your Christian heritage may shed on love, married friendship, and the blessing of children. Our marriage preparation is designed to help couples prepare for their married life with a good deal of learning, sharing, prayer and growth. The marriage guidelines of the Dioceses of the Province of Michigan require that a couple initiate the process of arranging their marriage at least six months before the date of the wedding. Often, it is necessary to do so even earlier, and that is advisable.
- 4. Initial Meeting: Engaged couples will meet to complete various forms, the dispensation and permission to marry form required by Canon Law and the Diocese. This provides basic information along with personal testimony of freedom to marry and the desire to do so without reservation. This process ensures that each person approaching the Sacrament of Matrimony is indeed free to marry in the Church.
- 5. Pre-Marital Questionnaire (FOCCUS): Couples take a pre-marriage inventory called FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, & Study). This tool is offered as an aid to self-discovery and measures the degree of compatibility of the couple in their relationship as it exists. When the FOCCUS results are returned, the person preparing you for marriage will facilitate conversation for you as a couple on the results. If it is a mixed religion marriage, the subject of the Catholic practicing his/her faith and the Catholic baptism and upbringing of children should be discussed.
- 6. Pre-Cana Sessions: All couples are required to attend a Pre-Cana Retreat. A schedule of these retreats around the diocese is available on the parish website. Once completed, please give/send a copy of your certificate to the pastoral staff member preparing you for marriage.
- 7. Natural Family Planning: All couples are required to take a Natural Family Planning (NFP) class. The schedule for these classes is available on our parish website. Once completed, please give/send a copy of your certificate to the pastoral staff member preparing you for marriage.
- 8. Sponsor Couple: As part of your preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage, you will be assigned a married couple in the parish who will sponsor you as you are formed for the Sacrament. You will meet with this couple and discuss various elements related to marriage.
- 9. Sacrament of Reconciliation: The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an integral part of life within the Church. All Sacraments posture us to be recipients of a Sacrament with a clean and whole heart, a reconciled heart. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is strongly encouraged before celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony. Holy Family offers this Sacrament weekly on Saturdays at 3:45pm (3:30pm during Lent). Confessions can be heard by the priest at a prearranged time, also; call for an appointment.
- 10. Sacrament of Confirmation: If you were baptized in the Catholic Church and are receiving Holy Communion, but have not completed your initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation, you will be prepared for this Sacrament and receive the Sacrament if at all possible. While it is not an absolute requirement that Catholics be confirmed before they are married in the Church, confirmation before marriage is something the Church strongly urges. The *Code of Canon Law* states: “Catholics who have not yet received the Sacrament of confirmation are to receive it before being admitted to marriage, if this can be done without grave inconvenience. (CIC 1065)” Not only does the Sacrament of Confirmation complete one’s initiation into the Church, through the Sacrament of Confirmation, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are strengthened in a person; what a tremendous opportunity as one enters marriage --- to be strengthened with the gifts of the Holy Spirit!
- 11. Documents: All couples must also complete/provide the necessary documents:
 - Couple:
 - i. A certificate of Baptism must be obtained and given to the pastoral staff preparing you for marriage. Baptismal certificates should be dated no later than six months

- prior to the wedding. Baptismal certificates can be obtained from the Church where you were baptized by calling and requesting a newly issued copy of the certificate, and giving the month, day, year of your baptism and birth. In some cases, a Profession of Faith will be accepted instead of a certificate of baptism for a non-Catholic.
- ii. A marriage license from the State of Michigan must be obtained. This license needs to be in the Parish Office by Tuesday of the week of the wedding.
- o Together with the Priest: Along with the Priest, some other documents may be necessary depending on various circumstances:
 - i. The pre-nuptial questionnaire (Form A) is to be taken separately by the bride and groom. This provides basic information along with personal testimony of freedom to marry and the desire to do so without reservation.
 - ii. An affidavit of witness (Form B) must be completed by parents or close relatives of the couple when it is a marriage of mixed religion or the couple is from out of town or state.
 - iii. In the case of a mixed religion marriage, the Catholic partner is asked to sign a statement promising to live his/her faith, to respect the faith of the partner, and the desire to baptize and educate the children as Catholic to the best of his/her ability.
 - iv. When a Catholic wishes to be married in a Protestant Church, the Bishop of this diocese must grant a Dispensation from Canonical Form. This request is obtained by the priest.
 - v. When a Catholic is marrying a baptized member of another Christian Church, Permission for Mixed Religion must be given. The Priest grants this permission.
 - vi. When a Catholic is marrying a non-baptized person or a doubtfully baptized member of another Christian Church or when documentary proof of that baptism is unavailable (as a precaution), a Dispensation from Disparity of Worship must be granted by the priest.
 - o Marriages are to be recorded according to the proper procedures in the parish Sacramental record book of marriages. Notification of the marriage is sent to the church(es) of baptism. Marriage documents are kept on file forever.
12. Liturgy Preparation: As a couple, you will have several meetings with representatives of the Marriage Preparation ministry and Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry.
 13. Special Circumstances: Special circumstances, such as living together before marriage, teen marriages, under the age of 18, pregnancies, and second marriages are all sensitive issues. Please speak with the parish priest regarding these situations. A longer and more careful assessment will be made, which will minimally include professional counseling and pastoral discernment. This may lengthen the preparation period.
 14. Fulfillment of all other preparation responsibilities, as outlined in this booklet.

Policies and Guidelines

Parish Membership Requirements

For your Marriage Liturgy to take place at Holy Family Parish, either the bride or groom must show signs of being a believing, participating, registered member of the Holy Family Parish community for at least 6 months. You are expected to attend Mass faithfully on the weekends, and offer yourselves for service in the Parish community.

Pastoral Exceptions:

- a) Registration can be made on the Parish website, www.holyfamilycaledonia.org or during the week, Monday through Friday, at the Parish Office for those intending to become an active member of the Parish.
- b) Marriage Liturgies for persons who are not Parishioners of Holy Family can only take place if the Pastor of the bride or groom extends permission, and one of the following:
 - The parents of the bride or groom are active/contributing Parishioners of Holy Family Parish.
 - The Pastor of the bride and/or groom attests in writing to the Holy Family Pastor as to the bride and/or groom's membership and active participation in that Parish.
 - Other circumstances must be approved by the Pastor.

Note: For those newly registering in our Parish or those not registered at any Parish, an additional 6 months of preparation is necessary before the bride and groom may begin the marriage preparation process. (date may not be reserved until initial 6 months of preparation/Parishioner membership is complete, to total at least one year from date of Parish registration to date of Marriage Liturgy.)

Reserving a Date for the Marriage Liturgy

To reserve a Marriage Liturgy date at Holy Family Parish, contact Christine Shafer at the Parish as soon as possible once you know you want to be married at Holy Family. The Marriage Liturgy date needs to be approved before it is final. While there is a minimum of six months preparation time for all marriages, we strongly advise couples to contact the Parish one year or more before the proposed Marriage Liturgy date.

The following details must fall into place before the proposed date will be scheduled on the Parish calendar:

1. Catholic and non-Catholic people who have been through any previous marriage ceremony should consult with the Catholic Pastor and Parish Staff to see what special documentation will be necessary in their specific cases to ensure that they are free to marry. Contact the Parish at least one year in advance of the tentative Marriage Liturgy date. Dates cannot be held for couples waiting for a Declaration of Nullity of Nullity from the Diocesan Tribunal Office confirming their freedom to marry. The date should be set after the Declaration of Nullity is obtained, a process that commonly takes 12 months, sometimes more.
2. Deposit of \$100 paid (MUST be paid before the date is reserved; 50% refundable).
3. The final page of this document is to be signed and delivered to the Parish to certify that you have read and agree to the terms of our Marriage Liturgy policy.
4. Please wait until confirming your Marriage Liturgy date at Holy Family before scheduling any other wedding facilities or services. Sometimes, the Marriage Liturgy date is not finalized until after your first appointment with the Pastoral Staff person preparing you for marriage.

The Time for the Marriage Liturgy

It is possible and recommended that you examine the possibility of celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at: a.) a regularly Parish Saturday (Vigil) Mass, b.) a regular Parish Sunday Mass or c.) a Marriage Liturgy shared with another couple. These options place some restrictions on the Marriage Liturgy and should be chosen with care. If this is something you are interested in, please contact the Pastor or Christine Shafer as soon as possible to discuss feasibility.

If you opt for a Marriage Liturgy outside the Parish Mass, Marriage Liturgies at Holy Family must begin by 1:30pm on Saturday. The Church will generally be available at 11:30am. After the Marriage Liturgy, the Church must be clean and empty no later than 3:15pm.

Friday evening Marriage Liturgies are also possible. The building would be open 2½ hours before the scheduled Marriage Liturgy time. Times can be negotiated with the Parish office.

The Time of Year

The Liturgical Seasons of Lent and Advent are not well suited for Marriage Liturgies. In Lent, neither flowers and other decorations nor instrumental music are to be used in the Church. Instruments may only be used to assist in singing. In Advent, restraints are placed on music and decorations that may not match your expectations. Marriage Liturgies are strongly discouraged during these Liturgical Seasons for these reasons. Please be aware that there are weekends of the year for which no Marriage Liturgies will be scheduled. There may be no Marriage Liturgies on Holy Saturday.

Fees, Stipends and Stewardship

Our Parish spends a considerable amount of time and money helping couples prepare for marriage and also in simple practicals of facility usage like air conditioning, etc. To help defray costs associated with weddings, our Parish has set fee levels for Parishioners and non-Parishioners. Financial support of your Parish, within one's means is a sign of participation in the work of the Church. Couples are encouraged to reflect on the concept of Stewardship, where we return to God a portion of what has been given to us. We believe that tithing (giving of 5% of one's gross income to the church, and 5% to other charities) is a spiritual exercise that strengthens marriages. You are encouraged to tithe from your wedding gifts as a first sign as a married couple of giving your "first fruits" to God in gratefulness and recognition of the blessings bestowed upon you.

Fees are to be paid by check, payable to each service provider, and given to the Marriage Liturgy Coordinator at the rehearsal, who will distribute payments for you at the rehearsal.

Fees Schedule:

- Church: \$100 Parishioners, \$500 non-Parishioner
- *Musician Provided by Parish: \$150
- *Cantor Provided by Parish: \$75
- Altar Servers Provided by Parish: \$20 each (Mass only; 2 needed)
- Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator: \$200
- *There are no fees for the Priest or Deacon; however a gift to the Priest or Deacon is welcomed.*
**Musician and Cantor are required. If not using Parish Musician and Cantor, there is a \$25 Consultation fee for the Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry.*

Rehearsal

Except for the musicians and the Priest/Deacon, anyone who has a special role to play in your Marriage Liturgy should attend the rehearsal. This includes ushers, groomsmen, bridesmaids, witnesses, Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, assistants (M/M of ceremony), people bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, Altar Servers that are not supplied by the Parish, etc. This will allow them to receive instructions, ask questions and familiarize themselves with what they will be doing at the Marriage Liturgy. It is very important that these people participate in the rehearsal. The Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will assist with the Rehearsal.

Rehearsals for Saturday Marriage Liturgies take place most commonly on Friday evening at 5:00pm. For a

Friday night Marriage Liturgy, the rehearsal time will be arranged at the time the Marriage Liturgy is being scheduled.

Sunday Eucharist Obligation

The Marriage Liturgy does not fulfill any Sunday Eucharist obligation, unless it is celebrated during the Sunday Mass.

Use of the Church

Catholic Marriage Liturgies are to take place in a Parish Church or an approved Catholic chapel. Given the sacredness of marriage and in order to emphasize the liturgical rites of the Marriage Liturgy, it is to take place in the Parish place of worship where the Parish community gathers for community prayer and worship.

Holy Family is air conditioned, and the Church seats up to about 700 people comfortably, so for most Marriage Liturgies there is plenty of room for guests to be comfortable. Holy Family is handicap accessible, and we have a wheelchair available for use. Respect for our Parish property is expected. The Church building of Holy Family is entirely non-smoking. No snacks, gum, or drinks (except water) are allowed in the Church. The Church and property should be left in the same order as it was found before the Marriage Liturgy.

Vehicles may be left overnight in the parking lot. However, they have to be left in the back of the parking lot to accommodate Saturday and Sunday Masses.

We are able to provide a small room for the men and women for final dressing, preparation, and such. The rooms must be left in the same clean and orderly condition in which you found them. Please be sure to place all belongings in a bag when finished getting ready so that your things are presentable, organized and ready to be taken to the reception. Do not leave any valuable items (purses, cameras, etc.) unattended in any room or the Church. Holy Family is not liable for any damage or lost/stolen items. The room for women has a mirror for last minute adjustments. Women and men should practice conservative modesty and sensitivity, as this is a public and sacred building, and privacy cannot be assured.

The possession or use of alcohol or drugs is not permitted on the Church grounds by anyone before, during or after the rehearsal and Marriage Liturgy. Anyone found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs before or during the Marriage Liturgy will be asked to leave the premises. If the bride, groom, or witnesses violates this policy or comes to the Church under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the Marriage Liturgy will be cancelled, as this is a Canonical Impediment. The exception to the use of alcohol after the Liturgy is if the reception is being held at Holy Family, and then alcohol may be used only in the area of the reception as found in the rental agreement.

Marriage License

The marriage license must be turned into the Parish Office no later than Tuesday before the Marriage Liturgy.

Use of the Hall

Please contact the Parish Office for rental information.

Worship Aid

We would encourage use of a Worship Aid. The Worship Aid is very important in fostering the active participation that is due the Liturgy. A worship aid can be a sign of hospitality extended to the assembly. This sign might be especially important when a significant number of the assembly will not be familiar with the Roman Catholic Liturgy and Rite of Marriage. As a sign of hospitality, the prime

purposes of such a program are to A.) provide an overview/outline of the Liturgy and B.) serve as a record of the event.

If you will be using a Worship Aid, samples are provided in the Appendix, one for a Marriage within the Mass, the other for a Marriage Outside of the Mass. These templates can be sent to you electronically if you would like; just request from the Parish Staff. Printing the Readings in the Worship Aid is discouraged, as there are many different editions and only some are approved for the use in the Church and due to copyright infringement. Two copies of the Worship Aid are to be given to the Marriage Liturgy Coordinator at the rehearsal. Also, the Worship Aid is to be proofread by the Director of Liturgy and Parish Music in advance of printing. Please submit your final version for approval at least one week before it is due to your printer.

If you would like to provide a more expanded Worship Aid to assist your guests with their participation, the assembly's responses may be included in the appropriate places. (For example: "The Lord be with you." "And with your Spirit."). Please consult the Parish Staff for help with this.

Decoration Suggestions and Restrictions

Please provide your florist or decorator with a copy of this page.

If you choose to bring in decorations for the Church, keep the focus on the Marriage Liturgy. The prayers of the Church for your marriage are the key element in your Marriage Liturgy; you don't want to distract from the words and actions of the Liturgy. All decorations should point our minds and hearts to God for His worship, which is the reason for any Liturgy.

First and foremost, as a member or someone associated with Holy Family Parish, we ask that before you select your Marriage Liturgy colors, you learn from the Parish what Liturgical Season and Liturgical color during which your Marriage Liturgy will be occurring so that you may compliment the Church's color and Liturgical environment. We encourage you to consider, as a part of the Parish community, gifting a part of your floral arrangements used in the Liturgical environment of your Marriage Liturgy as a connection to the broader Parish community.

Because of the style of our Church building, we encourage those responsible for flowers and decorations at Marriage Liturgies to strive for beauty in simple rather than extravagant ways. One should be able to sense something special (and nothing trivial) in everything that is seen, heard, touched, smelled and tasted in our Liturgy. When this is overlooked, many people at a Marriage Liturgy may feel like spectators at a show.

Please know that the Church environment, especially during the Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter Seasons takes priority over any other décor. Since the Church is the house of God and the place where the Parish faith community worships, special Church decorations for weekend worship may not be removed in favor of a Marriage Liturgy. Do not move any existing flowers, furnishings, candles, plants, seasonal decorations, etc. The Marriage Liturgy Coordinator will remove the Parish's flowers in front of the altar and replace them after the Marriage Liturgy.

- No decorations may be so large as to obstruct the view of the Sanctuary furnishings from anyone in the Church, nor should they ever hinder any ritual movement and action. The use of arches, pillars, decorative fencing and/or extra candelabra are not allowed anywhere in the Church. Arches may be used in the Narthex or outside the Church only.
- Plants and flowers being used are to be real or natural in the Liturgical Environment, as anything used in Liturgy should have life in it.
- Flowers or bows placed on the pews should be used to offer hospitality to the entire assembly, not to emphasize the aisle or to set apart special seating. If used, flowers or bows used on the center ends of the pews may also be matched by decorations on the outside ends of the pews. There are 17 pews on each side of the main aisle, although placing decorations on each and every pew appears excessive in our space; plan for one bow per 2-3 pews. No tape, tacks, or wire are to be used: pew bow clips or 3M Command Strips are suggested. Do not block the pews off for any reason.
- Runners are discouraged, as they are a safety hazard, an added expense, and reflect an older day when the aisle was not a clean place and the runner protected the bride's dress from filth. Today, the Church is clean and the dress does not need the protection as in days of old. However, if a runner is desired, it needs to be fabric for safety reasons (so it doesn't slip). Runners are to be laid down immediately prior to the entrance procession beginning.
- Bubbles are the approved "send off" item. For reasons of safety and cleanliness, no rice, birdseed, confetti or similar substance may be thrown or scattered. These all cause special problems best avoided.
- The sprinkling of SILK rose petals during the Marriage Liturgy service is approved, but the Master/Mistress of Ceremonies and/or the Ushers must plan ahead to clean up the petals.
- If using ribbons on your Worship Aids, please be sure they are attached in some fashion (tied, stapled, glued).
- Our Parish Liturgical Environment room is available with the help of the Marriage Liturgy Coordinator. Available are: Unity/wedding candle with cloth; plant stands of various sizes/design; fabric pieces; baskets; vases; guest book podium.

If you are using the services of a florist, please inform them that the building is open 2½ hours before the Marriage Liturgy. Please plan deliveries accordingly. Flowers can be brought to the Church the Friday of rehearsal to store in cooler with the prior arrangement of the Marriage Liturgy Coordinator.

Photography / Videography - Suggestions and Restrictions:

Please share a copy of this page with your photographer/videographer.

The use of the Church for pictures is a privilege, not a right of either the couple or the photographer. All photography or video before, during or after the Liturgy must respect the sacredness of the Sacrament and of the Church. Most simply stated, we expect photographers and videographers to be reverent and discreet.

The building is generally open at 11:30am for a 1:30pm Saturday Marriage Liturgy, and the Church must be empty no later than 3:15pm. Plan accordingly. Also, the photographer must plan to have the Church empty 30 minutes before the Marriage Liturgy to prepare for pre-Liturgy activity and seating of the assembly.

- As a guest of our Parish, do not move any existing flowers, furnishings, candles, plants, seasonal decorations, etc. Photo sessions may be held before the Liturgy and immediately after, within the set time limits. We strongly discourage the practice of “hiding” the bride from the groom before the Marriage Liturgy. Please keep this in mind when scheduling photographs.
- During the Liturgy, only non-flash photography is permitted. Please plan ahead to bring appropriate film, cameras and lenses.
- It is necessary to avoid any movement or action during the Liturgy that will distract from or interrupt our worship. Photographers and video operators may not operate in or near the Sanctuary. Please remain behind the assembly and work as discretely as possible.
- You may use the side aisles, no closer than the 3rd row from the front. *Please remember, this is a Liturgy and Sacrament first.*
- No photography or videography in the center aisle once the Marriage Liturgy begins.
- Every moment of our worship—word, song and silence—is intentional and significant. This fact is especially important to anyone recording the Liturgy with video. If the Liturgy will be recorded to video, consider continuous footage of the entire Liturgy to honor the spirit of our service.
- Distasteful portraits to the worship space should be avoided.
- If the photographer is not familiar with a Catholic Marriage Liturgy, a review of the Liturgy is encouraged in order to better understand the various rituals and moments in the Marriage Liturgy, such as the Nuptial Blessing.
- Photographers should be dressed appropriately, modestly, and conservatively for the Liturgy.
- Consider having important photos of the Marriage Rite taken after the Liturgy, re-posed, to better capture them and not distract during the Liturgy.
- The photographer is strongly encouraged to come to the rehearsal to learn the movements of the Marriage Liturgy and plan ahead.
- If you would like pictures with the Presider, please inform the Wedding Liturgy Coordinator ahead to make arrangements.

Music in the Marriage Liturgy: Suggestions and Restrictions

Please provide your Musicians with a copy of this page.

You have seen weddings on TV and in the movies, and you have likely attended a few yourself to get ideas for your Catholic Marriage Liturgy. But have you considered also looking at your Parish's Sunday Mass? Paying attention to what happens at the Sunday Mass at your Church – even if it's not the same Church where you will be married – will give you a huge advantage when you begin planning your Catholic Marriage Liturgy with the Parish Staff. The Marriage Liturgy is first and foremost a Church Ritual that needs to follow the principles and rules of the official public rites of the Catholic Church, also called "Liturgies." Music is a key and integral part of any Liturgy. It is the Sung Prayer of the Church, used to praise and worship God, and call unity to the Assembly in Prayer.

The couple will meet with the Director of Parish Music to help you choose appropriate music, ask questions, explore options and listen to appropriate examples. Following are some initial and general guidelines and information about the Liturgical Music for the Marriage Liturgy:

- Typically, the Parish supplies the Cantor and Musician for the Marriage Liturgy. Musicians outside of the Parish must have prior approval of the Director of Parish Music to verify they have appropriate Liturgical training. Contact the Director of Parish Music before inviting outside musicians.
- There must be a Cantor and a Musician. The Cantor must be Catholic and liturgically trained, but outside musicians must be approved in advance by Parish Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry.
- Musicians are to be dressed modestly and reverently.
- The Director of Parish Music will consult with you regarding copyright licensing.
- There may be no pre-recorded music or accompaniment CD's. All music must be live.
- If you are having a Worship Aid, the Director of Parish Music must approve it before sending it to your printer. This is due to music selection requirements, copyright infringements, and to ensure the sacredness of the celebration.
- Fees/Stipends:
 - Musician provided by Parish: \$150
 - Cantor provided by Parish: \$75
 - If not using Parish Musician and Cantor: \$25 Consultation fee for Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry
 - Your musicians: agreed upon rate

Liturgical Music Selection:

Only Sacred Music may be used during the Marriage Liturgy. There are three basic guidelines that the Director of Parish Music uses regarding music for Catholic Marriage Liturgies. These guidelines are based on standard principles that govern how music is chosen in the Catholic Church throughout the world. You will need to keep these guidelines in mind as you're thinking about music in the Liturgy preparation, and as you meet with the Parish Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry.

1. Catholic Marriage Liturgy music is music that everyone sings together.

The Church values singing together because the Liturgy is meant to express the unity of all the people gathered. Singing together shows and strengthens that unity. Think of it like the national anthem. Whether it's sung by a professional singer alone or by everyone together, the song expresses our patriotism. Yet there's a subtle difference depending on who is singing it. When it's sung well by a soloist, it elicits deep emotion and we're moved by the singer and the song. However, when everyone sings it together, the focus is no longer on one singer or even on the song but on the group and what the group is doing and can do, together. Group singing says that each of us is necessary and we're all in this together. Your family and friends are there to support you, and most importantly, to worship and praise God. Let them express this by choosing music they can sing together.

2. Catholic Marriage Liturgy music is liturgical.

The music we use in Church is different than what we hear on the radio because it is specifically written for Catholic Liturgy, that is, it's Liturgical Music. Not only does Liturgical music have lyrics that fit the theme of the Liturgy, but more importantly, Liturgical music needs to fulfill the specified function of each part of the Liturgy. Every Liturgy has assigned words and actions that happen in a specific order. The music used during the Liturgy must "serve the Liturgy" so that the music fits the purpose, length, and assigned texts, if any, for each particular moment.

3. Catholic Marriage Liturgy music is rooted in Scripture, Sacred writings, or Catholic Church teaching.

Because your Marriage Liturgy is a ritual of the Catholic Church, the lyrics of your songs need to represent the Catholic faith. Your best bet is to stick with words from the Bible or with songs you find in the Parish's hymnals. When you are at Church next Sunday, look through the Parish's song book for Catholic hymns for Marriage Liturgies. Often, hymnals will group songs together by theme or purpose. Look in the index or table of contents for sections of hymns on "love" or "marriage."

Explanation of Where Music Is Used in the Marriage Liturgy:

There are specific points in the Liturgy where music will be used. The Parish Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry will guide you through these areas.

- *Prelude Music:* Prelude music should reflect the joy and love that will be celebrated during the Liturgy. The purpose is not to entertain guests, but to recognize that God will be present during the Liturgy and is in the love that you share.
- *Procession:* Music for the Procession will include one song for the entire Procession. At Marriage Liturgies, there is still the need for an opening (aka Gathering Song). Couples preparing their Marriage Liturgy may choose such a song to be sung during the processional, or immediately after it. An instrumental processional alone is beautiful and serves to accompany the procession, but fails to recognize the role and needs of the assembly. The assembly at a Marriage Liturgy is just as important as at any other Liturgy. The introductory rites of Catholic liturgies are there to bring the people together as a community and prepare them to listen to God's word. An opening song combines the voices of those assembled and intensifies the unity of those gathered. Together, we become more conscious of ourselves as a worshipping community, not just individuals. The Church teachings point out the importance of this simple but powerful action.
- *The Psalm:* Following a brief period of silence after the First Reading, the Cantor begins a sung Psalm. The Director of Parish Music will help you select one of the assigned Psalms for Marriage Liturgies.
- *Acclamations:* Throughout a Catholic Liturgy, there are moments when we sing a short refrain. These acclamations are dialogues that heighten the solemnity and punctuate the importance of what is happening in the ritual. These acclamations have assigned texts, so you can't change them; but your Director of Parish Music can give you different options for musical settings of the texts.
These are the times when we sing an acclamation:
 - Before the Gospel reading
 - Three times during the Eucharistic Prayer (if celebrating a Catholic Mass)
 - And once right before Communion (if celebrating a Catholic Mass)Listen for these in your Sunday Mass to get a sense of what setting you like.
- *Presentation of the Gifts:* Typically in a Marriage Liturgy, this is an instrumental piece chosen by the Director of Parish Music.
- *Exchange of Peace:* Instrumental Music is preferred during the Sign of Peace, often provided by the Parish Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry.
- *The Communion:* One hymn should be sung, and it is recommended that it be one that the assembly can easily sing as they proceed to receive Holy Communion. The Communion procession's purpose is to express the unity of the assembly who come to the Altar to share Communion. The song during this procession should express our union in Christ who feeds us and nourishes us with His Body and Blood.
- *Recessional Music:* The couple can discuss with the Director of Parish Music whether to have sung recessional music for the Assembly or instrumental, or one of each.

The Marriage Liturgy as Worship

The celebration of the wedding is a day...marriage is a life time! People remember their wedding day for a variety of reasons. We hope that one of the special and meaningful memories you will have is of the readings you choose and the vows that you pledge to one another. The Marriage Liturgy will be a time like no other in the celebration of the wedding day. Therefore, the Church encourages you to carefully assist the Priest and Music Director in the preparation of the Liturgy. Keep in mind that while your wedding day will consist of many important moments, the Marriage Liturgy is a moment of prayer...a time of praising God, asking His blessing, and making a public covenant with your partner!

In our Catholic tradition, a wedding is first and foremost a gathering for worship. For a man and woman, the giving of themselves and their entire lives to one another is a profound act of faith – in God and in each other. The songs, the prayers, the readings from Scripture, the blessings, the exchange of vows and rings – all are chosen to give expression to that faith. We encourage the couple to spend time and careful thought in the selection of these aspects of their wedding rite from the treasury of possibilities the Church offers for their use. A very old saying in the Church states, “The way we pray is the way we believe.” So the way we celebrate the rite of marriage at Holy Family reflects our faith and beliefs as Catholic Christians. We ask those who wish to celebrate their wedding here to observe our liturgical style of worship.

Wedding celebrations within the Catholic Church are much like Sunday Mass. As on Sundays, we gather at church for a wedding to express our love and faith. The communal atmosphere of prayer colors all aspects of the wedding celebration.

It should be noted that many of today’s wedding customs are not Christian, and some are actually contrary to our faith. It is important to remember that being married in the Catholic Church is entering into the Liturgy of the Church. Secular customs and traditions should be reserved for the wedding reception. One such secular custom that has been popularized is that of making the marriage “the bride’s big day”. Catholic weddings are called to be expressive of two people coming together in the Lord to join in covenant love.

Because we want those you have invited to experience God’s presence in your wedding celebration and your marriage, we offer you some education and guidelines to help you make choices about ministries, music and the worship environment.

¶. Marriage Rite: During Mass or Outside of Mass

The Catholic Church provides for two types of Marriage Liturgies:

- Marriage within the Eucharist (Communion), known as a Nuptial Mass
- Simple Rite consisting of a Liturgy of the Word with readings from the Scriptures and the exchange of vows.

Both are powerful expressions of the meaning of marriage. When two Catholics marry, the Church encourages them to celebrate their union within the Eucharist that expresses their oneness in and with the Body of Christ. They may also use the simple Rite if they wish. When one party to a marriage is not Catholic or is a non-practicing Catholic, the simple Liturgy is more appropriate (aka Marriage Outside of Mass). While a Mass is permissible, it tends to highlight differences rather than unity when both bride and groom cannot receive the Eucharist. In some cases, a couple of differing Christian traditions may, for various reasons, request the permission of the Bishop through the Pastor to celebrate their wedding in the non-Catholic partner’s church (called a dispensation from Canonical Form). If one of the parties is a non-baptized person, the marriage will be celebrated during a Liturgy of the Word.

As you meet with your priest to plan your Marriage Liturgy, you may wish to consider the following questions:

- What is our relationship to Sunday Eucharist? Are we faithful to the Church's worship or have we been away from the community's prayer? Do we desire to grow in a committed faith for the future?
- If we are of mixed belief, how do we each feel about the ceremony and what it expresses? Are we sensitive to each other's needs and feelings in this choice? How can we best express our oneness?
- Who will our guests be? Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them to be with us, to be comfortable, to pray with us and to participate in our wedding?

B. The People in a Marriage Liturgy

As you know from Sunday Mass, there are a variety of roles involved in the Liturgy. These roles may be carried out by different people, people who through their lives speak a message about their faith. Please carefully consider the people you will ask to assist at the Liturgy. Since secular wedding planners and etiquette books are not the best guides in this area, this information will help you get an overall picture of the various ministries and roles involved in the Marriage Liturgy.

Liturgical Roles:

- **The Couple; The Bride & Bride-Groom:** In the Roman Catholic Marriage Liturgy, the two of you are the ministers of the Sacrament. This means you are administering the Sacrament of Marriage and at the same time receiving the Sacrament of Marriage. Your love gathers the assembly, your words in the presence of the priest and the assembled Church, create the bond that joins you forever in Christ. Since a great deal of attention is focused on you during the Marriage Liturgy, you also set the tone for the assembly by your own attitudes and behavior. If you enter into the prayers and singing during the Liturgy, others in the assembly will be inclined to follow your lead. If, for example, you are at ease before the Liturgy and taking the time to greet people as they arrive, people will feel welcome, relaxed and the hospitality of Christ. You will be part of the Entrance Procession, along with other ministers in the Liturgy and will be seated in the Sanctuary facing the assembly as befits your role as ministers of the Sacrament.
- **Priest/Deacon:** A Roman Catholic Priest/Deacon leads the Liturgy because it belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. This means he calls the assembly to prayer, coordinates the various ministers, and addresses God in prayer. He is also the official witness of the Roman Catholic Church to the marriage.
- **Witnesses:** Two witnesses are required to be present for the legality of the wedding according to the laws of both the State of Michigan and the Roman Catholic Church. They must have attained the age of reason and be competent to attest to the events as they have transpired. Often, the witnesses are referred to as the best man and the maid/matron of honor. Both must be at least 18 years of age. It is preferable that both witnesses at a marriage ceremony in the Roman Catholic Church be Catholic. When circumstances warrant, one or both may be other than Catholic without the need for special permission, but must take their role seriously as witnesses. It should be noted that if there are other attendants in addition to the best man and maid/matron of honor, any two Catholics among them may be designated as the official witnesses, while the ceremonial title of Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor would remain with the non-Catholic attendants chosen.
- **The Assembly:** Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church Community. At any Liturgy, the primary role of the assembly of people who gather is to worship God. The goal in preparing Liturgy is to encourage the full and active participation of all who will gather to celebrate your marriage. When this is overlooked, the majority of the people at your wedding may become mere spectators at a show. You will want to encourage everyone to

participate and fulfill their Liturgical role. Many things contribute to people's participation. Hospitality, a printed Worship Aid, and well-chosen, familiar hymns for all to sing are some of the ways that help people to feel welcome and be part of the Liturgy. The way that you and the other people with special roles in the Liturgy conduct themselves is also a key influence.

- **Lectors:** You will want to select one or two Lectors (those who will proclaim the Readings) from among the people who will be at the Marriage Liturgy. One of these Lectors (or someone else) may be chosen to announce the petitions of the General Intercessions. People who serve as Lectors at Holy Family or in their home Catholic parishes may be the Lectors. Readings will be given to the Lectors in advance, practiced at the rehearsal, and then the Readings will be on the ambo in a prepared binder for the Lectors by the Wedding Liturgy Coordinator.
- **Liturgical Musicians:** Music is a key and integral element of any Liturgy. It is the sung prayer of the Church for the worship of God. The Director of Parish Music is responsible for all music and musician selections for Marriage Liturgies. The couple will meet with the Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry to prepare the music for the wedding. This will give you an opportunity to ask questions, explore options and listen to appropriate examples. In rare circumstances, musicians outside of those selected by the Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry may be used for weddings, but only with prior approval of the Director of Parish Music. If you plan on using outside musicians, contact the Director of Parish Liturgy & Music Ministry as soon as possible to verify Cantor/Musicians have proper Liturgical training. A well-meaning family member may be a fine singer or instrumentalist, but often lacks the necessary training in Liturgy. Cantors and Musicians must be two different people.
- **Gift Bearers (Marriages within a Mass only):** If your Marriage will be celebrated within Mass, you will need to assign at least two Catholics to be Gift Bearers, to bring the bread and the wine for the Eucharist forward to the altar. It is appropriate for these people to be the bride and groom. As a first demonstration of your vocation as a married couple, you might choose to express your gratitude to the outpouring of gifts to you by making a gift of your own to the needy in your area, perhaps in the form of a basket of food items that can be brought up with the bread and wine.
- **Extra Ordinary Ministers of Communion (Marriages within a Mass only):** These ministers assist the Priest with the distribution of the Eucharist. As with Lectors, ministers from Holy Family are the logical first choice since they are familiar with the procedures. Otherwise, think of people who will be at your Marriage Liturgy who are Extraordinary Ministers of Communion in their home Catholic parishes.
- **Altar Servers (Marriages within a Mass only):** Two Catholic Altar Servers are needed; these are usually provided by the parish. However if you have family or friends who are trained Altar Servers in a Catholic parish they may be used.

Non- Liturgical Roles:

- **Attendants/Ushers (The Wedding Party):** There is no official role for the bridesmaids and groomsmen in the Catholic Marriage Liturgy, but few couples would consider having a wedding without asking friends or family to fill these traditional roles. It is our experience that fewer wedding attendants contribute to a smoother celebration. The choice of whom to ask as attendants should reflect the involvement of both families, as well as those people who will be the support of the couple's faith and marriage. Rather than relegating the Wedding Party to standing around nervously before the wedding, consider asking them to serve as ministers of hospitality, warmly greeting guests as they arrive at the church, give them the printed Worship Aid for the wedding, and lead them to a seat near other worshippers. Both the men and women in your wedding party are encouraged to assist with this hospitality.
- **Ushers:** Ushers are an important non-liturgical role in that they reflect your hospitality and keep things on time by getting the Assembly into the Church and seated. In choosing Ushers, please consider these are people who can approach people to be seated so the Liturgy can start on time. Often this works well when the Ushers are people who know the family or the majority of your

guests. Please make note of the Church's preference for seating the assembly to reflect unity versus bride and groom's sides. Ushers can play double duty and also be groomsmen and bridesmaids.

- **Children in the Wedding Party:** Traditionally, caution is necessary if you are considering the inclusion of children in your Wedding Party. They should be old enough to rehearse, remember and carry out their roles in a respectful and reverent manner. We strongly discourage the inclusion of children too young to meet these basic expectations. The sometimes seen social roles of "flower girl" or "ring bearer" are not essential roles. We encourage you to use the Church's age of reason, usually by age 6 or 7, as a rule of thumb; at this age, a child is more able to fully participate and witness the marriage.
- **Greeters/Guestbook Attendant:** As already mentioned above, the couple themselves could serve as greeters, or they could assign this role to their Wedding Party. Another option is to ask additional people to greet and distribute your Worship Aids. *Note:* If you are planning to have a Guest Book, please consider placing it at the reception.
- **Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator:** A Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator is a parishioner that will assist in the planning of your Marriage Liturgy, as well as assist at your rehearsal and wedding. The Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will help with setup and cleanup, the processional, dismissal, staged exit and assist as needed.
- **Master/Mistress of Ceremonies :** A suggested list of things for the MC to do is in the appendix. The Master/Mistress of Ceremonies works with the Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator.

A Thought about Godparents: If you are Catholic and it is possible to include your Godparents in the wedding service, you might consider asking your Godparents to serve in your marriage in some way. Your Godparents sponsored you into the Catholic Church, and prayed for and supported you in your journey of faith to this point. Your parents believed them to be of faith and example, and as such, they might well still serve as good models for you as a couple. They can continue to be a support to you as you begin your married life. Suggestions would be for Godparents if they are trained, to serve as Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers of Communion or Gift Bearers.

C. Signs and Symbols in the Marriage Liturgy

In the following section, the signs and symbols found in a Catholic Marriage Liturgy are described. The signs and symbols approved for use in Liturgy are signs of the presence of God and point us to Him. Everything in the Church speaks of our belief in God and our desire to praise Him and follow as closely as we can. The actual Sacrament of Marriage is a symbol in the world of Christ's love for us and every marriage's purpose is to demonstrate and reflect this same love of God. It is fitting, then, that the signs and symbols in the Sacrament of Matrimony, as with all the Sacraments point us to God and remind us of His love.

- **Bride and Groom**
The Bride and Groom are symbols to one another and the world of Christ's Love and the covenantal bond between God and His people. They are signs of openness to life and a vocation of service to one another, God and His holy people.
- **Attire**
The dress of the bride and groom and the entire wedding party should be a sign and symbol which reflect the nature of what is being celebrated: namely, the union of husband and wife before God, His Church, and His People. As it is sacred space and a sacred event, clothing should be modest and in good taste. You want your outward appearance to be a sign of your inner dignity and the beauty of love you share as a couple. On the other hand, attire must not distract from the Liturgy, the worship of God.

- Men may wear “Sunday attire” or tuxedo, if preferred, to “dress up” as a reflection of this momentous and holy occasion.
- Women also “dress up” and usually the bride wears a formal dress. The Wedding dress has not always been white. In the Middle Ages, the bride was wearing her most beautiful dress, vibrant red was mostly used. In the different regions of each country, the bride was wearing the traditional dress until very recently. It is only in the 19th century that we find white dresses again. White is considered as the natural color of virginity. White also recalls the Baptism garment, symbolizing that the person has “put on Christ, has risen with Christ”. Brides should avoid long trains on the bride’s dress, as the Sanctuary is small and the train adjustment becomes a distraction in the Marriage Liturgy. Low cut dresses, dresses with no backs, etc. are not appropriate as we keep marriage attire as a sign and symbol of the dignity of the Sacrament and of God’s human creation.

It should be noted that while *formal* attire for bride, groom, and wedding party remains popular, it is not required by the Church.

- **The Wedding Rings**

The Wedding rings are a symbol to everyone that the person wearing it is married. Wedding ring in French is called a "covenant". Generally worn on the well-named ring finger on the left hand, the ancients called it "the finger closest to the heart". They said there was a nerve linking directly this finger to the heart. The circular shape symbolizes the continuity, the indissolubility of the Marriage. The circles convey the unending nature of your bond, and the precious metal expresses its strength and immeasurable value.

- **The Assembly**

The Assembly gathered, also known as your guests, are representatives of a community of believers; they are the assembled Church. This assembly gathers, first and foremost, to worship God during the Marriage Liturgy. The assembly gathered also represents the parish community to which you belong and are active members, serving them and being served yourselves as you grow together in love and deeds in the Lord.

- **The Entrance or Procession**

The Marriage Liturgy procession in the Rite of Marriage first symbolizes the Church’s understanding of the complementary role of husband and wife in marriage, keeping the American custom of focus on the bride at bay in order to elevate God’s intentions for marriage in a shared Sacrament of service where both the Bride and the Groom are central to the vocation. Additionally, the entrance procession has the ministers of the Liturgy, followed by the priest and then the Bride and Groom as the default order, symbolizing that the Marriage Liturgy is not a distinct Liturgy separate from the other Liturgies of the Church. Although it is special to the Bride and Groom, it is also one of many Liturgies whose primary focus is the worship of God, and secondary is the marriage of the Bride and Groom.

Other Information about the Wedding Liturgy:

- **Hiding the Bride:** Long gone are the days when a groom met his bride for perhaps the first time at the Marriage Liturgy. In our time, to pretend that they are meeting each other for the first time as the bride enters the Church contradicts the work that goes into a relationship to prepare for marriage. We strongly discourage the practice of “hiding” the bride from the groom before the Marriage Liturgy. On the practical side, it creates unneeded difficulties on the day of the Marriage Liturgy, for the Church was not built with such things in mind.
- **Extra Ceremonies/Rituals:** Additional rituals and symbols, including ethnically derived traditions (including Candles, Arras, Laso, and Cojines), may be admitted to the Marriage Liturgy after discussion with the Parish Staff as to their

appropriate inclusion. These customs are not a part of the Rite of Marriage, but are permitted. These are secondary to the central ritual actions of the Marriage Liturgy. There may be a limit on the number of these traditions that are allowed at a particular Liturgy to avoid duplicating the symbolism. Any such additions are generally placed in the Liturgy after the exchange of rings and the optional prayer of the couple, and before the general intercessions.

- While not a Catholic symbol, the unity/wedding candle may be used. If used, the wedding candle is placed on the unity candle stand in the Sanctuary. The Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will help with placement. Two small, lighted candles, perhaps the baptismal candles, are symbolic of the separate families and histories of the bride and groom. They are commonly used to light central, larger candle that represents their oneness in Christ. The side candles are not extinguished, but left burning, as the families and histories of the couple do not cease to exist because of the marriage. Another option is to use a unity/wedding candle as the beginning prayer of the wedding reception. Holy Family makes available a unity candle stand, but the couple provides the candles. Please be sure to get high quality tapers, as it is further into the Liturgy that the tapers are used, and the tapers have been known to burn down to 2 inch candles in that amount of time. Party-lite or a high end taper with beeswax are suggested; please try to get dripless and unscented.
- If both the bride and the groom have a genuine devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in their prayer life, it is possible for them to say a prayer together in front of the image of the Blessed Mother, offering flowers or a lit candle. Like the unity candle, this is a devotional prayer that is not a part of the Rite of Marriage. Unlike the unity candle, it is an ancient, religious tradition, and is central to some cultures. If chosen, the bride and groom process to Mary's statue before the final blessing, placing a flower as they ask Mary, wife and mother, to pray for their marriage.
- Some couples desire to gift flowers to their mothers at the Sign of Peace. This is acceptable. No other rituals or ceremonies are permitted, during the Sign of Peace.
- **Prayers of the Faithful:** The Prayer of the Faithful is part of the transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Through it, we respond, in faith and hope, to the Word of God by petitioning God on behalf of the whole world. We give our worries and concerns to God in an unburdening that frees our minds and hearts to receive the gift of the Eucharist. Vatican II established a format for the Prayer of the Faithful. Usually, the petitions are delivered in this order, but within this format, however, there is much room for flexibility.
 - for the needs of the Church,
 - for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world (optional),
 - for all married couples
 - for the Bride & Groom
 - for deceased family members of the Bride & Groom
 - for those burdened by any kind of difficulty (or special needs)

As a result, the Prayer of the Faithful has become a unique part of the Mass in that it is always changing. Petitions may, for example, relate to current events such as wars, natural disasters or social justice issues. Or, as occurs in many parishes, petitions may include the specific names of parishioners who are ill or have died. The people physically present and participating in the Mass use the Prayer of the Faithful to draw the whole world to the table of the Lord. They bring the sick and the dying, the leaders and the downtrodden, the rich and the poor, the believers and the non-believers. All share in the benefits of the Mass. As with all prayers of petition, we know that God's response will come. It probably won't be according to our timetable or in a manner in which we would like to see things done. But it will come. And so our faith and hope sustain us as we pray over and over again, "Lord, hear our prayer."

The Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will assist you in selecting the Prayers of the Faithful for the Marriage Liturgy.

- **Seating:**

- **Seating of the Assembly:** Just as the bride and groom are united, so are their family and friends joined together by a Marriage Liturgy. Marriage is about a bond of unity. The intermingling of guests is more important than having guests seated on the “bride’s side” and “groom’s side”. The Church does not recognize the distinction between a bride’s side and groom’s side. Designating one side of the church “for the bride” and the other “for the groom” is a counterproductive practice. Beyond seating immediate family together, the assembly should be seated equally and indiscriminately starting on both sides of the main aisle. Designating sides only divides the assembly at a time when unity is a primary symbol. This assembly gathers, first and foremost, to worship God during the Marriage Liturgy. The assembly gathered also represents the Parish community to which you belong and are active members, serving them and being served yourselves as you grow together in love and deeds in the Lord.

Increasingly popular is the practice of the couple themselves greeting the guests as they arrive. It is an apt expression of the hospitality which should characterize Christians. The secular custom of the bride hiding from the groom until the procession is superstitious in nature reminiscent of an older time when marriages were arranged and the veiled bride was handed over to the groom as property, and sometimes switched the bride in favor of an older unmarried sister. This goes back to Old Testament times when Jacob was deceived by Rachel’s father and married a veiled older sister Leah instead of Rachel, whom he greatly loved. (Genesis 29:1-35) Today we recommend the Bride and Groom plan a private moment together before the Marriage Liturgy to see one another, to speak to one another, and to be together in prayer and silence.

- **Special Seating:** The couple will need to determine, with the help of the Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator, the seating plan for the attendants, parents, grandparents and other guests of recognition. Sometimes, these guests are escorted by the Groom or Ushers during prelude music. A reminder about “sides” for seating (bride side, groom side), in that it is rooted in an outdated system of pre-arranged marriages, and really no longer serves a purpose as the guests at the wedding gather to witness your vows and actively worship God, where “sides” have no bearing on worship.

- **Typical Special Seating:**

- Lectors & Special guests, such as siblings not in wedding party or other persons of special significance to the couple: seating along with assembly by ushers in 4th or 5th pews.
- Grandparents and/or Godparents: typically seated specially by Groom or Ushers in 3rd or 4th pew before processional or lighting of Tapers if being used. Not seated to special music.
- Parents: If using Lighting of Tapers/unity candle (typically by mothers, but sometimes both parents are chosen), they will be escorted before processional by sons or groom or husband; return to processional line or be seated (depending on processional option chosen); seating is in 2nd or 3rd pew
- Wedding Party: seated in first 1-2 pews, but usually part of processional first.

Pew 1	Wedding attendants	Wedding attendants
Pew 2	Wedding attendants (if needed)	Wedding attendants (if needed)
Pew 3	Parents	Parents
Pew 4	Grandparents &/or Godparents	Grandparents &/or Godparents
Pew 5	Lector/s, Special guests (siblings, etc.)	Lector/s, Special guests (siblings, etc.)

- **The Marriage Liturgy Entrance Procession:**

Processions are a very ancient tradition in Christianity. In contrast to a parade, which is staged for entertainment value, a procession symbolized the journey that is the Christian life, always moving toward ever greater life. One of the earliest images of a procession we find in the Bible is the Exodus account of the Israelites moving out of slavery in Egypt. Led by Moses, they left Egypt and walked through the Red Sea toward a new life on the other side. The women brought out tambourines and sang a song of praise to God who had set them free. Throughout the Bible, and throughout Church history, processions continue to be marked with music and singing. The *Rite of Marriage* presumes that your wedding procession will also include instruments and song, ideally sung by all those assembled.

Here is what the *Rite of Marriage* says about the entrance procession:

If there is a procession to the altar, the ministers (e.g. lectors, altar servers) go first, followed by the priest, and then the bride and bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses. Meanwhile, the entrance song is sung.

Sound unfamiliar? That's because in the United States and elsewhere, it is much more common for the bride to be escorted down the aisle by her father, who then "gives" her to the groom waiting at the altar – a tradition rooted in the days when weddings were viewed as a sort of property transaction (with the woman being the property). The "traditional" wedding procession with the giving away of the bride is widely practiced, however, the form stated by the *Rite of Marriage* better symbolizes the Church's understanding of the complementary role of the husband and wife in marriage. Another option is to skip the procession altogether; the presider simply greets the bride and groom at the altar (*Rite of Marriage* # 19). In this case you would still process in at the end of the procession, because the two of you are ministers of the Sacrament.

- If you opt for a procession, the assembly should stand at the beginning of the Liturgy, when the entrance song is announced and the procession begins – in other words, the assembly should not remain seated until the bride enters the church. In the Catholic Liturgy, standing is a way of acknowledging the presence of God.
- In a Catholic Marriage Liturgy, the Bride and Groom are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage: they enter the assembly from the same door, avoiding any visual suggestion that one is more important than the other. The procession, as envisioned in the *Rite of Marriage*, is the ritual entrance of the ministers for the Liturgy. Also in the procession are the other ministers for the Liturgy (servers, book bearer, cross bearer, presider), parents, the two witnesses and perhaps special friends of the bride and groom (groomsmen and bridesmaids). If children are to be part of the procession, they should walk with adults.
- Separation of the men and women in the procession (bridesmaids first, single file, followed by groomsmen, single file) is discouraged. It is an artificial separation of people who have been chosen to be partners for the day; it unnecessarily lengthens the procession and makes of it something of a fashion show.
- If the Bride and Groom will not be walking in together, we encourage both the father and mother of each person to walk with them in the procession. What harm is there in having only the father walk the Bride down the aisle? Rather than asking, "What harm is there in doing this?" we ask, "What benefit and meaning is there in doing this?" "What better expresses our faith, our unity, God's love for us, our membership in the body of Christ?"
- The Rite of Marriage was revised so that our worship may be enriched and invigorated. When planning your procession, be careful to consider the message that the order you choose communicates. It is important to recognize that every action in Liturgy is symbolic. The Catholic Rite of Marriage expresses the mutuality of the spouses in the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of marriage. The explicit inclusion of parents in the entrance procession seeks to honor with clear recognition the roles that both mothers and fathers play in the lives of their children. To embody the spirit of the Rite of Marriage, the procession which is preferred is #1 as follows on the next page of options. Other variations in this spirit are possible, of course, as one can see in options 2-4. Couples who want this moment to be a

deeply meaningful part of the Liturgy will keep this spirit in mind when adapting the procession to their wedding party and family. The Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will discuss further with couples the procession and assist in their choice. At the recessional the same order may be taken again with the cross bearer leading.

Processional Options

Liturgically Correct Procession (1):	Liturgically Correct Procession (2):	Liturgically Correct Procession (3):	Attendant's Procession (P-Permitted):
Cross Bearer/Servers	Cross Bearer/Servers	Cross Bearer/Servers	Cross Bearer/Servers
Lector/Book Bearer	Lector/Book Bearer	Lector/Book Bearer	Lector/Book Bearer
Fr. Mark/Presider	Fr. Mark/Presider	Fr. Mark/Presider	Fr. Mark/Presider
Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Groom and Parents
Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Bridesmaid and Groomsman
Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Bridesmaid and Groomsman	Bridesmaid and Groomsman
Maid of Honor and Best Man	Maid of Honor and Best Man	Flower girls	Bridesmaid and Groomsman
Flower girls	Flower girls	Ring bearers	Maid of Honor and Best Man
Ring bearers	Ring bearers	Groom and Best Man	Flower girls
Groom's Parents (optional)	Groom & Groom's Parents	Bride and Maid of Honor	Ring bearers
Bride's Parents (optional)	Bride & Bride's Parents		Bride with Parents/Father
Bride and Groom			

- **Recessional:** The order of the recessional is the reverse order of the Processional, with the Cross bearer leading.
- **Dismissal of the Assembly and the Receiving Line:** There are generally two methods of dismissal of the Assembly from the Church:
 - by the Ushers into a receiving line, or
 - by the newly married couple at the pews.
 - If the Usher/receiving line method is chosen, the Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will work with the couple to plan the receiving line order with several options as follows. Please note that the more people in the wedding party, the longer the receiving line will take.
 - If any of the parents are divorced and relations are strained, then a simple switch in the order of the line could occur. The option could be as shown in #4.
 - Children in the receiving line should be carefully considered. It is only advisable if the child is old enough and well behaved enough to stand for a long period without becoming restless or fidgety, and has the ability to greet guest.

Receiving Line Options

<i>Family Oriented</i>	<i>Contemporary</i>	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Option #4</i>
Father of bride	Mother of bride	Mother of bride (traditionally official hostess)	Mother of the Bride
Mother of bride	Father of bride	Father of bride (optional)	Father of the Groom
Bride	Bride	Mother of groom	Bride
Groom	Groom	Father of groom (optional)	Groom
Mother of Groom	Mother of groom	Bride	Mother of the Groom
Father of Groom	Father of groom	Groom	Father of the Bride
Wedding Party (optional) – particularly siblings in the wedding party.	Wedding Party (optional)	Matron/Maid of Honor	Wedding Party (optional)
		Wedding Party (optional)	

- **Staged Exit:** If doing a fake exit after the Marriage Liturgy for your guests to see you off (and then you will return for photos), the Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will organize and plan this with you. This assists the guests in knowing it is time for them to leave following the receiving line or ushering by the couple from the pews.

(Sample for Marriage Outside of Mass/Liturgy of the Word Only)

(Optional one)
*The Marriage Liturgy of
The Sacrament of Marriage of
The Marriage Nuptials of*

Thank You

To our family and friends: We want to thank you all for sharing this special day with us. Whether you traveled two miles or two thousand, we appreciate all of you who made the journey to be here. We are truly grateful for your love and support in our lives.

To our parents: You helped us grow as individuals and flourish as a couple. Thank you for providing us with examples of what a loving and lasting marriage should be. Your love, guidance, encouragement and example is our foundation. We love you!

With love, laughter and friendship,

Mary Smith and Joe Jones

Mary Smith

and

Joe Jones

Our Happily Ever After begins...

*Mary & Joe Jones
Address
City State Zip
Phone
Email*

*Saturday, date of April
Two thousand and seven*

*My Catholic Church
City, Michigan*

The Marriage Liturgy

*Prelude..... Water Music: Air, Handel
..... La Grâce, Telemann*
Processional
Mothers' Entrance..... Four Seasons: Winter, Vivaldi
Processional/Opening Hymn..... Trumpet Voluntary, Clark
Opening Prayer
Liturgy of the Word
First Reading..... Song of Songs 2:16a, 8:6-7a
Responsorial Psalm..... Psalm 118
Second Reading..... Colossians 3:12-17
Gospel Acclamation..... Celtic Alleluia
Gospel Reading..... John 15:9-12
Homily
Rite of the Sacrament of Marriage
Declaration of Intent
Declaration of Consent
Exchange of Vows
Blessing of the Rings
Exchange of Rings
Prayer of the Newly Married Couple (optional)
Unity Candle (optional)..... Song Title goes here...
Presentation to Mary (Marian Devotional) (optional)
Prayer of the Faithful
Nuptial Blessing
The Lord's Prayer
Final Blessing
*Recessional..... Wedding March, Mendelssohn
..... Four Seasons: Spring, Vivaldi*

The Participants

Presider..... Rev. Mark F. Bauer
Parents of the Bride..... XXXXX
Parents of the Groom..... XXXXX
Maid of Honor
..... Friend of the Bride
Best Man
..... Brother of the Groom
Bridesmaids
..... Cousin of the Bride
..... Friend of the Bride
..... Sister of the Groom
Groomsmen
..... Friend of the Groom
..... Friend of the Groom
..... Brother of the Bride
..... Brother of the Bride
Ushers
..... Cousin of the Bride
..... Cousin of the Groom
Lectors
First Reading XXXXX..... Sister-in-Law of the Bride
Second Reading XXXXX..... Friend of the Groom
Prayers of the Faithful XXXXX..... Friend of the Bride
Program Attendants, XXXXX..... Friends of the Couple

Thank You!

To our family and friends:

We want to thank you all for sharing this special day with us. Whether you traveled two miles or two thousand, we appreciate all of you who made the journey to be here. We are truly grateful for your love and support in our lives.

To our parents:

You helped us grow as individuals and flourish as a couple. Thank you for providing us with examples of what a loving and lasting marriage should be. Your love, guidance, encouragement and example is our foundation. We love you!

With love, laughter and friendship,
Catholic Bride and Catholic Groom

Photos here
XXX and XXX
(Catholic Bride's parents)
39 years of marriage

XXX and XXX
(Catholic Groom's parents)
41 years of marriage

Our Happily Ever After begins...

Mary & Joe Jones
Address
City State Zip
Phone
Email

Sample for Marriage within the Mass

(choose one)

The Sacrament of Marriage of
The Nuptial Mass of
The Marriage Liturgy of

Catholic Bride

and

Catholic Groom

Saturday, date of Month
Two thousand and five

Our Catholic Church
City, State

Order of Nuptial Mass/Marriage Liturgy

(choose one title)

Prelude.....	SSS - XXXX
Processional / Opening Hymn.....	SSS - XXXX
Opening Prayer	
Liturgy of the Word	
First Reading	Tobit 8:4-9
Responsorial Psalm.....	Psalm 128
Second Reading	1 John 3:18-24
Gospel Acclamation	
Gospel Reading	Mark 10:8-9
Homily	
The Rite of Marriage	
Declaration of Intent	
Declaration of Consent	
Exchange of Vows	
Blessing & Exchange of Rings	
Prayer of the Newly Married Couple (Optional)	
Presentation to Mary (Marian Prayer) (Optional)	
Unity Candle (optional).....	song title goes here
Prayers of the Faithful	
Nuptial Blessing	
Liturgy of the Eucharist	
Presentation of the Gifts/Offertory Hymn.....	SS - XXXX
Preparation of the Altar	
Prayer over the Gifts	
Eucharistic Prayer	
The Communion Rite	
Lord's Prayer	
Sign of Peace	
Holy Communion.....	SSS - XXXX
Concluding Rites	
Final Blessing	
Recessional	SSS - XXX

Participants

Officiant	
Father XXX	
Parents of the Bride	
XXX & XXX	
Parents of the Groom	
XXX & XXX	
Man of Honor	
XXX	Brother of the Bride
Best Man	
XXX	Brother of the Groom
Flower Girls	
XXX	Cousin of the Bride
XXX	Niece of the Groom
XXX	Niece of the Groom
Ushers	
XXX	Cousin of the Bride
XXX	Brother-in-Law of the Groom
Program Attendants	
XXX	Cousin of the Bride
XXX	Cousin of the Bride
XXX	Nephew of the Groom
Readers	
First Reading	
XXX	Bride
Second Reading	
XXX	Groom
Prayers of the Faithful	
XXX	Sister of the Groom
XXX	Sister of the Groom
Organist	
XXX	Music Director, St. XXX Church
Cantor	
XXX	Friend of the Couple

Recommended Resources for Planning the Catholic Marriage Liturgy:

www.CatholicWeddingPlanner.com
www.CatholicWeddingHelp.com
www.TheKnot.com/CatholicWedding
www.ForYourMarriage.org
www.FOCCUSinc.com
Natural Family Planning:

- [www.dioceseofgrandrapids.org / Ministries/MarriageFamily/ Natural Family Planning](http://www.dioceseofgrandrapids.org/Ministries/MarriageFamily/NaturalFamilyPlanning)
- www.ccli.org
- www.learnNFPonline.com

Diocesan Pre-Cana Retreats: [www.dioceseofgrandrapids.org/Ministries/MarriageFamily/Resources/Pre-Cana Schedules](http://www.dioceseofgrandrapids.org/Ministries/MarriageFamily/Resources/Pre-CanaSchedules)

Resources:

The following resources were used in the creation of these guidelines. Some of them (especially the first one listed) may be of interest for your further reading.

- Celebrating Marriage: Preparing the Wedding Liturgy — a Workbook for Engaged Couples, revised edition, Paul
- Covino, ed., Pastoral Press, Laurel, MD, 1994, especially pp. 2, 23-28, 89-90.
- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Second Vatican Council, 1963.
- Fleming, Austin, Parish Weddings, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, Illinois, 1987.
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Congregation for Divine Worship, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002.
- Guidelines for the Liturgical Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage, Province of Michigan, 1999, esp. p.4.
- Huck, Gabe, Preaching About the Mass, Liturgy Training Publications, Archdiocese of Chicago, 1992.
- Lectionary (Introduction), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- Rite of Marriage, Congregation for Divine Worship, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1969.
- Sacramental Handbook, Diocese of Grand Rapids, 2001.
- Champlin, Joseph, Together for Life (revised edition), Ave Maria Press, 2002.
- Wedding policies of the Diocese of San Diego, Texas, 2000.
- Wedding policies of Holy Family Parish, Sparta; St. Anthony Parish, Grand Rapids; St. Clement Church, Chicago, Illinois; St. James Parish, Grand Rapids; St. Patrick Church, Troy, Ohio; Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Grand Rapids; St. Francis DeSales Parish, Holland MI.

Signature Page

To have your wedding date placed on the calendar you must bring this page to the parish office with a check in the amount of the deposit of \$100. Any remaining fees are due as stated previously in this handbook.

By signing below I certify that I have read and agree to all of the regulations and responsibilities contained in this document.

Bride's signature _____ Date _____

Groom's signature _____ Date _____

Deposit: \$ _____
Received by: _____
Date: _____