

Guidelines for Marriage Preparation

SACRAMENTAL LIFE

In the course of our life, there are moments which the community celebrates with special emphasis and care. These moments in the life of the community are called Sacraments. In Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, we are born through water and the Holy Spirit into God's household. When our relationship within and outside the household of faith are tangled or even severed, these ties are restored through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Some are called to minister to the community and are ordained for service as deacons, priests or bishops. When one falls ill, we gather around the sick with prayer and anointing. *And when a man and a woman fall in love and want to make their commitment before God and the Church, we gather with them in moments of joyful promise as they become ministers of the sacrament of marriage to one another.*

WEDDINGS AT ST FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH

You have chosen to get married in our church and we are interested in helping you prepare for your wedding celebration and your future life together. In this spirit, we offer the following guidelines to assist you in preparing for your wedding day.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE

Marriage is a sacrament, a serious life-long commitment. It is not merely a matter of arranging for the reception, filling in the necessary papers and getting to the church on time. As part of the preparation for marriage, it is necessary that the bridal couple receive instruction for married life. This is done by attending a Marriage preparation course. We firmly insist on your participating in this course because we feel it is important to spend a day and a half planning for your future lifetime. No matter how well you know each other, being married is very different from being single. Unfortunately marriages do break down and even second marriages break down regularly, as first ones do. We feel that it is important for you to learn how to communicate with each other and how to handle finances, stress and conflict, which are a part of every life.

The Catholic Church recommends that all couples attend an approved Marriage preparation course, please ask the Parish Priest for further information

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:

Sunday Mass before marriage.

All sacraments point towards the Eucharist. Here is the very life-blood of our Christian Life. Our whole tradition has upheld the weekly community celebration together as Church, as the minimum necessary to maintain and to nourish the life of the Spirit within us. If we have been somewhat neglectful in this regard until now, the marriage engagement period is an excellent time to have a change of heart and to begin afresh our weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist. You want to celebrate a Catholic wedding and you want to raise a Catholic family. By your participation in the Sunday Eucharist, you show that you are part of the Catholic community.

CHOOSING YOUR WEDDING MUSIC:

Music in a Christian Wedding Service.

Music is a servant in worship. It is never to be done for its own sake within a celebration of Christian worship. Music chosen for your wedding should be chosen to suit the different parts of the whole celebration. The text of sung pieces should always respect the particular emphasis of the action and

gesture being celebrated. The music must also blend in to serve that particular action. "Performance" type music must be carefully avoided. There is room for solo pieces and/or choir pieces for folk type music, as well as for more classical music. Good taste and dignity will determine what is sung, by whom, when and how. These should be discussed with the celebrant. These guidelines are suggestions based upon an understanding of the reality being celebrated. Christian marriage celebrations should not be cheapened or made into sentimental "soap opera" productions.

Should you particularly wish to play a secular/modern song, the most appropriate time would be at the signing of the register. As a matter of courtesy, please discuss your choice with your celebrant.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The texts of the marriage rite are available from the celebrant. The couple is invited to choose their Scripture readings, and other options, to help them celebrate their wedding. The couple with the celebrant will decide whether they are to have a mass or a service.

THE EUCHARIST

If a mass is to be celebrated, the celebrant decides whether the bridal couple should receive both the Body and the Blood of Christ. Receiving Holy Communion is a sign of belonging to the Catholic community, and so, only Catholics can receive the Eucharist.

On the occasion of a marriage of mixed religion or non-practising Catholics, a service is to be preferred. The decision however, is to be made by the bridal couple in consultation with the celebrant. Due consideration is to be given to the feelings of the non-Catholic party.

READERS

The couples are encouraged to ask an adult friend or two to proclaim the Scripture readings. The readers need to be able to proclaim the reading clearly and intelligently.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs can be taken before the celebration. Professional photographers are allowed to take pictures during the celebration as long as they do not become a distraction. This norm helps to preserve the true reverence for the celebration. Videos are allowed. Please tell the photographer or videographer to introduce themselves to the celebrant.

CONFETTI, BUBBLES AND CANDLES

The church and the grounds are cleaned in preparation for weekend services and weddings. You are therefore advised that **FLOWER PETALS, CONFETTI OR RICE ARE NOT PERMITTED** either inside or outside the church. **USE OF CANDLES AS DECORATIONS IS PROHIBITED.** After your wedding, the church is to be left in the same condition as it was before. Past experience has shown that **soap water used for bubbles** causes damage to the carpet and the pews, **BUBBLE BOTTLES SHOULD BE KEPT OUTSIDE THE CHURCH**

PREVIOUS MARRIAGES

If either party has been through any form of marriage before, no matter where or when, it is very important to discuss this with a priest before making a firm booking. In these cases the death certificate of the previous spouse, a certificate of annulment of the previous marriage and divorce papers, should be supplied.

MIXED MARRIAGES

At least one party has to be Catholic for the church to be used for a wedding. When one partner is not a Catholic, the Catholic party will be asked to sign and answer the question, *“Do you sincerely promise to do all in your power to share your faith with your children by having them baptised and brought up in the Catholic Church?”* The marriage ceremony is the same in all cases.

BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

Getting married in our church does not give you the right to baptise your children in this church. Church law states that children should be baptised in the parish church the family belongs to. Normally this is the church where the family lives or the church that the family attends regularly.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

- BIRTH CERTIFICATE OR PASSPORT OR CITIZENSHIP PAPERS

The law requires one of the above documents

- BAPTISM CERTIFICATE

A recently issued certificate is required in the case of all baptised persons. This can be obtained by contacting the church where the baptism took place. It is normal procedure to ask for a recently issued Baptism certificate for marriage purposes.

- CONFIRMATION

You need to know the date and place of Confirmation

- PRE-NUPTIAL INQUIRY AND NOTICE OF INTENDED MARRIAGE

These will be filled in by the celebrant after all necessary papers have been produced.

KEEP A COPY OF THESE GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE REFERENCE