

# MARRIAGE PREPARATION INFORMATION GUIDE

CATHEDRAL PARISH OF ST. RAPHAEL  
MADISON, WISCONSIN  
(608) 257-5000  
[www.isthmuscatholic.org](http://www.isthmuscatholic.org)

**Welcome to the marriage preparation process!** We hope that the months ahead will be a blessed time for you to grow in your understanding and appreciation of the vocation to married life that God has given you. Our mission at the Cathedral Parish is to help and support you in preparing not only for the celebration of your wedding, but also for a lifelong commitment to God, the Church and each other. In this packet you will find information pertaining to the marriage preparation process, guidelines for wedding liturgies, and other helpful information.

Since our purpose is to establish sacramental marriages within the community of the Church, our mission is to celebrate weddings in which at least one party is a parishioner here. That means that at least one party should be an active, practicing Catholic, who has been regularly attending Mass at the Cathedral Parish for at least six months prior to beginning marriage preparation. Please remember that our churches are not wedding chapels. They are the home of a parish community in which people are invited to encounter Jesus Christ through His Word and the Sacraments so that they might be strengthened by His grace to live out the Christian Faith. Therefore, they are generally available only for the weddings of those persons who are actively living their faith within this community.

The only exception would be a case in which both the bride and groom live more than one hour from Madison, and at least one parent of the bride or groom is an active member of the Cathedral Parish (and has been for at least six months before the beginning of marriage preparation). In addition, either the bride or groom (or both) must be an active, practicing Catholic in his or her local parish, and the pastor of that parish must certify that the couple would be eligible for marriage in that parish.

We also understand that God calls engaged couples to live chastely until they exchange the sacred vows of marriage – the giving of the body seals and celebrates the giving of the life in the marriage vows. Though it may be increasingly difficult in our culture, we ask all engaged couples preparing for marriage at the Cathedral Parish to live as faithful disciples of the Lord by living chastely during their engagement. To this end, we also ask all couples preparing for marriage to live separately until marriage.

If you do not meet these requirements and think that you may have circumstances that merit special consideration, please contact Marc Laudonio, Director of Evangelization and Catechesis, at 257-5000, or at [marc.laudonio@gmail.com](mailto:marc.laudonio@gmail.com).

## **I. HOW TO GET STARTED IN YOUR MARRIAGE PREPARATION:**

- A. Please contact the Cathedral Parish at least *SIX* months before your intended marriage date.** This minimum period of time is required in order to provide an adequate time to complete the components of marriage preparation.
- B. Make an appointment with Marc Laudonio, Director of Evangelization and Catechesis.** When you contact the Cathedral Parish, the receptionist will put you in touch with Marc Laudonio so that you can set up a first appointment with him.

At your first appointment Marc will explain the marriage preparation process and reserve a date for your wedding and rehearsal. Plans such as securing a reception hall or printing invitations should not be considered until after the date has been set at the church. By doing so you will avoid disappointment and inconvenience.

- C. Catholics are asked to provide a *recently issued* baptismal certificate.** An original certificate (issued at the time of Baptism) is not sufficient because it does not carry notations – as, for example, information about a prior marriage. Getting a newly issued baptismal certificate is one way of establishing a Catholic's freedom to marry. A recently issued certificate may be obtained by contacting the parish at which you were baptized. We can assist you in finding the contact information if necessary. In the event that there is absolutely no baptismal record available, Marc can help you to obtain an Affidavit of Baptism. **Baptized non-catholic Christians** are requested to bring any information or documentation they might have regarding the date and place of their Baptism (an original baptismal certificate is suitable, if available).

### **D. GENERAL REMINDERS:**

1. No date for a wedding can be set until **AFTER** the initial interview with the Director of Evangelization and Catechesis.
2. All arrangements for weddings are made only through the parties themselves, not through parents, relatives or friends.
3. At least one of the parties seeking marriage must be an active, practicing member of the Cathedral Parish.

## **II. COMPONENTS OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

**A. Meetings with the Director of Evangelization and Catechesis and a Priest/Deacon.**

The number of meetings is to be determined by the Director of Evangelization and Catechesis and the priest/deacon who will officiate at the wedding. If the wedding ceremony will be at one of the churches of the Cathedral Parish, the last meeting is dedicated to planning the marriage liturgy. Couples getting married elsewhere should schedule a separate meeting with the priest/deacon that will be officiating to plan their wedding liturgy.

**B. FOCCUS Marriage Preparation Instrument**

FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study) is an aid for marriage preparation. It can help couples understand and communicate openly about many things that are important in a relationship. It is not a test or a way to predict the future. It is designed to help couples target the topics they need and want to discuss. The FOCCUS content covers the range of elements necessary for a successful marriage and reflects an appreciation of marriage as sacred. The questionnaire consists of 156 standard questions, plus 33 additional questions for special circumstances, and takes approximately one hour to complete. Responses are scored within 2-3 days. Couples then meet with a married couple of our parish to review their responses. These couples have been married for varying lengths of time, and want to help engaged couples start their lives together successfully. Most engaged couples meet twice for two hours each with their FOCCUS couple to review areas of strength and discuss specific questions and patterns indicating uncertainty or disagreement. More follow-up sessions may be scheduled as needed. Follow-up sessions are intended to be learning experiences, not professional counseling sessions, and should be completed within two months of the assessment date.

**C. Marriage Reflection Days**

**REAL LIFE, REAL LOVE** is a marriage preparation program conducted by the Diocese of Madison. It is a sort of practicum – a day of dialogue and reflection on the things that matter most. The program is on select Saturdays from 8:30-3:30 at various locations throughout the Diocese of Madison and is also available in a two weeknight format. For more information or to register, visit [www.madisondiocese.org/mp](http://www.madisondiocese.org/mp) or contact Gloria Brockman at (608) 821-3175 or [gbrockman@straphael.org](mailto:gbrockman@straphael.org).

**GOD'S PLAN FOR A JOY-FILLED MARRIAGE** is another part of the marriage preparation process offered by the Diocese of Madison. The program focuses on Catholic marriage as a visible sign of the Holy Trinity and the relationship of Christ to the Church. The program is offered on select Saturdays from 8:30-3:30 at various locations throughout the Diocese of Madison and is also available in a two weeknight

format. For more information or to register, visit [www.madisondiocese.org/mp](http://www.madisondiocese.org/mp) or contact Gloria Brockman at (608) 821-3175 or [gbrockman@straphael.org](mailto:gbrockman@straphael.org).

If your schedule so permits it is recommended that the Real Life, Real Love program be taken first.

- D. Catholicism 101** is a three-session overview of the Catholic Faith offered by the Cathedral Parish. It is designed to help engaged couples know what the Faith says about the mystery of life, and the place the Sacrament of Matrimony has in that mystery. Catholicism 101 meets for three consecutive Tuesday evenings at St. Patrick Church. Please see [www.isthmuscatholic.org](http://www.isthmuscatholic.org) for more information on dates, times, and content of Catholicism 101.

Again, if your schedule so permits it is recommended that Catholicism 101 be taken before God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage.

- E. Natural Family Planning.** The Diocese of Madison offers informational talks on Natural Family Planning, as well as classes that teach couples how to practice NFP. To find dates, times, and locations for all types of NFP sessions please visit [www.madisondiocese.org/nfp](http://www.madisondiocese.org/nfp) or call Jessica Smith, Family Planning Coordinator for the Diocese of Madison, at 821-3035. Natural Family Planning is a church-approved means of planning the size of your family, if that is needed. It is an individualized, easy-to-use method of monitoring a woman's fertility. We strongly encourage all those preparing for marriage at the Cathedral Parish to take advantage of these different sessions to learn more about NFP and how it can strengthen your marriage.
- F.** At some point before your wedding you will have to arrange a **Liturgy Planning Session** with the priest/deacon witnessing your wedding. This is the time you will finalize which Scripture readings, prayers, songs, etc. will be used in your marriage ceremony.
- G.** In order to be in a state of grace and so be truly receptive to the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony, Catholics should receive the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** shortly before their wedding day.

### III. USE OF FACILITIES AT THE CATHEDRAL PARISH

- A. Agreement for use of the church, deposit, and requested donation.** A non-refundable deposit of \$100.00 is required at the time a date is set and the church reserved. Of course, you never have to pay to receive the Sacraments of the church. But in order to help defray the cost of utilities and maintenance, the pre-marriage preparation process, and the officiant's stipend, we do ask a donation of \$450. (In a case of genuine financial hardship, where the wedding must be celebrated on a minimal budget, this fee can be

reduced or waived.) In the exceptional case where neither of the parties is a member of the Cathedral Parish, the fee is \$600. If you are having a visiting priest we ask an extra \$100 to compensate a member of our staff who will be at the church to help with practical details for the rehearsal and wedding. If you are being married somewhere else, but are doing marriage preparation through the Cathedral Parish we ask a \$150 fee for marriage preparation. The two days of marriage preparation offered by the diocese have separate fees, payable to the diocesan office. We will gladly provide you with a resource list of organists and cantors but any fees for musicians are separate and subject to agreement among the parties.

- B. As a general rule weddings may be scheduled at anytime between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturdays.** Other days and times for weddings should be discussed with Marc Laudonio, Director of Evangelization and Catechesis. It is necessary to take into account the on-going activities of parish life when scheduling marriage ceremonies. We have Mass and Baptisms at Holy Redeemer on Saturday mornings. We have confessions and Masses at both churches beginning in mid-afternoon.
- C. Rehearsals are usually scheduled the day before the wedding is to take place.** Except in the case of the simplest ceremonies, a rehearsal for the wedding is conducted to familiarize all participants with the liturgy and their own involvement in it. Rehearsals are usually scheduled the day before the wedding is to take place. Wedding rehearsals typically begin between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. and usually last about 30 to 45 minutes (depending on whether there is a Nuptial Mass). Please remember that Christ is present in the tabernacle while your wedding party is gathering, and as the rehearsal is taking place. All activity in the church should be reverent and respectful of the sacred space.

#### **IV. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MARRIAGE LITURGIES**

- A.** Typically a marriage between two Catholics takes place within a Nuptial Mass. However, this is not required – if, for example, many relatives of the couple are not practicing Catholics, or if there are other considerations that lead you to think it might be better to have a wedding liturgy outside Mass. The Nuptial Mass is a privilege, never an obligation. A marriage between a Catholic and a person of another Christian denomination usually takes place in a liturgy outside Mass. A Nuptial Mass is not permitted for the marriage of a Catholic and an unbaptized person.
- B.** Our church has been consecrated to the service of God. We ask that all who use it respect it as a place of prayer and encounter with God. Our maintenance staff is very limited, so please help us to take good care of God's house.
- C.** Participants are asked not to bring drinks, tobacco or food into the church at any time.

#### **V. FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS AND DECORATIONS**

- A. Please review the following guidelines with your florist and/or those decorating.**
- B.** Flowers are never placed on top of the tabernacle or on the altar itself. Flower arrangements that obstruct the view of the tabernacle or the action on the altar are not allowed. Flowers, unity candles, and other decorations may be placed in the sanctuary near the altar or in other locations.
- C.** The main altar is a consecrated object, and should not be used as a worktable or convenient shelf while the church is being decorated.
- D.** If florists want to decorate the church more than one hour before the wedding, they cannot expect the air conditioning to be run in the church for extended periods of time before the ceremony for the sole purpose of keeping floral arrangements cool.
- E.** After the wedding we would certainly appreciate your leaving us your flower arrangements for the weekend Masses in the church; but they do of course belong to the couple.
- F.** If candles are used (even the so-called "dripless" candles), you need to provide sheets of plastic underneath them, to catch dripping wax. Candelabra are not permitted.
- G.** During the Liturgical Seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, the decorations and the colors used in the church are to be considered permanent. During Ordinary Time (essentially the entire summer and fall), you still must consult the priest, deacon, or Director of Evangelization and Catechesis before moving any parish decorations or furniture. Any decorations or furniture that is moved must be returned to its former place once the wedding is over. Weddings during the Lenten season should be modest in their festivity, in keeping with the penitential spirit of the season.
- H.** Rice, birdseed, confetti, or flower petals are not to be thrown inside or on the grounds of our churches. This is to ensure the safety of all and to respect the sacred space.
- I.** Tape, tacks, and staples are not allowed when attaching decorations to pews. Pew decorations are easily attached by means of ribbons or plastic hooks. Aisle runners are discouraged for safety reasons.
- J.** Unity candles are an optional, non-essential part of any wedding. We do not have a unity candle to provide you. If you wish to use one, you will need to provide it.
- K.** Someone from the bridal party, the family or the florist is to be appointed ahead of time by the couple to be responsible for removing flowers, candles, bows, empty floral boxes, trash and wrappings from the church after the ceremony. Please make sure everything is cleaned up before everyone has left the church.

- L.** Visiting priests or deacons are to abide by these guidelines, the provisions of Canon Law, and the approved Rite of Marriage.
- M.** The church is not responsible for anything left after the wedding nor is it legally responsible for musical instruments rented by the wedding party and used in the parish.

## **VI. GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS**

- A.** Photographs or videotapes of a wedding can bring back memories for many years to come, but they can also serve as a distraction for everyone involved if proper etiquette is not observed. If you plan to have photographs taken or to have the ceremony videotaped, we ask that they take care not to interfere with the religious nature of the ceremony.
- B.** All photographers (still and video) should clarify expectations with the priest or deacon prior to the ceremony.
- C.** Photographers/videographers are not allowed in the sanctuary (the elevated floor area at the front of the church) at any time during the liturgy and are to remain at a respectful distance so as not to distract the congregation. They may also not interrupt any part of the ceremony including the procession.
- D.** No extra camera lights may be used during the liturgy. This includes flash lighting. Extra lighting is permissible prior to or following the liturgy.
- E.** Photographs can be taken before or after the wedding ceremony. In all cases, St. Patrick must be vacated by 3:30 p.m. and Holy Redeemer by 4:30 p.m. on Saturdays.
- F.** If the couple would like pictures with the officiating priest or deacon after the wedding, these should be taken first to allow him to get on with other duties. Please maintain reverence while taking pictures in order to respect the sacredness of the sanctuary area. Photos intended to be comic or risqué should never be taken in church.

## **VII. MUSIC GUIDELINES**

- A.** The church wedding is an act of worship of God within the Catholic Church. Therefore, music selections need to reflect the common faith of the whole Church. If you wish to use a particular piece of music or have a visiting musician perform in your wedding ceremony, please consult well in advance with the priest or deacon officiating at your

wedding or the Music/Liturgy Director, Glenn Schuster, who can be reached at (608) 712-3302.

- B.** Do not overlook the effectiveness of congregational hymns as a part of your ceremony. The singing of hymns by the congregation draws your guests into more active, meaningful participation in the celebration.
- C.** Music for the ceremony is your responsibility. We will be happy to give you names and phone numbers of organists, pianists, and/or vocalists, but it is up to you to arrange with them for your wedding.
- D.** Musician fees are arranged between you and your musician.
- E.** Pre-recorded music or accompaniment tapes should not be used in the public liturgy of the Church.

### **VIII. VISITING CLERGY**

- A.** Monsignor Holmes or a deacon of the parish ordinarily presides at weddings here. Exceptions to this norm are possible, especially when a member of the family or a very close friend is a priest or deacon. If you wish to invite a Catholic priest or deacon from outside the Cathedral Parish to preside at your wedding, you should submit a written request to Msgr. Holmes, giving the name, title, address, and phone number of the priest or deacon you want to invite. Ultimately, it is the pastor who grants permission for a visiting priest or deacon to preside at a wedding in the isthmus parishes. (Of course, if Bishop Morlino wishes to witness a marriage anywhere in the Diocese of Madison, he needs the permission of no one.) Please remember that if you do have a visiting priest or deacon witness your marriage, there will be an extra \$100 charged to compensate a member of our parish staff who will be on hand to help with practical details at your rehearsal and wedding.

### **IX. MARRIAGE LICENSE**

- A.** Please visit <http://www.co.dane.wi.us/coclerk/marriag.htm> for all the details you will need to know about obtaining your marriage license.
- B.** Please give the marriage license to the priest or deacon at the rehearsal. After the wedding he will sign it and mail it in. The marriage license is a civil document; it is not signed in the course of the ceremony, nor on the altar afterwards.

**Contact Information**

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