

# *Preparing for Marriage...*



# *...and Planning a Wedding*

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The celebration of Christian marriage in the presence of the Catholic Church’s minister and community is a manifestation of God’s own love for us and the love that a man and woman have for each other. “Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us,” Saint Paul proclaims. For this reason, the priest and/or deacon and the community come together to witness the promises of unity, fidelity, openness to life and unconditional love made by those who marry. Rooted in the pattern of Christ, Catholic marriage is nourished by God’s grace and presence, encouraged and directed by God’s Word and is celebrated in Sacrament and Sacred Scripture.

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*Church of St. Patrick*

*3535 72<sup>nd</sup> Street East*

*Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076*

*651-455-6624*

# Church of St. Patrick's Wedding Guidelines

## I. Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage

Congratulations on your commitment of love for a lifetime together in Christian marriage. We welcome you to celebrate your wedding at St. Patrick's. Our Catholic community is here to assist you in both celebrating your wedding day and preparing you for your marriage.

Christian marriage is a sacrament of commitment, ministered by the two of you and situated within the life of the St. Patrick's community. Therefore, we require that one member of the couple be a registered and active member of the parish. In addition, both must be committed to that life-long relationship with each other and with God in the context of the teachings and tradition of the Catholic Church.

This outline will familiarize you with requirements for celebrating the sacrament here at St. Patrick's. During the next few months, you will continue to learn more about each other and about the vocation of Christian marriage with the help of our clergy and/or mentor couples. In cooperation with our support staff, you will also take an active part in the preparation of the order of worship for the wedding.

## II. Scheduling

Weddings must be scheduled at least six months in advance. Contact our pastor when you are ready to set a date for your wedding. Saturday weddings take place at 2:00 pm. Weddings on other weekdays are possible. The church is open two hours prior to the ceremony and must be vacated one hour after the ceremony. Rehearsals will be scheduled at the convenience of the couple and the presider.

## III. Pre-Marriage Program

You are required to complete a pre-marriage preparation program certified by the Catholic Church. If you choose to utilize St. Patrick's program, then be aware that you should plan on starting your preparation at least six months prior to the wedding date. There are three parts to the program:

### 1. Documentation

- a) If either of you have been **married previously**, please discuss your situation with our pastor. Permission (a dispensation/annulment) may be required from the Archdiocese before a wedding date can be set with the parish.

- b) Catholics need to provide a recently issued (dated within the past six months) copy of their **baptismal certificate** from their parish of baptism. Other baptized Christians can provide any copy of their baptismal certificate.
- c) A **marriage license** valid in the State of Minnesota --- this can be acquired at any county courthouse/government center in Minnesota. This document should be obtained at least two months prior to the wedding --- note, the license is valid for six months from the date of issuance. Upon completion of your pre-marriage counseling and retreat, you may request a letter from St. Patrick's which can be presented at the government office in order to receive a discount.
- d) A "**Freedom to Marry**" **testimonial** will be required for each of you from a family member (typically a parent).
- e) A certificate of completion from an Archdiocesan approved **pre-marriage retreat** --- our preference is Catholic Engaged Encounter. Contact [www.ceemn.com](http://www.ceemn.com) for dates. See below for more information.
- f) A letter acknowledging **active membership** in a Catholic parish --- if at least one of you is not a registered parishioner at St. Patrick's, then we ask you to provide a letter from the Catholic parish in which you are currently registered which acknowledges your membership.
- g) A letter acknowledging completion of **pre-marriage counseling** --- if your counseling is done through another parish, then upon completion of this counseling, you are asked to provide a letter from your counselor stating that you understand and are ready to accept the responsibilities of Christian/Catholic marriage. In addition ---
  - i. Two meetings still need to take place with one of St. Patrick's clergy; namely, the initial meeting to set the date and the final meeting to work out last minute wedding day details.
  - ii. Even if your wedding is taking place at another church, be aware that you can still participate in St. Patrick's pre-marriage preparation program. Upon completion of our program we are happy to provide a letter acknowledging your work. Talk to our pastor for further details.
- h) If you would like **visiting clergy** to participate in your wedding at St. Patrick's, then we ask that you have them contact our pastor at least two months prior to the wedding date in order to receive proper delegation and instruction. In addition ---
  - i. If you desire one of St. Patrick's clergy to participate in your wedding at another church, then you are asked to first receive permission from the pastor of that parish, and then have them contact our clergy to work out the details.

## 2. **Retreat weekend**

You are asked to participate in an Archdiocesan approved pre-marriage retreat. Our preference is Catholic Engaged Encounter. Contact [www.ceemn.com](http://www.ceemn.com) for dates. Please schedule the retreat shortly after your initial meeting with our pastor.

## ***What is Catholic Engaged Encounter?***

Catholic Engaged Encounter (CEE) conducts marriage preparation retreats world-wide throughout the year. This professionally developed and pontifically blessed ministry has operated in the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis for over 40 years, preparing couples for the Sacrament of Matrimony. CEE is staffed entirely by married couples, priests and deacons. There are no paid presenters, just married couples who care about marriage, speaking openly and honestly from a real life perspective on marriage from the inside out.

## ***What is the CEE retreat format?***

CEE offers an intimate experience in a peaceful and private setting at the Christ the King Retreat Center overlooking Buffalo Lake in Buffalo, Minnesota. The retreat is a unique opportunity to communicate on a deep level with your fiancé on important topics you will face in married life. This overnight retreat format fosters the sense of togetherness, unity, and an uninterrupted focus on your relationship with your fiancé. CEE also highlights couple prayer as an integral part of your marriage through God.

## ***What happens on a CEE weekend?***

A team of two married couples and a priest or deacon will guide you as you explore topics including communication, conflict resolution, finances, intimacy, forgiveness, decision making, marriage as a sacrament, an introduction to Natural Family Planning, God and prayer. After each presentation you and your fiancé will be given ample time for private reflection and conversation on these topics.

## ***Do you have to be Catholic?***

No. CEE welcomes engaged couples of all faiths preparing for marriage. Note that the retreat does follow the Catholic Church's teachings

### **3. Counseling**

Couples will be asked to complete the online [Prepare Inventory](#) (see below). This is normally done at the parish office. The results are then discussed with our parish clergy and/or a parish mentor couple. These meetings --- there are at least four gatherings depending on the couple --- usually take place over a three to four month period.

The Prepare Inventory was developed in the 1970s at the University of Minnesota, and continues to be updated to the present day.

## ***WHY IS THE PREPARE INVENTORY RIGHT FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIP?***

### **a) Increases Awareness**

The results of an assessment provide insights to your relationship. Research has shown the act of taking the Prepare assessment improves relationship quality and brings increased awareness across multiple aspects of the relationship.

### **b) Assesses Your Relationship**

Prepare covers various areas within the relationship including communication, conflict resolution, finances, and spiritual beliefs. In addition, the assessment will explore your personality, family of origin, and relationship dynamics. Over 30 customized categories, such as previous marriage and expecting a child, ensure your experience with your results will feel accurate and relevant to your relationship.

### **c) Reduces Your Risk for Divorce**

Research has shown that utilizing the Prepare assessment prior to marriage reduces your risk for divorce by 30%.

### **d) Encourages Discussion**

Prepare will help you celebrate your strengths as a couple and use them to gain momentum in the growth areas of your relationship. The assessment primes you to have meaningful conversations as you continue to grow as a couple.

## e) Enhances Your Relationship Skills

Prepare provides skill-building exercises to help you strengthen your relationship. Developing skills such as assertive communication and active listening will allow you to support growth in all areas of your relationship.

### ***IS THIS A TEST?***

No, we promise it is not a test. It's an assessment of your relationship across several categories. Review below what the assessment is, and is not, so you have a deeper understanding of what it will do for your relationship.

#### The Prepare Inventory is:

- i. A momentary snapshot of your relationship;
- ii. A catalyst for discussion between you and your partner;
- iii. A proven means to lower your risk of divorce;
- iv. An accurate, research-based report of your relationship's strength and growth areas;
- v. A valid and reliable source of relationship enrichment.

#### The Prepare Inventory is not:

- i. A reflection of what your relationship historically has been or will be in the future;
- ii. A compatibility report or a test you can pass or fail;
- iii. A guarantee for a successful relationship;
- iv. A measure that indicates you should break up or get married;
- v. A replacement for professional relationship counseling.

## IV. Interreligious Marriages

Understanding one another's faith, beliefs and values is a vital element of your relationship. We strongly encourage Catholics marrying someone of another faith tradition to learn more about your partner's faith. Support one another in growing spiritually – which at its heart means growing in love. Regardless of where the wedding takes place, if the Catholic party wants the marriage to be recognized/validated by the Catholic Church then the couple must complete a pre-marriage program certified by the Catholic Church. Talk with St. Patrick's clergy for more details.

## V. The Wedding Ceremony

Your wedding ceremony is a liturgy of the Church. Everything should be done to make this a truly spiritual and liturgical experience. At your first meeting with our pastor you will be given a ***Together for Life*** booklet to guide you in planning your service. Your choices for readings, prayers, ministers, music, etc., can be discussed at any time during the pre-marriage preparation process. Your choices are expected to be shared with the presider at your final meeting.

Another resource you are asked to utilize during your preparation is our Director of Liturgy (DL). You are asked to schedule a meeting with our DL three months prior to your wedding date. Issues such as music, church environment, etc., can be discussed. (see below)

Other considerations:

### 1. Nuptial Mass or Scripture Service

A Nuptial Mass is normally offered only when both parties are Catholic. Unfortunately, Catholics and other Christian denominations do not share a common belief in the Holy Eucharist; thus, we are unable to share Holy Communion. Since a wedding should be a celebration of unity rather than disunity, we recommend that when only one party is Catholic then the Liturgy of the Eucharist not be celebrated.

### 2. Music

Since the celebration of the sacrament of marriage is a prayer of the Church, all the guidelines for Church music apply. This means that the music must be liturgical/sacred in nature. It is there to assist us in prayer, and for that reason no popular/secular songs will be allowed in the ceremony. If you have questions, feel welcome to contact the parish DL for guidance.

At your **meeting with our DL** --- remember to schedule this meeting three months prior to your date --- you will plan/review your music selections and discuss possible musicians.

While musicians outside our parish are welcome to participate in the liturgy, a pianist and cantor from our parish list will be present for the service. If you have a guest musician who desires rehearsal time on a day other than the wedding day, then the DL should be contacted. An additional fee will be requested for each extra rehearsal (see section VI).

### **3. Ministers**

**Bride and Groom:** You are the actual ministers of the sacrament. Remember, the priest or deacon does not “marry you” – you marry each other.

**The Assembly:** The assembly is the chief ingredient for your celebration. When preparing your liturgy, you will want to enable them to take a full and active part in the service. This includes insuring they are warmly welcomed, involved in the ritual, and encouraged to join in the sung and spoken prayer.

**Witnesses:** Your **best man and maid/matron of honor** will be the legal witnesses for the State of Minnesota and the Church. They must be at least 16 years of age. After the rehearsal they are asked to sign the license.

**Other members of your wedding party** will function as honored and enthusiastic members of the assembly. They serve to make sure everything runs smoothly.

If you choose to have **flower girls and ring bearers**, they should be old enough to walk the aisle alone. For the processional we recommend you have an adult in the back of church to start the children out, and an adult located in a front pew they should walk to. The adults should be ready to “pull out” the child in case they cannot or will not walk down the aisle.

For the recessional we leave it up to the adults’ discretion as to whether the children participate. No objects are to be tossed by the flower girls (see section 5 on Church Environment/Decorations).

**Presider:** One of our parish clergy will be the presider of your celebration. If you would like to have another cleric participate in the service, please discuss this matter with the pastor.

**Ministers of Music:** The pianist and cantor are present to oversee and manage the music for your wedding. Parish musicians will be present for the service. Additional musicians are welcome. Please discuss possible music selections and guest musicians with the DL **before** any plans are made.

**Ministers of the Word (Lectors):** Though the readers need not be practicing Catholics/Christians, we do ask that such a person be familiar with reading in a public setting and believe what they are reading. One to three lectors are needed. Attendance at the rehearsal is suggested.

Please provide them with their assigned reading prior to your wedding day so they may practice. There will be a copy of their selection in a 3-ring binder on the lectern at both the rehearsal and the wedding. They should check in with the wedding coordinator before each event.



Eucharistic Ministers (when Mass is celebrated): Must be an active, practicing Catholic and installed Eucharistic Minister. One to three ministers are possible. They should check in with the wedding coordinator prior to the start of the wedding.

Gift Bearers: If you are having a Mass, then you may have one to three gift bearers. They should be of an age to be able to safely handle the Offertory Gifts. They should check in with the wedding coordinator prior to the start of the wedding.

Ushers: They should be instructed to begin seating the guests immediately upon arrival. They should be instructed if and how many special people (e.g., grandparents, parents, etc.) will be seated just prior to the processional. They should be aware of the location of restrooms, phone, water fountains. They should be prepared to handle any emergencies during the service. After the service they should assist in clean up (see section 5 on Church Environment/Decorations).

Wedding Coordinator: This parish volunteer will be present throughout both the rehearsal and the wedding to assist the presider. Their role is to answer any questions you may have and to guide you as to how we do weddings here at St. Patrick's.

#### **4. Photographers & Videographers**

Flash photography during the wedding ceremony is limited to the processional and recessional only. Videotaping should be done with a tripod or fixed camera, using available light only. Pictures and videos may only be taken in designated areas. Your photographers and videographers should check with the presider and the parish wedding coordinator before the ceremony for details.

Please advise your guests prior to your wedding day that they should use flashless photography during the ceremony.

All posed pictures taken on church grounds must be done prior to the ceremony, and they must be finished at least 30 minutes before the start of your service. Please instruct your photographer of this expectation prior to your wedding day.

#### **5. Church Environment/Decorations**

The church is already decorated according to the liturgical season. Any decorations we have placed in the church must be left in place. You may add to our decorations if you wish. Furnishings in the sanctuary are not to be moved. Remember, the altar is a sacred and holy table; thus, it must not be used for camera equipment and/or flower bouquets at any time. Please discuss the church environment expected for your wedding date with our DL.

The use of candelabras or other candles should be discussed with the DL and the wedding coordinator. If you wish to use the parish's unity candle holder, then know that your **unity candle** should have a hole drilled in its bottom that is 1" in depth and 3/8" in diameter.

**An aisle runner** is not allowed.

**Rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals and soap bubbles** are not to be used during the ceremony or anywhere on church property.

**Food and drink** are not allowed in the worship space. Dressing rooms will be provided for the bride and groom and your attendants. You are welcome to bring food to be consumed in the dressing rooms.

**Alcoholic beverages and smoking** are not allowed on the parish campus. In addition, the wedding party is asked not to consume any alcoholic beverages prior to the rehearsal or wedding. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in the wedding being cancelled.

## **6. After the Wedding**

**Cleanup** --- Please appoint someone prior to the wedding (e.g., the ushers) to be responsible to handle cleanup. Anything you wish to save (e.g., flowers, unity candle, etc.) should be gathered immediately after the service. Everything else should be thrown away. All boxes, wrappings, programs, flowers, food, beverages, etc., should be removed. Check all spaces utilized including: church, foyer, dressing rooms, entrances, Shamrock Hall, etc. Parish trash and recycling dumpsters are located outside the lower church entrance. Check with the wedding coordinator for direction.

**The Marriage License** --- The presider will take care of mailing the license in to the state. If the bride and groom would like copies, then the official copies can be ordered after the wedding from the state.

**Sacramental Recording** --- Our parish office will inform your parish of baptism of your newly received sacrament of matrimony.

## VI. Summary of Fees

It is customary to make an offering to the church on the occasion of a wedding in token gratitude for God's blessings and to help cover the parish's expenses. This offering does not go to the presider, rather it goes directly to the parish. How much should we offer? Sacred Scripture tells us to tithe 10% (i.e., to return 10% of our blessings to the Lord); however, for most couples to offer a sacrificial gift equivalent to 10% of the overall cost of their wedding would be a difficult burden. Therefore, the table below gives you a more realistic guide. Note, those who do not feel they can afford these fees should discuss their situation with our pastor.

- Notes 1** ---
- A. The Reservation Fee is due at your initial meeting with our pastor.
  - B. The Church Fee, Cleaning Deposit and Musician Fees are due at your final meeting with our parish clergy.
  - C. The retreat and license fees are paid directly to their respective organization.
  - D. If you are only needing to utilize our pre-marriage preparation, then the sole fee is \$200 for parishioners or \$300 for non-parishioners.

	<u>Parishioner</u>	<u>Non-parishioner</u>
1. <b>Reservation Fee</b>	\$100	\$100
2. <b>Church Fee</b>	\$500	\$800
3. <b>Cleaning Deposit</b>	\$100	\$100

---Upon request, will be returned if you clean up after the wedding.

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| 4. <b>Pre-marriage Retreat</b>                | --- fees vary with each program |              |
| 5. <b>Parish Musicians</b> (pianist & cantor) | \$225 (each)                    | \$225 (each) |

---Additional guest musicians are compensated directly by the couple.

---Extra rehearsals are \$75/session.

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| 6. <b>Parish Clergy</b> | --- honorarium at the choice of the couple |  |
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--- Guest clergy are compensated directly by the couple.

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| 7. <b>Minnesota State marriage license</b> | --- fees varies by county |  |
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**Notes 2 ---**

- A. To be considered a parishioner, you must have been registered and active in the parish at least six months prior to the first meeting with the pastor. You should not assume that you are a parishioner because your parents were or are registered at St. Patrick's.  
In approaching the Catholic Church to celebrate the sacrament of matrimony you are declaring yourself to be an adult; and, as an adult you should be registered and active in a parish. Any questions? Feel welcome to talk with the pastor.
- B. The Church Fee is applicable regardless of who conducts the pre-marriage counseling or who presides at the service.
- C. If you desire to have one of our parish clergy participate in a service at another church, then an appropriate offering should be given to St. Patrick's.
- D. None of these fees are given to our parish clergy; thus, any personal honorariums would have to be given "over and above" the listed church fees. Know that the presider for your wedding always appreciates being remembered ---😊.
- E. Finally, the fees listed here are to inform you of the basic expenses the church has for your wedding (e.g., counseling, the Prepare Inventory, maintenance, etc.). Any offering you can give beyond these "minimum" figures would be appreciated. Or to put it another way, how much of your blessings will you return to the Lord, especially in light of God's call for us to be sacrificial givers (the ideal being the 10% tithe)?

**Final Thoughts** --- We pray that your sacramental union may be a real occasion of grace for you. Please do not hesitate to call upon the Church of St. Patrick for any future needs. We are here to serve. May God bless you!