

*Congratulations!*

*Congratulations on your engagement! We rejoice with you in your happiness and promise to pray for you and your marriage.*

*The following pages provide guidelines to help you enhance the sacred character of your wedding. We ask your cooperation in following these guidelines.*

*Additionally, we present our Marriage preparation programs: Pre-Cana, Prepare-Enrich, and Couple Ministry. All of these coordinate to provide times for discussion and reflection on the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.*



*We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.  
God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.*

I John 4:16

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## *What is a Christian Marriage?*

The Catholic Church believes that Christian marriage is the union of a baptized man and woman who freely enter into a covenant of love with each other in Christ, for the purpose of giving and receiving love and for the procreation and education of children.

Married couples live their sacrament in the way they care for and love one another, and are enthusiastic for one another as husband and wife. In their daily love for each other, their children, and the larger community, they become a living sign (a sacrament) for all of how much Jesus loves us and wishes to embrace us as His brothers and sisters. As they work their way through marital and family crises and struggles, they are witnesses of the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

In order to live out this ideal Christian marriage, couples must have the ability to give and receive love and to sustain an intimate relationship. They must also have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His body, the Church.

- Marriage is a covenant relationship (I will love you unconditionally), not just a contractual relationship (I will love you if you love me).
- The principal goals of marriage are the mutual love of husband and wife and the openness to new life.
- The sacrament of marriage has two important community dimensions:
  - Couples, by their love for each other, become living signs of how God loves us and how God wants to embrace us as family.
  - A Catholic wedding is a celebration of the entire Christian community, and not simply a private family function.
- Marriage enables a couple to sustain a close intimate relationship.
- A Catholic marriage assumes that the couple has a relationship with Christ and His Church.

### Special Circumstances

Marriage of Young People: If either of the parties will be under 20 years of age at the time of the wedding, parental consent and completion of the canonical Free State form must take place.

Pregnancy: If the couple had not planned to marry, pregnancy of itself will not be considered sufficient reason to enter into marriage or to shorten the marriage preparation process.

Validation: If the couple has entered into a marriage outside the laws of the Church, a validation of the marriage is permitted after the couple has completed the assessment process of these pastoral guidelines.

Previous Marriage: Any previous marriage (Catholic or non-Catholic) is an obstacle to marriage in the Catholic Church. The parties must disclose to the Priest/Deacon the facts of the previous marriage(s) in an effort to seek resolution.

Co-habitation: The Church has traditionally taught that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is contrary to the divine law. Times have not changed the Church's teaching with reference to this particular matter. Those who come to begin marriage preparations and are living together will need to enter into specific discussion with the Priest/Deacon/Couple Ministers concerning the marriage and the ceremony. Only after the matter has been discussed will the decision be made concerning the marriage and the nature of the ceremony.

Mixed Religion Marriages: An application for matrimonial dispensation is submitted to the Bishop of the diocese before a member of the Catholic faith may marry someone who is not of the Catholic faith. In preparation to submit this petition the Catholic makes the following promise:

*"I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ, and with God's help, intend to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church. I promise to do all in my power to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics."*

The individual who is of another faith tradition is not required to sign this promise, though he/she is to be aware that his/her fiancé is making this promise.

Mixed Religion wedding ceremonies are celebrated with Rites outside of Mass.

## *Your Wedding at St. Joseph Parish*

### **Wedding dates and times:**

Weddings are celebrated on Saturdays at either 11:00 AM, or 1:00 PM. Friday evening weddings may be scheduled if the church/clergy is available.

Special weekday wedding dates are permitted only if the parish schedule allows.

There are no weddings on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.

### **Rehearsal dates and times:**

Rehearsals are generally planned on the evening before the wedding. Rehearsals are conducted by our Pastor and last approximately 1 hour, provided all arrive promptly. Rehearsal date and time will be tentatively scheduled at the first meeting with the Pastor.

### **Wedding fees and honorariums:**

Celebrant: Suggested gratuity to the celebrant is \$150.00. If you prepare for your wedding at another parish, it is suggested that you also offer a gratuity to the priest/deacon with whom you have worked.

Musician: The parish organist/soloist sets aside time for your wedding as soon as it is placed on the parish calendar, and will work with you as you plan your ceremony. The musician's fee for service is \$150.00. Should you elect to have additional musicians, any financial arrangements are strictly between you and those musicians. If you require special rehearsals for extra musicians, you should offer a gratuity to the organist for the additional time involved. Please remember that the parish Music Director plays for all weddings unless you have made prior arrangements with her.

Servers: A gratuity of \$10.00 per server is customary and requested.

Sacristan: A gratuity of \$35.00 is suggested for the sacristan, who supervises the behind-the-scenes preparations for your wedding. The sacristan also assists in assuring a prompt start to your ceremony and an orderly flow to the bridal procession.

Fees/gratuities should be presented, along with your marriage license, to the celebrant at your wedding rehearsal. This will remove a little stress from your wedding day!

## *The Marriage Preparation Process*

### **The Initial Interview:**

As soon as your engagement is official, please contact the parish office to schedule an interview with our pastor, Father Ron Wearsch. This will allow sufficient time for preparation, without rushing or crowding everything into those last hectic weeks before your wedding. Our parish secretary will need correct spellings of both names and contact information, including both telephone and email. She will send to you the *Information for Marriage* form, which is used by all of the Dioceses in Ohio, for completion. She will instruct you to obtain a current (issued within the previous six months) copy of your Baptismal certificate with notations. This will be issued by the parish in which you were baptized. If you were baptized at St. Joseph Parish, we already have the information from it.

Please print and complete the *Information for Marriage* form that is emailed to you and bring it, along with your Baptismal certificate, to the first meeting with Father. At this meeting, he will determine whether you are free to marry in the Catholic Church, set your wedding date on the parish calendar, and establish a process best suited to you. Wedding dates can only be entered into the parish calendar by the Pastor.

One of you must be a member of St. Joseph Parish, registered and participating on your own, or you may be married here if your parents are registered, participating members. To be considered a participating member, you must be attending Mass on a regular basis, participating in parish activities, and making financial contributions according to your abilities. If a couple is living out of town (i.e. college students), they should be registered and participating in a church and may complete the preliminary work with a priest where they live.

**Pre-marital Programs:**

The Prepare-Enrich Inventory is assigned to all couples seeking to marry at St. Joseph Church. The evaluation covers areas of marriage and family life concerns: religion and life, marriage readiness, interpersonal communications, personal development and maturity, role adjustment in marriage, children and parenthood, sexuality and conjugal morality, extended family and in-laws, interests and activities, and approaches to finances. The Prepare-Enrich Inventory is sent to you online from the Diocesan Office for Marriage, for independent completion. There is a \$35.00 fee for this service, payable online when you open the link. Once scored, you will meet with a couple from St. Joseph Parish's Couple Ministry Team to evaluate your areas of strength and devise a plan for growth in areas identified as being not as strong.

In addition to the Prepare-Enrich inventory and meeting with Couple Ministers, all couples are required to participate in ONE of the following:

- Pre-Cana Day – a one-day program offered once each year at St. Joseph, usually in the spring. Other parishes in the Diocese offer similar programs that may be available if you cannot attend the one here.
- Engaged Couple Encounter – a Diocesan sponsored program offered monthly and held locally, featuring a weekend-long program beginning Friday evening and concluding Sunday afternoon. The Diocesan Office for Marriage and Family Life (800.869.6525, ext. 3570) can provide you with information about making reservations for the Encounter weekend.
- Cana II – designed for couples planning remarriage in the Church, this one-day program is offered twice a year. Information may be obtained from the above noted Office.

### **Documents Needed:**

Parish Registration. If you are not living in our Parish and not a registered member of St. Joseph Parish, we will need a letter from the pastor of the church you belong to stating that (1) you are a registered parishioner at that parish, and that (2) the pastor of the church gives you permission to be married at St. Joseph.

Baptismal Certificate. You will supply this document at the initial interview or as soon as it can be obtained after that interview. If you do not have it for the interview, please mail to the rectory.

Marriage License. The marriage license should be obtained one to two weeks prior to the ceremony. This can be obtained at the Lorain County Courthouse, in Elyria. After your wedding, the Parish will record your marriage in the Sacramental Register and mail the license back to the courthouse clerk's office for you. The county clerk will record the information in the public records of the county and return a certified copy to you. Please note that NO marriage may take place without the license.

Other Documents. If other documents are required, you will be advised early in the preparation process to obtain and present them.



## *The Marriage Liturgy*

As Catholics, our main focus is that the wedding ceremony reflects the fact that marriage is a sacrament. You may celebrate your marriage at Mass if both parties are Catholic, or outside of Mass. (The Eucharist is not shared in celebrations outside of Mass.)

As you are planning your wedding, you will be working with a book we provide to you. This book contains the complete marriage rite with prayers, blessings and scripture texts. From these, you will select readings for your own wedding Mass or liturgy. You will complete your planning form, and give that to your celebrant (usually our pastor) about one month before your wedding. Our parish liturgy and music director, Lorene Coughlin, is able to answer questions during your preparation of your ceremony regarding choices of music and other options. You should schedule a meeting with her about one month before the wedding.

All members of the wedding party (attendants, ushers, parents, lectors, etc.) should attend the rehearsal. We strive to make rehearsals short and sweet; please invite all to arrive promptly and ready to rehearse.

The pastor will be the celebrant (officiant) unless other prior arrangements have been made, with his permission. Likewise, our parish music director will provide the music, unless prior approval has been granted for additional musicians. St. Joseph Church will supply one altar server for weddings outside of Mass, two for weddings during Mass. We encourage couples to choose friends or family members to read the Scripture passages they have chosen (lectors). The couple may also choose friends or family members to read the petitions and to present the Offertory gifts at a wedding Mass.

Flowers are not required for weddings. If you desire flowers, our parish florist is Mary Huerner (440.933.9969), and you are welcome to work with her. If you decide to use another florist, please let the parish secretary know who this will be.

The bridal party must arrive at church in full dress. There is a bride's room available, but there isn't enough room (or privacy) for changing. Brides must pay special attention to their choice of attire for the wedding ceremony, both for themselves and for their attendants. Gowns that are low-cut in front or back, or which have high-slit skirts are inappropriate for wearing in church. Please exercise restraint and good judgment; however if you have a question as to whether a gown is appropriate for church, it probably is not.

## *Use of St. Joseph Church and Hall*

### **Use of the Church:**

**Time Allowed:** The church is reserved for your use 1 hour before the wedding and 1/2 hour after the wedding. This is the time available for floral decoration, picture taking, and clean up. Weddings must begin at the scheduled time.

**Clothing:** No clothing may be delivered directly to the church or parish offices.

Smoking inside any of the buildings is prohibited at all times. Food and drink, other than bottled water, are also prohibited in the church.

Rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, etc. may not be thrown on church grounds or inside the church. We do permit bubbles or bells, but these must remain OUTSIDE the church doors!

**Aisle runners:** for your safety, aisle runners may not be used in the church or on the church grounds.

Please remove all programs, the unity candle, if used, and personal items from the church.

### **Use of St. Joseph Hall and Sacristy/Brides' Room:**

Bridal parties may sequester themselves in the Hall to insure privacy and moments to calm themselves before the wedding. Again, smoking, food, and drink are prohibited. For safety and security, please designate a family member or friend to care for your personal belongings. Wedding parties must remove all personal belongings from the Hall area prior to the start of the wedding ceremony. Please leave the Hall and sacristy/brides' room neat and clean.

## *Photography*

Videographers / photographers are NEVER permitted in the sanctuary area during the celebration, nor are they permitted to interfere in the processions. Setup of photographic equipment must be completed at least 10 minutes before the wedding begins. The couple may pose for pictures after the wedding, but a limited time is set. Weddings are often scheduled back-to-back, and equal time must be afforded to all couples.

## *Preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony: Time-Line*

### **As soon as you are engaged, or 12 months before the ceremony:**

- Call the parish rectory to **check availability of wedding dates** and schedule the initial interview.
- Please understand that your chosen date cannot be entered into the parish calendar prior to your initial interview; you should not book your other venues until you confirm this with our Pastor.
- Meet with the Celebrant to determine freedom to marry; take Prepare-Enrich.
- Schedule Pre-Cana Day, Engaged Couple Encounter or Cana II.

### **Six to nine months before the ceremony:**

- Meet with the Celebrant to discuss Prepare-Enrich. Begin work in Prepare-Enrich workbook.
- Meet with Couple Ministry couple to complete discussions of Prepare-Enrich.

### **Two to three months before the ceremony:**

- Prepare your liturgy, using provided book.
- Meet with music director to complete planning of liturgy and submit Mass plan.
- Choose readers (lectors; one for each reading. They do not have to be Catholic, but should be comfortable to do public reading.) Provide readings to them for practice!

### **One month before the ceremony:**

- Confirm with all ushers, lectors, greeters, attendants and remind them the time of the rehearsal.
- Remind everyone else necessary to the rehearsal about the time of the rehearsal.

### **At the rehearsal:**

- All are asked to be mindful that you are preparing to celebrate a sacrament – exciting, for sure, but still a sacrament!
- Bring the marriage license to give to the Celebrant.
- Give stipends to Celebrant, musicians, altar servers (in marked envelopes, please).

**Remind everyone to arrive well in advance of the ceremony starting time.**

### *Parish Personnel*

- Pastor: Father Ronald Wearsch  
440.653.5610, pastor@stjosephavonlake.org
- Deacon: Keith Jenkins  
440.653.5625, deacon@stjosephavonlake.org
- Parish Music Director: Lorene Coughlin  
440.653.5615, 440.897.0894, music@stjosephavonlake.org
- Pastoral Assistant: Phil Lewandowski  
440.653.5638, phil@stjosephavonlake.org
- Parish Sacristan: Mrs. Carolyn Chatlos  
440.933.3810, 440.714.1477, cchatlos@stjosephavonlake.org
- Couple Ministry: Lois Allegretto and Don Reaser  
440.933.8978, lallegretto49@gmail.com



*“We, in the presence of one another, individually declare our freedom to marry and our freedom from any known impediments between us. We hold marriage to be a lifelong and faithful union and process of choosing each other for the mutual sharing of our life and our love; it is a union which is open to children; it is a union which is modeled after and symbolizes God’s ever-faithful love for His people. It is this partnership of life and love that we seek in marriage and to which we publicly give our consent.”*

Declaration on Matrimonial Consent, Diocese of Cleveland