

# *Getting Married at Holy Apostles*



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Dear Engaged Couple,

Welcome and congratulations on your engagement! It is a privilege to serve you during this important time of preparation and celebration. This booklet contains guidelines and details that will help you prepare for marriage and plan your wedding.

We at Holy Apostles want to work with you to make this celebration a true symbol of your love and of the presence of Christ in your life together. May God bless you during this time and in your married life with great happiness and fruitfulness!

In the peace of Christ,

Fr. Tom Jamka

## *Introduction*

*The Sacrament of Marriage is a public celebration of God's love that joins a couple together in a permanent union. Through the commitment the couple makes to one another, a partnership of the whole of life is established and the couple becomes oriented toward each other and the family, building a "communion of persons."*

*The purpose of marriage is for the good of the spouses and bringing forth new life in children. The newly married are channels of God's love, justice, mercy, and peace for their families, friends, and the community at large. Pope John Paul II called the family, which finds its origins in marriage, the "fundamental cell of society." What is more, the sacramental marriage bond expresses in a special way the love Jesus has for his Church. Thus the wedding liturgy is a celebration not just for the couple but for the whole Church.*

*This booklet is based on this primary understanding of marriage in the Catholic Church. It will be a helpful guide for those preparing for a wedding in the parish and will serve as a reference for those who are working with engaged couples in the planning process. We want your marriage to be happy, healthy, and holy. Every step in this preparation process draws on the collected wisdom and experience of those who have achieved this great feat. Similarly, we want you to have a beautiful and sacred wedding. The policies found in this booklet are based on practical experience that has grown into the guidelines and requirements that follow.*

## *Getting Started*

Registered members of the parish may celebrate their weddings at Holy Apostles Church. Non-registered Catholics who live within the bounds of the parish and couples from outside the parish may also request to have their wedding here. They must complete their marriage preparation either at Holy Apostles or another Catholic Church.

Preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church should be made by calling the parish office **9-12 months prior to the desired wedding date**. However, the wedding date cannot be set until the initial meeting with the parish Marriage Preparation Coordinator. This appointment will start the process of collecting information, get the couple started in the marriage preparation program, and begin the planning for the wedding. If you are reading this, you have most likely already taken this step. One of your next steps will be to meet with one of the parish priests or deacons at Holy Apostles. They are eager to support you in this process.

If there has been a previous marriage contracted by one or both partners, the issue of obtaining a declaration of nullity (annulment) will be addressed. The declaration of nullity must be obtained before beginning marriage preparation or setting the wedding date. The parish will make any necessary referrals to diocesan agencies in order to assist the couple in this process.

Mixed marriages (between a Catholic and a non-Catholic/non-Christian) are not forbidden but should be given realistic consideration. Because faith is an essential element of marriage, the Church has a special concern that the faith of the Catholic party is respected and not endangered. To this end, the Catholic party is asked to formally reaffirm his or her faith, to do all he or she can to continue to grow in the faith, and to be diligent in sharing this with their children by having them baptized Catholic and brought up in the Church. The Catholic and the non-Catholic party must be aware of each other's faith intention and should discuss this early on.

Otherwise, the wedding date can be discussed in light of the preparation process and other necessary time frames.

Because a wedding is a testimony of their intentions before witnesses, before the Church, and most importantly before God, it is essential that the couple be married in a church. In other words, outdoor or destination weddings are not possible.

If a couple is cohabitating or are in a common-law marriage they are expected to separate for at least one month before the wedding. This is a very important part of the preparation process and allows for a more thorough examination of personal readiness to make the commitments required in marriage. Every effort should be made in this regard.

For baptized Catholics seeking the Sacrament of Marriage, the other sacraments of initiation (Confirmation and First Communion) should be received before marriage. More information can be provided about this on request.

Planning a wedding can be hectic. Make sure to take time for yourself in prayer and draw close to the Lord especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist sustains us in our self-giving love. Weekly Mass on Sunday is essential both for the process of preparation and the rest of a married life. Couples preparing for marriage are expected to be attending Mass every Sunday.

## **The Preparation Process**

Preparation begins by meeting with the Marriage Preparation Coordinator. They will help explain the preparation process which takes anywhere from 9 to 12 months. The process includes:

- Catholic Marriage Preparation (Either in person or online)
- Natural Family Planning course
- The FOCCUS inventory, a potential retreat, and meeting with either the pastor, parochial vicar, or another mentor. During this process several documents will need to be collected including baptismal certificates dated within 6 months of the wedding date (the mentor will help direct you how to request these), certificates of completion of the other preparation steps, witness forms signed

by someone who has known the bride/groom for at least 14 years, and any other necessary paperwork (dispensation/permissions, declaration of nullity, etc.). You will be guided through this process.

There are fees associated with these steps but you will find them well worth the cost. These will directly benefit your whole married life, beyond the day of your wedding.

## *Rite of Marriage*

### **I. Rite for Celebrating Marriage within Mass**

The Catholic Rite of Marriage centers around two key moments: the Exchange of Consent and the Nuptial Blessing. Marriage is rooted in the couple's mutual vows of faithful love and is blessed by God as an image of the marriage between Christ and His Church. The bride and groom are the primary ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage. The couple's declaration of reciprocal consent and the nuptial blessing reveal the sacramental nature of marriage as the spouses become symbols of Christ's selfless love.

In addition to **Exchange of Consent** and the **Nuptial Blessing**, the Rite of Marriage contains two other basic elements. Before exchanging vows the bride and groom are asked a series of questions, called the **Statement of Intentions**, to determine that each approaches marriage freely, intends a lifelong union, and is open to children and to rearing them in the Church. The fourth element is the **Blessing and Exchange of Rings**. The spouses will wear these blessed rings as a sign of their covenant with each another and with God.

When two Catholics marry, the rite is ordinarily integrated with the Eucharist (in the context of the Mass). The structure of this first form is outlined as follows. Moments accompanied by music are noted with an \*.

## **The Introductory Rite**

1. Gathering
2. Procession\* (Altar Servers, Priest, Bridegroom, Bridal Party, Bride)
3. Welcome of the Bride and Bridegroom (at the door of the church or at the altar)
4. Greeting
5. Gloria\*
6. Opening Prayer

## **The Liturgy of the Word** (Readings done within Mass should be proclaimed by Catholics)

1. Old Testament Scripture Reading
2. Responsorial Psalm\*
3. New Testament Scripture Reading
4. Gospel Acclamation\*
5. Homily

## **The Celebration of Matrimony**

1. Address to the Couple
2. The Questions before Consent
3. The Consent
4. The Reception of the Consent
5. The Blessing and Giving of Rings
6. The Universal Prayer
7. Profession of Faith (if Marriage is celebrated on a Sunday or Solemn Feast Day)

## **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

1. Preparation of the Gifts\* (may select two people to carry the bread and wine to the altar and choose from among three options for Prayer Over the Gifts)
2. Eucharistic Prayer
3. The Lord's Prayer
4. The Nuptial Blessing
5. Sign of Peace
6. The Breaking of the Bread
7. Communion\*
8. Prayer after Communion

## **The Conclusion of the Celebration**

1. The Solemn Blessing



2. Dismissal
3. Recessional\*

## II. The Order for Celebrating Marriage Without Mass

When a Catholic marries a baptized non-Catholic Christian, the Rite for Celebrating Marriage Without Mass is used.

“Celebrating Marriage within a Liturgy of the Word” more accurately portrays this form of the rite. It is identical to the rite used for marriage within a Mass. It has the same four basic elements: **questions about intent, exchange of consent, the blessing and exchange of rings, and the nuptial blessing.** The emphasis is still on mutual consent and the nuptial blessing, showing that this marriage is a sacrament rooted in the couple’s mutual vow of love and is blessed by God as an image of Christ’s wedding with His Church.

The difference between this form of the rite and a marriage within Mass is only that it is not integrated with the Eucharist. The structure of this first form is outlined as follows. Moments accompanied by music are noted with an \*.

### The Introductory Rite

1. The Procession
2. The Greeting
3. The Sign of the Cross and Opening Prayer

### The Liturgy of the Word

1. Old Testament Scripture Reading
2. Responsorial Psalm\*
3. New Testament Scripture Reading
4. Gospel Acclamation\*
5. Homily

### The Celebration of Matrimony

1. Address to the Couple
2. Questions before the Consent
3. The Consent
4. The Reception of the Consent
5. The Blessing and Giving of Rings

6. The Universal Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer
7. The Nuptial Blessing

### **The Conclusion of the Celebration**

1. The Blessing over the Bride and Bridegroom

## **III. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian**

The rite for a Catholic marrying a catechumen (one who is preparing for baptism), a non-Christian (never baptized), or someone who does not believe in God exemplifies sensitivity for the unbaptized person and his/her family. This third form has the same four basic elements as the first two forms of the rite: **questions about intent, exchange of consent, the blessing and exchange of rings, and the nuptial blessing.** With the exception that the nuptial blessing may be omitted, this rite preserves the same structure as the other two forms.

A non-Catholic bride or groom and the person's family may not know that the bride and groom are the principal ministers of the Rite of Marriage. As such they are both expected to be in the entrance procession with the priest or deacon and other ministers of the liturgy. Bride and groom may walk together or their parents may escort each of them. Ordinarily their two witnesses (Maid of Honor and Best Man) precede them down the aisle, and bridesmaids and groomsmen may also join the entrance procession.

The third form of the Rite for Celebrating Marriage, between a Catholic and an unbaptized person, while not a Sacrament (an unbaptized person does not celebrate a sacrament) is a complete and valid rite, signifying a permanent bond, that offers the couple many options. When the couple makes choices that reflect their own prayerfulness, religious practice, and social responsibility, their individuality and hopes for marriage will shine out in their Scripture, prayer, and music selections. Their wedding will be the holy, hospitable, and happy celebration it is meant to be, reflective of the Church's vision for their marriage.

### **The Introductory Rite**

1. The Rite of Reception

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

1. Old Testament Scripture Reading (Optional)
2. Responsorial Psalm\*
3. New Testament Scripture Reading
4. Gospel Acclamation\*
5. Homily

## **The Celebration of Matrimony**

1. Address to the Couple
2. Questions before the Consent
3. The Consent
4. The Reception of the Consent
5. The Blessing and Giving of Rings
6. The Universal Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer
7. The Nuptial Blessing

## **The Conclusion of the Celebration**

1. The Blessing over the Bride and Bridegroom

## *Particulars*

### **Music**

Please refer to Music Planning Guide.

### **Environment**

Before the wedding, the couple will have access to the church facilities two hours before the celebration.

Wedding decorations should have a festive atmosphere depicting the colors, sounds, and look of what is being celebrated. Simplicity and moderation are the key elements to consider in the decoration. The decorations should enhance the feeling and atmosphere of this holy occasion. Please do not move the fixtures in the church without permission. Please always restore any moved items after the event.

In the Catholic Church, the altar is the central focus of the celebration. Flowers, candles, and other decorative items should be arranged in such a way as not to detract from this. All decorations that are brought in, with the sole exception of flowers being left for the church in vases, are to be removed after the ceremony.

The Unity Candle is not a part of Catholic weddings. This symbol is unnecessary because the most important and distinct symbol of unified love is the bride and groom themselves. If a Unity Candle is desired, it may fittingly be used at the reception afterward.

After the wedding **NO** rice, confetti, bird seed or any other materials should be thrown inside or outside the church. It creates very difficult clean-up problems. Bubbles are an acceptable and popular alternative for after the ceremony, as the bride and groom leave the building. Please clean up any containers.

No aisle runners, please.

## **The Wedding Rehearsal**

The rehearsal is the night before the wedding. Rehearsals are scheduled to start promptly and will last for roughly one hour (60 minutes). All the planning and ceremonial movement should be discussed beforehand and should be followed during the rehearsal. The Wedding Coordinator and priest are responsible for rehearsal proceedings.

The wedding party and anyone participating in the liturgy should be present for the rehearsal. Any guest musicians are strongly encouraged to be present to practice the music and to review the progression of the ceremony and when the appropriate music is to be played and sung.

## **Photography and Videotaping**

Pictures are important keepsakes from a wedding day and so the parish does allow photography before, during, and after the ceremony. In order to make the day as special as possible for the bride and groom, we encourage couples to plan this aspect of the wedding with care.

It is generally a good idea to begin taking pictures no later than one hour before the scheduled start of the wedding. This allows the entire wedding party ample time to prepare for the ceremony itself and cuts down on anxiety and potential delays.

Please remember that this is a sacred ceremony—an opportunity for us to attune to the presence of God. A camera cannot capture a spiritual encounter; however, a camera might interfere with someone encountering God because it is a distraction.

During the ceremony photographers and videographers need to stay out of sight as much as possible so as not to detract from the ceremony. They are not to pass in front of the congregation.

After the ceremony, the uses of the building or the outside grounds are available for picture-taking. Couples will be advised in advance about other parish events, so that they can make the necessary arrangements for photos. On Saturday evenings, Mass begins at 5:30 pm. Photographs must be completed by 5:00 pm.

## **Before and after the ceremony**

*Please keep in mind all of the following...*

- The church is a sacred space and should be respected by everyone. Talking should occur at a low volume. Chewing gum and food/drinks should be discarded before entering, and gentlemen should remove their hats. Children should not be allowed to run through the church and should be kept off the altar area.
- There is one small room available for the bride. Use of this requires that the bridal party clean up and remove all personal items and trash.
- The bride and groom are responsible for getting the civil marriage license to the priest by the rehearsal. This should be obtained by the couple 30 days before the wedding and will need to be signed by all parties after the ceremony.
- The wedding ceremony is a religious event and this should be considered when picking bridal attire. Brides and bridesmaids are asked to be respectful of the space and exercise modesty when selecting dress styles. Gentlemen should dress appropriately formal in keeping with the very special occasion of the

wedding. Only males may dress and stand in as groomsmen. Only females may dress and stand in as bridesmaids.

## **Times and Schedules**

The rehearsal will be scheduled on the day before the wedding, normally between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. These are run by our parish Wedding Coordinator. Outside Wedding Coordinators are not involved in the rehearsal or in the planning of the ceremony, readings, or music.

Weddings can be scheduled on Saturdays between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. unless other arrangements have been made. Times are negotiable depending on other weddings or activities in the church the same day. It is also possible to choose other days of the week, such as Friday evening, if the church is available.

## **Fees**

The sacraments are free. We do not charge for the wedding. However, there are a number of people and expenses involved with hosting a wedding. Here are some costs to assist in your planning (*Please give to parish one month before wedding*).

### **Wedding Fee Schedule:**

Wedding Coordinator: **\$150** (Coordinator is provided by the parish; they will help plan wedding and run rehearsal)

Church Utilities/Misc. Fee: **\$100** (Amount for registered/Active Parishioner\*)

**\$350** (Amount for Non-Parishioner)

Musician Stipend: **\$150/cantor; \$150/musician** (see Music Planning Guide)

Recommended donation for priest/deacon celebrant: **\$150**

(\*Registered/Active Parishioner = Registered, tithing, active in ministry for one year or more.)

*Holy Apostles recognizes that there can be legitimate financial hardships. If an actual need exists, please contact the parish office. We can calculate with you the actual*

*costs of the entire wedding and arrive at a fitting percentage of total costs that can be paid to the parish.*

**The following announcement is required to be included in all wedding programs at Holy Apostles, usually on the back page.** (An electronic file can be provided to the couple's publisher upon request.)

*To our wedding guests at Holy Apostles Catholic Church:*

*Welcome and thank you for joining us for this beautiful and important occasion! It is a joy to welcome family and friends to our parish, many who might not be Catholic. As your hosts, we wanted to offer a few helpful points.*

- *Catholics firmly believe that the Eucharist is truly the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus given to the Church at the Last Supper. We reserve the Eucharist in the tabernacle, indicated by the red "vigil light" behind the altar. This means that God is present with us. We ask that you maintain a respectful silence in the church, both before and after the wedding until you leave the sacred space.*
- *There may be moments in the wedding rite (or) Mass that are unfamiliar, including responses, postures and various prayers. The priest and cantor will help indicate the appropriate responses or postures throughout the ceremony. You are encouraged to participate throughout the whole rite.*
- *[For wedding within Mass] At a certain point in the Mass, the bride and groom will receive Communion. This participation in the Eucharist not only expresses their belief in the Eucharist as the True Presence of Christ but also declares their shared and practiced Catholic faith. For this reason, only practicing Catholics in a state of grace are invited forward to receive Communion. Any of our friends/ family who are not Catholic or Catholics who have been away from the Church are asked instead to either remain in the pews and pray for the newly married couple or to come forward to the priest with their arms crossed over their chest to make a spiritual communion. Thank you for respecting this most Sacred Treasure.*

*Thank you for your prayerful presence today!*

## Checklist

- Contact the Marriage Preparation Coordinator at Holy Apostles parish office (719-597-4249 or [office@holyapostlescc.org](mailto:office@holyapostlescc.org)) to initiate the marriage prep process. **Please do not complete any of the following steps until you have met with the Marriage Preparation Coordinator.**
- The Marriage Preparation Coordinator will provide you with an initial questionnaire. Please fill out your basic contact information on the form but wait to fill out the questionnaire portion, as the questionnaire must be completed with a priest or deacon.
- The Marriage Preparation Coordinator will also provide you with other necessary paperwork and will assist you with scheduling your wedding
- Complete the course from CatholicMarriagePrep.com
- Complete the FOCCUS Inventory
- Complete the Natural Family Planning course
- Complete Freedom to Marry forms and any other necessary paperwork
- Request baptismal certificates, request any necessary dispensations, and get witnesses
- Attend regular meetings with the priest, deacon, and/or mentor couple. You might consider asking this priest or deacon to celebrate your wedding
- Read through this booklet and be familiar with the wedding policies at Holy Apostles
- Meet with the Wedding Coordinator to plan the wedding liturgy 6-8 weeks beforehand. They will help you select the readings, music, and arrange stipend/fee payment schedule
- Obtain civil license (by the time of the rehearsal)
- Discuss photograph arrangements with your photographer
- Notify all wedding party members of rehearsal and wedding times

*Helpful websites for the engagement process and beyond:*

[www.catholicweddinghelp.com](http://www.catholicweddinghelp.com)

[www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)







