

# PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY AT HOLY ROSARY CLUSTER

St. Bernard, Alta Vista  
Our Lady of Lourdes, Lourdes  
Immaculate Conception, Elma  
Immaculate Conception, Riceville  
St. Peter, New Haven

Congratulations on your engagement! The choice to celebrate marriage in the Catholic Church is one of many choices you will make together. The parish priest will assist you with all your preparations and decisions as you prepare to enter into Catholic Christian marriage.

This guide is intended to assist you in your marriage preparation and to answer some of the most commonly-asked questions. Please read it carefully and ask the priest any further questions you may have.

At the time of your formal engagement, please contact the cluster office to make an appointment with the parish priest ([dbq170@dbqarch.org](mailto:dbq170@dbqarch.org) or 641-393-2520) to begin the preliminary arrangements. This needs to be done no later than six (6) months prior to your intended wedding day.

## I. PRE-MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS

### A. Parish Registration

The Christian life is not a solitary life. Jesus calls us to be in communion with others through the Church. Also the Catholic understanding of the of sacraments makes it clear that marriage, like all sacraments, is celebrated within the context of the Church community. Thus your marriage involves not only yourselves, but also the community of the local parish. For these reasons one of you needs to be registered at one of the parishes in the cluster or another Catholic parish. If you're not registered the priest will be happy to help you with this step.

If you are registered in another parish, written permission from your pastor is to be forwarded to the Holy Rosary Cluster Office before you marry in one of the parishes of the cluster. As members of a parish, there's an expectation you are faithfully practicing your Catholic faith and supporting your parish as we journey through life together with Jesus and the Church.

## **B. Marriage Preparation**

1. As with every sacrament, instruction and preparation are required before marriage. Couples must participate in at least one of two preparation offerings: the Engaged Encounter Program or the Pre-Cana Program. The priest will give you information on each program.
2. Each person completes and discusses with the priest an inventory entitled "Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study." [FOCCUS].

## **C. Marriage Documents**

1. A pre-nuptial questionnaire is one of the first documents to be completed. The parish priest will meet with you to complete the necessary documents.
2. Any person not baptized at a parish with Holy Rosary Cluster is responsible for providing a **baptismal certificate issued within the past six (6) months.**
3. In most instances, witnesses are also asked to fill out papers Verifying your freedom to marry. Parents make excellent witnesses.
4. A **certificate of completion** from the Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana program is to be provided to the cluster office after you have completed your chosen program.
5. A **valid marriage license** from the State of Iowa is required for the marriage. The license must be provided to the cluster office **no later than one week before the wedding rehearsal.**

## II. SCHEDULING AND DECORATIONS

### A. Dates and Times

**Please do not set dates or times prior to meeting with the parish priest.**

Weddings may be celebrated on **Saturdays** starting no later than 2:00 PM.

**Friday evening** weddings are possible, as our weddings during other days



of the week.

Couples may also choose to be married at one of the regularly scheduled weekend Masses, however these wedding Masses will have the form of a weekend liturgy. The priest will discuss this with you in more detail if you decide to celebrate matrimony during a regularly scheduled weekend liturgy.

The calendar of the Church is such that there are days when weddings are normally not celebrated. The priest can discuss these with you.

### B. Decorations

**Respect of Place:** Our churches are decorated for the parish community in keeping with the liturgical calendar and the seasons of the year. During the seasons of Christmas and Easter, there are usually flowers already in the churches, so if you desire flowers you may not need to order more. A good guideline for decorations is to plan to maintain the simplicity and authenticity of the church space.

Please advise florists and photographers that parish plants, banners, other decorations, and sanctuary furniture are not to be moved or removed.

**Flowers:** If you do purchase fresh flowers, a few bouquets are sufficient. They may be placed in the sanctuary in spaces that do not disrupt the liturgy or obstruct movement or view. Flowers cannot be placed on the altar. No wreaths, hearts, or other decorations may be hung against or taped on the back wall of the sanctuary.

Due to safety concerns, cleanliness, and the sacredness of Catholic Christian worship **the following items are not permitted:** carpet runners, balloons, real flower petals, tape or adhesives, sand, rice, bird seed, confetti, paper or curtains on church doors/windows, candelabras, animals, glitter (including glitter on the body, clothing, shoes, flowers, bows, flower girls, etc.), and other items deemed inappropriate by the priest. If there are questions please ask the priest.

Any decorations brought in for the wedding must be removed after the wedding unless they're accepted as a donation to the parish. Basically the church needs to be left as it was before the wedding. Ushers and attendants in the wedding party are asked to assist with the clean up immediately after the wedding.

### **C. Rehearsals**

- ◆ Rehearsals are usually scheduled for the evening preceding the wedding.
- ◆ The rehearsal is for the priest, the bride and groom, the wedding party (including ushers), readers, altar servers (if they are from outside the parish), and the parents of the bride and groom.
- ◆ Music ministers are encouraged to attend the wedding rehearsal, not as a practice time, but to help coordinate the music for the wedding with wedding party and the priest.
- ◆ If music ministers want to practice in the church, please have them contact the cluster office.

### III. WEDDING LITURGY

#### A. Prayers and Scripture Readings

Christian marriage is a sacred reality where God is invited into married life, and seals the marriage between husband and wife. Therefore in the wedding celebration prayers and readings from the Christian tradition are used to reflect this reality. The Church has specifically set aside Biblical readings and prayers for the celebration of matrimony. These are found in the booklet *Together for Life*, which you will receive during your marriage preparation. The priest will review and discuss your choices with you.

#### B. Liturgical Ministers.

Although it is commendable to desire family members and others who are important to your relationship play a part in the wedding, it's also important that they are able to adequately do what you ask them to do, and they believe what they're doing! With this in mind, the following ministers are needed:

- ◆ **One or more readers** to proclaim your chosen readings and petitions. A competent reader is important, so select her/him wisely. [You may request a reader from the parish.]
- ◆ **Two altar servers if the wedding will take place within Mass.** [You may request servers from the parish.]
- ◆ **Three commissioned Eucharistic Ministers if the wedding will take place within Mass.** [You may request these from the parish.]

**NOTE:** Marriages are celebrated within Mass when both the bride and the groom are Catholic.

### C. Music

Music is meant to complement the sacred nature of the wedding. Therefore the music you choose **must also be of sacred nature (Catholic Church hymns)**, and **your music ministers need to be familiar with Catholic liturgical music**. The bride and groom need to provide an accompanist and cantor for the wedding. Financial arrangements, if necessary, are made between the couple and the music ministers.

Please discuss the music for the wedding with the parish priest.

### D. Worship Aids

Worship Aids (programs) may help all attending the wedding to actively participate in the celebration. If you wish to create your own worship aid (program) to include parts of the wedding ritual, please allow the priest to review it for accuracy before its final printing.

### E. Photography

Pictures may be taken before or after the wedding, but if taken after the wedding the church must be cleared and restored to how it was before the wedding at least sixty minutes before the next schedule event.

If taken before the wedding, pictures need to be concluded thirty minutes before the wedding begins in order to accommodate guests arriving and to provide time for the final preparations for the liturgical celebration.

During the wedding itself, the focus is on the love of God sealing the love of husband and wife. Photographers are not to distract or interfere with the wedding ceremony itself. Additionally flash bulb or flash attachment may not be used to take pictures during the wedding.

Please ask your photographer or videographer to consult with the priest prior to the wedding about guidelines.

## F. Your Wedding Party

Because of limited sanctuary space, please consider limiting the size of the wedding party. Additionally because both the rehearsal and the wedding take place in the church, and therefore in the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, proper and reverent conduct is expected and insisted upon.

If vehicles are being decorated, please have someone in the wedding party ensure the decorations are in good taste and appropriate for a church environment.

Members of the wedding party are not to bring or consume alcohol either at the rehearsal or wedding. **The presence of alcohol or recreational drugs is reason for cancelling the wedding.** The bride and groom play an important part in helping the wedding party be aware of and respect this policy. Please save this part of the celebration until after the wedding at the reception.

Please also inform the wedding party of the following guidelines to help maintain a spirit of prayer in our church buildings: The churches in our cluster are non-smoking areas. Please respect this policy. Additionally please do not bring food or drink, other than water, into the churches. Please remove hats when inside the churches.

## IV. WEDDING FEES

Financial concerns in no way should interfere with someone celebrating Christian marriage. However there is a custom to offer financial support to the Church. Additionally some programs need money to help offset costs. If you have a concern or questions about fees/offerings, please discuss them with the priest.

Offerings for the church are requested prior to the wedding itself.

**A. FOCCUS**

A \$15.00 fee per couple is assessed in order to support this program.

**B. Marriage Preparation Programs**

A couple is to participate in one of the following preparation programs:

- ◆ Pre-Cana Program
  - \$45.00—\$55.00
- ◆ Engaged Encounter Program:
  - \$300 per couple (includes food, lodging, and materials)

**C. Church:**

1. Parishioners: \$100.00
2. Non-Parishioners: \$150.00
3. Altar Servers: \$10.00 (per server if provided by the parish)
4. Music Ministers: This is to be worked out between the music ministers and the couple.

Preparation for and celebration of Christian Marriage is one of the most exciting times in your life. Take advantage of this time as not only an opportunity for you to learn more about each other and prepare for a life together, but also as an opportunity to renew your relationship with our God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who loves us and also seeks a relationship with us in the Church. With this in mind, pray together and for each other as you approach your wedding day and throughout your lives!

*Be attentive to our prayers, O Lord,  
and in Your kindness pour out Your grace on these Your servants,  
that, coming together before Your altar,  
they may be confirmed in love for one another.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,  
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

January 2017