

Preparation for Your Marriage in the Catholic Church

As your parish community, we welcome the opportunity to help you prepare for marriage.

This brochure details for you the steps of your preparation as outlined in the Marriage Preparation Policy for our Archdiocese. This process will help you prepare not just for your wedding day but for your married life together.

As your parish community, we will assist you in each step. The process will involve sessions with a priest or deacon, a formal marriage preparation program, the necessary documents, a rehearsal and the marriage ceremony itself.

Important Questions for You

1. Am I a parishioner?

A parishioner lives within the boundaries of the parish or is a registered member of the parish family.

2. Am I a practicing Catholic?

A practicing Catholic is one who joins the Christian family for Sunday worship on a weekly basis, has a mature understanding of the Catholic faith and participates in the life of the Church.

3. Am I prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage?

In Catholic belief and practice, marriage is more than a legal contract. It is a sign not only to the couple, but also to the Christian community, that God is important in their lives. The desire to live one's faith must be as important as the desire to live together. Each couple must be free to marry in the Church.

Responsibility for your Preparation

The parish where the wedding is to be celebrated has full responsibility for the marriage preparation process: documents, preparation program, etc.

Preparation Steps

1. Preparation period

Couples must contact their parish at least six months before the proposed wedding date.

2. Location of the wedding

The parish of either the bride or the groom is the normal place for a wedding. Permission of the pastor of one of these parishes is necessary for the wedding to take place in another church.

3. Pre-Marital Inventory

This instrument will help the couple to discuss and share the strengths and weaknesses in their relationship.

4. Documents

The parish will help the couple with the necessary documents and forms. If the couples are of different faiths, additional procedures will be necessary.

5. Natural Family Planning

You are encouraged to learn more about this excellent method to plan your family. For more information visit NFP: www.nfpandmore.org

6. Marriage in another diocese

A couple residing in the Archdiocese of San Francisco must obtain permission to be married outside the archdiocese. Other dioceses also require marriage preparation, so a couple planning a wedding “back home” should contact the parish where they now live for marriage preparation and permission.

Preparation Programs

Engaged couples have the option of choosing either of the following programs:

Parish Preparation Program

1. Four sessions with a trained married couple and two or three other engaged couples. Areas covered: communication, conflict, sexuality and faith/sacrament.
2. The married couple help the engaged couples reflect on how they plan to live their lives together. The trained couple share the experience of their own marriage.

Engaged Encounter

1. A weekend experience with 25–30 other engaged couples, in which a team of two married couples and a priest help the engaged to focus on their entire marriage agenda and makes plans for their future.
2. Each couple will have the opportunity to discuss privately with each other their strengths, weaknesses and goals, their attitudes about money, children and sex as well as their role in Church and society.
3. Four to five months advance registration is necessary. Registration brochures are available from your parish.

Second Marriage Program

Where one or both parties are entering a second marriage, especially with children, a unique preparation program is available through Office of Marriage and Family Life: (415) 614 – 5504

Parish Arrangements

Planning the Ceremony

The parish staff will help you plan the wedding liturgy. Booklets with suggested readings and ceremonies are available. All arrangements for music and singers should be made in consultation with the parish.

Photographs

Please check beforehand regarding parish guidelines for photography or video recording.

Offering

Your parish may have a standard suggested offering. This stipend goes to the support of your parish church, which has provided you with the required preparation and documents and the use of the church for your rehearsal and ceremony. There is usually an established fee for the parish organist and singer.

Couples usually offer a personal stipend to the officiating priest or deacon. These matters should be taken care of at the wedding rehearsal.

Check to see if your parish has additional guidelines that are not covered in this brochure.

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