

**St. Mary's Church – Praha**  
**Preparation and Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage**  
**Wedding Guidelines**

Our church congratulates and welcomes you with open arms as you intend to celebrate your marriage in the context of the Church's Liturgy in Praha.

Taking into consideration the importance of the Sacrament of Marriage, our Church will do all in her power to offer you the assistance needed to celebrate and live your marriage in a Christian spirit.

**Preliminary Procedures for Marriage Preparation**

- Setting the Wedding Date and Reserving the Church
  - Couples, (not their parents nor other family members), who intend to celebrate their marriage at St. Mary's Church are expected to contact and make an appointment to meet with the pastor at least six months in advance of their wedding date. At this meeting, the following will be discussed:
    - The proposed wedding date.
    - The couple's suitability for marriage in the Church.
    - The format of the ceremony.
    - The presider at the wedding.
    - Any issues that relate to the celebration of the marriage.

**Overview of the Marriage Preparation Process**

- Marriage Preparation Sessions:
  - Couples will meet with the Pastor for individual preparation sessions three or four times before the wedding. The meetings will be on Saturdays in the Parish Office in Moulton after the 6:30 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph's Church, Moulton.
- Engaged Encounter Weekend:
  - Couples are required to register for the Engaged Encounter Weekend. The weekend focuses on communication skills, the spiritual and the personal needs of engaged couples. At the weekend, each couple is offered the opportunity to question, examine and deepen their relationship with each other and with God through personal reflections and dialogue. To register for the

weekend, visit [www.stmaryspraha.org](http://www.stmaryspraha.org) to locate the local Engaged Encounter calendar and application form. Attend Engaged Encounter Weekend as soon as possible.

- Natural Family Planning (NFP):
  - Couples are encouraged to participate in NFP Marriage Preparation Classes.
    - Contact David or Annie Coffey at (361) 579-8464 for upcoming classes.
    - All classes are taught in the auditorium at Holy Family Church in Victoria (704 Mallette Dr.), 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
    - The cost for class materials is \$65. Checks can be made out to Holy Family Church. If a couple has financial difficulties, scholarships may be made available.
    - A couple must complete all three classes to get a certificate. The classes must be taken in order, but they do not have to be taken during the same session if there are scheduling conflicts. Currently, classes are not available in Spanish. They are only available in English.
- Church Documents:
  - The Baptized party/parties are to request a recently issued (no later than three months) copy of their Baptism certificate from their church of Baptism. This should be mailed together with the registration form and appropriate fees before the second session with the Pastor.
- Sacraments:
  - Couples are encouraged to participate in the Sunday Liturgy.
  - To be well disposed for the Sacrament of Marriage, the couples are well advised to celebrate the sacrament of Penance (confession) before the wedding day.
- Scheduling of Weddings:
  - Wedding ceremonies are normally scheduled on Saturdays no later than 2:00 p.m.
  - Weddings may not be scheduled:
    - On Holy Days of Obligation.
    - On major civic holidays.
    - During Holy Week and All Souls' Day.

- During the Lenten season due to the penitential nature of the liturgical season.
- Presider at the Wedding:
  - We recommend that the Pastor/a Deacon of the Church of marriage presides at the wedding. If you are inviting a priest/deacon from another parish or diocese to preside or participate in the ceremony, it must be discussed and approved by the Pastor at the initial meeting.
  - A presider other than the Pastor or a parish deacon will comply with the following:
    - He should write a letter seeking delegation at least three months before the wedding (not call at the last minute asking for delegation).
    - He should adequately prepare the couple using the marriage preparation programs approved by the Catholic Bishops of the State of Texas.
    - He will complete all the required paperwork, ascertain all the church documents needed and mail them to our office at least two weeks prior to the wedding date.
    - He will conduct the rehearsal and perform the ceremony.
    - He will bring his own liturgical vestments. The Church will be setup for the rehearsal and the ceremony.
    - If he is from outside the Diocese of Victoria, he should seek clearance from the Chancery of the Diocese in addition to the above requirements.
- Church Reservation Fee:
  - For Parishioners:  
A non-refundable church reservation fee of \$200 to help defray the cost of utilities and secretarial services is to be paid at the time the church is reserved.
  - \* For Non-Parishioners:  
Those of the faithful who are not members of St. Mary's Church are required to pay a non-refundable fee of \$500 for the use of the Church. The check should be made payable to St. Mary's Church at the time of reservation.  
  
They are also to provide a written recommendation letter from their Pastor.

\* A non-parishioner is one who is not registered at St. Mary's for at least one year prior to the wedding date nor has parents registered in the parish.

- Clergy Stipend (Stole Fee):
  - It is customary to offer the officiating Priest/Deacon a stole fee in appreciation for the services rendered. The amount is left to the discretion of the couple.
- Mixed Marriages (A Catholic and a Christian Non Catholic Marriage):
  - This type of marriage requires the permission of the bishop for the marriage to take place. The appropriate form will be filled out to request the necessary permission during one of the sessions.
  - The Rite for celebrating marriage outside of Mass is recommended for use when a Catholic marries another Christian who is not Catholic. The rite has this structure:
    - Entrance Rite
    - Liturgy of the Word - two or three readings with intervening chants
    - Homily
    - Rite of Marriage
    - General Intercessions
    - Nuptial Blessing
    - Conclusion - Lord's Prayer, Final Blessing

This rite is used out of respect to the non-Catholic party. It recognizes the fact that many of the participants at the ceremony may be non-Catholics. To celebrate a ritual act of unity such as marriage with Mass without the full and active participation of one of the newly married undermines the very essence of the celebration of the Eucharist. The couple is to seriously consider the impact of this issue on their marriage.

### **Guidelines for Celebrating the Rite of Marriage**

Those involved in the Liturgy play an important role in the celebration. The following must therefore be considered when they are being selected.

- The Wedding Party:
  - Ring and flower bearers under five years old may not be appropriate for the ceremony. They often do not cooperate and

- are often a distraction that takes away from the sacredness and solemnity of the celebration of the Sacrament.
- Wagons or other modes of transportation in which children can be placed are not permitted in the Church.
  - Animals of any kind (except licensed dogs for the disabled) may not be brought into Church at any time.
  - When deciding on the number of those in the wedding party, the couple must bear in mind that the larger the number of attendants, the more difficult it is to coordinate the sacramental celebration.
- The Lectors:
    - Lectors who proclaim the Scripture readings during the celebration should be selected from among those who have prior experience or the necessary background to publicly proclaim the word of God.
  - The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:
    - Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be used at the ceremony only in cases where it is anticipated that a large number of people will be participating in the Liturgy. The Extraordinary Ministers according to the policies for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the Diocese of Victoria are commissioned to serve only in their respective parishes. They do not have the authority to serve in other parishes or dioceses. You may choose ministers from the Parish. The Pastor is to be consulted.
  - Sacred Music for the Wedding:
    - The music selection for the wedding must be appropriate for liturgical celebrations and must be expressive of the Christian vision of marriage. The music chosen must facilitate prayer, draw the congregation into the sacred celebration and foster their participation in a way that only words alone cannot do.
    - Suggested Music Outline
      - Prelude - approximately three songs before the Liturgy.
      - Entrance Rite - For the procession, instrumental music is recommended.
      - A festive hymn in thanksgiving to God is appropriate as a gathering hymn.

- The Bridal Chorus *Here Comes the Bride* from the opera *Lohengrin* by Richard Wagner or *The Wedding March* by Felix Mendelssohn are not appropriate for liturgical celebrations and are therefore not permitted in the Church.
  - It is recommended that the Acclamations which include the Psalm, and the Gospel Acclamation be sung.
  - The Lord's Prayer is a prayer to be sung or recited by the whole assembly. It is not to be sung as a solo according to liturgical norms.
  - Pre-recorded or taped music is not permitted for liturgical celebrations. The celebration of the Liturgy is a dynamic action and not a static reality.
  - The Communion Song could be instrumental, a solo or a song sang by the assembly.
  - The Recessional Song could be instrumental.
- The Unity Candle:
    - The use of the Unity Candle is discouraged. It is not a Catholic tradition and has no place in the prescribed liturgical ritual for weddings in the Church. This issue is to be discussed at the initial meeting with the Pastor.
  - Cell Phones:
    - Cell phones and pagers are to be turned off before entering the Church.
  - The Rehearsal:
    - The rehearsal normally takes place on the eve of the wedding from 6:30 p.m. to no later than 9:00 p.m. The P.A. system and all lights in the Church must be turned off after the rehearsal.
    - The proper decorum must be maintained in Church at all times, at the rehearsal, before and after the wedding.

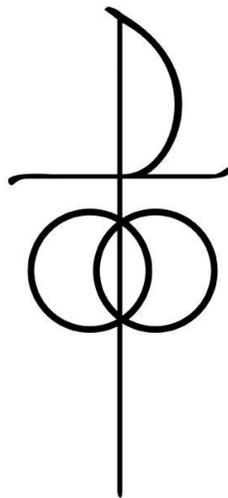
### **Other Matters**

- Civil Marriage License:
  - A marriage license issued by the State of Texas must be obtained no earlier than thirty days and no later than three days prior to the wedding date.

- Place the license with the envelope on the table in the sacristy before the wedding ceremony.
- Bride's and Bridesmaids' Dresses:
  - Due discretion must be exercised when choosing dresses for the wedding. Bare shoulders and strapless dresses are not appropriate to be worn in Church. Shawls must be worn over these kinds of dresses in Church.
- Decorations for the Wedding:
  - The Church will be available for decoration on the day of the wedding by 9:00 a.m.
  - Pews may be reserved for the wedding party however no pins, tacks, nails, adhesive tapes or glue may be used to fasten anything to the pews.
  - Flowers placed on the reredos for the ceremony are dedicated to God and stay in Church after the ceremony. The intention of the donor(s) will be published in the bulletin. The parish does not permit the use of artificial flowers for the liturgy.
  - Free-standing decorations should not block the view of the ambo, the altar or the presider's chair.
  - No obstructive decorations such as candles, arches or runners should be in the center aisle.
  - For safety and maintenance reasons the throwing of flower petals, confetti, rice or birdseeds is not allowed inside or outside the Church.
- Photos and Videos:
  - Photographers and video operators must consult with the presider before the beginning of the wedding ceremony for guidelines.
  - If photographs are to be taken prior to the wedding, it is recommended they are taken from Noon and conclude no later than 1:00 p.m.
- Church Cleanup:
  - A designated person(s) should be assigned the responsibility of cleaning up the Church after the ceremony. Programs, bows, facial tissues, etc. must be picked up after the ceremony no later than 3:30 p.m. in preparation for the evening Mass.

- Use of Church Facilities:
  - It is the responsibility of the couple to make sure that the wedding party maintains a respectful and reverent atmosphere in the Church. Loud or excessive talking, the chewing of gum, the use of food/drink, tobacco products is considered inappropriate behavior in Church.
  - The consumption of alcoholic beverages on Church grounds before and after the wedding is strictly prohibited. This includes the Church parking lot and any Church facility used by the wedding party.
- Dressing Room:
  - The couple may use a designated room in the school. Do please make sure the facility is left clean, all lights and ac/heat are turned off before the ceremony and all personal items properly secured.

These guidelines have been put in place to ensure that your wedding ceremony in the Church would be a transforming religious experience. Your co-operation in following these guidelines is deeply appreciated.



*Do please fill out the enclosed form and return it with the registration fees to the Parish Office: St. Mary's Church, 821 FM 1295, Flatonia, Texas 78941*

*\* Note: It may be useful to send a copy of these guidelines to the presider if he is not the pastor of St. Mary's Church.*