

## ST. AGNES CONGREGATION MARRIAGE PREPARATION MINISTRY

Welcome to St. Agnes Parish. You're beginning an adventure in your faith journey and we're pleased to be a part of your prayerful preparation as well as the celebration of the ceremony itself.

We know it is helpful to set out the guidelines that have been agreed upon as part of the Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation in the State of Wisconsin.

As a starting point, we encourage you to approach all aspects of your marriage celebration with a shared awareness that Christian marriage is a sacramental sign and symbol of God's love for you in the context of the worshiping community. As such we joyfully join with you in prayer as you prepare.

Planning for your wedding will take much of your attention in the coming months. Even more important, however, is your preparation for living out in your life together the covenant that you celebrate on your wedding day!

Two major periods divide the next eight months: A) An extended time of Assessment and Formation; and B) Liturgy Preparation.

- A) In the Assessment and Formation period, through a series of questionnaires (**FOCCUS**) and discussions with a FOCCUS couple, the engaged couple, with the help of the priest, assess their prospective marriage, and hopefully confirm their decision to become candidates for the sacrament. It is conceivable that, in the process of the Assessment and Formation Period, it could become apparent that it is better to temporarily or indefinitely delay the marriage; but the usual presumption is that the couple has done considerable assessing before coming to the church, and that their decision to marry will be judged by the church as mature and wise. In this period the engaged couple will discuss important areas for married life; communication, compatibility, sexuality, finances, spirituality, etc. You will also be participating in one of the Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation Conferences. This day-long or weekend-long experience will give you the opportunity to encounter dynamic married couples who will share about the meaning of marriage, praying as a couple, and the powerful gift of sexuality and offer tips for a healthy marriage. Regardless of your faith or background, you are welcome at any of these preparation experiences. You will choose one program that best suits your needs as a couple. Find out more information or sign up for a conference at [www.archmil.org/MarriagePreparation](http://www.archmil.org/MarriagePreparation).
- B) In the Liturgy Preparation Period, the details of the wedding celebration are planned by the couple, usually with the assistance of the priest presider or deacon presider and the director of music.

When a Catholic wishes to marry a person of another denomination, a special permission must be granted. In an interfaith marriage a minister of another denomination is welcome to participate in the wedding ceremony. For serious reasons, a Catholic may receive special permission to be married in another church. In such a case, inviting your parish priest is appropriate if this is permitted by the pastor of that church. In deference to those who are members of other denomination, interfaith marriages usually are celebrated without the Eucharist. This does not mean that the marriage is not sacramental, nor does it mean that the ceremony will be extremely brief.

## ASSESSMENT AND FORMATION

1. Like all sacraments in the Church, marriage demands serious preparation. We follow the *Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation* mandated by the bishops of Wisconsin. The preparation for marriage includes participation in the **FOCCUS** inventory, an instrument to facilitate discussion between the couple. This is explained in greater depth at the initial interview.
2. Preparation includes a series of meetings with a FOCCUS Couple from St. Agnes Parish. Normally held in their home, they have been specially trained to share their married experience in a context of open communication. Following these meetings, the engaged couple will continue their preparation with the priest or deacon to discuss their response to the FOCCUS Couple session(s).

**You will be expected to attend the Archdiocesan Day or Weekend of Enrichment for Engaged Couples prior to meeting with the FOCCUS couple.**

3. In order to insure mutual trust and honest communication, couples who are living together are asked to be honest about that experience and discuss it openly with the priest or deacon.
4. **Papers...papers...papers!**  
You will need the following:
  - a. Prenuptial Questionnaire.
  - b. If Catholic, a copy of your Baptismal records with annotations issued within the last six months from the parish where you were baptized.
  - c. If non-Catholic Christian, a copy of your Baptismal record.
  - d. A marriage license from the county clerk; this must be presented to the priest on or before the evening of the rehearsal.
  - e. In the event of an interfaith marriage, the Catholic party must be willing to agree to the following statement:

*I reaffirm my faith to 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.*

## FEES

1. According to the policy of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee the fee for weddings is **\$100.00**. This fee is payable to *St. Agnes Parish*. It is used by the parish for its building maintenance and its many pastoral programs. **(It is not given to the priest)**. If a marriage couple is unable to afford this fee, special provisions can be made with the pastor of the parish.
2. Music Ministers fee (consultation and performance): **\$150.00**. This fee includes the consultation to choose wedding music and the playing of the service itself. Soloist or instrumentalist provided by the parish: **\$65.00 each**.

## REGISTRATION IN THE PARISH FOLLOWING MARRIAGE

As soon as possible after your marriage, we urge you to register at the Parish Office of the Catholic Church in the area where you will live. Please let us know if you are changing membership to another parish. If you are, we will take you off our parish roster. If not, we will change our parish files to reflect the marriage, change of name, address, phone number, etc. take an active part in your parish, pray for its work and willingly offer your time, talent and treasure.

## GUIDELINES FOR WEDDING MUSIC

As with all sacraments, marriage demands adequate preparation if the sacrament is to have its full meaning and effect. The planning of the liturgical celebration with the close involvement of the couple, priest and musician is an essential part of the preparation because “[the sacraments] not only presuppose faith, but by words and actions, they nourish, strengthen and express it” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, #59).

## THE ASSEMBLY

Because the sacrament of marriage is an act of public worship, people attending the wedding liturgy should not be considered merely as guests. The liturgical assembly is called upon to assume a role of actual participation, and any planning must take this into account. The people are participants, called to pray and to sing at appropriate times, to witness the universal love of Christ in the Church and society and to be signs of Christian love and support for the couple as they begin their married life.

**\*\*\*The Director of Liturgy and Music, will put the Order of Worship together and will let you know when it is ready for print. The couple will be responsible for having the Order of Worship printed if desired.**

## MUSIC SELECTION

Because of the integrity of music to sacramental celebrations, certain principles should be stated.

1. While the songs themselves ought to be as musically attractive as possible, it is the text that matters most. At least implicitly, each and every text ought to be identifiable as prayer. If it cannot, then it is out of place in a liturgical context. Thus, a song which highlights the Christian dimension of human love always deserves priority. A song which negates, either explicitly or implicitly, the divine or religious dimension of love is not suitable at a Christian marriage.
2. Judgments will have to be made to determine the value and appropriateness of a given piece of music, whatever style it may be. Working together, the priest and the music minister will evaluate a given piece of music.
3. Some texts by their very nature should always be sung by the whole assembly.
4. Prior copyright permission is needed for the reproduction of music and some texts. If the bride and groom plan to prepare a wedding order of worship to facilitate participation, it is very important that as early as possible they make arrangements to obtain permission to reproduce copyrighted words and/or music. The parish music minister can assist the couple in facilitating this permission.

## PREPARATION

1. Each couple must contact the Director of Liturgy and Music (DLM) to schedule a music planning session. The office phone number is (262) 781-9521 (ext. 102). You are strongly urged to take care of this matter *after you have planned the liturgy with the presider* (2-3 months prior to marriage).
2. *If you know someone whom you would like to have sing or play a musical instrument, be sure that they have had previous experience and are able to do a good job. Anyone you invite to help with the music must be willing to cooperate with the guidance of the DLM.*
3. The couple is responsible for making sure that their chosen soloist/instrumentalist will schedule any necessary rehearsals with the DLM/music minister.
4. It is not the responsibility of the DLM/music minister to teach music to soloists or instrumentalists. It is assumed that they will know their music by the time of any scheduled rehearsal.
5. *If the services of the parish music minister are not used, and the music is being done by outside musicians, couples still must meet with the DLM to plan the music for the service.*

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WEDDING LITURGY AT ST. AGNES

1. Saturday weddings are scheduled ordinarily at 12:00 or 2:00 PM. For days other than Saturday, consult the priest or deacon.
2. In order to allow sufficient time to prepare the church for the Saturday evening liturgy, choose to have either a receiving line or the opportunity for pictures, but not both.
3. NO SMOKING is allowed any place in church. NO consumption of alcoholic beverages or other substances is ever allowed. The presiding priest or deacon may exercise the option not to perform the ceremony if alcoholic beverages are found on the premises. Anyone obviously under the influence of alcohol or other substances will be asked to leave. Also, humorous pranks have NO place in church before, during or after the ceremony.
4. You will need to have two witnesses for your wedding. State law requires that both be at least 18 years of age or older.
5. Please seek input from our representative from Art and Environment (ask Fr. for name and number), regarding flowers prior to ordering them, since the environment of the Church changes with the Liturgical seasons. Floral arrangements are to be removed from sanctuary following the wedding ceremony. Flowers are never allowed on the altar.
6. The church aisle is 100 feet. The parish does not provide the aisle runner, but you may order one from your florist. Many couples are foregoing the use of the runner, as the church is already carpeted. If you choose to use a runner, please remove it from the church immediately following the ceremony.
7. We request that you have no more than *five couples* in your wedding party, including the best man and maid/matron of honor. We would prefer that you choose less than five couples if at all possible. This will better enable the Liturgy to be celebrated with simplicity and to highlight the true minister of this sacrament, the bride and the groom.
8. The use of throwing/dropping flowers, balloons, rice, confetti and/or seeds of any type are not allowed at St. Agnes.
9. A Unity Candle (available at most florists or religious goods stores) can be a part of weddings at St. Agnes. You may also need two small tapers with which to light the larger candle. If you have your baptismal candles, it is appropriate to include them to light the Unity Candle. St. Agnes does not provide candles or holders for your Unity Candle.

## TIMELINE FOR COUPLES AND MINISTRY TEAM

<u>ACTIVITY/EVENT</u>	<u>RECOMMENDED LENGTH OF TIME BEFORE WEDDING</u>
1) Initial contact and arrangements with presider	Minimum of 10 months before marriage _____
2) Referral to and meeting with wedding presider	ASAP after step #1 _____
3) Attend Marriage Conference Day	After step #2 _____
4) Referral to and initial phone contact with FOCCUS Couple	After step #3 _____
4) Session with FOCCUS Couple	<b>Minimum 6 months</b> Before marriage _____
5) Acquire Baptismal Certificates	<b>6 months</b> before marriage _____
6) Meet with presider to begin liturgy preparation	<b>Minimum 3 months</b> _____ (or upon completion of FOCCUS Couple sessions)
7) Liturgy preparation completed. All paperwork (documents, liturgy, etc.) Submitted.	<b>Minimum 3 months</b> _____
8) Meet with DLM/Music Minister (after liturgy prep is complete)	<b>Minimum 2-3 months</b> _____
9) Obtain civil marriage license from county of residence	<b>Within 10 days</b> of wedding date _____
10) Meet with Priest for final time	<b>Within 4 days</b> of wedding _____
11) Wedding rehearsal	As scheduled with presider
12) Wedding Liturgy	THE BIG DAY!