

ST. PIUS X

MARRIAGE PREPARATION HANDBOOK

Wedding Preparation Checklist

- ☐ Initial interview with presider (priest or deacon) 9-12 months before planned wedding date
- ☐ Baptismal Certificates (for both parties) obtained
- ☐ FACET completed and reviewed with presider
 - ☐ Pre-Cana and Sponsor Couple (if available) at least 6 months before planned wedding date
- ☐ NFP Instruction
- ☐ Meet with Director of Liturgy two months before the wedding date
- ☐ Iowa Marriage License obtained
- ☐ Final meeting with presider
- ☐ Rehearsal Date: _____ Time: _____
- ☐ Wedding

Please see the USCCB website regarding the Sacrament of Matrimony:

www.foryourmarriage.org

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I. Ongoing Preparation and Responsibilities

- a. **The Sacrament of Matrimony** is a sacred covenant between a man and woman based upon unconditional love and fidelity, sealed in the presence of God and open to the creation of new life. It is through the celebration of this sacrament and the vocation of married life that God continues His actions in the world today.
- b. **The Couple:** As Christ says in the Gospels, you are becoming your own family, united 'as one flesh'. Since the couple are the ministers of this sacrament, any and all arrangements must be made through them. While two families are excited at the prospect of becoming one, **ONLY** the ministers of this sacrament can make binding arrangements.
- c. **Spiritual preparation:** We believe that Marriage creates a bond that is spiritual as much as it is physical and emotional. Begin praying with and for one another, that each of you grow in faithfulness, patience, and love.
- d. Due to the spiritual significance of the Sacrament of Matrimony and the greater Church community, we celebrate the sacrament with those who fulfill one of the following:

- i. Have a current and significant tie to the Parish either as active members or children of active members
 - ii. Become active members of the parish during their engagement
- e. **The Catholic Community** holds Sacramental life at the center of our worship together. It is especially in the new family created by the Sacrament of Matrimony that the couple expresses the greater family of the Catholic Church. As a member of this family of Faith, we encourage you to join us at Mass and the various ministries available, sharing your time, talent, or treasure so that our families grow together.
- f. **After your wedding** we encourage your active participation in parish life by attending Mass weekly and by joining other parish activities. You'll have the support of others in our parish as you journey through the stages of married life together.

II. **Formal Steps toward Marriage in the Church**

It is the responsibility of the engaged couple together to complete the following:

a. Initial contact with the Director of Faith Formation

- i. At least **9-12 months** before your planned date, the couple contacts the Director of Faith Formation to discuss:
 - 1. Church availability on the date you request
 - a. Please note that out of respect for the Saturday Evening Mass, Saturday Weddings may start no later than 1pm (or 1:30pm for a ceremony)
 - 2. Preference of presider (priest or deacon)
 - 3. Future contact and planning
- ii. Please note that you must meet with your presider before confirming your wedding date.

b. Meeting with your Presider

- i. After obtaining basic biographical information about both of you, he will discuss the process of marriage preparation,

including a **FACET** inventory that highlights topics to address further. At least one follow-up meeting will take place within the next month. If either of the following applies to you, please discuss this immediately with your presider:

1. **Interfaith couples:** When one of the persons is of another faith tradition, some instruction on the Catholic teachings of marriage are helpful in the preparation process. We encourage you to include the minister/pastor of another faith tradition, when possible, to participate in the wedding ceremony of an interfaith couple. If one of the persons wishes (whether for raising children or unity of faith in marriage) to become a member of the Catholic Faith, please consider joining RCIA in the year following your wedding.
 2. **Annulment:** When one of the persons, even if they are a non-Catholic, has been married previously and then divorced, an annulment of the previous marriage(s) by the Catholic Church is required before the wedding can take place. The annulment process takes approximately **10 months** and must be completed before setting your wedding date. Our parish will help you through this process.
- c. **Pre-Marriage Workshop** - *Consult with your presider to choose one of the following options:*
- i. **Pre-Cana Workshop and Sponsor Couple Sessions**
 1. **Pre-Cana** is a **one-day** workshop covering various aspects of Catholic marriage with preparations, discussions, and prayer in preparation for your life together.
 - a. <https://dbqarch.org/pre-cana>
 2. Contact your presider or Director of Faith Formation to be assigned a **Sponsor Couple** who will assist you in a confidential couple-to-couple experience. Using the

program “For Better and For Ever”, they will guide discussion for better understanding and awareness of one another. Sponsor couples are not there to judge or counsel; they are present as both example from their own marriage experience and as coaches in the preparation process. If you have not been contacted by your Sponsor Couple at least **6 months** before your wedding date, please contact the Director of Faith Formation. Please consider inviting your sponsor couple to your wedding ceremony.

d. Natural Family Planning (NFP) Instruction

- i. This is a one-time meeting intended to help you as a couple approach family planning in healthy, natural, and cooperative way. Our Cedar Rapids contact is:

- 1. Thomasina Hutchins, BS. FCP, Whole Life Fertility Awareness LLC.

- a. 319.440.8277 / WholeLifeFA@gmail.com

e. Meet with the Director of Liturgy

- i. **Two months** before your wedding, the Director of Liturgy meets with the couple to plan your Wedding Ceremony including your responsibilities below:

- 1. Hiring musicians
 - 2. Choosing liturgical songs
 - 3. Selecting readings, vows, and prayers

*Refer to the **Section III – The Wedding Liturgy***

f. Finalized Meeting with the Presider

- i. The following documentation is required for a Catholic marriage to be fully processed. Contact your presider to complete and review the following:

- 1. Baptismal Certificate (issued within the previous **6 months**)

- a. Contact your Baptismal parish to request a copy sent to St. Pius X
2. A Certificate of Completion of either Pre-Marriage Workshop:
 - a. Pre-Cana and Sponsor Couple
 - b. Engaged Encounter
3. An Iowa Marriage License to be given to the Presider as soon as you have it before the Wedding rehearsal.

g. The Rehearsal

- i. The wedding rehearsal is scheduled in consultation with the presider and will take about one hour. The following are expected to attend:
 1. Bride and Groom
 2. All Attendants
 3. Ushers, Lectors, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (*if at Mass*)
 4. Parents of both the bride and groom
 5. Musicians if hired outside the parish

III. The Wedding Liturgy

a. Ministers

- i. The primary ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage itself are the **Bride and Groom**
- ii. **Attendants** (*wedding party*): Only two are required, the maid of honor and the best man, who will sign the marriage license as official witnesses.
- iii. The **Presider** serves as the witness of the Church and leads the prayer.
- iv. **Lector(s)** are chosen by you for your Scripture readings. These persons must be baptized Christians and can be members of the wedding party, family members, or friends who can clearly proclaim the Word of God.

v. **Musicians**, either hired or recommended by the Director of Liturgy, must be familiar with Catholic Liturgy. It is important that these men and women are chosen not just by their ability to perform, but their acknowledgement of the beauty of the sacrament taking place.

1. A **Cantor** who is capable of and comfortable with leading others in song increases the likelihood your guests will participate.

vi. Only if the wedding is taking place within a Mass

1. Two **Gift Bearers** bring forward the gifts of bread and wine at the appropriate time. Knowledge of the Catholic Liturgy is encouraged. This could be your Sponsor Couple or godparents.

2. Three **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** help distribute the Body and Blood of Christ to all attending Catholics. Each must be trained by their home parish in this capacity.

3. Consider the following for your wedding program or announcement before Mass:

a. Out of reverence for the Presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist, only practicing, baptized Catholics are permitted to receive Holy Communion. We invite our brothers and sisters in Christ to approach the Extraordinary Ministers for a blessing. You may indicate your desire for a blessing by crossing your arms over your chest.

vii. Many of those who choose to work with a **Sponsor Couple** wish to include them in the ceremony. Please discuss ways to include them in the ceremony with the Director of Liturgy.

viii. **The Assembly** is made up of all your guests present!

b. **The Procession**

i. Before the Procession, please remind all guests to turn off or silence their cell phones and refrain from flash photography.

- ii. The procession is much more than the bride's grand entrance. There is also no theological basis for the father of the bride giving the bride away. Christian marriage does not consist of 'giving a woman away,' but a covenant relationship undertaken by two equal partners. A single procession acknowledges the transition for the bride and groom from their families of origin to the new family they are creating through marriage. Your options for the entrance procession are:

Preferred Option

Altar Server (*if at Mass*)
Presider (*priest or deacon*)
Bridesmaids & Groomsmen
Maid of Honor & Best Man
Flowergirl & Ringbearer (*if included*)
Bride and Groom

Alternate Option

Altar Server (*if at Mass*)
Presider (*priest or deacon*)
Bridesmaids & Groomsmen
Maid of Honor & Best Man
Flowergirl & Ringbearer (*if included*)
Groom and both parents
Bride and both parents

c. Readings

- i. There are three readings: one each from the Old Testament, New Testament, and one of the four Gospels. You will be given a 'Together for Life' book which contains appropriate readings to help you choose readings.

d. Music

- i. Music is an integral part of the Wedding Liturgy. The Director of Liturgy will provide you access to mp3 samples of music selections. Consider the following guidelines:
 - 1. Choose music that complements and enhances the spirit of the Liturgy. Music that is appropriate at a Sunday Mass is also appropriate at a wedding, including the prelude.
 - 2. Popular or secular music should be left to the rehearsal dinner and wedding reception.

3. Songs that are most appropriate express similar meaning as the readings you choose: love, joy, gratitude, hope.
4. Choose music that guests likely know and can easily sing.
5. The Catholic Church places great meaning to Marriage being a sacrament of life; because of this, all music before, during, and at the conclusion must be sung or played by a live musician as opposed to pre-recorded music.

e. Photography

- i. All wedding pictures must be taken prior to the wedding ceremony, take no more than two hours, and must be finished before 30 minutes before the ceremony begins.
- ii. During the wedding ceremony, all pictures and video should be taken from the side, back, or another stationary position.
- iii. If requested, the ceremony can be recorded/livestreamed.
- iv. An unobtrusive, designated photographer should take the pictures.
- v. No flash photography is permitted during the ceremony.

f. Church Environment

- i. The environment for the Liturgical season (plants, banners, etc.) remain in place. Nothing may be removed or changed without permission.
- ii. If you choose to add your own flowers, you may do so in the following locations:
 1. Along the back wall behind the altar
 2. The far sides of the Sanctuary
 3. In the gathering space
- iii. The following are not permitted:
 1. Use of an aisle runner
 2. Adhesives on pews or other furniture
 3. Rice, birdseed, etc.
 4. Signs or posters within the Church

- 5. Flower petals (real or imitation) dropped on the floor
- iv. The Unity Candle, sand mixing, etc. is not a part of the Catholic Wedding Liturgy. These are more appropriate at a reception.
- v. The use of bubbles outside the building is permitted.

g. Church Etiquette

- i. Remember that the Church is a sacred place and deserves proper reverence. We ask the cooperation of the wedding party to leave the dressing rooms, Church, and gathering space in the same condition as you found them. Follow these guidelines:
 - 1. Both the wedding party and guests need to know that it is prohibited to consume food or beverages (including water bottles) in both the Church and gathering space.
 - a. If you host a breakfast or lunch in your dressing rooms, please dispose of all packaging and leftovers before the ceremony.
 - 2. Designate a clean-up person or team who will remove everything added immediately after the ceremony.
 - 3. Alcoholic beverages may not be consumed on church property at any time.

IV. Expenses

- a. A **\$75** fee covers all local preparation expenses (including FACET, Sponsor Couple, 'Together for Life' books, etc.). If your marriage preparation will be completed at another parish, this fee is not applicable.
- b. If your wedding is scheduled at St. Pius X, there is a **\$250** fee for registered and 6-month active parishioners which covers use of the Church, dressing rooms, and rehearsal. If your preparation is at St. Pius, but your wedding ceremony is elsewhere, this fee is not applicable. For non-active members, the fee is \$500.
 - i. If your wedding takes place during a Mass, the Director of Liturgy will find an altar server to assist the presider. You are

asked to pay the altar server directly with \$25 by cash or check on the day of your wedding.

- c. You will be invoiced for all fees from the Business Office (except the Altar Server). Please make checks payable to **St. Pius X Church** (not the presider).

d. Additional Expenses

- i. Rental of Pius Hall for the reception or rehearsal dinner carries an additional fee and separate appointment to reserve the space and discuss arrangements. Please call the parish office to schedule that appointment at (319) 393.4445. Please verify this when you call the Director of Faith Formation.
- ii. Payment of musicians is additional. A list of musicians and fees is available from the Director of Liturgy. Plan to budget \$325-\$500 for these musicians.
- iii. The presider of your ceremony lives out his vocation in service to the Church and the People of God; there is no expectation or requirement of payment. If you wish to give a gift to the priest or deacon for his service, it is in addition to the above expenses. A check should be payable to him directly.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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FOR  YOUR
MARRIAGE