

The Sacrament of Marriage (Divine Mercy AFC)

Introduction

Congratulations and best wishes on your engagement. We rejoice with you in your intention to commit yourselves to each other in the Sacrament of Marriage.

The sacrament of marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the Church. Therefore, your marriage is very important. We are happy that you intend to make your vows to each other in the presence of God and His Mystical Body, the Church. Together we will worship God and thank Him for His love for us and ask His blessings on your lives together.

Because you are asking to be married in the Church and specifically in one of the parishes of the **Divine Mercy Area Faith Community**, that is the Parishes of St. Mary's, St. Michael's, Japanese Martyrs or St. Paul's there are a number of expectations we have of you:

That you are **practicing** your Catholic Faith. This means **attending Mass each and every weekend and Holy Days of Obligation**, receiving the other Sacraments, especially Reconciliation on a regular basis, and being otherwise present to the parish. **Our best preparation for this sacrament happens when we are in the state of grace.** The attendance at Sunday Mass (or Saturday evening) along with reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is of the utmost importance in receiving this Sacrament worthily and receiving all the graces that Christ has to offer. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered the night of the rehearsal.

- If one of you is not Catholic, we hope that that party will be a practicing member of his/her parish.
- That you are a registered member at St Mary's, St. Michael's, Japanese Martyrs, or St. Paul's and contributing to the support of the parish. If you no longer live in the geographic boundaries of the parishes, then you are expected to register in the parish in the place in which you live. This is so that as you begin your life as a family, they become your "spiritual family".
- That you will abide by the expectations and requirements of the Diocese of New Ulm and The Divine Mercy Area Faith Community pertaining to the marriage preparation and to the wedding ceremony itself.
- That you will be honest in the discussions and in all information given to the parish and to the priest with whom you are working. It is our wish to help you prepare for not only your wedding day, but more importantly, your whole married life. We want you to have as happy of a Christian marriage as possible. Our work with you is all done to help you have the best marriage that you can have. This will require good will, honesty and confidentiality.

Requirements of the Diocese of New Ulm and of the Divine Mercy Area Faith community

ALL COUPLES preparing for Marriage in any parish in the Diocese of New Ulm are asked to abide by the following requirements. The couple is to:

1. Give at least six month's notice of their intention to marry thus allowing adequate time to prepare for this important lifetime commitment.
2. Meet immediately with the priest. The priest preparing you for the Sacrament of Marriage will determine how many meetings he will have with you during the course of your marriage preparation.
3. Participate in a **Diocesan Pre-Marriage Prep Day**. These are provided throughout the year at different times in Olivia. If necessary, you may participate in an approved one in another diocese.
4. Participate in a Pre-Marital Inventory. We use one called "**Fully Engaged**" This is an inventory which indicates how couples relate to each other. It identifies strengths and challenges that need attention as they move forward with their relationship. It is not a test nor is an instrument that determines the success or failure of your marriage.
5. Participate in the program "**God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage.**" The priest will give you a brochure with information to register and program dates. This session is held in Sleepy Eye and assists the couple in seeing and understanding how their Marriage is a Sacrament, and what that means and involves.

Living Together Before Marriage

We would be remiss not to add a few firm but important words against cohabitation before marriage. Unfortunately, this has become more acceptable and more common in our culture, despite studies and statistics that show that couples who cohabit before marriage have a greater risk of failure in their marriage. Regrettably, for a variety of reasons, couples try to justify their decision to live together before marriage, contrary to the teaching of Jesus found in the Gospels and taught by the Catholic Church.

The Church speaks of living together before marriage as "trial marriage" and it is seriously morally wrong (mortally sinful) because it undermines the permanent commitment that makes up the marriage vows by mimicking them. From the viewpoint of faith, it seems difficult how one can prepare for this sacrament while living contrary to the will of God.

The priest preparing the couple will address this, should the couple be living together. He will strongly encourage them to make other living arrangements until the wedding for their own benefit, as well as to protect the sanctity of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Certificates of Baptism

For Catholics: If you were not baptized at the parish in which the wedding will take place, you must obtain a copy of your baptismal certificate. Notify the parish where you were baptized and ask for a copy of your **baptismal certificate, which is less than 6 months old** for marriage purposes. State your name, birth date, and parents' names. Please ask also for a notation about Confirmation to be made on the baptismal certificate. If there are any unusual circumstances concerning your baptism, state that as well (such as baptism at 7 years of age, adoption, etc.) After the marriage, the priest will

notify the parish where you were baptized that you have been married and that fact will be entered into their parish records. The marriage will also be recorded in the parish where the wedding takes place.

For non-Catholics who have been baptized: Proof of baptism is required. The certificate that you received at baptism suffices. If you do not have that please obtain a copy from the church in which you were baptized.

State Marriage License

Our state and federal governments recognize church marriages as legally binding. The State requires that you first obtain a marriage license. You must be married in the state where the license is issued. However, you do not have to be married in the county in Minnesota where the license is issued. You will need two witnesses over the age of 16. You will need to provide the state with their legal names. The license once issued is good for 6 months.

The Ritual for the Order of Celebrating Matrimony

There are several decisions to be made about the wedding ceremony. You will go over these with the priest normally with the aid of the book, **“Together for Life.”**

There are two ways of celebrating weddings in the Catholic Church: 1) Within a Mass (The norm for Two Catholics) 2) Outside of Mass (Normally weddings that include one party who is not a baptized Catholic are celebrated outside of Mass.)

Music: All music will be planned and approved in consultation with the AFC Music Director, Mr. Sean Connelly. His cell is: 1 (859) 250-7888. Normally a Cantor and Accompanist will be needed. One of the two should be familiar with the local parish church and be Catholic. It is strongly recommended that you utilize Mr. Connelly, the AFC music director as the musician for your marriage.

- Scripture Readings: The Church provides us with numerous options for Scripture readings. You will want to study these readings together and then make your choices. They are provided in the above-mentioned book.
- Your Vows – The Catholic Ritual provides you with two options from which to choose.
- Witnesses - As mentioned above State and Church law require two witnesses for every wedding. They must be at least 16 years of age. Their names are on the marriage certificate. You will need to provide the priest with their full legal names.
- Flower Girls and Ring Bearers - If you choose to have a flower girl and/or ring bearer, experience tells us that children 5 years of age or older work out the best, again while we are not firm on this it is for the best celebration of the liturgy that those participating be able to fulfill their rolls with dignity and not drawing undo attention to themselves.
- Lectors – You may choose someone who is Catholic and regularly lectors and therefore has familiarity with this important function in the Liturgy.

- Ushers - Ushers welcome guests, hand out programs, and take guests to seats. After the ceremony, ushers are responsible for picking up programs left in pews and any other things remaining in the church.

*****All who are directly involved in the Wedding ceremony must be at the rehearsal. (Musicians are not expected to be there.)**

Dates and Times

Weddings can be celebrated any time of the year except during the seasons of Advent and Lent and Holy Days of Obligation. (Because of prior Mass commitments for the whole parish) They can be scheduled for any day of the week except Sunday. Weddings cannot be scheduled after 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays at St. Paul's, St. Michael's, and Japanese Martyrs because of regularly scheduled confessions at St. Mary's and the evening Mass. Because there is no need to travel weddings at St. Mary's may be celebrated at 2:30pm however the preferred time is 2:00 pm.

Various Items Regarding the Wedding

Photographers/Videographers –

Reverence and respect for the Blessed Sacrament present in the Tabernacle must be maintained throughout the photographing. It must be completed in the sanctuary area a half hour before the wedding ceremony. Photographers are welcome to take pictures during the ceremony from outside the sanctuary, provided they stay in one place and do not use flash. Video must be taken from either the balcony or a side aisle. Couples should always be aware of the possibility that there could be a funeral in the church in the morning of their wedding day which could affect photography times and the use of the Church basement.

Flowers, Pew Decorations

Please consult with the priest if there are flower arrangements. The best policy is less is more. Pew decorations are only allowed using attachments that do not damage the wood pews.

Food/Beverages

Food and beverages (including water and gum) are never allowed in church. All food and beverages must be removed from the parish social room immediately after the ceremony. Someone must be assigned to be responsible for cleanup. **Alcoholic beverages are not permitted under any circumstances on any part of the parish grounds.** If the parish social room is not cleaned up after the wedding anything remaining will be removed and thrown away.

Dressing Room –

The Parish hall basement is offered as a place to dress. The space must be left in the same condition as it was found. Please use the waste containers that are provided.

Financial Stewardship

Wedding Offering

The fee to the parish is \$250.00 for registered members of the parish (or according to long-standing tradition, those who grew up as members of the parish). This fee goes to the cost of providing the facility, heat, lights, etc. According to diocesan policy, this donation is given to the parish, not to the priest. If you further wish to give something to the priest, you may do so separately. If neither party is a member of the parish in which the wedding is taking place for one calendar year, the fee to the parish for use of the church is \$500. The Wedding Offering Fee does not include any stipends to the priest or altar servers, musicians, lectors etc.

Musicians and Cantors

Musicians and cantors will tell you their fee at the time when you secure their services.

Signing the Marriage Certificates –

The marriage certificate is a legal document. The best man and maid of honor will sign it immediately after the wedding ceremony in the sacristy with the priest.

Conclusion

We hope that these guidelines help you as you prepare to receive the sacrament of Marriage, which is a profoundly sacred event and received in the manner in which they are intended. Please know of our prayers and desire to help you to grow in holiness and our willingness to assist you now and at any other time in your lives that you may need us.

A few words about Catholic Schools: Although it may seem very far off, should the Lord bless you as a couple with children, our local parishes operate a Catholic School system; pre-K– 12. We believe it is the best option you have as parents in aiding you in the Catholic School education of your children that begins with you in your home. The Catholic School brings Faith into all aspects of life, and prepares your children to be good and holy members of God’s Kingdom here on earth and in the next life.

Parish registration after the celebration of marriage

Please fill out the parish form.