

**CHRIST THE KING CATHOLIC CHURCH
FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS.**

**GUIDELINES ON CELEBRATING
HOLY MATRIMONY**

Marriage Preparation Process

Congratulations on your engagement and decision to be married in the Catholic Church! This is a wonderful time of joy and anticipation. Marriage is among the most serious and sacred of human commitments. Your choice is a beautiful expression of your faith in Jesus Christ and your desire to make Him an intimate part of your love for one another. May God bless you through this time of discernment, preparation, and planning! Many couples struggle to integrate their prayer into their relationship. University studies have proven that the old adage, "The couple who prays together stays together" is actually true! If you are not already, start praying with each other, for each other, and for your upcoming marital life together. The *For Your Marriage* website offers a great list of prayers, including a prayer of a future wife, prayer of a future husband, and a blessing for the engaged couple. - See <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage>

The general outline of the marriage preparation process is as follows:

Initial Meeting

Complete the Prenuptial Questionnaire with the Priest. We will then review the steps involved in marriage preparation and begin the necessary paperwork.

Before our next meeting, you will be asked to get copies of the following:

- Request from the church where you were baptized a recent copy of your baptismal certificate and have it mailed to our office: **2112 S Greenwood Ave Fort Smith AR 72901.**
- If applicable, have the "Testimony of Freedom to Marry" form filled out and signed in front of a Notary Public. (For the non-Catholic party only) This is an affidavit testifying that you have not been married before and why you are free to enter into a Catholic marriage.
- If civilly married, submit a copy of your civil marriage license to us.
- If previously married and your former spouse is deceased, submit a death certificate(s) to us.
- If previously married (and the ex-spouse is still alive), an annulment for that marriage must be obtained. Submit that "Decree of Nullity" to us.

The FOCCUS is a values-inventory that engaged couples take which helps couples to have a clearer sense of how well they have communicated their values, past history, and future plans. The inventory is done online and takes about 45-60 minutes. It is then scored by a computer and the results are printed in the office. We will need a good email to send you the inventory.

FOCCUS Meeting

We will schedule a meeting in order to go over your FOCCUS results and, hopefully, provide some helpful insight into various areas of your relationship. You can contact the parish secretary to schedule the meeting, usually within a month, after you have taken the FOCCUS.

Pre-Cana Day.

This is a one-day retreat covering many of the issues and topics that are essential to marriage.

Natural Family Planning

NFP is a beautiful form of natural birth control/family planning that is advocated by the Catholic Church. Engaged couples of childbearing age are required to take this course.

Ceremony Planning

Please contact the parish secretary to schedule meetings with the Priest to discuss and plan the ceremony. Based on the individual needs of each couple, there might be additional meetings that offer further tools for building a solid, lasting marriage.

Wedding Ceremony Selection

At the first meeting you will receive a booklet called “Together for Life,” which provides you with a program for the wedding ceremony. Please review together the readings, prayers and blessings provided in the book.

Scheduling the Wedding

Once your initial meeting with the priest is completed you are welcome to schedule your wedding. Weddings are normally scheduled on Saturdays any time before 2:00 p.m. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays. Please remember that weddings are not scheduled during Lent or Advent, due to the solemnity of these seasons.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are scheduled the evening prior to the wedding. A rehearsal for the wedding familiarizes all participants with the wedding ceremony and their respective roles. **Make every effort to begin the rehearsal on time.** It is recommended that the couple receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the beginning or end of the rehearsal if they haven't recently done so.

Fees

Parishioners are not required to pay a fee. They are welcome to make a donation.

Non-parishioners are required to submit a \$500.00 Church facility fee in order to reserve the Church for a wedding.

Clergy Stipend It is customary to compensate the clergy for his time. \$100.00 is the appropriate stipend. Please submit directly to the Parish Secretary with a notation as to the date & the name of the wedding.

The Ministers

The **principal ministers** at a wedding are the bride and groom. The priest or deacon serve as official witnesses – the best man and the maid or matron of honor – are also required to be present.

Lectors - those who will read the scriptures and intercessory prayers, should be provided by the bride and groom from among their family and friends. Furnishing them with a copy of the readings before the rehearsal allows them to proclaim God's word with confidence and ease.

Altar Servers - you are welcome (but not required) to provide altar servers for the wedding. You may wish to include family members or friends who have been trained as servers. Let the Church office know if altar servers are needed and they will be obtained from the parish. It is customary to offer a gratuity to the servers of \$10.00 each.

Wedding Liaison - A wedding Liaison will assist with the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. The Liaison is familiar with all of the guidelines of our church and will be able to answer your questions. Contact who will assign your liaison. The stipend for the liaison is \$150.00; please submit directly to the liaison.

Music - Music should reflect and communicate, above all, the mystery of God's love in Jesus, especially as it pertains to the couple joined together in marriage. For help in selecting appropriate music and approval of music selected, contact Judy Weisenfels (who also plays the organ). Fees for music are negotiated directly with Mrs. Weisenfels 479-651-1644 Please note: secular music is not allowed during religious ceremonies. If you are unfamiliar with popular religious music, Mrs. Weisenfels will be able to assist you.

Programs - Programs are not required, but should you decide to have them, send the proof to Fr. Juan Guido prior to printing for review to ensure order of ceremony. You can find templates for Catholic wedding programs at

<http://catholicweddinghelp.com/wedding-planning/11-wedding-program.htm>

Make sure someone is appointed to gather them up from the pews and vestibule immediately following the ceremony.

Church Etiquette - Please remember that we consider the church and the building of our parish part of “God’s House, and ask that you treat the premises with respect and dignity.

- a) The wedding party should be ready and in the Church at least thirty (30) minutes prior to the time of the ceremony. This will allow sufficient time for everyone to be in place and able to enter into the joy of the occasion, instead of attending to last-minute details.
- b) Kindly avoid loud talking in the Church.
- c) Please respect our policy of NO food or drinks allowed in the church. For your convenience there is a water fountain located at the back of the church next to the women’s restroom.
- d) Nothing is to be moved from the sanctuary.
- e) In the Church the bride and her attendants may use the “bride’s room” to change clothes and prepare for the wedding. Please make sure someone is responsible for cleaning the room immediately following the ceremony. It is highly suggested that personal items not be left in the bride’s room unattended. The church has no way of assuring their security and is not held responsible.
- f) Unfortunately there are no facilities for the groom and his attendants to dress. They should plan on arriving at the church in their wedding attire.
- g) Throwing of bird seed, real flower petals (the petals stain carpet) rice or other items to greet or bid farewell to the bride and groom – in or outside of the church - is NOT allowed. Silk flower petals are allowed but must be picked up at the end of the ceremony. Blowing bubbles is allowed outside the Church only.
- h) All clothes, trash, etc. are to be cleaned up and removed from the building immediately following completion of the service.
- i) The church should be left in a condition suitable for Mass. Therefore, immediately after the wedding, someone from the bride’s or groom’s family or ushers must see to it that anything brought into the church for the marriage is removed and all areas used are cleaned up so that the church is left ready for Mass.

Flowers and Decorations -

- a) The Church has candles fashioned for our sanctuary, which you are permitted to use; they may not be decorated but we are happy to light them during the marriage ceremony
- b) Aisle runners and arches anywhere in the church are NOT ALLOWED
- c) Should you wish to decorate the pews of the Church there are a total of 28 pews in the center aisle. Most Brides choose to decorate every other pew in the Church. Aisle markers may be attached with pew clips or rubber bands. NO TAPE, NO GLASS OR PEW CANDLES
- d) The Chapel has a total of 26 pews down the center aisle, however due to the size of the isles there is limited room to decorate the pews. Aisle markers may be attached with pew clips or rubber bands. NO TAPE, NO GLASS OR PEW CANDLES
- e) Silk flower petals WITHOUT GLITTER may be used by the flower girl and must be picked up after the ceremony.
- f) The Church seats 500 people
- g) The Chapel seats 148 people
- h) All décor and floral arrangements must be approved by the priest or church wedding Liaison.

Some couples have found that the elegant simplicity of the worship space conveys a reverence and beauty that requires little or no decoration. You may want to consider this beautiful simplicity for your wedding.

Photography/Videotaping -

- a) Please plan to take as many pictures as possible before or within 30 minutes after the ceremony.
- b) Since the wedding liturgy is a sacred communal prayer, persons taking pictures should always be inconspicuous and discreet. Photographers will not be free to roam about the sanctuary areas during the celebration of the liturgy. Photographs may be taken from the rear of the church and from designated places near the sanctuary. Photographers and videographers should consult with the priest or Wedding Liaison before the ceremony.
- c) Photographers and videographers should do nothing to distract or obstruct the view of those attending the wedding. Therefore; no flashes, portable lamps or reflective umbrellas will be allowed during the Mass.
- d) The bridal party is not to be instructed to stop at any time during the procession for the benefit of the photographer.

- e) If you would like to have photos taken with the Priest or Deacon inform the Priest ahead of time. These should be the first photos taken immediately after the ceremony, before any family photos, to accommodate the priest's schedule.

Additional Symbolic Rituals

Unity Candle - lighting a "unity candle" is not part of the Rite of Marriage. A suggestion would be to have it done at the reception since the Rite of Marriage already has abundant symbols of unity.

Placing flowers before a statue of Mary - It is not a part of the Rite of Marriage.

Legal Documents -

Anyone who marries in the State of Arkansas must obtain a marriage license from any CourtHouse within the State. Typically obtained one month prior to the wedding. Bring your marriage license to the rehearsal and give it to the liaison so it can be filled out and then signed after the ceremony. It will then be returned to the person you designate to receive it. Please be aware that if the clergy officiating at your wedding does not reside in Arkansas, he is required to obtain Minister's Credentials at any CourtHouse within the State. Also any Catholic clergy coming from outside the Diocese of Little Rock must first be approved to celebrate a wedding by the Bishop of Little Rock. The Parish secretary can assist you with that.

This document provides the guidelines for Marriage at Christ the King Church and is at the sole discretion of the Priest.

Marriage Preparation Checklist

If not registered at another parish submit registration form

Schedule initial meeting with the Priest.

Once the initial meeting and the Prenuptial Questionnaire is completed, schedule the rehearsal and wedding with the Church office.

Submit \$100.00 Wedding Mass Stipend fee to Church office.

Request the current Baptismal Certificate be mailed to our office.

Schedule meeting with _____ to complete the FOCCUS

Schedule subsequent meeting with _____ to review the FOCCUS

Review and complete checklist under Initial Meeting on page 1

Contact Church music Judy Weisenfels 479-651-1644

Register for NFP classes

Register for Pre-Cana classes

Register for Sponsor Couple Program (if applicable)

Make arrangements for Altar Servers

Submit \$500 facility use fee to office (non-parishioners) Submit \$150 for wedding liaison

Submit Wedding Ceremony Selection from Together for Life book Obtain “minister’s credentials” for out of state clergy (if applicable)

Obtain a civil marriage license & bring to the office the week of the wedding.