

# *Spirit of Life Catholic Church Wedding Preparation Guidelines*



*Spirit of Life Catholic Church  
801 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE  
Mandan, ND 58554  
663-1660*

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Dear Engaged Couple-

Congratulations on your engagement! To enter into the Sacrament of Marriage is to begin together a life of commitment and faithfulness that mirrors beautifully the love that Our Father has for each one of us. As God loves you and me unconditionally, without measure and without end, so you are called to love each other in marriage. I pray that as you move through the process of preparing for the Sacrament you will find yourselves growing in your understanding of what God is asking you to give to each other. More importantly, I hope you will come to know more deeply the great love God has for you and the desire He has to see you married joyfully- committed to Him and to each other for a lifetime.

Keep in mind, then, that your wedding is not first something you are doing, but something Jesus is doing for you in the Sacrament of Marriage. True, the two of you are promising to live a committed, faithful, fruitful love, but it is God that binds you together. It is by His action that two become one. As you prepare for your wedding day, keep in mind that it is a day that is not first about you, but about the work God is doing in and through you.

Having said that, your wedding day is, of course, a celebration of your love for each other! The work of marriage preparation is designed to give you some of the theological insight and practical tools you will need to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage with your hearts and eyes wide open. I encourage you to take this time very seriously. Take to heart all that you hear. Recognize that those who will be assisting you in this preparation have walked the beautiful and challenging road of commitment, and want to help you do the same with joy.

Your wedding is just the first day of a lifetime commitment. I pray that your time of marriage preparation will not only prepare you for your wedding day, but a lifetime together, sharing with each other generously the love God has for you both.

In Christ,



Msgr. Chad Gion  
Pastor, Church of Spirit of Life



## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a life commitment between a man and a woman. Therefore, it needs careful and thorough preparation so that the couple can fully understand the meaning of the commitment.

Marriage is a Sacrament, which means that the relationship of husband and wife should reflect the presence of Christ and his love for us. To live this Sacrament, a couple needs to grow in their faith as individuals and as a couple.

Ideally, a wedding is a celebration of the marriage of a man and woman that come to the church from two separate places on their wedding day, stand before God and his people, make a commitment to each other and to God to be faithful to their vows, and then leave the church as one.

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS

A couple desiring to get married should contact the parish office (663-1660) at least nine months, but preferably 1 year prior to the wedding date.

The church should be reserved before a commitment is made to a photographer and reception hall. The church may not be available on the desired date without reserving it in advance.

Couples need to participate in a Pre-Marriage Seminar weekend and attend Natural Family Planning (NFP) training. Information about these topics as well as dates and how to register can be found on the Diocese of Bismarck's website. The specifics of these events will be shared with the couple in the first meeting with the pastor (or deacon).

Couples will also need to take the FOCCUS questionnaire, which assists the couple in understanding themselves as individuals and as a couple. The results will be shared with the presider of the wedding or it will be given to a sponsoring couple who will assist the engaged couple in evaluating the results of this tool.

Additional preparation may be required depending on the particular circumstances of the couple.

## DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

- 1) Pre-nuptial FOCCUS questionnaire.
- 2) A Baptismal Certificate which should be requested from the parish of baptism at least six months prior to the wedding date. (A non-Catholic person should provide a photocopy of a baptismal record.)
- 3) Completion certificates from the Pre-Marriage Seminar weekend and NFP training.
- 4) A MARRIAGE LICENSE which is procured from the Clerk of Court at the local court house. The couple needs to go together and present a document of personal identification (driver's license or social security card). The license can be purchased up to 60 days before the wedding. Fee for the license is determined by the state. **This must be dropped off at the parish office one week prior to the wedding in order for the parish secretary to have it completed in time for the wedding rehearsal.**
- 5) Appropriate documentation of any annulled (previous) marriages including freedom to marry paperwork.
- 6) Two copies of your program should be brought into the office at Spirit of Life **at least two weeks prior to your wedding**. One will be stored in your file and the other will be given to the music director for approval. Once your program is approved you can have them printed. **Do not print your programs before they are approved by the Liturgical Music Director (663-1660) at the church.**

## THE CELEBRATION OF THE WEDDING

The celebration of the wedding is a very sacred and spiritual moment. The planning of the wedding should reflect a sacred character. On the day of the wedding, if the celebrant notices any indication of a member of the wedding party being under the influence of alcohol, he will ask that person to leave.

**CEREMONY PLANNING:** The ceremony will be planned with the celebrant (the priest or deacon) of your wedding. We strongly encourage you to celebrate the full mass at your wedding. You can begin by choosing scripture readings from the *Together for Life* book. It will be important for you to choose an **Old Testament reading**, a **Responsorial Psalm**, a **New Testament reading**, and a **Gospel reading**.

**PROGRAMS:** Having a wedding program is an important way to keep your guests involved in the ceremony. A program should include the parts of the ceremony, what readings and songs you have chosen, and who has played a special role in your ceremony. Example programs are included later in this packet to help you through this process. **Please bring two copies of your program into the office at Spirit of Life at least two weeks prior to your wedding.** One will be stored in your file and the other will be given to the music director for approval. Once your program is approved you can have them printed. **Do not print your programs before they are approved by the Liturgical Music Director (663-1660) at the church.**

**MUSIC:** In continuity with the guidelines of the Catholic Diocese of Bismarck, “wedding music must be sacred religious music, including music performed immediately before and after the ceremony” (Synod, 166). The wedding liturgy is a sacred ceremony, meaning it is a celebration that is set apart from ordinary life. For this reason, secular music, including Country Music and songs commonly heard on the radio, will not be permitted during the liturgy itself. All music for the wedding must be pre-approved and fall under the scope of music the church is licensed to sing or play. **Contact the Liturgical Music Director (663-1660) at least two months before your wedding to obtain information pertinent to planning your music and begin the music planning process.**

**DRESS:** All wedding dresses, including bridesmaid dresses, should be modest in nature and appropriate for the sacred occasion. If you are concerned about your dress please talk with the celebrant. You might also consider wearing a shawl if you have a dress that exposes your shoulders.

**WEDDING PARTY:** The number of couples in the wedding party should be limited so as not to detract from the Bride and Groom and the real purpose for the celebration. Suggestions: **One to three couples is preferred and there should be no more than five couples in the wedding party.** “The best man must be male and the maid or matron of honor must be female. The same is true for groomsmen and bridesmaids.” (Synod, 162) If children are in the wedding party, they should be old enough to understand what their role in the ceremony will be. No pets please.

**CHURCH ENVIRONMENT/DECORATIONS:** Some decorations are allowed in the church. Typically couples choose to have a gift table in the gathering space and memorial flowers are very common. Nothing is to be moved in the sanctuary.

**CANDLES/CANDELABRAS:** If candelabras are used, the candles **MUST** be metal tube candles; regular dripless candles are not acceptable. The church has candelabras which can be used but candles are not included.

**AISLE RUNNERS/DISPERSAL OF FLOWER PETALS:** The use of aisle runners or the dispersion of real flower petals is prohibited. If silk flower petals are strewn, they must be retrieved following the ceremony.

**UNITY CANDLES/SAND RITUALS:** Modern novelties are strictly forbidden during any Catholic marriage ceremony in the Diocese of Bismarck, such as: unity candles, unity bowls, sand rituals and the release of butterflies or other creatures or anything of the like. (Synod, 165)

**PICTURES:** Couples should ask their photographers to limit their picture taking to as short a time as possible. A drawn out photo session tires the wedding party and limits their ability to fully celebrate the wedding itself.

During the photo session, food and drink should be kept in designated areas only and should not be brought inside the church proper and the gathering space. The church should be respected as a sacred space. Chairs may NOT be moved within the church proper at any time.

During the ceremony, photographers should remain around the outer perimeter of the church. They should only be at the head of the church during the procession. Please ask them to refrain from using a flash during the ceremony.

**DRESSING ROOMS:** The “Rock and Rest” room and Library are available for use as dressing rooms. A key can be checked out from the office. Please check out the key by 4:30 pm the night before the wedding. The office is open Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. The key can be checked out from the front desk and then returned to the front desk when you are finished. Please do this during regular business hours.

**FOLLOWING THE CEREMONY:** Ushers and anyone so designated should assist in picking up left over programs, help remove candelabras, flowers and flower petals, ensuring the “Rock and Rest” room and Library (if used) are picked up, and any food and drinks that may have been brought in are properly disposed, etc.

## **LIST OF FEES AND STIPENDS**

### **FACILITIES:**

- 1) Fee for use of the Church: Parishioner fee is \$100. Non-Parishioner fee is \$300.
- 2) Fees for optional use of the activity center: \$75 to use the kitchen and foyer (capacity 75), +\$75 to use additional area north of the divider (capacity 250), +\$100 to use stoves/ovens/dishwasher.

**CELEBRANT:** There are no stole fees for the services of the priest at the wedding. If you want to make a donation for the sacramental services provided, that donation is made to the church.

**ALTAR SERVERS:** Suggested stipend for each altar server provided by Spirit of Life is \$10.

**MUSICIANS:** The stipend for the musicians is arranged by the musicians themselves. This is a contract entered into between you and your musicians. The stipend should be given to the musicians before the date of the wedding. Please be respectful of them and make sure they receive payment in a timely manner.

**CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP AIDS:** It is important that the congregation at your wedding be able to actively participate in the liturgy. Providing the lyrics or music for them is a good way to facilitate their involvement. There are several options for this:

- 1) Make sure that your congregational songs are in the hymnals that the Church provides and have your ushers distribute hymnals on the day of the wedding.
- 2) Insert the words for all congregational songs into the ceremony program.
- 3) Have the church prepare a program insert that will contain all congregational songs. Fee is: \$30.
- 4) Have the church prepare PowerPoint slides that contains the words to all congregational songs.  
**PowerPoint slides must be created by the church.** Fee: \$30.

## **PREPARING FOR THE LITURGY**

### **The Introductory Rites**

The Introductory Rites are a time of gathering and preparation that should prepare our hearts and minds to enter into the presence of God. This is the beginning of the formal ceremony where we ask God to be a part of the two lives he is about to join as one. Within the Introductory Rites are the Entrance Procession, Opening Prayer, and the Gloria.

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

The Liturgy of the Word includes the Old Testament reading, the Responsorial Psalm, the New Testament reading, the Alleluia, the Gospel reading, and the Homily. This is an important part of the Mass where our minds are nourished with God's Word.

The *Together for Life* book is a great resource to help you plan this part of the liturgy. You should choose readings that have meaning to you. Take time together to pray and read through all your options. You should use the *Together for Life* book to choose an Old Testament reading, a Responsorial Psalm, a New Testament Reading, and a Gospel reading. All of these need to be selected directly from the *Together for Life* book.

### **The Celebration of Matrimony**

The Celebration of Matrimony is what makes the liturgy a marriage ceremony. This is where the couple will exchange vows as they enter into the covenant of marriage with God. This is also where the couple will exchange rings. Following the exchange of vows and rings will be the Universal Prayer where we offer intercessions on behalf of the new bride and groom and whole universal Church. If you have any special requests for the intercessions, please talk to the presider.

### **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is a beautiful part of the Mass where the Priest, in the person of Christ, offers the sacrifice of the Cross to God the Father for the redemption of our sins and for our union with God. The bread and wine which we offer become Christ's true presence through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Through the miracle of the Eucharist, we are all united as the body of Christ who is our Head. The Liturgy of the Eucharist also contains the Lord's Prayer, a special Nuptial Blessing for the couple, and the Sign of Peace.

### **The Conclusion of the Celebration**

The Concluding of the Celebration is where God shares His blessing with His people and calls on us to take the love of God out into the world. This is where the couple is presented to the congregation as one with God.

**NOTE:** Page 10 of the *Together for Life* book lists the Three Forms of the Rite of Marriage. The Rite of Marriage ceremony celebrated outside of Mass will be slightly modified from the above. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is eliminated, as are the Gloria and Sign of Peace. The Nuptial Blessing takes place after the General Intercessions.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

In order for your wedding to be a success you will need some help from family and friends. For the ceremony, you may have 1-2 readers, 1-3 altar servers, 2 gift bearers or a family, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. The number of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion will depend on how large your congregation will be. Please consult with the pastor to find out what your ceremony will need. For more specific information on this topic, see the parish website ([www.myspiritoflife.com/the-sacraments/marriage](http://www.myspiritoflife.com/the-sacraments/marriage)).

## CELEBRATING MATRIMONY WITHIN MASS

Below is an example of a program for a marriage ceremony celebrated during Mass that can assist you with putting together your program.

### *The Marriage Ceremony*

#### *Introductory Rites*

Entrance Procession  
Opening Prayer  
Gloria

*“Canon in D”*

#### *Liturgy of the Word*

Old Testament Reading  
Responsorial Psalm

*Tobit 8:4b-8*  
*Psalm 145*

℟ *“How good is the Lord to all.”*

New Testament Reading  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel Reading  
Homily

*1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8a*

*Matthew 5:1-12a*

#### *Celebration of Matrimony*

Questions before the Consent  
Consent  
Reception of Consent

℣. *“Let us bless the Lord”*  
℟. *“Thanks be to God”*

Blessing and Giving of Rings  
Universal Prayer

#### *Liturgy of the Eucharist*

Offertory Procession  
Eucharistic Prayer  
The Lord’s Prayer  
Nuptial Blessing  
Sign of Peace  
Communion Procession

*“Be Thou My Vision”*

*“Gift of Finest Wheat”*

#### *Conclusion of the Celebration*

Final Prayer and Blessing  
Presentation of the Couple  
Recessional

*“Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring”*

## CELEBRATING MATRIMONY WITHOUT MASS

Below is an example of a program for a marriage ceremony celebrated without Mass that can assist you with putting together your program.

### *The Marriage Ceremony*

#### *Introductory Rites*

Entrance Procession  
Opening Prayer

*“Canon in D”*

#### *Liturgy of the Word*

Old Testament Reading  
Responsorial Psalm

*Tobit 8:4b-8*  
*Psalm 145*

℟ *“How good is the Lord to all.”*

New Testament Reading  
Gospel Reading  
Homily

*1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8a*

*Matthew 5:1-12a*

#### *Celebration of Matrimony*

Questions before the Consent  
Consent  
Reception of Consent

℣. *“Let us bless the Lord”*  
℟ *“Thanks be to God”*

Blessing and Giving of Rings  
Universal Prayer  
Nuptial Blessing

#### *Conclusion of the Celebration*

Final Prayer and Blessing  
Presentation of the Couple  
Recessional

*“Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring”*



## OTHER RESOURCES

- 1) For marriage prep information- <http://www.bismarckdiocese.com/ministries/default.asp?ID=331>
- 2) For natural family planning- <http://www.bismarckdiocese.com/ministries/default.asp?ID=375>
- 3) More on marriage- <http://www.bismarckdiocese.com/ministries/default.asp?ID=332>
- 4) <http://foryourmarriage.org/>
- 5) <http://catholicweddinghelp.com/index.htm>