



SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Marriage Procedures

Congratulations!

Congratulations on your anticipated marriage in the Catholic Church. This information is intended to help you in your preparation for a joyous and holy celebration of marriage.

Because you are preparing for the sacrament of marriage, your preparation should include a regular practice of the faith. For couples who reside in the parish, at least one of you must be registered in the parish and actively participating at Sunday Mass. Attending Sunday Mass will also help you select a priest to officiate at your wedding. For those who reside outside of the parish, a statement from your own pastor that you are an active parishioner and have permission to marry at St. Francis of Assisi is needed.

The process of marriage preparation should begin once you are engaged, ideally at least a year before the desired wedding date. The minimum time ordinarily needed to fulfill the following marriage preparation requirements is six months.

Step 1 – Marriage Information Meeting

To begin the process, please attend a marriage information meeting held on the fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. In addition to receiving basic information on the marriage preparation process, you will take a pre-marital inventory at the meeting, which is a survey used later as the basis for discussion between you and the priest. It is important that both parties attend this meeting so that both complete the inventory.

Prior marriages: If you were married – in any manner (religious or civil ceremony) – and were divorced, you must make an appointment to speak with a priest **before attending this meeting.** All issues related to any prior marriages and civil divorce must be settled before beginning the process of marriage preparation.

Step 2 – Make Appointment with Priest

After attending the marriage information meeting, call the parish office to schedule a first appointment with the priest whom you would like to prepare you for marriage and celebrate your wedding ceremony. These appointments can be arranged through Debbie Ely, the parish scheduling coordinator.

Once your freedom to marry is established with the priest, he will set the wedding date with you. Once the wedding date is set, remember that you are nonetheless obligated to fulfill **all** premarital preparation requirements in order for the wedding ceremony to take place.

The times for the wedding ceremonies are as follows:

- **Friday at 5:00 p.m.**
- **Saturday at 11:00 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. (only)**

Requests for weddings Monday-Thursday may be considered provided that they do not conflict with other parish activities. Weddings are not celebrated during Lent or Holy Week or on Sundays.

Important: Do not book a reception hall prior to scheduling the date and time of your marriage with the priest!

Step 3 –Documents and Offerings

The following documents and offerings are required:

- **Catholic baptism certificates:** For all Catholics, a new baptism certificate issued within the last year must be provided. You need to contact your church of baptism to receive this. The authentic certificate must be submitted to the parish. Photocopies or faxes are not accepted.
 - **Non-Catholic proof of baptism:** For baptized non-Catholics, any proof of baptism may take the form of, in order of preference, a baptismal certificate, a page copied from a sacramental register, an affidavit of the fact of baptism by a parent or other witness, or some other reliable proof.
 - **Affidavits of freedom to marry:** An affidavit of freedom to marry is required for each of you. The forms will be distributed at the Marriage Informational Meeting. The form is completed by a parent, close relative, or, if necessary, another person who has known you at least since the age of 16. It needs to be notarized by a priest, deacon, or public notary.
 - **Certificate of death or declaration of nullity:** A certificate of death or ecclesiastical declaration of nullity is required for each prior marriage (religious or civil), if any.
 - **Offering:** The offering is \$700. This covers the cantor and organist, preparation materials, utilities, wedding coordinator, insurance, janitorial services, altar servers, etc. A deposit of \$350 is required once the wedding date is set. Once the deposit is paid, a wedding coordinator and a wedding rehearsal time will be assigned. The \$350 balance is due 1 month before the wedding. (If you later decide not to get married, the offering will be refunded.)
- Situations of poverty: No couple will be denied a Catholic marriage due to poverty. If the offering to the church creates a hardship, please discuss this with the priest preparing you for marriage.

Important: All documents and the full offering must be received in the parish office at least 1 month prior to the wedding. If documents are not received by then, the marriage will be **cancelled.**

Step 4 – Marriage Preparation Program

A program for marriage preparation must be completed. You may attend any Pre-Cana Program, Engaged Encounter Weekend, Evenings for the Engaged, or other similar program offered by any parish of the Diocese of Las Vegas. Here at St. Francis of Assisi we offer a Pre-Cana day twice per year from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. on a Saturday. The fee is \$75 per couple which covers all materials and lunch. Contact the parish office for the schedule of dates.

Step 5 – Sacramental Preparation

Prior to celebrating your wedding ceremony, Catholics are to receive the sacraments of penance (confession) and Holy Communion. It is also strongly recommended that if you are baptized as a Catholic but have not yet received confirmation that you enroll in the parish program for confirmation preparation offered each spring. Contact the Faith Formation Office at (702) 914-3529 for more information.

Step 6 – Planning the Ceremony

Wedding coordinator: After the wedding date is set and the deposit is paid, a wedding coordinator is assigned to help you plan the ceremony. The wedding coordinator will:

- Meet with you to plan the ceremony (except music), including selection of the readings, planning the procession, and assist with plans for decoration
- Conduct the rehearsal
- Assist at the wedding ceremony

Contacting the wedding coordinator can be done through the parish receptionist. Planning of the ceremony is done with the bride and groom only, not through parents or others.

Rehearsal: After the wedding date is set and the deposit is paid, you will be assigned a time for the rehearsal on the day before the wedding. One hour maximum is allotted for rehearsals. The ceremony must be completely planned prior to the rehearsal. No changes in plans are permitted at the rehearsal.

All rehearsals must begin on time as there may be other rehearsals or parish events scheduled afterwards. Wedding rehearsals start at the scheduled time, even if everyone has not arrived on time, so please encourage those in your wedding party to arrive early.

Wedding ceremony: The Rite of Marriage is ordinarily celebrated within Mass when both of you are baptized, practicing Catholics. When a Catholic is marrying a non-Catholic, a full wedding ceremony is celebrated, but the celebration of the Eucharist is omitted. (In accord with diocesan norms, the celebration of the Eucharist is also omitted when the couple is already cohabitating. The grave moral issues relating to cohabitation before marriage will be discussed with the priest in private.)

Music: A few months before the wedding, call the office to set an appointment with Stephanie Logan, the parish music director, to plan the music. The following rules apply to the music:

- Only sacred or religious music that is positive and joyful and expresses a Christian view of life and love is permitted. Contemporary love songs, secular music, show tunes, etc., can more appropriately be incorporated into the wedding reception plans.
- The music is to fit the part of the liturgy in which it will be used.
- Recorded music is also not permitted as the worship of God is meant to be live.
- Only organists and cantors who are employed at St. Francis of Assisi Church may be used.
- Additional instrumentalists, such as trumpet, harp, or a string group, may be hired at additional cost. Those hired are subject to approval of the parish music director.

Step 7 – Civil Marriage License

You need to obtain a civil marriage license from the Clark County Clerk's Office. The license must be submitted to the parish office at least 2 weeks before the wedding. For information on securing the civil marriage license, go to:

www.accessclarkcounty.com/depts/clerk/Pages/marriage_information.aspx.

Final Step – The Wedding Day

Timeliness: Weddings will start at the scheduled time, even if everyone has not arrived on time, so please encourage those in your wedding party to arrive early. If you, as bride or groom, arrive late, portions of your ceremony will be omitted, music ministers may need to depart prior to the end of your ceremony due to other commitments they may have, and photographs in the worship space after the ceremony will not be possible.

Flowers: In addition to corsages, boutonnieres and bouquets, you may desire to purchase floral arrangements for use during the liturgy. Flowers are to be delivered only 1 hour before the ceremony and need to be removed within a 1 hour after the ceremony.

Special seasons: During the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Easter, it is not permitted to remove or relocate season decorations. However, you may bring additional arrangements.

Pew bows: Pew bows or ribbons are permitted in the center aisle of the worship space. They are to be secured with rubber bands or pipe cleaners. Plastic clamps, scotch tape, tacks, pins, or other adhesives may not be used as they can damage the chairs.

Flower girl and ring bearer: Flower girls and ring bearers are permitted in the ceremony. However, it is unrealistic to expect children under the age of 5 to perform this task without excessive difficulty. Even when young children do well at the rehearsal, it is often overwhelming for them during the actual ceremony.

Lectors: You may choose three lectors to read the first and second readings and the General Intercessions from among your family and friends. If the marriage is being celebrated within Mass, the lectors need to be Catholic. If marriage is celebrated outside of Mass, any baptized Christians may serve as lectors.

Aisle runners, flower petals (real or silk), birdseed, rice, etc.: These things are prohibited both inside and outside because they pose potential danger, especially for older individuals. Nothing may be put on the floor or thrown. Due to concern for danger to individuals, damage to parish property, and harm to the environment, hurricane candles, confetti, silly string, glitter, bubbles, balloons, coins, doves, etc., are not to be throw or released inside or outside on parish property, including in the parking lot. They create liability problems so no exceptions can be made.

Modesty: Modest and respectful attire is required for all in the worship space. Dresses of women in the wedding party must have a modest cut. All tattoos and body piercing must also be covered or removed.

Unity candle: This is not a required part of the Catholic marriage ceremony. If it is used, it must be done in a simple manner and without any accompanying music or prayers. If desired, you must supply the candle. Candelabras may set up on each side of the sanctuary, if desired and you wish to supply. Candles along the center aisle are not permitted to be used as additional decorations due to liability concerns.

Ethnic customs: The observance of certain ethnic customs may be observed if desired, such as the use of the cord and the veil or blessing and giving of coins. Please discuss these with your wedding coordinator. If you desire these customs, you will need to supply the needed items.

Presentation of Flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary: This is another optional custom. If desired, it can be included near the end of ceremony. If chosen, you need to supply the flowers for this.

Photography: The marriage ceremony is a sacred event. In order to preserve the sacredness of the ceremony but also provide the opportunity for photography, please instruct your photographer or videographer according to the following rules:

- They are to have a respectful demeanor fitting for a place of prayer.
- Stationary tripods are encouraged.
- They are not permitted in the sanctuary at any time and may not cross in front of the sanctuary during the ceremony.
- They are not permitted in the center aisle during the processional or recessional.
- They are not permitted to block the bride, groom, or priest in any manner.
- They are never to block the view of any guest attending the wedding ceremony.
- No tripods or other equipment may be set up in front of the musicians.
- No flash photography or video spotlights may be used. If modern equipment is used, the reliance on existing lighting is sufficient.
- No cords or wires may be placed in aisles due to concerns about possible danger.
- There may be no photography in the building before the ceremony.
- Photographs may be taken after the ceremony, but this is limited to **30 minutes** because of other scheduled events.

Note: St. Francis of Assisi reserves the right to bar any photographers or videographers from returning for future weddings if these rules are not obeyed.

Beverages and alcohol in particular: At the rehearsal and the day of your wedding, the only beverages allowed are water bottles. Alcohol is absolutely prohibited. This extends to all parish property, including the parking lot (and within limousines and other vehicles on parish property).

Any member of a wedding party intoxicated by alcohol or drugs may not participate in the ceremony. If the best man or maid/matron of honor is intoxicated, he or she may not function as a witness. If either of you, bride or groom, are intoxicated, the marriage ceremony may not proceed.

Receiving lines: Receiving lines should be planned at the place of the reception, not at St. Francis of Assisi, due to schedule of parish events.

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