

Ascension of Our Lord Catholic Church

Preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony

WEDDING POLICIES

“The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

The Catholic Church requires that sufficient time and preparation be given in order for a couple to understand the importance of their vows. The dioceses of Louisiana have established a set policy regarding the preparation of couples for marriage. At Ascension of Our Lord Parish, we incorporate these guidelines into our preparation.

FIRST MEETING

A couple planning marriage must contact the parish office at least eight months prior to the wedding date. No wedding dates are finalized until the first meeting with the priest/deacon. At the initial interview, the priest/deacon will complete the Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire. He will answer the couple’s questions about their preparation and reception of the sacrament, and will direct the couple to take the FOCCUS online.

FOCCUS online

The FOCCUS is a communication tool that helps the priest/deacon in preparing the couple for the sacrament. It is NOT a psychological evaluation nor does it determine the couple’s readiness for marriage.

To register online for the FOCCUS:

- Email names and email addresses to (flasec@arch-no.org) ATTN: Deacon David Farinelli. The couple will receive an email with login information.
- The first person to login will be prompted to pay \$15 via credit card. Other payment options are available if the couple cannot pay for the inventory.
- After both have completed the inventory, the report will immediately be made available to the priest/deacon. The couple should then contact the priest/deacon to arrange a time to go over it with him.

SECOND MEETING

At the second interview, the priest/deacon will review the results of the FOCCUS. He will discuss with the couple their family backgrounds and their relationship as a couple. Since the couple seeks a sacrament of the Church, the priest/deacon will expect the couple to show their commitment to the Church by attending Mass regularly. After meeting with the priest/deacon to go over the FOCCUS, the couple should contact the Family Life Apostolate at 504-861-6243 for details and reservations for one of two marriage preparation programs.

- **Engaged Encounter Weekend:** A weekend retreat like setting with other engaged couples; helps to facilitate communication.
- **Day for the Engaged:** A day-long seminar.

THIRD MEETING

Upon completion of one of the above programs, the couple should contact the priest/deacon who will celebrate their marriage for a third interview. The couple should bring the following documents to this meeting:

- Recent copies of their baptismal certificates. The couple should contact their church of baptism for this information. The copy cannot be older than six months prior to the wedding date.
- Certificate from the Engaged Encounter Weekend or Day for the Engaged.
- A civil marriage license. The couple should bring their birth certificates to the local clerk of court no earlier than 30 days and no later than 3 days before the wedding.

OUTSIDE CELEBRANT

If a priest/deacon from another parish celebrates the wedding, he must complete the marriage preparation shown above. We must receive the paper work ONE MONTH prior to the wedding. A priest/deacon coming from another parish or diocese must get the approval of the pastor. If a priest/deacon comes from another state, he must receive not only our authorization but must be authorized by the state of Louisiana.

WEDDING MASS

- Couples are responsible for the photographer, florist and organist. Contact the parish secretary for the name of our parish organist.
- Keep the flowers simple. You should donate two baskets of flowers to the Church.
- Arches are not allowed

- Only dripless candles are allowed, and a covering should be placed on the floor beneath the candles.
- Only sacred music is allowed during the mass. Check all music with the priest.
- Set the date and time of the rehearsal with the celebrant at the first interview.
- The wedding party should show up on time for both rehearsal and the wedding Mass. The rehearsal takes about 30 minutes.
- Make arrangements with the priest for private confession. Couples are expected to use this opportunity to prepare themselves for their Marriage. Couples can also contact the priest for an appointment for confession.
- Catholics who marry non-Catholics must do so without the Nuptial Mass. We will perform a Liturgy of the Word. See the priest for details.

OUTSIDE CHURCH

Ascension of Our Lord will give permission for a couple residing in our parish to celebrate their wedding in another church. Each church sets their own policies regarding the use of their church and couples must adhere to their regulations.

FEEES

Like all sacraments, the sacrament of Matrimony is given freely. However we ask that you help with the cost of utilities and maintenance.

- A CHURCH OFFERING of \$200 for in-parish or \$400 non-registered/active or out-of-parish parishioners should be paid by the third interview with the priest. This offering helps offset the costs of utilities and does NOT go to the priest. (If the cost is a problem please inform the priest).
- We provide two altar servers for the wedding. It is customary to give them \$10-\$20 each.
- While not required, it is customary to give an offering to the priest who celebrates your sacrament.