



Marriage Preparation Guidelines

Jesus' first miracle, at the request of Mary, His mother, took place at a wedding feast. The Sacrament of Matrimony, celebrated by the Church with great joy and thanksgiving, confers immense dignity, holiness, and strength upon the loving commitment of a man and a woman. No longer are they just two individuals. Through the sacrament, they join themselves as one before God in an ongoing bound of love.

It's been said that a wedding is for a day; a marriage is for a lifetime. For this reason, it is much more important to prepare for a marriage than it is to prepare for a wedding. Following are very basic rules required in preparation for marriage at St. Genevieve Catholic Church.

1. **Registration.** Parish policy and canon law requires that the bride or the groom must reside within the boundaries of the parish. Additionally, one or both of them must be registered parishioners at St. Genevieve Catholic Church no less than 6 (six) months prior to scheduling a wedding date. To be registered parishioners, either the bride or the groom must reside within the boundaries of the parish.
 - a. This requirement may also be fulfilled if the families of the bride and/or the groom are already registered parishioners.
 - b. If neither the bride nor the groom resides within the boundaries of the parish, a **letter of permission** from their own Pastor must be submitted.
2. **Initial Interview.** The bride and groom are required to contact one of the priests of the parish at least 6 (six) months prior to setting the wedding date. If another priest is to perform the marriage ceremony, the permission of the pastor is needed and the visiting priest must attend to all necessary paperwork. When all the paperwork is ready, the Pastor may give delegation to the visiting priest.
3. **Previous Marriage.** If one or both parties were previously married, this must be disclosed to the priest at the onset of the first interview so that proper procedures can be undertaken. In some cases, the marriage preparation cannot proceed and no date may be assigned until an annulment process is completed.
4. **Documents**
 - a. **Baptismal Certificate.** Both parties must submit a copy of the baptismal certificate from the Church of Baptism issued within the last six months.
 - b. **First Communion & Confirmation Certificates.** If the Catholic party has received the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation, please provide copies of these certificates.
 - c. **Affidavit or Letter of Freedom to Marry.** These forms, attesting to the freedom of the bride and groom to marry in the Church, must be signed in the presence of the priest, deacon, or parish minister; or before a notary public. Two witnesses will be required for each party. It is preferable but not absolute, that these witnesses be the parents of the bride and groom. The priest will supply the forms.
 - d. **Prenuptial Questionnaire.** This form is for both the bride and groom and is filled out before the priest to establish the freedom of the couple to marry.

5. **FOCCUS.** The priest who is interviewing you for your marriage may choose to administer this instrument to “Facilitate Open Couple Communication Understanding, and Study.” It is intended as a tool to help the couple target the topics they need and want to talk about as a couple. It can help them reflect, study, understand and communicate openly about many things that are important to their relationship.
6. **Interfaith Marriage.** If either the bride or groom is a baptized Christian but not Catholic, a **Dispensation from Mixed Marriage** is required. If either the bride or the groom is an un-baptized person or a member of a non-Christian religion, a **Dispensation for Disparity of Worship** is required. In either case, the Catholic party must declare his or her intention to practice the faith and to do all in his or her power to have all the children baptized and educated in the Catholic Church. The forms will be supplied by the priest.
7. **Engaged Encounter Weekend.** The participation of the couple in an Engaged Encounter Weekend is required. These weekends are offered at certain retreat centers throughout the Archdiocese. An Engaged Encounter brochure is enclosed. You may also visit www.ceeofla.org to view the dates and locations of the retreat.
8. **Natural Family Planning.** The couple is strongly encouraged to attend an introductory session about Natural Family Planning. Please see enclosed brochure.
9. **Marriage License.** It is the law in the State of California that a civil license is obtained for the marriage to take place. It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain this license from any county clerk’s office in the State of California. Locally, this office is in the Van Nuys Civic Center, 14340 W. Sylvan St., Van Nuys, CA. 818.374.7176. The license is valid for 90 days. We suggest you get your license within the month of your wedding. Please submit this license at the time of rehearsal.
10. **Confessions.** Please remember that you are receiving a sacrament of the Church. It is important, therefore, that part of your preparation is to receive the Sacrament of Confession. Please plan ahead to make a good confession prior to your wedding. Confessions are heard at the parish every Saturday at 3:30 p.m.

Your Wedding Ceremony

1. **Time.** Weddings generally take place in the Parish on Saturdays before 3:00 p.m. When the Religious Education Program is not in session (June, July, August, September), the wedding can be scheduled as early as 10:00 a.m. Friday afternoons are also available but not later than 4:00 p.m.
2. **Together For Life.** This book will be provided by the priest and is a valuable resource in planning your wedding ceremony. You will need to go through this book together and select the prayers, readings, and other elements of the Rites of Marriage. A tear-off sheet is located at the back of the book that you will need to fill out and give to the wedding coordinator. The priest might also need a copy of this sheet.
3. **The Wedding Coordinator.** Please contact one of the wedding coordinators 1-3 months before the date of your wedding: Ms. Elizabeth Sotoj (sotoj@sgps.org) or Mrs. Martha Sotoj (310) 363-5097. The wedding coordinator will set the day and time for the rehearsal with you. She will also coordinate the Wedding Liturgy on the day of the wedding. It is important that the instructions of the Wedding Coordinator are followed. Please note that the wedding coordinators have their own stipend.
4. **Lectors.** There must be a least one lector to proclaim the Readings at the Wedding Mass. Because the Readings at Mass are an important part of the ceremony, the Lector chosen must be proficient in public speaking so that she or he can proclaim the Word of God in a clear and strong voice.

5. **Altar Servers.** When Mass is celebrated, the parish will assign altar servers. Relatives and friends of the wedding couple are invited to serve, in addition to the assigned servers.
6. **Ushers.** Ushers should arrive for the wedding ceremony no later than 30 minutes before. Please familiarize the ushers with guidelines for pictures in the Church. Should a guest have a camera, ushers should politely inform them that the use of flash is prohibited.
7. **Flower Girls and Ring Bearers.** Many processions have been delayed and much attention focused away from the bride and groom, because children who are too young have been involved as flower girls and ring bearer. If you feel that it is necessary to have someone in these roles, please make sure that the children in your bridal party are no younger than school age, that is, they must be at least already in the First Grade.
8. **Rehearsal.** The rehearsal for the wedding is a very simple affair. Rehearsals should take no more than an hour if everyone is punctual. Since the rehearsal is conducted in the church, a respectful attitude must be observed. At all times chewing gum, cell phones, eating and drinking, smoking is forbidden. Smoking is prohibited on church premises. Rehearsals are arranged with the Wedding Coordinator who conducts and starts the rehearsal **promptly** at the appointed time. The entire wedding party is to be present for the rehearsal, including the Readers/Lectors. Note that the priest is never present at the rehearsal.
9. **No Rice, Confetti, Seeds, Petals, Bubbles.** These do more to distract from the ceremony and are NOT allowed inside or outside the church.

Music at your Wedding

1. **Sung Prayer.** Music forms an integral part of the Wedding Liturgy. It must be suitable to the Nuptial Mass/Ceremony and must be sacred in nature and appropriate for church. The sung participation of the congregation should be provided for. Therefore, a song leader or cantor is expected. No taped or recorded music is allowed in the liturgy.
2. **Music Ministry.** The Parish has available some excellent singers and instrumentalists. Please contact our Music Coordinators to help you plan the music: Ms. Araceli Chavez (818) 894-2261 ext. 118. These ministers of music can also arrange for other musicians and instrumentalists to play at your wedding ceremony. Please note that they and the other musicians have their own schedule of fees.

Video Taping and Photographer

1. There should only be ONE official photographer and/or ONE official videographer for your wedding. More than these will distract from the sacredness of the occasion. These professionals should observe the “line of sight rule”—if they can be seen, they are not in the right place. In addition, they must not move about during the ceremony.
2. No flash pictures of any kind are permitted during the liturgy. If guests have cameras, the ushers or the wedding coordinator are instructed to inform them that no flash pictures are to be taken.
3. The entrance and closing processions are part of the ceremony and are not to be hindered by the photographer in any way whatsoever.

Flowers and Decorations

- 1. Liturgical Decorations.** Please note that during specific liturgical seasons of the Church year such as Advent, Christmas, Lent and Eastertime, no additional decorations may be allowed in the Church. During these times, the church decorations are in keeping with the spirit of the particular liturgical season and, therefore, no other decorations are necessary or permitted. Please keep this in mind when deciding on the date and colors for your wedding.
- 2. Floral Arrangements.** Arrangements may not be artificial, e.g., plastic or silk, and must not hide or overshadow the altar table, the ambo, the presider's chair, or the bride and groom. A runner may be used although the use of it is questionable since the church is already carpeted. The runner may be rolled out by the ushers or the flowers before the ceremony and must be removed by them immediately after the ceremony. The length of the center of the aisle of the Church is approximately 100 feet.
- 3. Pew Bows** may be used but taping them is not permitted. Use ribbons, or plastic clamps to attach bows or small bouquets to the pews. No tape, glue, nails or metal clamps may be attached to the pews or elsewhere in the church.
- 4. No candelabras or candles** are permitted in the church. The only candles allowed are the once used for the liturgy and that are already in the sanctuary.

Donations

When considering the financial offering to the church, the engaged couple should consider the use of the church and the services of the pastoral staff in relation to the other expenses, such as hotel or auditorium, bridal outfits, flowers, photographers, limousines, etc. For this reason we request that the offering should be proportionate to the costs incurred for the entire wedding. The following should serve only as a guide in considering your financial offering which is considered your gift to the parish. Financial difficulties should never prevent you from celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony; if there are financial hardships, please discuss this with the priest.

- Church Offering: \$100 to reserve the date (non-refundable) and \$400 for the wedding.
- Music: \$150.00 each (Cantor and Pianist)
- Wedding Coordinator: \$100.00
- Gift for Two Altar Servers: \$10.00 each

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