

## STS. PETER & PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Dear Newly Engaged,

Congratulations! We at Sts. Peter & Paul Parish are happy for you and will try to help you prepare for your wedding. To marry in the Church is special and unique, so we wish to guide you through the planning of the wedding ceremony to insure that your marriage will be blessed with dignity and spirituality. The Catholic marriage ceremony involves participation in a liturgy and does not follow the ordinary prescriptions of our culture. Our teachings and beliefs regarding marriage differ vastly from our American culture and so, too, does our manner of celebrating a wedding liturgy.

Popular books written on preparing the “perfect wedding” follow customs that are frequently not consistent with the Church and are often inappropriate for the wedding liturgy. You are about to plan your wedding liturgy. This is far different from a “marriage ceremony.” **God is the central figure in the Catholic wedding, sharing a sacred moment with the bride and groom who vow in the Sacrament of Marriage to model their relationship upon the love of Christ for the Church.** They seek to be a living witness of His love. The bride and groom invite their families and friends to join with them in prayer through and in Jesus Christ; praising God for His goodness; thanking God for the gift of each other; asking God to unite them in the power of love; claiming God as the foundation and source of their marriage; promising God to be faithful in marriage; hoping in God that this marriage will find its ultimate fulfillment in the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Often times couples get so caught up in the preparation for a wedding that they lose sight of the sacredness of the occasion and the impact it can have on friends and families.** It is a communal experience which goes far beyond the bride and groom. Married couples witnessing the marriage may use the wedding liturgy to renew their own marriage; couples who may be experiencing difficulty in their marriage may be inspired to renew their determination to improve their marriage; young couples planning to be married will see the dignity and sacredness of your wedding liturgy and wish to model their own on yours. Even more significant is the opportunity for those who have drifted away from the Church to be so profoundly affected by the liturgy that they look again to renew their faith. All of this is possible when the wedding liturgy is kept sacred.

Marriage is so revered by the Catholic Church that we call it a sacrament. Our faith holds marriage in such high regard that we understand the commitment of marriage is to be lived out in permanence. A wedding liturgy done in a prayerful spirit enables the Church to teach the dignity and holiness of marriage and emphasize the role of married persons to be God’s servants of love in the world.

All of this means that we have a responsibility to maintain the sacredness of this occasion. We should also avoid the temptation to plan a “**staged production**” that emphasizes the ceremony rather than God’s love for all of us, your love of God, and your love for one another.

There is one additional point. We ask that you remind those who will be attending the rehearsal that they will be in the church and that they should dress appropriately. The Blessed Sacrament is present and we show our reverence by genuflecting when walking in front of the tabernacle.

A wedding is, indeed, a joyous occasion for us all. The reception following the liturgy is the time when bride and groom take center stage and join their friends in rejoicing in the day. With all this in mind, we have prepared this guide to help you plan your wedding. This wedding guide is not intended to be restrictive, but to help you prepare for the most special and holy moment in your lives. Please share this guide with your families and those who will be joining you in this celebration.

### **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

As soon as a couple announces to their friends that they plan to be married, everyone asks, “Have you set the date?” That implies that this is the first thing to do. In actuality, however, there are many things to consider before setting the exact date.

1. The mandatory Marriage Preparation Program takes six months to complete. A marriage cannot be witnessed by the Church without completion of this program. The couple should plan on attending a weekend Marriage Preparation class in addition to meeting with the priest four to five times as part of the Marriage Preparation Program.
2. If either the bride or groom has been previously married and requires an annulment, the annulment process may take a year or longer to complete.
3. Catholic weddings cannot be celebrated on Sunday, Holy Days of Obligation, Ash Wednesday, All Souls Day (November 2<sup>nd</sup>), or during the penitential season of Lent.
4. The pastor of the church must be consulted **prior** to setting a tentative date for the wedding to determine availability of the Church. If the requested date is within six months, then the priest will commit to performing the ceremony, or if he is unable, will ensure that another priest is available. If the requested date is more than six months away, the priest will not commit himself until six months prior to performing the ceremony.
5. Wedding times and rehearsals must be coordinated with the pastor. Rehearsals are usually held the night before the wedding. Usually, most people choose 6:00 or 6:30 PM since they want it to be late enough for everyone to get off work and come to the rehearsal, but early enough so that there is still time to have a rehearsal dinner. Promptness at the rehearsal is very important since we cannot begin until everyone involved is present. If a visiting priest will be witnessing your marriage, he should also conduct the rehearsal. The rehearsal usually lasts one hour.
6. The Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas does not permit Saturday evening weddings because they often conflict with the Saturday evening Masses. Friday evening weddings are allowed as well as Saturday morning and afternoon weddings. We ask that weddings be no later than 1:30 PM on Saturday (when the time changes from fall – spring dead line is 1.00 pm because the confession starts at 2.30 pm).

### **LIVING TOGETHER**

Catholic moral tradition teaches that living together before marriage is not consistent with the teachings of the Lord Jesus or the tradition of the Church. Living together expresses a public sign that the couple has already made a total commitment to marriage. To publicly witness such a marriage would cause the Church to contradict her teachings, and could serve as a source of scandal to the people. Those couples who have chosen to live together outside of marriage will need to meet and discuss with the priest before finalizing any wedding plans.

### **PRENUPTIAL FORM**

This Archdiocesan questionnaire must be completed by both the groom and the bride at least a month before the wedding; usually following the marriage preparation classes. The interview is conducted by the pastor. Besides biographical information, it contains questions about the person’s beliefs, any dispensations that may be required, and the couple’s freedom to marry

according to the Catholic faith. When the couple come to see the pastor to complete the form, they must also bring with them the certificate of completion of the Marriage Preparation Class and proof of baptisms. For Catholics, proof of baptism will need to be dated within six months of the date of marriage. You may obtain this by requesting one from the church of your baptism. If the baptism took place in Sts. Peter and Paul Church, we will automatically include this information for you. For those who are Christians of other denominations, any proof of baptism may be submitted.

In case of a marriage between a Catholic and non-Catholic, a promise must be made by the Catholic party that the children will be raised Catholic. The non-Catholic must agree. The couple should prepare themselves for this by discussing it beforehand.

After the form is completed, the priest will send it to the Chancery office in order to receive the necessary permission to conduct the wedding ceremony.

### **THE CHURCH OF MARRIAGE**

In some circumstances, engaged couples are inclined to “shop around” for the perfect site for the wedding ceremony. Since the Catholic wedding is unique in that it is sacred liturgy, the site is, in most cases, predetermined.

In the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, Catholic weddings must take place in a Catholic church. Public meeting halls, homes, and parks are not permitted for the Sacrament of Marriage. The marriage of two Catholics must take place in a Catholic Church. If the bride is Catholic, the marriage customarily takes place in the bride’s parish church.

### **WITNESSES**

Any ordained Catholic priest or deacon is the ordinary minister (witness) to officiate at a Catholic wedding. If a friend or relative of the couple is an ordained Catholic priest or deacon from outside the Church of the marriage, and is to officiate, delegation must be given by the pastor of the church of marriage and approved by the Archbishop. The priest of the church of marriage needs to be consulted before making these arrangements.

A marriage license and witnesses are required by the State of Kansas and the Church. Witnesses must be at least 18 years old. Please bring the marriage license to the rehearsal with you. Non-Catholics may, of course, be chosen to be one of the witnesses.

### **THE LITURGY**

All liturgy and worship within the Catholic Church is characterized by the principles of simplicity and appropriateness. This means that good liturgical prayer focuses attention on those things which are truly primary and most important, with a minimum of clutter or distraction. **In the wedding ceremony, the bride and groom are primary and their most important action is the exchange of vows**, while the entire assembly is the witness to this primary action.

A couple may want to honor special friends by including them as attendants, flower girls, ring bearers, and candle lighters. The resulting wedding party can sometimes become so large that it distracts from what is about to take place. Special consideration needs to be given to this. Ideally, the number of attendants should be limited to no more than five couples.

It is strongly recommended that young children, especially those under the age of four years, **not** be in the wedding party. Experience has shown that children under the age of four often become overwhelmed by the experience, they become anxious, and are often unable to complete the task at hand.

In the marriage of two Catholics, a nuptial Mass is usually celebrated. In a marriage between a baptized Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, the ceremony is usually conducted outside of

Mass. And if the marriage is between a baptized Catholic and a non-baptized person the ceremony is always conducted outside of Mass.

The ushers greet people as they enter the church and lead them to their seats. The ushers help set the tone for the wedding. They should encourage a quiet, respectful atmosphere. They should remind guests with cameras that pictures **with flash are not to be taken during the ceremony**. Ushers should be present, with the assembly, for the entire ceremony and be ready to help if there is an emergency.

Vocal or instrumental music is recommended as the guests arrive in the church. The purpose of this prelude music is to gather and unite the thoughts of all present and to prepare them for the celebration of the marriage liturgy.

If you have trained altar servers among your family and friends and you wish to include them in the wedding, it will be necessary for them to be present at the rehearsal.

Friends or family members who are experienced lectors or eucharistic ministers may be honored to take part in the ceremony. It is important for the lectors to practice the readings so that they will feel comfortable with the acoustics of the Church. Eucharistic ministers and lectors need to be present at the rehearsal.

The Scriptural Readings are selected by the bride and groom from an approved list of appropriate readings. Poetry and personal verses are appropriate for the reception only.

“Open” communion is not possible. Only Catholic members, properly disposed, should receive the Eucharist. This should be explained to non-Catholic members of the wedding party.

A Catholic custom that some couples opt to choose is to place flowers at the statue of the Blessed Virgin after Communion. Couples who choose to do this have a special devotion to the Blessed Mother. The couple remain at the statue for a few minutes, asking the Blessed Mother’s intercessory prayers to help them to be good spouses and parents. If a hymn is sung (often times “Ave Maria”), they remain until it is finished. If you have a special devotion to the Blessed Mother and wish to do this, please discuss this with the priest before making any final plans.

### **CONFESSION**

All Catholics are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before their wedding day. If you wish, the priest will offer the Sacrament after the rehearsal since there may be others who would also like the opportunity to go to confession before the wedding.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. is not permitted inside or outside the church. Insurance companies discourage this practice as the church would be liable if any injuries occurred.

If an aisle runner is used, it should be made of cloth to avoid the possibility of someone falling.

The consumption of any type of alcoholic beverage is not allowed anywhere on the premises. No drinks or food is to be taken into the main body of the church at anytime.

The photographer should be advised to consult with the priest for instructions and limitations.

The use of flash or lights during the ceremony is not appropriate. The photographer may take pictures two hours before the ceremony in the church but should finish not later than thirty minutes before the start of the ceremony.

Video taping is permitted of the ceremony from the choir loft and/or a side area either outside or within the sanctuary. The camera must be stationary. There should be no movement as this becomes a distraction from the primary focus of the ceremony.

The dressing/preparation area for the wedding party will be in the church basement. Should there be a funeral the same day of your wedding, the funeral Mass will be at 9 AM.

### **IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER**

The Catholic party must present proof of baptism issued from the church of baptism dated within six months prior to the wedding unless baptized at Sts. Peter and Paul. If the bride or groom is non-Catholic, the Church asks that they provide a copy of their baptismal certificate also. If unable to do so, we need at least the date and place of baptism.

A rehearsal for the ceremony will be held the day before the ceremony. Everyone having a role in the wedding liturgy should be present to begin the rehearsal at the scheduled time. No others are required to attend the rehearsal.

### **CHURCH ENVIRONMENT: Flowers, Candles, Etc.**

You may decorate the church the evening before the wedding. **Please keep in mind that weekday Mass will be celebrated the morning of your wedding.** The decorations should not interfere with this Mass. Should there be a funeral the morning of your wedding, the decoration of the church will need to wait until after the funeral.

The use of flowers and candles should enhance the liturgy and not detract from it. Simplicity in church décor enhances the liturgy and emphasizes the unity between God, the bride and the groom. If you choose to decorate with flowers, please discuss with the priest the type of arrangements you will have and where you plan to position them in the sanctuary.

If you choose to use candelabras, please use only **dripless** candles. If the candelabras you use have globes around the candles, you should consider using candles tall enough that **reach the top of the globe** for ease of lighting.

The unity candle (which is to be used only within the marriage of a Catholic and a non-Catholic) will be placed on a stand within the sanctuary and not on the altar.

Please do not remove any church décor such as flowers, banners, liturgical art without approval of the priest. The environment for the liturgical season should be respected, so if the wedding is in Advent, for example, purple will remain in the Church.

Nothing may be placed on the altar of sacrifice; this includes decorations. Please keep this in mind when decorating the church.

The use of any type of tape is not allowed on any surfaces in the church, such as on pews and floors. Bows may be tied to the pews with ribbons. Nothing should obstruct entrance to any of the pews on either side. No sticky tape, glue, any sticky material and anything to this nature to be strictly not permitted. No decorations are permitted on the wall. Please consult Clea Renyer, the lead sacristan of the parish for the decorations. Funerals have to be accommodated in the parish sometimes on Saturday mornings too. Please work with the church and grieving family to accommodate the circumstances for decorating the church.

### **MUSIC**

A wedding is a communal liturgical celebration. The purpose of music, when used in the liturgical celebrations of the Church, is to glorify God and to transform His people. The music, whether it comes before, during or after the wedding, **should serve to direct the people's attention to the sacredness of the event and the presence of Christ in the holy union of marriage.** Choices of music should be chosen from sources that express the divine as well as the human aspect of love. All music **must be approved** by the pastor.

Only vocal music with **sacred texts** and **classical instrumental music** may be performed at the wedding. **Secular songs are not appropriate in the Church but to be used at the reception.**

Pre-recorded music should not be played. The cantor and musicians are encouraged to come to the rehearsal. In selecting your cantor, organist, or musicians, please keep in mind that they need to be familiar with the Catholic Liturgy. All music must have the prior approval of the parish music coordinator Terry Nordhus.

## **CLOSING NOTE**

We share your joy in preparing for this holy and happy event. We wish to assist you in every way we can in your wedding preparations to insure a day that is dignified as well as prayerful and meaningful. May the blessings of God be with you all the days of your married life together. The following article was taken from our Archdiocesan newspaper, "The Leaven."

### ***Many problems arise when couples live together before marriage***

Jesus taught that when we make important commitments in life, we should be prepared to keep them and live them out. Among the greatest suffering that people experience in life is that caused by a failure to keep such promises. Conversely, our greatest joys are the fruit of honored commitments.

This is true in regard to marriage. One of the great joys of the priesthood is to be involved in the preparation of couples for marriage. It is a joy to get to know these young people as they prepare to make one of the most important commitments in life, and to help them explore the demands of marriage.

On average, couples getting married today are older than those in the past. The average age for marriage in the archdiocese is 27 years. Twenty-five years ago, the average was 21 years. This is a result of many factors, including the economics of today's world. Another factor is the fear of making a commitment that may be broken. With a national divorce rate of about 50 percent, it is understandable that couples want to be sure that they can be successful in marriage.

Sometimes couples begin to live together before marriage to see if they are compatible, which is a mistake. "Trial marriages" can cause a number of problems. Not only is such an arrangement morally wrong, and very seriously sinful according to the explicit teachings of Jesus, but it also becomes an obstacle to a stable and happy marriage. Indeed, statistically, those who live together before marriage have a higher divorce rate than those who do not. The reasons are multiple.

Sometimes, after living together for a year or so, one person wants marriage, while the other is satisfied with the status quo. As a result, one person ends up - sometimes subtly - pressuring the other to get married. That can be a catastrophe. Resentment can develop. And if any decision should be made freely, it is the decision to marry.

Living together outside of marriage is an ambiguous relationship. It is always confusing to the couple themselves. They have a commitment to each other, yet they are not really committed. "Is it my money, or our money? Is this my home, or our home? Am I committed to you, or am I still independent? Are you responsible to me and to my expectations, or not?"

When a problem arises, it is often much easier to split up rather than try to work it out.

When couples marry after having lived together, after the wedding they often go back to the same relationship they had before. It feels the same. They have the same attitude toward each other, the same habits and the same understanding they had before marriage. Often there is no new commitment.

When troubles arise, they often do not have the depth or mutuality of commitment to work it out. They are living the life of married singles. Living together without the commitment of marriage jeopardizes the possibility of a happy permanent marriage.

Even the sexual relationship, often a major reason for living together, is robbed of its fulfillment and beauty. The meaningfulness, the beauty and fulfillment of sexual union is found only in the marriage bed where there is the commitment of permanent and faithful love. Any sexual relationship without that kind of commitment is not only against God's law, but is also perverted and destructive. The couple may never learn the fullest possibilities of real love.

Jesus teaches that when you make a commitment, really make a commitment. And when you make important life commitments, please be prepared to live them out.

Cleaning:

The wedding party is required to clear all the items you brought for the wedding and decoration like program sheets, candles and flowers etc. Please pick up the trash and leave the church ready for the next service.

### **CHECKLIST**

- Proof of baptism
- Certificate from Marriage Prep Classes
- Schedule appointments with priest
- Date/Time of wedding
- Date/Time of rehearsal
- Marriage License (to be brought to the rehearsal)
- Readings chosen
- Organist and Cantor
- Music selections
- Lector
- Eucharistic Ministers (1 or 3)
- Altar Servers
- Flowers
- Photographer

We like to congratulate you on your engagement. It is a step closer to enter into the sacrament of marriage. We the parishioners at Sts. Peter and Paul are praying for you for a happy marriage.

### **Agreement:**

We \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have set the target date \_\_\_\_\_ for our wedding. The church has reserved this date for the wedding. We agree to pay \$300 as a deposit and out of which \$200 is refundable if abiding by the above said agreement. The wedding party will be responsible for any damage caused to the church property.

Signature of the party

Signature of the pastor

Date

Date