

**Marriage Preparation Manual**  
**St. Joseph Catholic Church**  
**P. O. Box 199**  
**Rayne, Louisiana 70578**

The first step towards marriage is meeting with a Priest or Deacon to conduct a pre-nuptial inquiry, a short interview that gathers necessary information and proves the couple's freedom to marry. Only after this step has been completed (and fees are received) can a wedding date and rehearsal be scheduled. Weddings must be scheduled at least six (6) and no more than eighteen (18) months after the initial interview.

After the pre-nuptial inquiry, couples must complete 3 elements of preparation. (1) Prepare and Enrich online assessment; (2) Witness to Love Marriage Preparation; (3) Natural Family Planning training. Registration for Prepare & Enrich and NFP training can be made online and the cost of each is the responsibility of the couple. Certificates of completion for each program should be turned into the Priest or Deacon who is overseeing preparation and officiating at the wedding.

**1. Prepare-Enrich**

Prepare-Enrich is a pre-marital assessment that aims to give couples a more in-depth understanding of their own relationship, including their particular strengths and the areas where they can grow as they prepare for marriage. The cost of the assessment is \$45 per couple and the registration form is found at [www.diolaf.org](http://www.diolaf.org) (search "Offices" – marriage and family life – marriage preparation – prepare/enrich). Once you have registered, you will be emailed a link to the Prepare-Enrich website. The bride and groom are to each answer the questionnaire separately. Once both have completed the questionnaire online, the results will be sent to the Priest or Deacon officiating the wedding. (C/O St. Joseph Church P. O. Box 199 Rayne, Louisiana 70578)

**2. Witness to Love**

The marriage prep coordinator for the parish will be in contact with you shortly to schedule an orientation meeting. See the Witness to Love folder for more information and/or visit [www.witnesstolove.org](http://www.witnesstolove.org).

**3. Natural Family Planning**

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is an umbrella term for certain methods used to regulate pregnancies based on the observation of the naturally occurring signs of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's cycle. These methods, which respect the dignity of human sexuality and do not resort to artificial contraceptives, are in line with Catholic moral teachings. A number of different organizations offer training courses in NFP. Couples are encouraged to begin this class as early as possible in the marriage preparation process. For more information and to register for a class, visit: [www.diolaf.org](http://www.diolaf.org) (search "Offices" – Marriage and Family Life – marriage preparation – NFP) or [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org). Our parish Marriage Prep Coordinator will also give you more information about local teaching couples.

## WEDDING GUIDELINES

### The Nuptial Mass

Couples are encouraged to celebrate their marriage in the context of Mass, which gives full expression to our Catholic faith, but you may instead prefer a simple wedding rite. Weddings at St. Joseph parish may take place on Fridays after 4:00pm or Saturdays before 1:30 pm or after 6:30 pm. **Weddings on Saturday evening will not be a nuptial Mass, only the simple rite.**

According to diocesan policy, weddings between a Catholic and non-Catholic may not be celebrated within a nuptial Mass. Also, couples who are presently cohabitating may not celebrate a nuptial Mass and will be married according to the simple wedding rite.

**Fees: (Please note that your wedding date will be officially booked only once fees are paid.)**

Fees are charged to recoup the cost of marriage prep materials and the sacristan/coordinator stipend.

—**\$300.00** for all parishioners\* of St. Joseph parish.

—**\$1000.00** if neither party or their parents are parishioners\* of St. Joseph Parish

\*Parishioners are defined as (1) those who reside within the boundaries of our parish, (2) or are registered in the parish census for at least 6 months prior to booking the wedding, or (3) who live elsewhere but whose parents continue to live and worship at St. Joseph.

### Permission for Non-Parishioners:

Non-parishioners must obtain written permission from their pastor to be married at St. Joseph and must make their own arrangements for an out-of-parish Priest or Deacon to conduct the rehearsal and officiate their wedding as well as guide the preparation process. Weddings of non-parishioners will not be scheduled until confirmation is received from the visiting Priest or Deacon who is overseeing preparation and officiating the wedding ceremony. All necessary paperwork is to be delivered to the parish office at least one month prior to the date of the wedding.

### Updated Baptismal Certificates

Both the bride and groom must submit a recently issued (within the last six months) updated baptismal certificate from the parish where they were baptized. Certificates are to be mailed or delivered to St. Joseph Church P.O Box 199 Rayne, Louisiana 70578.

## **Follow-up Pre-Nuptial Meetings**

After completing "Prepare and Enrich," couples must make arrangements to meet with the officiant of their wedding to discuss the assessment. After all other requirements have been met and at least four weeks before the wedding date, the couple must schedule a third meeting with the officiant to finalize plans for the ceremony and review their completed wedding packet. By this meeting, the following must be submitted:

1. Updated Baptismal Certificates
2. Engaged Encounter or Foundations certificates (if the couple is not using the Witness to Love Program)
3. NFP class certificates
4. Church usage fee
5. Music selection form and sacristan preparation form including readings and the names of the two witnesses

## **Marriage License**

Couples must obtain a marriage license from at the Parish Clerk of Court Office two (2) weeks prior to the wedding date. A 24-hour waiting period between the issuance of the license and the actual celebration of the ceremony must be observed. You will receive your wedding certificate from St. Joseph Church on the day of your wedding. The original license will be sent to the Clerk of Court Office by the parish office to be recorded.

## **Sacrament of Penance**

All Catholics are urged to receive the Sacrament of Penance prior to their wedding day as preparation for their marriage. Arrangements may be made with any Priest. A good confession should be made as close to the wedding day as possible.

## **Wedding Rehearsal**

The rehearsal is to be scheduled along with the wedding ceremony after the initial interview is completed. The date and time of the rehearsal is contingent upon the availability of the church and rehearsal director. For parishioners, a parish staff member conducts the rehearsal. Non-parishioners must make arrangements with their officiant for their rehearsal. All bridal attendants, lectors, ushers and servers for the wedding are urged to attend the rehearsal. The marriage license is signed by the bride, groom and witnesses at the rehearsal. The use of any alcohol and/or drugs during the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony itself is strictly prohibited. In the event any member of the wedding party is found intoxicated, they will be asked to leave immediately. If either the bride or groom appears intoxicated, the wedding must be cancelled.

## **Proper Attire**

Please understand that the church is a sacred place and immodest and/or inappropriate attire is not acceptable and will not be permitted. The couple, their attendants and servers are to dress modestly and appropriately for both the rehearsal and the ceremony itself.

Immodest attire includes, but is not limited to; attire that reveals cleavage/chest area as well as skirts that do not reach the knee.

Inappropriate attire includes, but is not limited to; shorts, collar-less shirts or non-formal footwear. In addition, cross-dressing of any sort (biological male dressed in traditional female attire or biological female dressed in traditional male attire) is not permitted.

Failure to abide by the dress code policy will result in postponement of the wedding ceremony until the individual in violation either complies or is removed from the bridal party.

## **Servers for the Wedding Mass**

Servers for the wedding Mass may include altar servers, lectors, and extraordinary Ministers of Communion. All servers are to be:

1. Baptized and practicing Catholics who are in good standing with the Church. If married, it must be a valid marriage, not a civil union.
2. Not living in any public impropriety, such as living with a partner outside of marriage.
3. Extraordinary ministers must be commissioned ministers currently active in their parish.
4. Non-Catholics may not participate in a liturgical function.

## **Photographers and Videographers**

Please have your photographer AND videographer sign and date the enclosed work permit (green sheet) and return it to the parish office by your second or third meeting with the Priest or Deacon. These guidelines are meant to be as accommodating as possible while respecting the integrity of the liturgy. You must review these policies with your photographer before the wedding.

## **Reception of Holy Communion**

We welcome all active Catholics who are well prepared, in good standing within the Church, and not conscious of serious sin, to join us in receiving Holy Communion. Non-Catholics or Catholics unable or not prepared to receive will be asked to remain in their pew or to come forward to receive a blessing.

## **WEDDING MUSIC POLICIES**

### **Planning Music for the Wedding**

We are committed to providing beautiful music for your wedding. Music is not a requirement of the marriage ceremony, but the musical tradition of the Church is a treasure of inestimable value and forms an integral part of the liturgy. Refer to the song selection sheet in your packet for most commonly used pieces of sacred music.

### **Parish Musicians**

Tori S. Gossen – organist/vocalist (337.581.5565)

Lanie Marcantel – vocalist (337.251.2606)

Emily Paille – organist (337.591.3614)

Sasha Massey – vocalist (337.501.8800)

\*If you would like an out-of-parish musician to provide the music, the pastor must approve them along with whatever music they have selected.

## General Guidelines for Music

1. No pre-recorded music is allowed before, during, or after the wedding liturgy.
2. All music used during the liturgy must be of a sacred character and appropriate for its particular liturgical function.
3. If a musician is engaged for a nuptial Mass, it is presumed that some parts of the Mass will be sung (at least the Ordinary, Alleluia, and responsorial psalm).
4. Before and after the liturgy—for the prelude, processional, and recessional—instrumental music of a non-sacred character can be used. Popular music, however, is never allowed. It is customary for this reason to use only classical instrumental music at these moments.
5. If there is any question of the appropriateness of a given musical selection it must be approved in advance by the parish organist and/or the celebrant.

## GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING WEDDING MUSIC

A Catholic wedding takes place in the context of the public worship of the Church. It is a liturgical act, not a private ceremony. The music at a wedding, therefore, must be appropriate for worship. Before making any plans about wedding music, please review the following:

There are two wedding liturgies: (1) the nuptial Mass, and (2) the simple marriage rite outside of Mass. Music is not strictly required for either, but if there is music, it must be liturgically appropriate. Before any music can be selected, we must first know which wedding liturgy we are planning. Musical elements in the liturgy may include the following:

### The Nuptial Mass

1. Prelude
2. Processional
  - Parents and grandparents
  - Bridal party
  - Bride
3. Gloria
4. Responsorial Psalm
5. Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia)
6. Mass Ordinary
  - Gloria
  - Sanctus
  - Agnus Dei
7. Offertory hymn or song
8. Communion hymn or song
9. Marian hymn (during offering to BVM)
10. Recessional

### Simple Marriage Rite

1. Prelude
2. Processional
  - Parents and grandparents
  - Bridal party
  - Bride
3. Responsorial Psalm
4. Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia)
5. Marian hymn (during offering to BVM)
6. Recessional

## DECORATING POLICIES

Decorating Hours: The church is available for decorating two hours prior to the start of the wedding.

Church Decorations: Liturgical decorations may not be moved or altered in any way. The church is specially decorated for the Advent, Christmas, Lenten, and Easter seasons. If your wedding is to take place during one of these seasons, additional decorations should not be used (except pew markers). All sanctuary furnishings must remain in place for the wedding.

Pew Markers: Bows and any other decorations on the pews should only be tied with ribbon or soft tulle in order to prevent scratching of the wood. Lit candles may not be incorporated as a part of decorations.

Adhesive: Under no circumstances are tape, tacks, nails or sticky tack to be used on the pews, walls, or any surface in the Church.

Confetti: The throwing of flower petals, rice, birdseed, bubbles, or any other type of confetti is not permitted inside church, on the steps or anywhere on the church grounds.

Handrails & Aisle Runners: Decorations are not to be placed on or near the handrails on the steps entering the church or the sanctuary. Aisle runners are not permitted down the steps or in the church. These areas are to remain open at all times for use by the handicapped.

Clean-up: It is the responsibility of the wedding party to remove all decorations from the church immediately following the ceremony. Flower arrangements may be left in donation to the church. Empty boxes or other trash must be removed from the vestibule or restrooms.

Unity Candle: The use of a Unity candle or similar additional ritual is not allowed within the content of the wedding Mass. However, flowers may be brought by the bride and groom to the Marian Altar at the end of the ceremony.

### **\*\*PLEASE NOTE\*\***

Trolleys, Party Buses, or other large vehicles are not permitted to park on the circle driveway in front of the Church. If they park here and cause damage to the lawn or sidewalk, it may result in the forfeit of your deposit for repairs.