

# Wedding Guidelines

For the Tri-Parishes of

**Holy Rosary, Lima**

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**Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mondovi**

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**St. Mary's Assumption, Durand**

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## **Christian Marriage**

You have asked to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage within one of our Tri-Parish churches, Holy Rosary, Sacred Heart, and St. Mary's. We are eager to work with you to help you experience the grace of this special sacrament as you begin your married life together. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, "The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws... God himself is the author of marriage."

Christian Marriage then is a sacred event, a sacrament. Catholics hold marriage in such high esteem because we believe human love reflects the single passionate love of God for His people, and reflected in His Church. Again, the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, "The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures, and spiritual attitudes."

St. Paul tells us that the marriage of Christians is a symbol of the union of Christ and His Church. The love and commitment embodied in husband and wife reveals the Love which creates and sustains all things. Christian Marriage is life-giving. Spouses commit to grow together and to create a family of life and love. In nurturing and sustaining each other, and their children, husbands and wives more clearly reflect God's loving concern for each of us.

As two Christians present themselves for the Sacrament of Marriage, there are several criteria that needs to be in place and understood and accepted by the couple

1. It is assumed that the couple is mature and that they have known each other long enough for a deep personal relationship to have been established.
2. At least one party is an active, practicing Catholic. (The Catholic party is either registered in one of the Tri-Parishes or resides in the parish and is the child of a registered parishioner.) Both parties should be living Christian lives of prayer, service, public worship, and involvement in the parish community.
3. That the couple is prepared financially to provide a suitable family living situation.
4. That the couple has an earnest desire to share the Catholic Faith with children they may have or adopt in the future.

## **Preparation for Marriage**

**As soon as engaged – One year to six months prior to your wedding date**

Please contact the Tri-Parish Central Office to check availability of dates and to arrange for an initial meeting. At this meeting information on the marriage preparation process will be provided. The wedding date may also be booked at this time. (If your plans change, please contact the parish so that the date may be available for others.)

## **Interchurch Marriages**

It is well within the guidelines of the Roman Catholic Church to celebrate interchurch (mixed) marriages. Several special factors should be kept in mind:

1. When the couple is from differing faith backgrounds, a course of instruction in the Catholic faith can be added to the preparation process at the discretion of the priest/deacon, and is invited to participate in the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program. Since the emphasis is on the mutual need of the couple for openness, dialogue, and understanding, exposure to some of the basic precepts of both faith communities is encouraged. The Catholic party should also honor and participate in pre-marriage programs in which the non-Catholic party may be required to participate in fulfillment of his/her religious traditions.
2. Out of respect for the non-Catholic party, his/her family, and in an effort not to distract from the unifying act of sacramental marriage, interchurch marriages will be encouraged to be celebrated within the liturgy, "Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass".

## **Non-practicing Catholics**

Catholics seeking the sacrament of Matrimony are expected to be actively engaged in their faith, including regular Mass attendance, witnessing their faith in their daily lives, and to be registered and supporting members of the parish with their time, talent, and treasure. When one or both of the parties preparing for marriage in the Church is not practicing his/her faith, an additional series of instructions may be added to the preparation process. Those who were baptized into the Catholic Church, but never confirmed are highly encouraged to celebrate confirmation prior to their wedding.

## **Cohabitation**

Cohabitation (couples living together prior to marriage) is not an impediment to marriage in the Church. However, it does raise special concerns regarding the couple's relationship and is frocked with many potential problems. These concerns will be addressed with the couple by the priest/deacon, FOCCUS facilitators and in the pre-marriage program as part of the preparation process.

While couples choose to live together before marriage for a variety of reasons, they should realize that the lifestyle they have chosen is contrary to the teaching of the Church regarding human sexuality and the permanency of sacramental marriage. The Church teaches, "the fact is that such liaisons can scarcely ensure mutual sincerity and fidelity in a relationship between a man and a woman, nor, especially, can they protect it from inconstancy of desires or whim." "Human love does not tolerate 'trial marriages'. It demands a total and definitive gift of persons to one another."

## **FOCCUS**

All couples are required to take the FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study) and review it with a designated couple. The purpose of the FOCCUS is a compatibility survey, and enables the couple and facilitators to identify topics or issues that need discussion and evaluation before marriage. Strengths are identified as well as growth areas. The FOCCUS session must be completed within 60 days of the initial meeting.

### **“In Perfect Union”**

All couples are required to review The State of Wisconsin Catholic Marriage Compendium, “In Perfect Union.” Once reviewed, there is a signature sheet at the back of the book that the couples are required to sign and turn in to the priest/deacon.

### **Pre-Marriage Retreat**

All couples are required to participate in a Pre-Marriage overnight Retreat offered by various parishes throughout the diocese of La Crosse.

### **Natural Family Planning**

The Diocese of La Crosse requires that preparation for marriage include training in NFP from an approved course offered by the diocese. This is typically offered online or it can be done in person.

### **Sharing With the Pastoral Staff**

The priest/deacon will meet with you at various stages throughout the time of preparation. Being open with them at those times will provide opportunities to explore your spiritual growth, the meaning of the Sacrament of Marriage, and your new roles as husband and wife. Please keep the Tri-Parish Central Office updated with current address and phone number information so any communication from us will be received.

### **Required Documents**

In order for a wedding to take place within the Catholic Church, all couples must complete or supply the following:

1. A current (issued within six months prior of the initial meeting) certificate of Baptism along with notation or certificates of First Communion and Confirmation is required of the Catholic party. Proof of a Christian baptism for the non-Catholic party is also required.
2. Information is taken from the bride and groom as to their freedom to marry and their desire to do so without reservation through a document completed called the Prenuptial Inventory (MA Form)
3. In the case of an interchurch wedding, the Catholic party is asked to promise to live his/her faith, and to baptize and educate any future children in the Catholic Faith. You will be asked to either sign a statement or make a verbal promise.
4. If neither party is a member of the Tri-Parishes, a letter from their pastor must be obtained granting permission for the wedding to take place locally, and indicating that the Catholic party(ies) involved is a member in good standing of their parish.
5. The wedding program and plans for the liturgy must be completed and approved by the priest/deacon prior to the rehearsal and actual celebration of marriage.
6. A Marriage license from the State of Wisconsin must be obtained. The license will need to be presented to the priest or deacon at the wedding rehearsal, along with church and presider stipends. The rehearsal will not be conducted without these items.

**The Sacrament of Reconciliation** - Couples are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Confession before marriage as a means of spiritual preparation.

## **The Wedding Liturgy**

As Roman Catholics we are a liturgical church. That is, the rites and sacraments we celebrate follow a prescribed form which is an official liturgy of the Church, formulated and handed down from one generation to the next. We see our liturgy as a gift – a gift of the Church and its living tradition. As good stewards of this precious gift, care must be taken to ensure that the public worship of the Church reflects the principles of authentic Catholic liturgy.

## **Participation**

The liturgy itself is to foster the full, active, and intentional participation of all those taking part in it. No one should feel as a mere bystander in the praise and worship of our God and this includes the celebration of the sacrament of Marriage

## **Music**

Music is integral to every Catholic liturgy, including the celebration of Marriage. The following criteria will be helpful in selecting appropriate music for your wedding liturgy.

1. There is a large body of sacred/liturgical music appropriate for weddings. Suitable songs will speak explicitly of the Christian dimension of love. Secular music or music that does not have an explicitly Christian focus is unsuitable for the liturgy. The music at your wedding should be made by the assembly as well as soloists. Familiar hymns and acclamations will facilitate the assembly participation and make your wedding memorable for everyone. The parish hymnal is the best place to start in choosing appropriate music. All music used in the Wedding Liturgy must be approved for use by the Wedding Music Coordinator. Guest vocalists and musicians may be used with the permission and direction of the Music Coordinator.
2. Recorded music may not be used.
3. The following elements of the wedding liturgy should always be sung by all:
  - a. The Gloria
  - b. The Responsorial Psalm (should always be sung)
  - c. The Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia, to be sung)
  - d. The Eucharistic Acclamations and Communion Song (if Mass is celebrated).
4. Solo or instrumental music may be used at the following times:
  - a. Prelude
  - b. Processional
  - c. Marian Consecration or Lighting of the Unity Candle [optional]
  - d. Preparation of the Gifts
  - e. After the Communion Song
  - f. Recessional
5. Unsuitable music contains lyrics which have only a tenuous or faintly implied connection with the religious dimensions of love, or which contain only “inspiring” or “consoling” secular sentiments as well as the instrumental versions of such songs. Such music is not deemed acceptable for the wedding liturgy, and is more appropriate for the reception. The music coordinator will help with determining if a song is acceptable for the liturgy.

### **Bride and Groom**

The bride and groom administer the Sacrament of Marriage to each other. As the representative of the Church, the Presider (priest or deacon) witnesses the administration of the sacrament along with two official witnesses.

### **Music Ministers**

Because music is integral to the Catholic liturgy, only qualified liturgical ministers should be asked to serve as accompanists, soloists, or leaders of song. Their ministry consists of proclaiming our faith and enabling the assembly to participate fully in the liturgy. Ordinary parish musicians are encouraged for music at parish weddings.

### **Readers**

Friends, relatives, or parish members proclaim the Scripture readings and the General Intercessions at the wedding liturgy. These individuals must attend church regularly, be competent and comfortable in front of people, and be able to read from the Lectionary Book. They need to be present at rehearsal in order to practice their readings. Readers within a Wedding Mass are to be Catholic.

### **Communion Ministers**

When the wedding liturgy takes place during Mass, an Extraordinary Eucharistic Minister may need to be present to assist the priest. Those chosen need to be approved Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Please consult with the presider concerning this ministry.

### **Servers**

When the wedding liturgy takes place during Mass, servers may be present to assist the presider, but are not required. Preferably, servers are members of the parish so that they are familiar with local procedures.

### **Attendants**

Because of space limitations and the need to keep the wedding couple central to the wedding liturgy, six couples are the maximum number of attendants allowable (including the Matron of Honor and Best Man). Only one couple, the official witnesses – is required. Those who officially witness the marriage are required by state law to be 18 years of age.

Miniature brides, grooms, or attendants are not to be used. One Flower Girl and/or one Ring Bearer can be used. If involved, they are to be at least four years of age. They are expected to be mature and able to participate independently (not need to be carried or led up the aisle by someone else).

### **Ushers**

Ushers greet people at the door, welcoming them to the celebration. They assist guests in finding seating, and guide the flow of processions. They are also responsible for making the liturgy start on time, keeping distractions from occurring, and for making sure the church is in order before they leave.

## **Gift Bearers**

If Mass is celebrated, you will need two people to bring forward the bread and wine. As these people are directly participating in your wedding liturgy, they should be competent to carry out this task.

## **The Order of the Wedding Liturgy**

*The Entrance* – all stand.

The procession into the church follows this order

1. Servers
2. Reader(s)
3. Presider
4. Groom and his Parents
5. Attendants
6. Bride and her Parents

## **The Greeting and Opening Prayer**

After all have reached their places, the presider welcomes all present on behalf of the local church and families involved and invites all to join in the celebration by participating in singing the Opening Song, then offers the opening prayer.

## **Liturgy of the Word**

A booklet containing the scripture selections for the wedding liturgy will be given to you. You are asked to select two readings: one from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament. Some presiders will opt to ask you to choose the Gospel reading as well.

## **The Rite of Marriage**

Immediately after the homily, you will state your intention to give yourselves freely, to love each other for the rest of your lives, and to accept children lovingly as a gift from God. You will then exchange your vows and rings.

While neither practice is part of the Church's official liturgy a Unity Candle may be lit, or you may place flowers at the Blessed Virgin's shrine after the Rite of Marriage. The Unity Candle and its tapers may be lit by the couple only. Since other popular practices (ie. Sand, release of butterflies, etc.) have no foundation in Catholic worship, they will not be permitted and are more suitable for the reception.

***(If The Wedding Liturgy Outside of Mass is being celebrated, the liturgy then concludes with the General Intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, Nuptial Blessing and dismissal.)***

## **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

After the exchange of vows and rings, the Mass continues in the usual manner. Bride and Groom or others may assist with the presentation of the gifts.

## **The Communion Rite**

Because of the Catholic Church's belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Holy Communion is offered only to Catholics who are actively practicing their faith. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy



Communion are to be practicing Catholics, trained in this ministry, and may be parish members, relatives or friends. (Please consult with the presider.)

### *Blessing and Dismissal*

The wedding liturgy concludes with a final blessing over the couple and the dismissal of the assembly.

## **General Matters**

### **Sacred Space**

Our Catholic tradition holds that the worship space within the church proper is sacred space dedicated to the worship of God. Proper decorum for such space is expected by all present. There should be no loud shouting, running about by children, smoking, or the consumption of food or beverages. No alcohol or drugs are permitted or will be tolerated on church grounds. Men are asked to remove hats or other headwear.

### **Program**

The use of a program is not required. If you choose to have programs printed for your guests, the final draft must be approved by the presider before printing.

### **Rehearsal**

All couples together with their whole wedding party, parents, and any other assisting ministers (readers, musicians, ushers, etc.) are required to meet with the presider to rehearse the wedding liturgy. The rehearsal normally takes place the night before the wedding. Exceptions are to be approved by the presider. Out of respect for all involved, rehearsal will begin on time. You must bring the marriage license, church, and presider's stipend to the rehearsal. The rehearsal will not take place without these items.

### **Photography/Camcorders**

Professional pictures may be taken before, during, or after the wedding liturgy. However, they should never detract from the liturgy or the wedding couple. Flash assisted photography during the liturgy is not allowed. All pictures should be completed one hour prior to any other parish liturgy (eg. Saturday evening Mass). Professional photographers and those using a camcorder are to be generally cooperative and are to respect the sacred nature of this celebration. They should remain in the nave of the church and are not to enter the sanctuary. It is appreciated if your photographer meets briefly with the presider before the liturgy. Amateur photographers are to attend the rehearsal to understand the liturgical rite.

### **Flowers, Plants, and Decorations**

Fresh flowers, live plants and decorations such as bows/ribbons and candles, add a touch of joy and beauty to this festive occasion. Artificial flowers and plants only of high quality may be used. Flowers and plants must be placed appropriately in the worship space, and are to be approved by the presider.

Bows and ribbons if used should be used only with the type of tape that will not damage the finish on church surfaces. Because of code issues, ribbons should not block off access to aisles or pews.

If candles are used on the pews, they must be enclosed in a glass globe. This is for code and safety purposes and prevents wax from damaging carpeting and pews.

No flowers or decorations are to be placed on top of the altar at any time.

### **Aisle Runner**

The use of an aisle runner is not permitted in the Tri-Parishes for safety and liability reasons.

### **Clean-up**

Ushers or other designated person(s) are responsible for cleaning up after the wedding liturgy. Pews, aisles, and the church hall are to be carefully checked for programs and other waste. Throwing of rice, confetti, or bird seed on parish grounds is strictly forbidden. It is hard to clean up, and presents a potential liability problem to the parish. If the church or grounds are left in such a way as to require special cleaning, the bride and groom will be presented with a bill for costs involved.

### **Offerings**

Parishioners of the Tri-Parishes are asked to offer a \$100.00 stipend to the church at the time of their wedding. These offerings are used in support of the parish ministry to the poor and also cover the cost of the FOCCUS program. These are to be paid at the time of rehearsal.

An offering to the priest or deacon who presides at your wedding is an appropriate expression of gratitude to him. The suggested stipend amount is \$100.00.

Servers and musicians should also be appropriately compensated for their time and ministry.

# LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MARRIAGE

*The following are some basic guidelines to the legal requirements for marriage. As laws and regulations are subject to change, please refer to the County Clerk's office for the most up to date information.*

## **Marriage License Application**

Apply for your license at the County Clerk's office.

## **Age**

A person must be at least 18 years of age to marry without consent of parents or legal guardians.

## **Waiting Period**

There is a five (5) day waiting period after the date of application before the marriage license can be issued. If the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) day falls on a weekend or a holiday, the license will be issued the following business day. It is recommended that you apply at least two weeks in advance. Since the license expires thirty days after issuance, it cannot be applied for more than thirty-five (35) days in advance of the ceremony.

## **Residency**

Residency is where the person has resided (lived) thirty days prior to the application for a marriage license. Please contact the County Clerk's office to see if you are eligible to apply in a county you do not currently reside in. Applicants must furnish proof of current address, which should be a driver's license or ID card. A rent receipt, lease agreement, utility or phone bill may also be acceptable.

## **Birth Date**

All applicants, regardless of age, are required to furnish a "CERTIFIED" Birth Certificate. This is a signed copy of the birth certificate which bears the raised County or State Seal issued from the Register of Deeds, or Recorder in the County of birth, or from the Office of Vital Statistics in the State of birth. A birth notification (no raised seal or signature) is NOT acceptable, nor is the one that hospitals issue, even though it may have a decorative hospital seal. These are birth announcements only and cannot be accepted.

***Once you receive your marriage license, please keep it flat. Folding it can sometimes cause the ink to smear. The Register of Deeds cannot accept the license if any parts are illegible.***

We acknowledge that we have received a copy of the “Wedding Guidelines for the Tri-Parishes”. We understand that any exceptions to the above guidelines are to be approved by the presider prior to the wedding rehearsal. We understand we are responsible for planning our wedding liturgy within these guidelines and that any changes to these guidelines will not be honored without prior approval.

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Bride’s Signature

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Date

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Groom’s Signature

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Date