

## **Marriage Preparation Overview and Requirements**

The Sacrament of Marriage celebrates a lifelong commitment of love and fidelity between a man and a woman. The model for this union is Christ's love for the Church.

This document contains an overview and information on the requirements for the marriage preparation of a wedding to be held at Good Shepherd Catholic Community. It may also be downloaded via PDF after reading this document.

## **General Information for Marriages at Good Shepherd Catholic Community**

- The Marriage Preparation process takes approximately 9 months.
- The Catholic Church requires the Sacrament of Marriage to be celebrated at a Diocesan church, or other approved location by the Bishop of Fort Worth. Weddings held at a third-party venue are *invalid Catholic marriages*.
- Preparation for weddings at Good Shepherd Catholic Community (GSCC) usually takes place at GSCC, unless you don't live in the diocese or immediate area.
- At least one person being married must be Catholic, and both must be at least 18 years or older.
- The Catholic(s) to be married must be attending weekly Mass and participating in the sacraments.
- Marriage Preparation guidelines and requirements in this document are for couples that have never been married before. If a previous marriage exists for either the bride or groom, please contact the Director of Marriage Preparation.
- For Catholic couples, it is appropriate to celebrate their marriage at a Nuptial Mass with the priest presiding. A deacon may officiate or assist in that Mass. In the case of an ecumenical or interfaith marriage, GSCC celebrates their marriage before a deacon at a Wedding Liturgy of the Word (without communion) rather than a Mass so that both parties and their families feel fully included in the celebration.

Our weddings are held on Saturdays at 1:30PM. Rehearsal is held the day before, on Friday, at 5PM ending by 6PM. Weddings are not offered during:

- The Lenten season, Holy Week, and the Easter Triduum
- The Advent season, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day
- Holiday facility closure after Christmas
- New Year's Eve, New Year's Day and into the first week of January

After you have read our requirements for Marriage Preparation below, feel free to contact the Director of Marriage Preparation via email to schedule an initial appointment.

### **Initial Appointment with Director of Marriage Preparation Process**

This appointment takes between 2-3 hours to complete questionnaire information, review the forms needed, discuss a checklist of items required and complete a Fully Engaged inventory assessment for your forthcoming mentoring couple program. This meeting is held at GSCC and requires bride and groom be present. You will be given a checklist of documents needed and courses to be completed.

### **Reservation of Church Facility and Fees**

After the initial appointment with the Director of Marriage Preparation, completion of the Fully Engaged inventory assessment, and registration has been made the next day for the Pre-Cana and Natural Family Planning classes, a reservation for a wedding date at GSCC can be made.

**Please do not reserve a reception venue until after you have signed the church reservation agreement. We cannot guarantee the date will be available until the church reservation agreement is signed and received, which can only be completed after the initial appointment with the Director of Marriage Preparation.**

This will require a deposit and completed contract with our Business Manager.

Fees: An actively tithing member of Good Shepherd Catholic Community is defined as someone who has been registered and has a visible record of tithing (envelope system, checks, electronic fund transfers) for at least one year before contacting the parish about setting a wedding date. The parishioner fee for actively tithing parishioners covers some of the basic costs to the parish such as staff and books/materials. The non-parishioner fee includes the above and the cost of building use.

### **Documents Required During Marriage Preparation**

1. Baptismal Certificate from your parish of baptismal record. This certificate must be dated within six months of your wedding and contain notations on the back.
2. Non-Catholic baptismal proof of Trinitarian baptism from pastor, or family member.
3. "Affidavit of Free" status – two each for the groom, and bride by family or friends.
4. Dispensation from the Bishop of Fort Worth, if required.
5. Marriage License within 90 days of wedding.

As you complete the forms, submit documents and receive certificates of course completions, you will send them to our Marriage Preparation Administrator who will also remind you via email what is incomplete, missing information or past due.

It is the couple's wedding. That also means it is the responsibility of the couple to complete all the requirements by the timeline and deadlines given to them. If anything is incomplete or not met by the timeline to request approval of the wedding by the Diocese of Fort Worth Tribunal, the wedding is subject to rescheduling.

### **Courses and Programs Required by Diocese of Fort Worth:**

Engaged couples will need to plan and be able to have several meetings during the preparation time. Diocesan programs are required of marriage preparation. These include the following:

Theological Formation: Pre-Cana is a one day, or two evening on-site experience for engaged couples to begin their formal marriage preparation process. The course includes a series of talks and activities on topics such as marriage as a sacrament, vows, and sexuality in marriage as God planned it. Pre-Cana course information and registration is available at [FWDIOC.org](http://FWDIOC.org)

Natural Family Planning: Natural family planning is a method used by couples as a means of achieving or avoiding a pregnancy. It fosters respect and acceptance of the total person by teaching couples the nature of fertility. Marriages are enriched through a mutual understanding of the shared responsibility for family planning, creating a deeper appreciation for the value of life. Natural Family Planning is up to 99% effective in spacing births. Additional information and registration available at [FWDIOC.org](http://FWDIOC.org)

Fully-Engaged Mentor Couple Sessions: Based on your inventory assessment from the initial appointment meeting, an analysis will be furnished to a mentoring couple where you will meet with them monthly over a period of 3-4 months.

### **Ceremony Planning**

Three months (90 days) before your wedding date, the bride and groom will meet with the Director of Liturgy and Music for wedding planning. At that meeting, you will plan your wedding; turn in your selected readings, select appropriate music, musicians and other items as needed. Clergy for your wedding will also be assigned at that time so that you can meet with him before your wedding.

Two volunteer wedding ministers offer their time leading the rehearsal and providing assistance at the wedding. Fees for musicians are to be arranged with the Director of Liturgy and Music. Clergy typically receives a stipend for their services.

### **Ready to Proceed?**

Contact the Director of Marriage Preparation for additional information or to schedule an initial appointment.