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### THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

*Marriage as a sacrament is a serious and sacred commitment that calls a couple to each other in the most profound and permanent way. Their mutual love is a reminder of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. By the grace of this sacrament they become able to love one another as Christ has loved them. As a married couple they become a visible sign and reminder of Christ’s sacrificial love for all people.*

[POLICIES, 604.1 Diocese of Lafayette]

The following guidelines must be met to assure your freedom to be married:

#### *Church Guidelines*

- I. One must be eighteen (18) years of age or, if a minor, must have parental consent.
- II. One must not be related to the other by blood (i.e., not a sibling or first cousin.)
- III. One must not be bound by a previous bond of marriage.

#### *Moral Guidelines*

- I. Both parties understand and accept the sacredness of Marriage and that it is a sacramental union if both parties are baptized Christians.
- II. Both parties understand that Marriage binds the couple in permanent union till death.
- III. In the case of a sacramental Marriage, for it to be received fruitfully by the spouses, neither party should be in a state of serious or mortal sin.
- IV. The Catholic party is encouraged by the Church to have received the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion, as well as to practice their Faith, especially through a life of prayer and by a faithful attendance at Mass.
- V. Both parties should practice chastity in mind and body during the engagement period.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

*Msgr. Jefferson DeBlanc*

The staff and parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima Church congratulate you on this most important time in your life. We will do all that we can to make your wedding as beautiful and as meaningful for you as we can. We want this time of preparation to be a positive experience.

As Catholics, we have certain structures and rituals that are to be respected. These guidelines are meant to inform and aid you in planning a nuptial ceremony that is in accord with these respective structures. Please pay particular attention to the guidelines for music, bridal/maid gowns, and church décor. If you agree to cooperate fully with the requests below, you may call the rectory to set up an appointment to begin the marriage preparation process. Due to Fatima's marriage preparation course, it is necessary to contact the Parish Office, if at all possible, at least one year before the desired wedding date.

Pope Francis has recently urged all parishes to develop strong marriage preparation programs so that couples being married in the Catholic Church can have the best opportunity for a long and successful marriage. In obedience to the Pope's wishes, we are now requiring all couples who marry at Our Lady of Fatima to prepare for their marriage by meeting with trained mentor couples who themselves are only 5-10 years into their marriage. These meetings, which will be held at the mentor couple's home, will allow you to learn from another young couple who has faced the same challenges and blessings you will encounter as you begin your married life together. There are six (two hour) meetings that must be completed at least two months before your wedding date. Following your initial meeting with our Parish Administrator, our Deacon and your mentor couple will meet with you to get the marriage preparation course started. This preparation program is used in several parishes in our diocese and throughout the state.

I am confident that your participation in this program will help you to learn of the beauty of a Catholic marriage and will enable you to

draw on the grace God wants to give you as you live out this lifetime commitment to each other.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**CLEAN UP:** While a designated member of the custodial staff will do the major clean up work after your wedding, you are responsible for collecting any personal items to ensure that the church is returned to its original condition. Groomsmen and bridal attendants are especially reminded to remove personal items and debris left in waiting areas.

**FOOD OR DRINKS INSIDE THE CHURCH:** No food or drinks are allowed inside the Church for the rehearsal or wedding ceremony.

**MARRYING A NON-CATHOLIC:** For pastoral reasons, it is best that a Nuptial Mass not be celebrated when a large number of the congregation is not Catholic. A Service of the Word is recommended on these occasions.

**MARRIAGE LICENSE:** This must be obtained from the Clerk of Court at least two weeks and no more than thirty (30) days prior to the wedding date. To obtain a marriage license, a birth certificate is required. For persons under the age of 18, a parent must sign a consent. The marriage license is only valid for thirty (30) days from the date of issuance. The marriage license must be submitted to the church office **no later than one weeks prior** to the wedding date.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:** To allow for the proper disposition of the sacred wedding vows, the couple is to receive the sacrament of reconciliation a few days before the ceremony. This is usually done before the wedding rehearsal.

## IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Our Lady of Fatima Church Office**

Monday – Thursday 8:00 – 5:00, Friday 8:00 – 12:00  
(337) 232-8945

### **Msgr. Jefferson DeBlanc, Pastor**

(337) 232-8945, ext. 114

**Deacon Timothy Maragos**

(337) 232-8945

**Mr. Keith D'Anna, Director of Music/Organist**

(337) 232-8945, ext. 111

**Stephanie Supple, Parish Administrator**

(337) 232-8945, ext. 114

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION SCHEDULE

1. INITIAL MEETING WITH THE PARISH ADMINISTRATOR is conducted by teleconference.
  - a. confirmation of wedding date and time
  - b. information distributed for the NFP course
  - c. outline of music/photography guidelines
  - d. additional ceremony information and materials

All Parish fees are collected when the Marriage License is brought to the Parish Office 2 weeks before the ceremony except the Church Out-of-Parish Fee. The Out-of-Parish fee is collected when the couple or couple's parents who are scheduling a wedding have not been registered Fatima parishioners for at least one year prior to the date that you call to schedule a wedding (not the date of the wedding).

You may get the details of these fees by contacting the Parish Office, (337) 232-8945.

Payment for musicians is due 3 months prior to the wedding and not before. If the wedding is cancelled for any reason, including change of venue from Our Lady of Fatima Church, and payment has already been made, only 50% will be refunded to the couple. This is necessary due to the fact that stated musicians could have booked other employment opportunities on that specific date.

## INITIAL MEETING WITH THE DEACON

An appointment with the Deacon and your Marriage Prep mentor couple will be made by email contact from the Parish Administrator following your initial meeting with her.

Documentation for the initial meeting is specific to each couple seeking marriage:

- CATHOLIC DOCUMENTATION: New baptismal certificates of both the bride and groom are required at the first meeting with the Administrator. New certificates can be attained by contacting the parish church in which your baptism took place.
- NON-CATHOLIC DOCUMENTATION: Written proof of baptism is required. This information should include the full name of the baptized, date of birth, parents' full names and date of baptism. Also required is some proof of no previous marriage.
- NON-BAPTIZED PERSONS: A copy of the birth certificate is required.
- CATHOLIC NON-PARISHIONERS: Written permission, the *Letter of Release*, for a wedding at Our Lady of Fatima from the prospective spouse's home parish is required.

## 2. NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING COURSE

There are three classes, once monthly, taught locally or online. *Registration information will be given to you by the Administrator.* You are then responsible for making the necessary contact through the Lafayette Diocese webpage Office of Marriage and Family Life, [www.diolaf.org](http://www.diolaf.org). Failure to complete the NFP class will result in postponement of the wedding.

## 3. CLOSING SESSION WITH THE DEACON

Couples will meet a second time with the deacon to conclude paperwork and to review wedding rehearsal details.

## FLOWERS AND FLORISTS

1. If the wedding date chosen falls during Lent **NO** flowers will be allowed on the Altar, in the sanctuary area or on the pews so as to follow the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. During Advent **only** flower arrangements chosen from the

Church inventory are allowed **on either side of the tabernacle**. During Christmastide or Eastertide when seasonal items (including floral decorations and colored altar paraments) are already in place, such items **MUST** remain for the wedding with no additions to be made.

2. Hanging decorations from the walls of the church is not allowed, as is the use of tape on walls, floors, and pews.
3. Sanctuary furnishings must remain in place for the wedding.
4. It is the responsibility of the florist to remove pew decorations from the church immediately after the ceremony. Flower arrangements in the sanctuary may be left for the weekend Masses.
5. For safety reasons and liability, use of an aisle runner is not allowed.
6. Use of an archway either in the aisle during the procession or in the sanctuary is not allowed.
7. Candelabras must feature tubes or globes which encase the open flame. Exposed candles in wedding candelabras are not allowed. Such candelabras may be placed at either side of the high altar only. No torches may be affixed to the pew ends.
8. Pew markers are to be assembled with ribbon only.

It is necessary that the florist uphold these guidelines to be allowed to decorate for future weddings at Fatima Church.

### **REHEARSAL AND REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE**

The rehearsal begins on time and will typically take an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes to complete. Rehearsals on Friday evenings cannot begin until 6:30pm following our Friday afternoon Mass. The deacon, priest, and sacristan will wait only 15 minutes for the bride and/or groom to arrive. Make this clear to each member of your wedding party. Persons hired to help coordinate your wedding are to be informed that they do not run the rehearsal and cannot alter the Wedding liturgy.

Everyone involved in the nuptial ceremony is required to attend the wedding rehearsal. This includes: bride, groom, bride's attendants, groomsmen, flower girls, ring bearers, lectors, gift bearers, and ushers. Parents of the couple are encouraged to attend.

**CHURCH SPACE IS SACRED SPACE:** It is important that you remind your wedding party that the church building is a sacred building. For this reason, when coming into the church for the rehearsal, talking should be minimal. Out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament, caps, gum chewing and shorts are not permitted.

**RINGS:** Use of a pillow or tray is recommended for the ceremony. The best man will carry the bride and groom's rings in his coat pocket. At a designated time in the ceremony, he will transfer the actual rings onto the pillow or tray which he will later carry into the sanctuary for the exchange of rings.

**UNITY CANDLE:** The use of a "unity" candle is not allowed.

### **VISITING PRIESTS**

We warmly welcome any visiting priest you desire to officiate your nuptials. To avoid schedule conflicts, your first contact must be with the Administrator of Our Lady of Fatima Church. A letter of delegation will be sent to a visiting priest from Our Lady of Fatima Parish Office in a timely manner. While priests vary with ceremonial and rehearsal procedures, marriage preparation, guidelines for music, church décor, and bridal gowns are to be adhered to in all wedding ceremonies at Our Lady of Fatima. We ask that you do not embarrass a visiting priest by asking him to make exceptions in these areas.

### **LECTORS**

Lectors read the Scriptures readings chosen for the nuptial ceremony. Up to two lectors may be chosen for this duty. Friends or family members of the bride and/or groom may serve as lectors. **Lectors**

**must be practicing Roman Catholics.** Church law does not permit a non-Catholic to participate in the Liturgy as a lector.

Regarding the Sacrament of Marriage, Holy Communion must not be distributed outside the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If the bride and groom elect to have a nuptial ceremony without a Mass, there may be no communion service.

## **EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION**

## **SCHEDULING**

Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion distribute the Body of Christ to the faithful when there is Holy Communion. If the presence of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is warranted, they are appointed by the deacon.

**WEDDING TIMES:** Weddings may be scheduled on Friday evenings at 7:00 PM, Saturday mornings at 11:00 AM, or Saturday afternoons at 1:00 PM, 6:30PM and 7:00pm.

## **GIFT BEARERS**

Gift bearers bring to the sanctuary the bread and wine to be consecrated at the Nuptial Mass. Two to three (2-3) persons may be chosen for this duty.

**ADVENT:** Weddings are allowed during Advent.

**LENT:** Weddings are allowed during Lent but not during Holy week.

## **BRIDAL ATTENDANTS**

We allow the number of bridal attendants for a wedding at Fatima Church to be six (6) adult couples (12 persons total) and four (4) children (ring bearer and 3 flower girls). If you require more than 6 bridal attendants only the best man and maid of honor witness the vows in the sanctuary.

**WEDDING DATES:** Major Church feasts or Holy Days of Obligation will preclude the scheduling of a wedding. This policy applies also to the day prior to the feast or Holy Day. Such days include: January 1, Holy Week, August 15, November 1, 2, December 8, 24, and 25.

## **BRIDAL/MAID & Lector GOWNS**

Practice Christian modesty. Please understand that plunging neck lines and bare backs are inappropriate for sacred worship. **Strapless or spaghetti strap gowns will not be allowed at a nuptial ceremony in Fatima Church without a cape, shawl or bolero.**

**REHEARSAL TIMES:** Wedding rehearsals are scheduled on Thursdays from 6:30 – 7:45 PM only. A rehearsal on Friday can take place starting at 6:30pm. The wedding rehearsal will take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. A time/date confirmation agreement will be signed by the bridal couple when meeting with the administrator.

## **PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS**

## **COMMUNION SERVICES**

1. There may be 2 official still photographers with a hand-held camera at the wedding ceremony.
2. There may be only one (1) videographer with a self-contained, battery operated shoulder camera or camera tripod at the wedding ceremony.

3. The priest will wear only the church's wireless microphone.
4. The photographer may enter side oratory during the nuptial ceremony provided he/she is dressed in the appropriate Mass attire. Contact our office if you require information on the appropriate dress. (337) 232-8945
5. Photography during the consecration (Liturgy of the Eucharist) is not allowed.
6. Flash photography of musicians is not allowed.
7. Photographers and videographers are to show respect with proper dress when working in sacred space. No jeans, t-shirts, tennis shoes, ball caps or hats.
8. Post-wedding photographs/video in church must be completed within 30 minutes.

The photographer and videographer must uphold these guidelines to be able to photograph or film future weddings at Fatima Church.

## MUSIC

The reverence and dignity of the sacred liturgy should be reflected in your musical selections.

The standard Mass parts used at Our Lady of Fatima services (English or Latin) will be sung by our Cantor.

Secular music is forbidden, including music from movies, television, plays, musicals, and operas.

Use of pre-recorded music is forbidden. Without exception, all music for the nuptial ceremony must be performed live by present musicians.

Only Fatima Church's staff musicians may perform at weddings. This includes organists, pianists, trumpeters, violinists, flutists, etc. All musicians will be hired by the Director of Music.. Any other arrangements made, financial or otherwise, without permission will not be honored.

### **All music must be approved by the Director of Music.**

#### **Frequently asked questions:**

**Q:** *I have a friend/relative that sings. Can he/she sing for my wedding?*

**A:** Yes, but they may only sing before the opening prayer and after the closing prayer (prelude, processions, presentation of flowers).

Everything else must be sung by our cantor. **The Music Director must approve this at the time of your meeting with him.**

**Q:** *May I request a certain instrumentalist (violinist, trumpeter, etc.) to play at my wedding? Can a friend/relative play?*

**A:** No. Only Fatima Church's staff musicians may perform at weddings. Simply inform the Director of Music which instruments you desire, and he will contract the instrumentalists. Test assured that we employ only the finest musicians available.

**Q:** *Is a cantor necessary? What if we don't want singing?*

**A:** Yes, our Cantor must sing Mass parts (Holy, Amen, Lamb of God, etc.) at all wedding Masses. The standard Mass parts used at Our Lady of Fatima services must be sung. If your wedding will not be a Mass, and you prefer to have no singing, you are not obligated to have a cantor.