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MARRIAGE PREPARATION & WEDDING GUIDELINES

Congratulations on your engagement! We are looking forward to helping you prepare for your wedding day and your life together.

The following is information you will find helpful as you prepare for your very important day. You may use this as a reference and checklist. If you are planning to be married at another location outside of our Diocese and are doing your marriage preparation at St. Francis, you should get in touch with your own pastor and learn what the church in that Diocese requires.

It is the task of the church to assist its members in understanding the Christian mystery of the Sacrament of Marriage and to provide them with assistance and support as they prepare for this very important Sacrament.

Weddings at St. Francis are scheduled on **Friday evenings at 6:00 pm, Saturday at 11:00 am or 2:00 pm.** *An 11:00 am & 2:00 pm wedding can & do sometimes occur on the same day.* Rehearsals are normally held the evening before the wedding. ***The entire wedding party for the 2:00 pm wedding need to out of the building and off Saint Francis' property by 3:30 pm.***

Requirements

Marriage in the Catholic Church is between a fully initiated Catholic Christian man and woman; between Catholics and men and women of other Christian churches; or between a Catholic Christian and a non-baptized person.

Both must be free to marry, that is, never have been married before. If they were married before, they must have obtained a declaration of nullity (annulment) from the Church. If you have questions regarding the annulment process, please discuss this with the priest preparing you for marriage.

Both must be of legal age, and mentally and physically capable of fulfilling the requirements of marriage.

One person must be a registered member of St. Francis of Assisi Church for at least three months before a meeting with the priest can be scheduled to start the marriage preparation process. A wedding date cannot be secured prior to the initial 1st meeting date with the priest. You must also be a registered member of St. Francis for at least three months if you plan to do your preparation here and then be married at another location. Registration cards are available in the parish office.

State of Iowa

In Iowa you must obtain a marriage license from the County Clerk of any county in Iowa. There is a **State Copy** and an **Officiant's Copy** and they are contained in a self-addressed envelope. Check with the County Clerk's office for their requirements, it is valid for six months. Please bring your marriage license and marriage record form with you to the rehearsal. The priest or deacon will see that the marriage record is mailed after the wedding.

Preparation Time

We need ***more than six months*** for your marriage preparation. The priest will also be the celebrant at your wedding unless you let him know you have someone else you wish to have for a celebrant or you will be having your wedding at another location.

Baptism Certification

For the Catholic party, Saint Francis is required to have on file a ***newly issued certified baptismal certificate***, with your church of baptism's seal. This certificate verifies you were baptized in the Catholic Church plus provides any notations on the back of the new certificate. Please contact the parish you were baptized in and request they forward a copy to you or to the priest. ***It must not be more than six (6) months old.*** For those baptized in another Christian faith, we ask that you provide a copy of your Baptism certificate or some other proof of baptism if possible.

Marriage Preparation

You will be asked to take the FOCCUS Inventory. At St. Francis we have a Sponsor Couple Program for those who are preparing for marriage. You will be assigned to one of our trained Sponsor Couples who will go over the FOCCUS questions and answers with you. You will meet in their home three to five times for discussion and sharing. Plus, couples are required to participate in a one day sacramental marriage preparation retreat facilitated by the Diocese of Des Moines. The priests will provide you with a schedule listing the dates & times of the retreats.

Once you have finished meeting with your Sponsor Couple you will then contact the priest and set up a follow-up appointment with him. You can call him at the parish office at 515-223-4577 and let him know that you have completed your meeting with your assigned couple.

If you are doing your marriage preparation in another parish or Diocese and are being married at St. Francis, your church/Diocese will provide Saint Francis with the completed paperwork of your preparation program.

If your marriage will be performed at another parish and doing the marriage preparation at St. Francis, we will complete the paperwork and forward it to the Diocese/church of marriage. See ***FEES*** for processing the ***FOCCUS inventory***.

Fees

For **registered members** of St. Francis there is a **\$350.00** non-refundable fee to hold a wedding date. Make checks payable to St. Francis of Assisi Church and put "wedding" in the memo section.

If Saint Francis is doing the marriage preparation but your marriage will be performed at another parish the **FOCCUS inventory and processing fee is \$100.00.**

Separate fees: Cantor (\$150) and accompanist (\$200) - Fees are paid directly to them.

The Marriage Ceremony

Before your wedding, make arrangements with the priest celebrating your wedding to go over the Marriage Ceremony. You will receive a book called ***"Together for Life"*** which will guide you through your choices for prayers and readings that will be used in the marriage ceremony. Someone needs to read the Old and New Testament readings. The Psalm may be read or may be sung and the priest or deacon will read the Gospel you have chosen. Please provide a copy of your worship aid (if used) to the priest for approval prior to your wedding date. You may email the program or fax it to his attention at 515-223-4768.

Music

All music arrangements and the use of Saint Francis' musicians must be coordinated through our Director. The music should reflect the Sacramental and Liturgical setting of your wedding. Secular songs and / or prerecorded music cannot be used as part of your ceremony.

Please contact Emily Schmid, Director of Music as soon as possible. You can contact her at the office number (515) 223-4577 or through email email address is eschmid@saintfrancischurch.org

Wedding pictures are taken before the wedding. Because of scheduling difficulties, no pictures are allowed after the wedding. Please instruct your photographer that picture taking can begin two hours before the time reserved for you wedding. **Camera and flashbulbs** may only be used during the processional and recessional of church. Please ask relatives and photographers to refrain from using a flash during the ceremony. You may **videotape** your wedding if you desire, from the back of the church. Please be respectful of the sacredness of the sanctuary space and poses for photography should reflect that sacredness. Drones are not allowed inside the church or on church property.

Church Decorations

Flowers: (*optional*) Our liturgical guidelines do not permit flowers on the altar. Flowers on bases are to be placed on the floor level (not on the altar platform).

Unity Candle: (*optional*) If symbol of unity is desired, the unity candle is the only one permitted. We require that you bring all three candles and holders. These are placed on a small table near the altar. Dimensions of that table are: 19" diameter circle.

Candelabra: (*optional*) are not recommended, but if you wish they can be brought in. They are to be placed on the floor level (not on the altar platform).

Aisle Runner: This cloth going down the aisle **is not allowed**.

The flower girl dropping flower pedals down the aisle **is also not allowed**. It presents a safety issue.

Pew Decorations: (*optional*) Although not recommended, bows are allowed if they have non-stick attachment. Clips may be used.

Worship Aid Handout: (*optional*) These are provided by the couple getting married. We ask that you have them reflect a religious ceremony. Please ask your ushers to gather those left in the pews after the ceremony.

Liturgical Church Decorations: The church is decorated for the Liturgical season (Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas). These decorations must remain in place in the church. Please take this into account when planning your wedding and your flowers.

All decorations, including flowers, that are brought in are to be removed after the ceremony is over.

Bride's Room & Wedding Party

Classrooms 2, 3 and 4 are available for the wedding preparation. Rooms 3 & 4 are for the bride and her attendants to dress and to prepare for pictures and the wedding. There is a full length mirror in this room. Room 2 (and when available the St. Clare room) are for the groom and groomsmen and for food. We ask that there be no food or drink in the Sanctuary. Please clear the classrooms following the wedding ceremony, leaving the rooms available for the next wedding party or activity.

No Alcohol

No alcohol is to be consumed before the wedding service or allowed on the premises.

Throwing of rice or birdseed is not allowed.

These items can be tracked back into the Gathering Space and Church. Please inform your guests of this restriction.

Sparkles/fireworks are not allowed on church property.

Reception Center

St. Francis does not have a reception space available for Saturday weddings since the Parish Hall is too close to the church and a reception would interfere with Saturday's Mass at 4:30 pm.

Final Words

These details are written to help inform you of what is involved in a St. Francis of Assisi Church wedding. Hopefully it will answer some of the questions you might have. Your priest/preparer will be happy to answer any others you might have. We wish you a happy and blessed marriage.