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Marriage Preparation & Wedding Guidelines

Congratulations on your engagement! We look forward to helping you prepare for your wedding day and 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 preparing for your marriage at St. Francis, you should get in touch with your 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 6pm or Saturday at 2pm**. Rehearsals are typically held the evening before the wedding. **The entire wedding party for the Saturday wedding must be off the St. Francis of Assisi campus by 3:30pm so we can prepare for the 4:30 pm parish Mass.** Please plan to leave everything the way you found it and take with you everything that brought in.

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 parties must be free to marry, that is, never have been married before. If either party has been previously married, 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, 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 deacon or priest can be scheduled to start the marriage preparation process. A wedding date cannot be secured prior to the initial meeting date with the deacon or 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. To Register: Attend a Newcomer Inquiry Session held every first Sunday of the month after the 9:30 a.m. Mass. Alternatively, you can schedule a meeting with our Newcomer and Volunteer Coordinator.

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 both 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, St. 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 that they forward a copy to you or the priest/deacon. **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 review 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 deacon or priest 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 Deacon Dan at 515-223-4577 and let him know 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 St. 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**.

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.

Music

All music arrangements and the use of St. Francis' musicians must be coordinated at least 4 months prior to your wedding through our Director. Before selecting music, all couples getting married at St. Francis must first meet with Emily Schmid, Director of Liturgy and Music. Wedding music informational meetings are offered every other month at St. Francis. Attending the meeting will fulfill the requirement to meet. The music should reflect the Sacramental and Liturgical setting of your wedding. Secular songs and prerecorded music are not allowed in Catholic wedding ceremonies. **Please contact Emily Schmid, Director of Liturgy & Music,** as soon as possible. You can contact her at the office number (515) 223-4577 or through email. Her email address is eschmid@saintfrancischurch.org

Fees

For **registered members** of St. Francis, there is a **\$400.00** 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 St. Francis is doing the marriage preparation, but your marriage will be performed at another parish, the **FOCCUS inventory and processing fee is \$100.00.**

Livestreaming your wedding ceremony:

Consider livestreaming your wedding ceremony so everyone can be part of your gathering. Invite elderly relatives or distant friends to share in the joy and witness your special wedding ceremony. Our parish is equipped to livestream your ceremony

with high-quality digital video recording. You will receive a thumb drive so that your special occasion can be re-lived. An unlisted YouTube link will be provided to the bride and groom for distribution. Please understand that your livestream will not be accessible via YouTube, Internet search, or our parish website and only accessible via the provided link. We will have a trained staff member onsite providing this service. You can pay the staff member \$150 directly the day of your wedding.

Video Screen Displays:

Video screen displays are available in the church to project music and Mass responses. A trained projection assistant is available to provide this service. They will also attend the dress rehearsal. A fee is \$100 payable directly to the projection assistant is due at the wedding rehearsal.

Wedding Coordinators

Should connect with the Celebrant of your wedding. Please share these wedding guidelines with your coordinator. The Celebrant is responsible for all movements within the ceremony.

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 your wedding. **Camera and flash** may only be used during the processional and recessional. Please ask relatives and photographers to refrain from using a flash during the ceremony. You may **video** your wedding if desired, but videography may not enter the altar area and disrupt the ceremony. 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 building.

Church Decorations

Decorating can begin two hours before the time reserved for your wedding.

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: The use of a Unity Candle **is not allowed**.

Candelabra: The use of a Candelabra **is not allowed**.

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 within 30 minutes after the ceremony.

Bride's Room & Wedding Party Room Use

Classroom 4 and the Youth Room are available for the wedding preparation. The rooms are reserved for your use two hours before the time reserved for your wedding. There is a full-length mirror in Classroom 4. We ask that there be no food or drink in the Sanctuary. Please clear the rooms following the wedding ceremony, leaving the rooms clean for the next wedding party or activity.

No Alcohol

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

Throwing of anything – rice, birdseed, paper, flowers, etc. 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/deacon will be happy to answer any others you might have. We wish you a happy and blessed marriage.

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