

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church
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The community of Our Lady of Grace Parish congratulates you on your engagement and upcoming marriage! We share in your joy as you begin your new life together. The next few weeks and months promise to be very busy as you plan your future together and prepare to enter into this partnership for the whole of life.

Included here are some thoughts and guidelines to keep in mind when planning your wedding at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church.

GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS AT OUR LADY OF GRACE CHURCH

1) Marriage between the baptized is an important Sacrament that the Church celebrates with great joy. Your marriage will be an important moment to begin your new family life well-connected with your parish community. In order to strengthen this connection, marriage takes place in the home parish of either the bride or the groom. If you are a member of our parish, please call us as soon as possible and we will help you in scheduling and preparing for marriage and for your wedding.

2) Sometimes it is not possible or desirable for couples to be married in either of their home parishes. Even if you are not a parishioner at Our Lady of Grace, these guidelines will still help you plan a wedding here. In this case, please identify and be in contact with your home parish first. You will work with the priest, deacon, or other designated pastoral minister in your home parish to prepare for marriage and for your Catholic wedding at Our Lady of Grace. Whenever possible, your parish priest or deacon will also celebrate the wedding with you. If you are having trouble identifying or connecting with your home parish, please call us and we will be happy to help you do so. You will prepare for your marriage according to the marriage preparation guidelines of your own parish, rather than according to these guidelines. Nevertheless, these guidelines will help you when planning for the wedding ceremony itself.

3) You may call the Church Office at **210-734-7285** to check the availability of the church, but in order to schedule a wedding you must meet with the priest, deacon, or pastoral assistant from your parish who will work with you in the marriage preparation. Once you have this approval, our Pastoral Assistant or Director of Music will help you schedule your wedding. Weddings are usually scheduled on Saturdays at **3:00 p.m.** The Pastoral Assistant or Director of Music will discuss scheduling your wedding with you.

4) Unless the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister preparing you for marriage decide otherwise because either you or the person you intend to marry is an active member of Our Lady of Grace Parish, you will need to make a non-refundable deposit of \$350 in order to reserve the church. At this time you will receive a Wedding Packet with additional information and more complete wedding guidelines and information.

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

5) In your initial meeting with the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister preparing you for marriage you will work together to select the most appropriate preparation options for your particular needs and situation. Please feel free to express your needs, hopes, and interests.

6) In this initial meeting, you will share any of the following circumstances that would impact the preparation process:

- * If one or both of you are under the age of twenty (20);
- * If you are expecting a child;
- * If you are presently cohabiting (living together);
- * If one of you is not Catholic;
- * If one or both of you have been married before in any type of ceremony or common law union;
- * If you are civilly married and wish to have your marriage convalidated in the Catholic Church.

With this information we will work with you to design your preparation process and more smoothly resolve any obstacles to marriage.

7) We will be able to assist you in obtaining the following necessary documents:

* **Baptism Certificate(s):** The baptismal certificate of the Catholic(s) should be issued within the last six months and include any notations (regarding other sacraments received). Some certificate of baptism is also required of a non-Catholic Christian.

* **Affidavits of Freedom to Marry** are to be completed by two witnesses on behalf of each engaged person (i.e. two forms for each of the engaged).

* **A Pre-Nuptial Inquiry** is to be completed by each of the engaged. This inquiry includes questions regarding one's freedom to marry and one's understanding of Christian marriage. The priest, deacon, or pastoral minister will assist you in completing this form.

* **State of Texas Marriage License:** A marriage license must be obtained no more than thirty days before the ceremony, and no less than 72 hours before the ceremony. The Bexar County Courthouse is on the corner of South Main and Dolorosa Streets, and the Marriage License Bureau is on the first floor. Bring proof of identification, Social Security Number and \$66 in cash for the license. Call 335-2221 for a recorded message from the County Clerk's Office for more information. The wedding will not proceed without the license. The license must be in the priest's possession before the ceremony begins, so it is a good idea to bring it with you the night of the rehearsal.

* **Confirmation Certificate(s):** If it can be celebrated without serious inconveniences, Catholics who have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation are to receive it before being admitted to marriage.

* **Permission for a Mixed Marriage** (only for a Catholic to marry a person baptized in a non-Catholic Christian denomination).

* **Petition for Dispensation for Disparity of Worship** (only for a Catholic to marry a non-baptized person).

8) There are various preparation options available, and the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister assisting you will work with you to determine the most helpful options. Some options include:

* **Marriage Inventory Tools**, such as FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study), PREPARE/ENRICH and PMI (Pre-Marital Inventory).

* **Pre-Cana Marriage Preparation Seminars**

* **Engaged Encounter Weekend**

* **Sponsor Couple preparation**

* **Natural Family Planning Classes**

PLANNING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

9) The couple will meet with the Director of Music and Liturgy to plan the ceremony at least 2 months in advance of the wedding. He will guide you in your selection of music and readings, and will help you to find musicians, if needed. If outside musicians are used, the Director will instruct them on the correct use of the sound system. Final plans must be completed, submitted, and approved by the Director in writing one month

before the wedding ceremony. No significant changes to the liturgy are to be expected after this time. The remaining rental balance of \$350 for the use of the church is also due one month before the wedding.

10) You may bring your own professional wedding consultant. There are coordinators from the church who will assist you at the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding.

11) Scheduling: Weddings are normally scheduled on Saturdays at 3:00 p.m., depending on the availability of the church. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays or Holy Days. Rehearsals are normally scheduled on the Friday evening before the wedding at 6:00 p.m. or later, depending on the church schedule for that particular Friday.

12) Rental Fee: While there is no fee for the Sacrament of Marriage, the church rental fee is \$700. A non-refundable deposit of \$350 reserves your wedding date. The balance of \$350 is due one month before the wedding. This fee covers the rental of the church and the services of the parish wedding coordinators. The fee does not include payment for musicians or flowers.

13) Wedding Programs: Please submit the final plans for your wedding program to the Director of Music and Liturgy for approval. The program, along with the order of the procession and seating, **must be finalized one month before the wedding**. A copy of the final program is to be given to the Director of Music and Liturgy as soon as it is available.

14) Wedding Rehearsal: The time of the rehearsal is set at the same time the wedding date is set and depends on the availability of the church. **Please make sure you have already discussed the order of the ceremony with all concerned, so that it will run smoothly. The wedding rehearsal must begin on time** since there may be other events in the Church on the same evening. Latecomers will have to be filled in by other members of the wedding party. If all members of the party are late, the wedding will proceed as directed on the outline that is submitted one month before the ceremony.

All members of the wedding party should be present at the rehearsal. This includes attendants, ushers, readers, gift bearers and padrinos.

15) Reverence in Church: Quiet and reverent behavior should be maintained at all times including the rehearsal and picture taking session after the ceremony. We are in the House of God and in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

- * Out of reverence for the religious ceremony, no alcohol should be consumed prior to the service.

- * The use of alcoholic beverages is **prohibited** on the church grounds.

- * **Appropriate dress** is expected in the church at all times. The Bride or bridesmaids may wear no low-cut, low back, excessively bare, or suggestive styles. If your dress is deemed inappropriate, you may have to make some last minute changes before the wedding will take place. Rather than risk this, please carefully consider whether or not the attire is truly appropriate for a church service. In selecting your attire, you may find it helpful to consider a small jacket or shawl for the church service that can be removed for the reception afterward.

- * No food or drink is allowed in the church or the Bride's Room or Groom's Room.

- * No gum is to be chewed in church.

- * Our Lady of Grace is a smoke-free campus.

16) Wedding Liturgy: You will consult with the Director of Music and Liturgy in preparing your wedding. Please keep these points in mind when selecting the scripture readings, prayers and vows.

The Church provides two rites for marriage:

- * A sacramental rite and Mass, which is the usual form when both parties are Catholic.

- * A sacramental rite outside Mass.

17) The Wedding Liturgy has three parts, along with beginning and concluding rites. The three parts are:

- * The Liturgy of the Word
- * The Marriage Rite
- * The Liturgy of the Eucharist (omitted when there is not a Mass.)

Several ministries in the wedding celebration may be fulfilled by laypersons. It is preferable that the presider not perform all these roles. Readers and gift-bearers are two of these ministries. Readers may read the Old Testament reading, the New Testament reading, and the Prayer of the Faithful. Provide your readers with copies of their readings from your Together For Life book so they may prepare.

18) Attendants and Additions

The bride and groom, as the actual ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage, should be the focus of attention. Please limit attendants to a reasonable number. It is highly recommended that flower girls and ring bearers be at least five years of age. Please carefully consider decisions in this regard.

All attendants and lay ministers must be appropriately dressed. (See #15 Reverence in Church)

Please consult with your Priest regarding the inclusion of cultural or ethnic traditions in your celebration.

19) Decorations

(Refer to the handout titled, "Guidelines for Wedding Florists")

You are responsible for knowing what our Guidelines are and furnishing your florist with a printed copy. Decorations for liturgical feasts take priority. It is the bride's responsibility to check concerning Feast Day or seasonal decorations.

The parish does not guarantee that there will be flowers already provided by the church unless you make arrangements in advance to donate the church flowers that week. This is done through the parish secretary.

Extra wedding flowers and decorations including pew bows, unity candles, etc., may not be in place during the regular parish Mass and must be removed after the wedding ceremony.

- The flower stands beneath the crucifix hold 8" diameter plastic or papier-mâché pots.
- Only live flowers and plants are permitted.
- Tacks, tape, or wire may not be used.
- Our Lady of Grace Church furnishes altar candles only.
- No extra candles that risk heat or wax damage to carpet, floors, or surfaces are to be used.
- Candles are **NOT** permitted on any window sills.
- The use of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals, butterflies, or balloons is forbidden.
- Please do not set up a guest book in the church.
- Paper floor runners are not permitted.
- No water, wax, foliage, or tape is to be allowed to contact the rugs or floor.
- Please provide your own baskets for any programs that are distributed, and have ushers return the pews to order after the ceremony.

The Priest or the Church Coordinator may move or remove decorations if they pose a problem or become a safety hazard.

20) Unity Candle

You or your florist must provide your own unity candles, should you choose to have one. The church can provide a glass table for the candle, as long as you request this in advance. The unity candle is placed in the sanctuary about 45 minutes before the ceremony. The parents of the groom, then the mother of the bride, escorted by ushers, light the small candles on each side. After the seating of the mother of the bride at the time the wedding is scheduled, the wedding procession begins. Immediately after the ceremony, the Church

Coordinator will assist in the removal of the Unity Candle.

21) Receiving Lines are to be reserved for the reception.

22) Bride's Room and Groom's Room

The Bride's Room is available one hour before the ceremony. A room for the Groomsmen and Ushers is also available. The couple is responsible for determining how the dresses, tuxedos, and flowers will arrive. If they are to be delivered, arrangements must be made to have someone receive them after first checking with the Church Office. Nothing is to be delivered to the Church Office. The bride and her attendants are to have make-up and nail polish on and hair done before arrival at the church. No electrical appliances may be used in the Bride's Room. **Food and drinks are not allowed** (other than water) in the Bride's Room and Groom's Room. **All articles must be removed from the Bride's Room and Groom's Room after the ceremony. The maid of honor and the best man are responsible for making sure that the Bride's Room and Groom's Room are cleared and left as they were found. Our Lady of Grace Church is not responsible for any lost or damaged items.**

23) Groom

The groom, groomsmen and ushers should arrive **one hour** before the scheduled ceremony. They should meet in the Groom's Room or other designated space to get their boutonnieres and be ready for the photographer. A Mass may be in progress when you arrive, so please be quiet and respectful.

24) Ushers

Please have extra ushers available to be at the church doors as the ceremony begins, so that latecomers can be seated in the least obtrusive manner.

25) Photographer and Videographer

Please refer to the handouts "Guidelines for Wedding Photographer" and "Guidelines for Wedding Videographers."

You are responsible for providing your photographer and videographer a copy of our guidelines. *The Priest or the Wedding Coordinator may ask a photographer or videographer to leave if our guidelines are not followed.* Flash cameras are only permitted at the exchange of rings and during the beginning and ending processions. **Please instruct your families.** Please read the following options for wedding processions. If you have any questions, call the Church Office. You should know what your processional, recessional and seating plans are by the time of your rehearsal.

26) Options For Order Of Wedding Processions

Please read the following options for wedding processions. You should know what your processional, recessional, and seating plans are by the time of the rehearsal. **No petals are to be dropped or scattered.**

From Priest's Sacristy:

Celebrant

Groom & Groomsmen

From Cloister, then up aisle from back of church:

Attendants

Maid of Honor

Flower Girl - Ring Bearer

Bride and Father (or both parents)

Celebrant proceeds into sanctuary. Groom and groomsmen stand at foot of steps facing procession. Attendants process up aisle and go to the left. Groom greets father and bride is presented to groom. Father allows bride and groom to pass, then moves to sit beside mother of the bride. As the ceremony begins, all

turn toward the priest.

Other options can be considered, but these need to be determined in advance of the rehearsal, including the need for extra chairs and the placement of kneelers. These arrangements must be known in advance of the rehearsal and approved by the Pastoral Assistant or the Director of Music and Liturgy.

Please Note: The plans for the ceremony, including the options for processions and seating, must be submitted and approved one month before the ceremony, and before any programs have been printed, so that any potential problems can be eliminated.

The attendants may sit in the third pew, depending on size of wedding party, (parents in first pew, grandparents and/or siblings in second pew) during the readings, gospel, and homily. Honor attendants may be in the center aisle with the bride and groom or seated with the other attendants. Attendants will come forward to the sanctuary or the steps for the exchange of vows and the exchange of rings. They will be seated again for the Mass and may come forward again (to the bottom of the steps) for the final blessing and recessional.

While the bride and groom generally kneel and stand in the center, two chairs can be placed in front of the first pew for the bride and groom's use upon request.

27) Recessional

- Bride and Groom
- Flower girl, Ring bearer
- Honor attendants
- Bridesmaids and groomsmen in pairs
- Parents of Bride
- Parents of Groom
- Grandparents
- Guests

If pictures will be taken in the church after the wedding, once the wedding party has reached the back of the church, the Church Coordinator will escort them out the side door and through the Cloister into the Church Sanctuary for the signing of the marriage license. **Picture taking after the ceremony is allowed until 4:30 p.m.** The Church Coordinator will remind the photographer at the end of the allotted picture time.