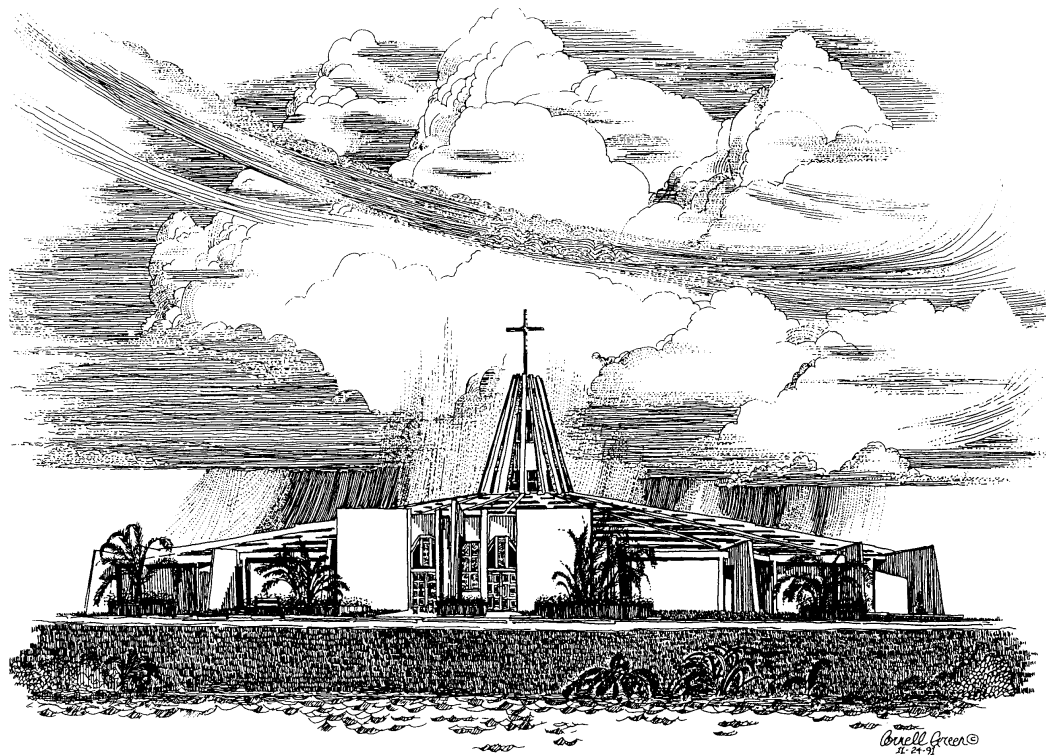


HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH

MARRIAGE PREPARATION GUIDELINES



THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

200 - 78th Avenue, NE
St. Petersburg, Florida 33702
Phone 727.526.5783 • Fax 727.521.2545
www.holyfamilystpete.com

GENERAL NORMS

Catholics believe that marriage in the Church is a sacrament and, therefore, the ceremony is a sacred sign. The Ritual for marriage tells us: “married Christians signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love that exists between Christ and his Church; they help each other to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and raising children” (par. 1).

* A wedding in the Catholic Church is a “faith event,” not just an attractive setting for the wedding vows or a backdrop for photographs. As such, it is necessary that one or both of the parties be a practicing Catholic. That is, one or both parties must participate in Sunday Mass each week, receive(s) the sacraments frequently and support(s) the work of the Church.

* When two Catholics are planning to marry, it is generally understood that the marriage ceremony will take place within the Mass. According to the custom of the Church, the Rite of Marriage Outside Mass shall be used in a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized person who is not Catholic (par. 8).

* A priest of the parish **must be contacted at least six (6) months in advance of the proposed date of the wedding**. This period of time is essential for scheduling appointments, completing the various requirements of the marriage preparation process and planning the ceremony.

* A date for your wedding may be scheduled **only after completion and discussion of your Pre-Marital Inventory (FOCUS)**. **No dates will be pre-arranged on the telephone**. Weddings are scheduled according to the parish calendar and the priest or deacon’s own schedule on a first-come, first-served basis. Wedding Masses are usually scheduled on Saturdays between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. The latest an afternoon Wedding Ceremony (Rite of Marriage Outside Mass) can be scheduled is 2:30. Other times may be considered depending on the availability of the church, the priest or deacon's calendar, and the scheduling of other parish functions.

* Holy Family Parish has established a policy that no weddings are celebrated on Sundays.

* Marriage preparations at Holy Family parish are conducted with the individual priest or deacon who will witness the couple's vows and include those preparations required by the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Those preparations include:

A **Pre-Nuptial Investigation** (Form A) is completed by the bride and groom with the parish priest. This form provides basic information about the parties to be married and whether there may be any obstacles to the marriage in Church or civil law.

A **Pre-Marital Inventory** (FOCCUS), mentioned above, is a series of questions designed to help a couple recognize the strengths and weaknesses in their relationship and guide their spiritual preparation for marriage.

At Holy Family Parish, the FOCCUS is administered and evaluated by Linda Condon, a licensed mental health counselor. **After your initial interview with the parish priest or deacon**, he will direct you to contact Linda at (727) 543-9128 or lincondon@yahoo.com to arrange for the FOCCUS.

A copy of each party's Baptismal Certificate. If Catholic, it must be a new copy obtained from the church of baptism dated within six months of the marriage.

The Form B provides the testimony of two witnesses (usually parents or relatives) certifying that each party to the marriage is free to marry. This is completed in the presence of a Catholic priest wherever the witness may reside.

Marriage Dispensations or Permissions from the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, if needed, will be arranged by the parish priest, depending on individual circumstances.

Engaged Encounter Weekend or **Pre-Cana Conference** are two programs provided and required by the Diocese of St. Petersburg to supplement the preparations provided by the priest. The parish priest will provide the couple with the registration forms and dates for the program you decide to attend. (Fees payable to the Diocese.)

Engaged Encounter is a weekend retreat program beginning on Friday night and concluding on Sunday afternoon. It is designed to encourage couples to share attitudes, fears, and hopes about married life. A team of clergy and lay people lead the couples through the weekend reflections on the serious responsibilities of married life.

The Pre-Cana Conference is a one-day program presented by a team of clergy and laypeople. This day is intended to focus on the various aspects of married life and to get couples to share their attitudes about married life.

Delegation by the Pastor of Holy Family Parish is required in writing if a priest or deacon from outside the parish is to witness the marriage vows.

Civil Marriage License. It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain the civil marriage license. This is provided by the local County Courthouse. (727-582-7771)

LITURGY AND MUSIC GUIDELINES

* The parish has established certain guidelines to help you make your marriage ceremony more meaningful and to help you plan the details of your celebration. Among these are the following considerations:

Diocesan guidelines state that “sacred music is a form of prayer and, therefore, the words ought to be directed from man to God and not from man to man, and are certainly not to be taken from outrightly secular sources of entertainment.” Therefore, all songs or hymns during the ceremony should be religious in nature. To assist you in making liturgically and musically appropriate selections, music for all weddings is under the direction of Mr. Robert Todd, Director of Music for the parish.

The Music Director must be contacted at least six (6) weeks in advance of the wedding. Mr. Todd may be contacted at the rectory office, Monday through Thursday at 526-5783 ext. 18, or by email: <music@holyfamilystpete.com>.

Other musicians (such as **the Folk Group**) and instruments (such as guitar, trumpet, flute, strings, etc.) may be employed, if desired, provided the selections are liturgically acceptable and the musicians well-trained and rehearsed. The cost of additional musicians is to be negotiated and accepted by the bride and groom. If this is an option you choose, please consult the Director of Music. Congregational singing is strongly encouraged, especially during a Nuptial Mass. The priest witnessing the vows and the Music Director must be consulted to provide direction in areas of liturgy and music respectively.

STIPENDS AND FEES

* For those marrying at Holy Family Church, a stipend of \$375, payable to Holy Family Church, helps to defray the costs of administrative services, utilities, and other expenses provided by the Parish. This stipend includes a modest amount for the priest, wedding coordinator, the organist, and the cantor. The costs of soloists, additional musicians and/or requests for music beyond the organist’s repertoire must be negotiated with the Music Director. Please note that no one is ever denied the sacraments if financial burdens keep them from providing these or any of the suggested stipends.

- * A fee of \$200 is to be paid directly to Linda Condon, the licensed mental health counselor who will administer and review the FOCCUS with each couple. The FOCUS is required for couples marrying at Holy Family Church and those who marry outside the parish or diocese.
- * Couples who are assisted by the Deacon but will be married by a visiting priest are asked to offer a modest stipend of \$50 for the Deacon.
- * Couples preparing for marriage at Holy Family Parish, but who will be married in another church, are asked to help defray the administrative costs incurred by the parish with a contribution of at least \$50.
- * All fees to be rendered to the parish, musicians, servers or priest are due no later than the time of the rehearsal and given to the Wedding Coordinator.

THE REHEARSAL

- * Mrs. Carolyn Pioli is the Wedding Coordinator. She is responsible for conducting the rehearsal and assisting the wedding party on the day of their marriage. Please contact her at least six weeks in advance of the wedding date at (727) 526-5783.
- * The wedding rehearsal is usually scheduled for the day before the wedding.
- * The wedding party and guests should be informed that the rehearsal and wedding ceremony will begin promptly at the appointed times.
- * **The civil marriage license and any fees mentioned above should be given to the priest or deacon at the time of the wedding rehearsal.** Immediately after the ceremony, the priest who accepted the vows of the couple and their two witnesses (the best man and maid of honor) sign the license. After recording the marriage in the parish archives, the parish will forward the license to the County Courthouse where it will be recorded. The County Clerk then mails the civil marriage license to the couple.
- * The members of the bridal party are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the celebration of the wedding.

PHOTOGRAPHERS

- Every effort will be made to make your wedding day a memorable one. Couples are encouraged, however, not to place the greatest emphasis on externals, but on the sacred meaning of your wedding vows. We understand, too, that you may desire a remembrance of your wedding through pictures or video recording. Please note, then:

The photographer and/or videographer must meet with the priest or deacon witnessing the wedding before the ceremony begins.

Before the wedding, photographs and portraits may be taken in and around the church respecting the sacred character of the place. Allow enough time and remember that the ceremony will begin on time.

Flash photography may be taken during the processional and recessional only. There may be no flash photography once the couple has entered their places in the sanctuary (the area around the altar.) During the ceremony, there is to be no unnecessary movement which would distract from the sacred and solemn nature of the ceremony, i.e., photographers may not do anything that would make them a distraction to the congregation during the ceremony and any video cameras must remain stationary.

There is a designated location at floor level on the priest's side of the sanctuary where a tripod may be placed for video recording.

Photographers are allowed thirty minutes following the ceremony for the taking of pictures and portraits.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

* In order to respect the sacred nature of the place, please observe the policy of the parish that receiving lines are not to be held in the church following the ceremony.

* The parish hall (Diffley Hall) is available for wedding receptions or showers. For more information on renting the hall contact the Peter Andre the Parish Administrator at (727) 526-5783.

* The maintenance staff of the parish does not work on weekends and you are asked to note the following:

Flowers, wedding candles, and such which may enhance your ceremony, are provided by the couple being married. The parish does not provide them.

The only exception to policy stated above is the use of the Unity Candle, which the parish is happy to provide at no cost. If, however, the bride and groom want to keep a Unity Candle as a memento of their wedding, the couple must provide this.

Decorations (flowers, bows, and candleholders) may not be attached to the ends of the pews in any fashion that would mark or mar the finish. This includes any fixture or tape that could not be removed without leaving any residue or scarring the finish on the pews.

Kindly inform your family and guests that the throwing of rice, birdseed, flowers, or confetti is prohibited whether inside or outside the church. These pose hazards to parishioners arriving for services later in the weekend.

If you plan on continuing as active members of Holy Family Church, please take a moment to **re-register** at the office as a married couple. We are glad you have chosen to celebrate this most special occasion at Holy Family. We wish you the very best in the years to come. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the office at (727) 526-5783.