



All Saints | Holy Family | St. Rose of Lima
OUR CATHOLIC FAMILY OF PARISHES

The Sacrament of Marriage and the Marriage Preparation Process

All Saints Parish – St. Boniface, St. John the
Baptist and St. Joseph Churches

Office - (402) 357-3506

Holy Family Parish – Immaculate Conception, Ss.
Peter and Paul and Sacred Heart Churches

Office - (402) 357-2465 or (402) 254-3311

St. Rose of Lima Parish – St. Rose of Lima Church

Office - (402) 388-4814

Fr. James Keiter - Pastor
jekeiter@archomaha.org

Fr. An Duy Phan – Associate Pastor
adphan@archomaha.org



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Dear Engaged Couple,

Congratulations! God has created you, sustained you, been at work in your lives, and now brings you together. Now you have made the decision to join yourselves to God and each other for a lifetime in the Holy Sacrament of Marriage.

The Sacrament of Matrimony is a celebration of love between two people and of faith in the Catholic Church. We at Our Catholic Family of Parishes look forward to assisting you in the following ways.

- We look forward to helping you grow in your understanding of each other and deepen your love for each other.
- We look forward to helping you grow in your knowledge of Christ and in your understanding of the purposes of a Catholic Christian marriage.
- We look forward to helping you plan your sacramental celebration among God's people and according to the rites of the Catholic Church.
- We look forward to the actual celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage and to helping you get off to a good start on a lifetime of Catholic Christian marriage.

May the good work God has begun in you come to fulfillment and happiness in Heaven.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. James Keiter
Pastor

Marriage in God's Plan Throughout the Ages

From the very dawn of creation, God's plan of salvation has depended on marriage. Knowing that "it was not good for man to be alone", God created woman from out of the side of man to be an equal and complimentary partner in mankind's great journey toward heaven. Man, rejoicing that at last he has found "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh...leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife," so that married couples are no longer two individuals, but one flesh. It is through this one flesh union of marriage that the couple both unites themselves to each other and fulfills God's first commandment to mankind; "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

Before too long, however, sin entered through the fall of our first parents. From that fateful moment, both the lives of Adam and Eve and the lives of each and every person throughout history were influenced by this Original Sin. Marriage was particularly affected by Original Sin. As a result of Original Sin self-absorption, mistrust, jealousy, domination, and infidelity all entered the marital relationship. Mankind had lost his innocence so that neither man nor woman was "naked and unashamed."

God, however, did not abandon His people. Instead, God prepared His people to receive His Son through the Old Covenant. So great was God's love for His fallen people that the best analogy the Old Testament prophets could find to compare the love of God with was marriage. Just as a man and woman were united to each other in love through marriage, so too, God and His chosen people were united to each other in love through the Old Covenant. Thus, when the Jews would break their covenant relationship with God, the prophets accurately described this action as adulterous.

Yet even such adulterous behavior did not influence God's fidelity. In fact, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" to cement the indissoluble bond between His people and Himself that the Jews had tried to break. In doing so, God reaffirmed the importance and dignity of marriage through the one flesh union of the Word made flesh. Thus, every successful Christian marriage is to do four things:

- Display faithfulness - As God is faithful to His people, so a Christian couple is to be faithful to each other.
- Display permanence - As God's relationship to His people never dissolves, so a Catholic Christian couple's relationship to each other is indissoluble.
- Give life - As God creates and gives life graciously and freely, so a Catholic Christian couple is to be open to cooperating with this gift through the begetting and raising of children.
- Symbolize the relation between Christ and His people, the Church - Each Christian marriage mirrors the relationship between Christ, and His Bride, the Church. Just as Christ gives Himself totally to the Church and the Church gives herself totally to Christ, so, too, a husband and wife give themselves totally to each other. Thus, they are no longer two, but become one flesh.

It is through the love of a Christian husband and wife, the love of God and His People is revealed and seen.

The Sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church

Marriage is a vocation. Literally speaking, a vocation is a call from God. Like any call, a call from God requires a response. The way we respond to God's call is through our prayer. By spending time with God each and every day in quiet prayer we can discern what our calling from God is.

For Catholics, the discernment of our vocation is twofold. First, we must discern if God is calling us to the priesthood, religious life or Christian marriage. Once we have discerned that we are called to Christian marriage, we can then begin discerning the particular person we are called to marry. Always remember we will never be happy unless we are doing what God is calling us to do. Thus, the importance of prayer during this process cannot be overemphasized.

Every Christian marriage is also a sacrament. This means that marriage is a sign conferring the reality it signifies. The sign of Christian marriage is the indissoluble bond linking the two persons united in marriage so that, once they have exchanged their consent, they are no longer two, but one. As a Sacrament, it also confers the grace necessary to fulfill the obligations and promises necessary for a valid marriage. When a sacramental marriage exists, it becomes a powerful witness not only of the love of a husband and wife, but of the love between Christ and His Church. Thus, sacramental marriage provides an indispensable witness for both practicing Christians and the world as a whole.

To receive any sacrament “lively faith is essential.” Lively faith necessitates the couple actively practice their Catholic faith by participating in the sacramental life of the Church; which means weekly attendance at Sunday Mass, regular reception of the sacrament of Penance and the avoidance of mortal sins. Since cohabitation violates the sixth commandment and gives grave scandal by witnessing to others that such behavior is permissible, it is absolutely forbidden. Cohabiting couples must undergo a period of separation and reception of the sacrament of Penance if their marriage is to be fruitful.

Steps in the Wedding Preparation Process within Our Catholic Family of Parishes

1. Initial Interview with a Priest
2. Visit www.archomaha.org and click on the Marriage Preparation button
3. Sign up for the Educational Requirement of your choice, pay the fee and, when the FOCCUS instrument is generated, complete it.
3. FOCCUS Sessions (three meetings with the FOCCUS coordinator)
4. Educational Requirement
5. Natural Family Planning Class
6. Sacramental Preparation - (up to three meetings with the priest)
7. Liturgy Planning Meeting- (one meeting to discuss the particulars of the wedding rehearsal and the wedding liturgy - this can also be done via email)
8. Provide necessary Documentation and Paperwork
9. Suggested Donation (see below)

Explanation of Marriage Preparation Steps

Initial Interview -- Your initial interview takes place with the Pastor or Associate Pastor of Our Catholic Family of Parishes. The couple is greeted, a questionnaire is administered, the process is reviewed and initial questions are answered. Any serious difficulties will probably surface at this time. A marriage is permissible only after all preparations have been completed. Pregnancy, minimal age, and cohabitation necessitate a closer look at the couple's readiness for marriage.

FOCCUS Sessions -- After the FOCCUS has been administered, it is reviewed and discussed by the couple with the help of the FOCCUS coordinator. These sessions will primarily focus on the areas identified as needing further growth in order to foster better communication between couples. Normally, four FOCCUS sessions are required.

Educational Requirement - The archdiocese of Omaha requires each couple to complete an educational requirement. There are various options and dates that will be explained during the Pre-Session. The couple should sign up for the one that best fits their needs.

Natural Family Planning Presentation - Natural Family Planning is the ONLY licit way of regulating pregnancy that is approved by the Church. All couples must attend the introductory session.

Sacramental Preparation - Couples must meet up to four times with the priest to discuss the Catholic understanding of marriage. Particular attention will be placed on marriage as a vocation, prayer within marriage, the procreative and unitive dimensions of marriage, Catholic sexual morality and cohabitation (if necessary), marriage's essential properties of unity and indissolubility, and marital consent. Sufficient understanding of the Catholic teaching about marriage must be demonstrated before the couple can be married in the Catholic Church.

Documentation and Paperwork

The documents needed by the Church comprise a formal certification of your freedom and readiness to marry.

Marriage Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire - Administered by Priest at initial meeting. It is used to identify any impediments that would prevent a couple from marrying.

Baptismal Certificates -- Both the bride and groom will need a recent copy (less than six months old) of their baptismal certificate from their church of baptism. Churches may be called directly and asked to send copies directly to Holy Family Parish.

Freedom to Marry Forms -- Your parents or other witnesses will be asked to meet with a priest in their area and certify that you are free to marry.

Permission for Mixed Religion - If one party is not Catholic, a permission to marry a non-Catholic must be obtained from the Archbishop. Such permission requires the Catholic party to testify that any children will be raised Catholic. The non-Catholic Party need not agree, but must be informed of the obligations binding on the Catholic.

Dispensation from Form - If the couple is prepared within Our Catholic Family of Parishes, but to be married in a non-Catholic Church, dispensation from the Archbishop must be obtained.

Declaration of Nullity- If either party has ever been married, even civilly, a Declaration of Nullity will be necessary before the Sacrament of Marriage can be celebrated.

Civil Marriage License - A license must be obtained from the County Courthouse and in the priest's hands the night of the rehearsal.

Suggested Donations

1. Use of Church:

- **PARISH MEMBER:** When at least one of the engaged parties or their parents are currently active members of one of Our Catholic Family Parishes the suggested donation for the Church use \$250.
- **NON-PARISH MEMBERS WITH FAMILY TIES-** when at least one of the engaged parties has parents who were members of one of Our Catholic Family Parishes or demonstrated family ties to members of one of Our Catholic Family Parishes the suggested donation is \$350.
- **NON-PARISH MEMBER WITH NO FAMILY TIES -** When neither one of the engaged parties has family ties to one of Our Catholic Family Parishes the suggested donation is \$500.

2. Parish Wedding Coordinator:

- We have started offering a Parish Wedding Coordinator that can help at or even lead the rehearsal and is present the day of the wedding to help the bridal party prior and during the wedding ceremony. The suggested donation to the Wedding Coordinator is \$100

3. Musicians:

- The suggested stipend for Cantors and Accompanist is \$100 each, however, they may have their own set fees that they will inform you of when you meet with them for your wedding music preparation.

4. Priest Stipend:

- The suggested stipend for the Priest who witnesses your marriage is \$150

5. Other Facility Use:

- If you are in need of other parts of a Church's facility for such things other than preparation of the bridal party the day of the wedding like a rehearsal dinner etc. please contact the respective Parish Office of the Church you have scheduled your wedding ceremony.

It is suggested that these stipends be taken care of at least 3 weeks prior to the wedding ceremony.

Marriage Preparation Checklist

Initial Interview with Priest	Date	Time
FOCCUS Sessions	Date	Time
	Date	Time
	Date	Time
___ Educational Requirement	Date	Time
	Place	
___ Natural Family Planning Class	Date	Time
___ Sacramental Preparation with the Priest	Date	Time
	Date	Time
	Date	Time
Submission of Affidavits and Certificates		
___ Baptismal Certificate - groom		
___ Baptismal Certificate - bride		
___ Freedom to Marry Form-groom		
___ Freedom to Marry Form - bride		
___ Dispensation (Permission) from Form if married else where in non-Catholic church		
___ Dispensation (Permission) for Mixed Religion if marrying a non-Catholic		
___ Wedding Certificate from a Nebraska County Courthouse		
Liturgy Planning & Approval	Date	
Rehearsal	Date	Time
Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage	Date	Time

The Participants in the Sacrament of Matrimony

- 1) The Presider - Priest or Deacon. All couples married within Our Catholic Family Parish Grouping must arrange for sacramental preparations with a priest of our parishes. Couples being prepared elsewhere but married in our Parishes/Churches must have completed all preparations and have their Marriage Liturgy approved by a priest of our Parishes.
- 2) The Bride and Groom - You are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage. The Priest and the Christians assembled only witness the promises you make before God.
- 3) The Congregation - Understanding the significance of the assembly witnessing the Sacrament of Marriage is critical in the preparation of the Wedding Liturgy (as in all Sacramental celebrations). It is the Congregation, your family and friends, who worship with you. ***They are not an audience.*** They are worshippers. Welcome and plan for their participation throughout the Liturgy. They are there, not just to rejoice with you, but also to pray for you.
- 4) The Lectors - Lectors proclaim the Word of God in the wedding liturgy. The lector must be a Catholic who is experienced and is accustomed to carrying out this ministry. Because of the importance of the proclaimed Word of God, the lector should diligently practice the chosen readings prior to the celebration.
- 5) Altar Servers - Altar Servers should be previously trained and must be at the wedding rehearsal. Altar Servers are not absolutely necessary for the celebration of a wedding, even when done in the context of a Mass. But, if they are, they need to be approved by the priest.
- 6) Ushers - Can be either male or female. Their principle tasks are to welcome people, seat people, give assistance to visitors, and clean the church after the celebration.
- 7) Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) - EMHCs are only needed for Wedding Liturgies that include the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Usually, EMHCs are not needed. However, if the couple wishes someone to help with the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest, prior to the wedding, must approve them.
- 8) Gift Bearers - Gift bearers are only needed for Wedding Liturgies that include the Holy Sacrifice of the mass. They are not required, but should they be used, there should be no less than two.
- 9) Music Ministers - Music ministers used for Mass should be Catholic and familiar with Mass. Non-Catholics may lead certain pieces with the approval of the priest.
- 10) The Church will be set to a comfortable temperature. Usually this is 70 degrees in the summer and 68 in the winter. Because of the size of the Church, the attire of the wedding party and the excitement of the celebration, the church may feel warmer than it is. The thermostats are NOT to be touched, changed, or altered in any way. If there is a real problem, talk to the Pastor before adjusting the temperature.

Wedding Day Planning

Once the sacramental preparation has been completed, the couple can begin finalizing plans for the wedding liturgy.

Weddings are such a joyous occasion that the bible describes heaven itself as a kind of eternal wedding day. The Church in no way wishes to place restrictions on exuding the joy of this celebration. Quite the contrary, the Church wishes to amplify this joy by ordering this joy to God, who is the source of all joy. The following guidelines seek to make your wedding the most joyous experience possible this side of heaven.

THE REHEARSAL

The celebrating priest must approve the rehearsal date. Rehearsals usually take place on the day prior to the wedding at 5:00 PM or 5:30 PM but not later than 6:00 PM and last for about one hour. Parents, grandparents, bridesmaids, groomsmen, candle lighters, ushers, lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, servers and anyone else with a role in the wedding should generally attend the rehearsal. Music may be rehearsed during the rehearsal. All participants need to arrive at the rehearsal on time.

Decent dress, sobriety and good conduct are required for the wedding rehearsal. It is the couple's responsibility to let the wedding party and all guests know this. All those entering the Church are to be reminded that they are in God's house. No boisterous or obnoxious behavior will be tolerated. **NO FOOD OR DRINK IS ALLOWED IN THE CHURCH AT ANY TIME. THIS INCLUDES CHEWING GUM.** You are asked to have the utmost respect for God's house and the personal presence of Jesus Christ present in the tabernacle.

If there is no funeral the next morning, the church may be decorated the night before the wedding. If there is a funeral the morning of the wedding, the Church may only be decorated after the funeral is finished (usually about 11:30 AM). Some things to keep in mind regarding decorations:

- Two bouquets of flowers are sufficient for decorating the sanctuary.
- Candelabras are allowed as long as plastic is placed beneath the candles. Non-drip candles must be used.
- Twist ties or rubber bands can only attach pew decorations. The use of tape, tacks, glue, nails, etc., is forbidden.
- Any other decorations must be approved by the Priest PRIOR to the wedding rehearsal

The Sacrament of Penance (Confession) will be heard after the rehearsal. All Catholics attending the rehearsal, especially the bride and the groom, should avail themselves of this sacrament.

THE WEDDING DAY

PRIOR TO THE WEDDING

Drinking alcohol is always prohibited on the church grounds, including the parking lot, before the wedding. Anyone giving evidence of ANY consumption of alcohol will not be permitted to participate in the wedding in any fashion.

No food, gum or drink is EVER allowed in the church. All food wrappers and drink containers from food eaten elsewhere should be disposed of properly and not left around the entrances of the church.

PHOTOGRAPHERS, VIDEO CAMERAS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

It is fitting that you should want photographs that remind you of this important day in your lives. The church, however, is not a photographer's private studio. Photographers must reverence and respect our beliefs and our facilities.

1. Photographers are not to make themselves conspicuous with the use of strobes, especially in front of the altar.
2. It is recommended that pictures be taken before the wedding. It is permitted to take a few posed pictures after the ceremony. Since confessions may follow shortly after the wedding, this session must be limited to fifteen (15) minutes.
3. The priest reserves the right to inform the wedding party when photos may or may not be taken before, during, and after the Liturgy.
4. Photographers must not disrupt the ceremony and should use prudence in moving about during the ceremony.
5. There are no repetitions of parts of the ceremony for the sake of missed pictures.
6. Video cameras are positioned only in the choir loft or stationed in the side aisles, in front of the first pew but before the sanctuary. Video cameras may not move about during the ceremony.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

1. Flowers and the usual decorations are permitted in the Church. However, the couple is asked to appoint people to remove and dispose of the packaging and debris resulting from flowers. The use of Aisle runner is prohibited. ALL flower petals must be made of plastic to avoid carpet damage.

2. A bouquet for the Blessed Virgin Mary may be incorporated into the service if desired. The use of a unity candle, sand ceremony or any other non-Catholic rite is not permitted.
3. Flowers and decorations should be of such a nature to compliment the ceremony, and may not dominate the altar. The priest may modify the couple's placement of flowers and decorations. No flowers may be placed on ANY altar or communion rail.
4. If Candles/Candelabra are to be used, the couple must provide them or contact the sacristan. Any candles or candelabras that the Church has may be used.
5. Please do not let oil candles burn for excessively long periods of time.

THE WEDDING

1. The parish does not provide wedding programs.
2. The wedding Mass does not dispense anyone from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.
3. The bride and bridesmaids are responsible for their dresses. The Church cannot receive delivery of those items.
4. Any desired changes from the traditional wedding must be discussed and approved by the Priest. The ceremony will follow the rubrics and norms of the Roman Catholic Church. The priest who witnesses the ceremony is in charge of the ceremony and NOT bridal consultants. Outdoor weddings are not permitted.

MUSIC AND WORSHIP

Your marriage in the Church is a religious event. With the exchange of vows, God enters into your life in Sacrament. It is fitting, therefore, that the music chosen to celebrate this event reflects the sacred character of this reality. As a result, only sacred hymns may be used during the wedding liturgy.

Secular music, although discouraged, may be used prior to the entrance of the wedding party and after the exit of the wedding party provided it is not of an anti-Christian nature. The priest presiding at the wedding **MUST** approve ALL secular music played in the church. **No pre-recorded music is allowed.**

AFTER THE WEDDING

No rice, birdseed, glitter, silly string, shredded paper, balloons, or any other substance that leaves required extraordinary clean up may be used as the couple leaves the church. Ringing bells as well as bubbles are permitted.

The couple must assign at least two people responsible for cleaning the church after the wedding. These two people will be responsible for:

- 1) Picking up and throwing away all tissues, paper, programs and other debris found in the pews.
- 2) Cleaning the hall or other rooms used by the wedding party while pictures are being taken. Chairs and other items must be placed back properly and remove all belongings. The parish assumes no responsibility for lost or misplaced articles. Garbage sacks will be provided.
- 3) Emptying all the garbage sacks into the trash receptacle found in the vicinity of the Church. Empty trash bags must be placed in every trashcan.
- 4) Once the priest is satisfied with the cleanliness of the church, the cleaning crew may head to thereception.
- 5) WE EXPECT THAT THE CHURCH WILL BE LEFT AS CLEAN AS YOU FOUND IT. THANK YOU.

**Again, Congratulations on your Engagement and
upcoming Wedding celebration.**