



**St. John Brebeuf Parish  
Guidelines and  
Requirements for the  
Preparation &  
Celebration of The  
Sacrament of Marriage**

**2007**

## THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is a covenant in which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership for the whole of life which is for the good of the spouses as well as for the procreation and education of children. When baptized persons marry, this covenant relationship has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a Sacrament. (adapted from Can 1005,1.) Through this covenant, each partner freely bestows and accepts from the other, the gift of marriage.

This intimate union and the good of the children who may come from it, require total fidelity and a lifelong commitment to each other. In view of this, the many pressures that are faced by married couples, combined with the number of broken marriages today, has convinced pastors that it is of utmost importance that all persons contemplating marriage be given every assistance in the proper and adequate preparation for this step of their lives.

It is evident today that too many marriages fail because of poor preparation. Therefore, the following directions are given to assist the couple in the total preparation for marriage at St. John Brebeuf Parish.

Since marriage is a great Sacrament, all couples are urged to place more importance on the spiritual aspect of marriage rather than on the material preparation. The Pastor is interested in the couple's happiness and in a marriage celebration which is both solemn and joyful. It is in this spirit that the following directions are given to assist the couple in preparation for their wedding day.

Weddings are sometimes thought to be private ceremonies for the purpose of the exchange of vows for two persons in love. While the couple are obviously the participants in such a ceremony, the Church teaches that marriage is a public act of worship in which the couple are bringing their intensely personal commitment forward to a larger community of faith. This community, along with family and friends witnesses the exchange of vows and is present to support the couple in their commitment. It does this by inviting them into an experience of prayer. This experience of prayer, the Marriage Rite, has two aspects: an act of worship during which there is an exchange of vows. Together they form the Wedding Liturgy, which takes place within the context of the community's Liturgical prayer.

It is important the couple be aware of this, so that they will not choose features that would resemble a private event that does not concern the larger community of faith.

### 1. How far in advance should a date be reserved?

a. **One year's notice** is to be given to the Pastor (or his designated priest or deacon) before the date of the marriage between two practising Catholics, neither of whom has been married before, and longer for the marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic.

b. No date should be set if there are any complications (one or both of the partners under the age of 20; a previous marriage; *etc.*) before arranging an appointment to discuss the couple's situation. A preliminary interview is necessary to assure that a marriage between this couple is possible and advisable.

## **2. How does the Church ask us to prepare for marriage?**

- a. To insure proper preparation for this major step in the couple's lives, the following steps are mandated:
- i. The couple begins with a meeting with the Pastor or his designate in which information will be taken, forms filled out and preliminary discussions will begin.
  - ii. The couple will be asked to complete a premarital inventory, and, after it is evaluated, to meet with the Pastor or his designate to discuss the results.
  - iii. The couple will complete a marriage preparation course. Information on this will be given to the couple at the initial interview.

## **3. What forms and certificates are necessary?**

- a. Baptism certificates must be presented. The certificate of a Catholic Baptism must be recent, dated not more than six months before the wedding date.
- b. If the marriage is to take place outside of the parish of the bride or groom, a letter of permission from the pastor of the bride/groom is required.
- c. A marriage license is always necessary.**
- d. There are a number of forms to be filled out by the Pastor or his designate, many of which may be done at the initial interview.
- e. If one or both partners are not known to the Pastor or his designate, one person as a witness to each party will be required to testify to the fact that the party they know is free to marry. These witnesses must have known the person for whom they are testifying at least a good number of years. They may be either relatives or friends.
- f. If one of the partners is not Catholic, permission or even a dispensation is required from the Archbishop and more preparation will be necessary to assure a common understanding of Christian Marriage.

## **4. Do the partners wishing to be married need to belong to St. John Brebeuf Parish?**

- a. In the normal course of events Catholics marry in their own parish.

## **5. What type of planning goes into the Liturgy?**

- a. The couple are invited to meet with the Presider in order to plan the Liturgy for their marriage. There are many options in the Rite and it is for the couple, in conjunction with the Presider, to determine which are most appropriate for their celebration.
- b. A note on the entrance procession:  
**"The entrance rite of the marriage ceremony, is meant to focus on the couple and celebrate their union, not to single out the bride and draw attention to her beauty."** (Rite of Marriage, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979, p.37)

In light of this, the couple may choose one of three options for entering the church.

Option 1: The couple, preceded by their attendants process to the front together.

Option 2: The bride and groom are escorted to the front by their parents, preceded by their attendants.

Option 3: The attendants, the groom and his parents are led by the celebrant to the centre of the church while the bride walks from the back to the centre with her parents.

**Please be aware that at St. John Brebeuf Parish, these are the options that are available.** In this we are following *The Directives of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops* established for the Sacrament of Marriage.

**The following custom is seriously discouraged since it places undue emphasis on the entrance of the Bride.**

“An old and former custom has the groom and best man seated in the front pew or stationed close to the front of the church. After all the guests are seated, the bride and her attendants arrive. The attendants lead the bride to the altar. She is accompanied by her father who gives her to the groom at the front and the couple moves into place.”

This is the wrong emphasis. This is interpreted as “giving away” the bride as if she is property being transferred to a new owner. The entrance should focus on the couple and their union, not to single out and draw attention the bride.

#### **THE LITURGY WHEN BOTH PARTNERS ARE CATHOLIC**

The sacramental nature of Marriage finds its source and strength in the celebration of the Eucharist. In marriage between two Catholics, the Nuptial Mass is celebrated with the appropriate liturgical music and prayers, unless there is a good reason not to do this.

#### **THE LITURGY WHEN ONE PARTNER IS NOT CATHOLIC**

Since it is our belief that the sharing in Communion is an action that visibly manifests our unity of belief and practice in the Roman Catholic Church, the rite of marriage between Catholic and a non-Catholic is normally celebrated outside of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

All of the elements of the Liturgy of the Word and the Rite of Marriage are celebrated without the celebration of the Eucharist. This celebration expresses the dignity of the marriage without causing a deeper division among those participating in the Marriage Liturgy. As in the Nuptial Mass, appropriate liturgical music and prayers are used and the opportunity for additional music exists before the Liturgy.

## **MUSIC GUIDELINES FOR WEDDING LITURGIES**

Appropriate music for weddings must clearly express Christian faith and be religious in nature so as to deepen prayer. Those who will be present at the ceremony, although usually invited, represent the larger community of faith. They are not as much guests as they are Christian Witnesses who join the couple in prayer. Together they become the voice of the Church, living out its word of faith. If one thinks of the ceremony in this way, it will be normal to want to invite their full participation and their words of wisdom and support. The couple will also see them as mirrors of their future faith lives together. In turn the couple will enrich the community by their exchange of vows in which they freely accept one another in an intimate union, and promise to nourish their marriage with undivided affection. This public promise of fidelity reflects strength and encouragement for all present who are married.

One of the best ways to use music is to involve the community by singing psalms, hymns and acclamations, much as we do in our Sunday Liturgies. It is important, therefore, for the couple to make their music choices in conjunction with pastoral musicians who can help them choose the appropriate music and are capable of performing it with grace and dignity. Because the wedding is being celebrated in our community, it is deemed appropriate to use musicians from this community.

### **A NOTE ON SECULAR MUSIC**

Selections of music which are from popular culture and are essentially commercial music detract from the unique worship experience, and are not appropriate. They are more appropriately used at the festivities following the Liturgy.

### **VISITING PRESIDERS**

It is possible, for a good reason, for another priest or deacon to perform a wedding at St. John Brebeuf with the delegation arranged beforehand by the Pastor of St. John Brebeuf Parish. Any visiting Presider would follow the *Marriage Guidelines* of this parish.

### **REHEARSALS**

A rehearsal for the wedding party will be scheduled with the Presider at a time that is suitable to the Presider, church and the wedding party. Generally, for a Saturday wedding, early Thursday evening rehearsals are preferred.

- a. It requires the attendance of the bridal couple, the attendants, the ushers and the parents of the bride and groom
- b. All should arrive on time as lateness inconveniences everyone. There may be other rehearsals scheduled also, so the couple's cooperation in being on time will be appreciated.

For the rehearsal, all should keep in mind that appropriate dress and behaviour is expected in the church. Eating or drinking, use of cell phones, headphones, video games, *etc.*, are not appropriate activities in such a setting.

## **DECORATIONS**

Moderation is always best; the couple should not plan on changing what is already in the church. All seasonal environment such as banners, candles, church furnishings and flowers will remain in place during Wedding Liturgies. The altar is the focal point of the Liturgy. Decorations may not obstruct the altar, pulpit or chair in the sanctuary. **Nothing is to be placed on the altar.** An aisle runner is not necessary and may not be covered by our insurance.

## **WHEN ARE WEDDINGS CELEBRATED AT ST. JOHN BREBEUF?**

Except for highly usual circumstances, weddings are discouraged during the penitential and preparatory seasons of Lent and Advent. Also, because of the stresses of a highly demanding Christmas season, weddings are not generally performed between Christmas and New Years.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO**

This is a religious event and respect for the place of worship must be maintained. The best photographers are the most inconspicuous. Photographers/Videographers must check with the Presider before the ceremony as to where and when pictures may be taken. Only a professional photographer commissioned by the couple will be permitted to take pictures at the wedding. Floodlights and augmented lighting are not allowed.

## **CONFETTI, etc.**

Confetti, rice, popcorn, birdseed, flower petals, *etc.* are an environmental concern and create serious care taking problems inside and outside the church. Therefore these items are not permitted on church premises.

## **OFFERINGS**

The couple's donation to the Church in gratitude to God for the gift He has given of their lives and the love they share for each other is an ancient custom that is a sign of good stewardship. "God has first given to me, therefore, let me give in return to God appropriately and gratefully." As the Scripture says:

Be generous when you worship the Lord, and do not stint the first fruits of your hands. With every gift show a cheerful face, and dedicate your tithe with gladness. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, and as generously as you can afford. For the Lord is the one who repays, and he will repay you sevenfold. (*Sirach 35:10-13*)

God is the giver of all we are and love. The couple is God's gift to each other. They should be grateful and thankful. Our wealth, talents, capabilities, intellectual and physical endowments are God's gift to us and His investment in us. "Remember then it is the Lord, Our God, who gives you

the power to acquire wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18) God expects us to be generous in return and has a right to expect dividends.

### **HOW MUCH TO GIVE?**

Offerings are given for musicians, cantors or singers as well as for the services and facility provided by the Church. The fees for musicians, *etc.*, are set by those responsible. The amount to be given to the Church should be proportionate to the other expenses for the wedding. The couple should consider what they are willing to and plan to spend on music bands, flowers, photographer, clothing, food, drink and then plan for a proportional donation amount to the Church, the place where the focal point of their celebration; the *wedding*, will take place. This donation covers upkeep costs incurred by the church. Rental of the Parish Hall is available at an extra cost.

The couple should make their donation payable to: “St. John Brebeuf Church”, and give it to the Pastor or his designate following the rehearsal. The donation can also be left at the Parish Office.

The priest or deacon has also rendered the couple a service in preparing them for this very special day, leading the rehearsal, and presiding at their wedding. It is not wrong to offer something for these services in appreciation. This can be done by placing it in an envelope for him, and presenting it along with the donation to the Church following the rehearsal. Or, this donation can be left for him at the Parish Office.

Please note, the Celebrant appreciates that some may wish to invite him to the wedding banquet. Often, however, because of other pastoral duties or commitments, his attendance may not be possible.

### **A LIFETIME COMMITMENT**

Society today, generally speaking, does not promote the permanency of marriage. If there is any difficulty in the marriage, many seek the easiest solution which generally means, ‘get out of it-end the marriage.’ The community of faith, however, does promote the ideals of marriage given to us by Christ. As active members of the community of faith here at St. John Brebeuf, or in a parish in the neighbourhood where the couple will reside as husband and wife, they will receive from their fellow members the help and encouragement they may need to overcome any possible difficulties they will face. It is in growing together through good times and bad that their love will grow stronger and their marriage will remain permanent. May God bless all those who plan on marrying in their time of preparation!

If there are any further questions, do not hesitate to call the Pastor or his designate at 488-4467.

# The Order of Celebration

## *Rite of Welcome*

Greeting at the entrance of Church  
Entry into Church  
Introduction and Welcome  
Penitential Rite  
Opening Prayer

## *Liturgy of the Word*

Old Testament Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
New Testament Reading  
Gospel  
Homily

## *Rite of Marriage*

Preparatory Dialogue  
Statement of Intention  
Declaration of Consent  
Blessing of Rings  
Exchange of Rings  
General Intercessions

***With Mass***

Preparation of bread and wine  
Eucharistic Prayer  
Our Father  
Nuptial Blessing  
Communion  
Prayer after Communion

***Outside of Mass***

Nuptial blessing  
Our Father

***Conclusion***

Final Blessing  
Signing the Register  
Recessional

**But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.**

**If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.**

**And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing**

**If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.**

**Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.**

**It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**Love never ends.**

**~1 Co 12:31-13:8**



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