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*OUR LADY OF FATIMA*  
*Wedding Handbook*

## *Prayer for Engaged Couples*

Lord God,  
the source of all love,  
the wise plan of your providence  
has brought these two people together .  
As they prepare themselves for the  
sacrament of marriage and pray for  
your grace, grant that, strengthened  
by your blessing, they may grow  
in their respect for one another and  
cherish each other  
with a sincere love.  
May the God of love and peace  
abide in them, guide their steps,  
and confirm their hearts  
in his love, now and forever.  
Amen.

We extend congratulations and offer our congratulations to you as you plan your lifelong commitment to each other and consecrate your love for one another in the Sacrament of Matrimony. God has called you both to this vocation of marriage. These guidelines are meant to help you prepare well for this most important event in your lives; to assist you in understanding the theology and purpose of the *Order of Celebrating Marriage* in the Roman Catholic Church and to inform you of the basic requirements of the Diocese of Wilmington and Our Lady of Fatima Parish.

Your engagement period is a time to deepen the spiritual foundation of your relationship. In addition to working on your communication skills, discussing practical issues (like finances and planning receptions), this is an ideal time to recommit yourselves to Sunday Mass and the Eucharist, frequent use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and a period of personal prayer each day. The practice of your faith is the best investment you can make in your future married life.

You will be meeting with one of the parish priests to prepare for your marriage. Please read through this handbook and feel free to discuss any questions that you may have.

We look forward to working with you.

With prayers and best wishes,

*THE PRIESTS of OUR LADY OF FATIMA*

## ***Getting Started***

The couple planning to marry should contact the parish priest ***at least one year prior*** to the anticipated wedding date and meet with him. In this meeting you will examine your faith commitment and your intention of marriage. Only after this first session can a date be reserved for the wedding.

To celebrate your marriage at Our Lady of Fatima, it is normally expected that one of the parties, bride or groom, is a Catholic registered at our parish; or, that your family is registered. However, if both bride and groom wish to be married in a Catholic Church other than their parish, two permissions must be granted: 1) the Pastor of our parish must give permission; and 2) either of your proper Pastor(s) must grant permission for you to be married here.

## ***Scheduling your Date***

Our church is available for weddings at the following times:

Friday evenings 5 PM to 7 PM

Saturdays 10 AM to 2 PM

[with intervals of 2 hours between each wedding]

or by special arrangement

All scheduling is subject to previously scheduled events and the norms of the liturgical calendar; that is, the Rite of Marriage may not be celebrated on the Immaculate Conception, Good Friday, Holy Saturday etc.

## ***Officiants***

Only a priest or deacon with faculties from the Diocese of Wilmington may officiate at the Rite of Marriage. Normally, this will be one of our parish priests. If you have a priest or deacon who is a relative or close friend and in good standing, he is welcome to officiate at your wedding. Explicit and written permission and delegation of the pastor of Our Lady of Fatima is required. The visiting priest or deacon must agree to prepare the couple for marriage and see that all requirements are fulfilled. If, for a good reason (distance, health, etc.) the visiting officiant is unable to prepare the couple, special arrangements with the pastor need to be discussed.

## ***Previous Marriages***

Previous marriages in another church or in a civil ceremony must be discussed with your parish priest and appropriate and/or necessary actions addressed ***before*** a wedding date can be set. No wedding may be even tentatively scheduled if annulment of a previous marriage is sought and/or in process. The final decree and completed counseling (if any) must be in hand ***before*** a date can be discussed.

## ***Interfaith Marriages***

Church norms require that a Catholic commit to live out his or her faith and do all in his or her power to share the faith with their children. This promise is given by signature. Please discuss this with the priest/deacon what this means and the purpose of it – it is required but must be explained and discussed to be understood properly.

Marriages of Catholics and non-Baptized people (Jewish, Muslim, etc.) can be celebrated with the blessing of the Church in a “neutral place”.

## ***Marriage Preparation***

Having chosen the Church and the officiating priest or deacon, preparation for your marriage is needed. Diocesan policy requires that every couple adequately prepare for the sacrament of marriage and family life. This preparation takes place with the priest or deacon who will be officiating at your Nuptial Mass or Wedding Ceremony. In addition to instruction time and discussions with the officiating priest or deacon, attendance at either a Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter Weekend is required.

## ***Documentation***

In preparation for your marriage, certain documents must be presented to the officiating priest:

- A. **Baptismal Certificate** - no less than 6 months old for both parties, if Catholic. A copy of the original, if one of the parties is a non-Catholic Christian.
  
- B. Anyone under the age of 18 years of age must have prior permission from the Bishop before setting a marriage date. Counseling with Catholic Charities will be required before the Bishop gives his permission. In addition, the consent of the parent(s) or guardian(s) must be obtained.

## ***Witnesses***

Two official witnesses are required for valid celebration of Christian marriage. Normally, the best man and the maid/matron of honor serve as these witnesses. The State of Delaware requires witnesses be **18 years of age**. The witnesses must sign the civil license. This should be done at the rehearsal.

## ***Exceptions***

Exceptions to the above norms can be made in cases of age, illness or unusual pastoral circumstances as long as the intent of the guidelines is maintained. ***There are absolutely no exceptions in the case of previous marriages as above stated.***

## ***Marriage License***

A marriage license **must be obtained from the State of Delaware**. A license is available at the Office of the Clerk of the Peace office located at 800 N. French Street (2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the City/County Building) in Wilmington. Please contact that office at (302) 571-7590) for more information. You can also visit online at [www2.nccde.org/clerkofpeace](http://www2.nccde.org/clerkofpeace). There is a 24 hour waiting period for residents and a 96 hour waiting period for non-residents. In addition, the license is good for 30 days. Please be sure to plan accordingly. **The license must be brought to rehearsal.** You will receive your official signed and witnessed copy of the license ***after*** the ceremony.



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## *Mass or Ceremony*

The Sacrament of Marriage is a public celebration of the love of God. The wedding liturgy is not just the union of two people, but also the worship prayer of the entire Church. *The Order of Celebrating Marriage* provides many choices in the selection of Scripture readings, prayers and music. Your officiating priest or deacon will provide you with a booklet entitled Together for Life which contains the readings and prayers from which you may choose those you would like proclaimed at your wedding. The wedding liturgy should have God at its center and include the full participation of the assembly. According to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the celebration of marriage should normally take place within the Mass. However, if one of the parties is not Catholic, the Rite for Celebrating Marriage outside of Mass (Nuptial Ceremony) is to be considered.

## RITE OF MARRIAGE WITHIN MASS

+Entrance Rite

+Liturgy of the Word

Reading from the Old Testament Responsorial

Psalm

Reading from the New Testament Gospel

Acclamation [Alleluia} Gospel

Homily

+Celebration of Marriage

Exchange of Vows

Blessings and Exchange of Rings Intercessions

+Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts

Eucharist Prayer

+Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer Nuptial

Blessing Sign of Peace

Communion

Prayer after Communion

+Concluding Rite

Final Blessing Dismissal

RITE OF MARRIAGE OUTSIDE MASS

+Entrance Rite

+Liturgy of the Word

Reading from the Old Testament

Responsorial Psalm

Reading from the New Testament Gospel

Acclamation [Alleluia]

Gospel

Homily

+Celebration of Marriage

Exchange of Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

+Intercessions

+The Lord's Prayer

+Nuptial Blessing

+Final Blessing

Flowers may be presented to parents during the Sign of Peace at the Nuptial Mass and to the Blessed Mother at either a Mass or Ceremony. The Unity Candle is not permitted as part of the Marriage Rite. It is more appropriate at the wedding reception.

A Nuptial Mass lasts approximately 50-60 minutes. A ceremony lasts approximately 30-45 minutes. Your wedding must be finished 1-1/2 hours from your scheduled starting time. Please make every effort to have your wedding start promptly at the scheduled time.

### *Altar Servers*

If the wedding is celebrated within a Mass or as a Ceremony, two altar servers will be scheduled to assist the officiating priest or deacon. The gratuity stipend is customarily a \$10 cash or gift card offering for each server. Please let us know as soon as possible if you have a specific server in mind; otherwise, we will schedule servers to help us.

### *Music*

**“Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance. As sacred song is united to the words, it forms an integral part of solemn liturgy. Yet the function of music is ministerial; it must serve and never dominate. Music, in addition to expressing texts, can also unveil a dimension of meaning and emotion, a communication of ideas and intuitions, which words alone cannot yield. Ideally, every communal celebration of faith, including matrimony, should include singing.**  
(MCW #23, 24)

The Sacrament of Marriage is greatly enhanced by the use of liturgical music. Whether you choose a Nuptial Mass or a Nuptial Ceremony, appropriate music, properly placed serves to focus the attention of the assembly and lead them to the source of love itself – God. Music is an extremely important aspect of preparing your sacramental celebration and must be planned thoughtfully and thoroughly.

Our Lady of Fatima employs a full time Director of Liturgy and Music to help you plan and choose your music and to schedule the organist, cantor and other instrumentalists for

your wedding day. The couple should contact the Director of Liturgy and Music at (302) 322-3745 ext. 20 at least **3-4 months prior to your wedding**. This ensures your wedding date is reserved. You should also arrange a time to meet the Director of Liturgy and Music to receive your planning materials and discuss what is appropriate for your wedding. Our organist fee is a separate fee of \$125 which includes a rehearsal with a soloist (if needed) and the playing of the organ on your wedding day. Our cantor/soloist fee is \$100. Fees for certain soloists and guest musicians are set directly by the individual and may be higher. The parish Director of Liturgy and Music must be consulted even if you have already planned the ceremony; have relatives and/or friends singing or plan to use outside musicians and soloists.

### ***Wedding Program***

A wedding program is an important part of preparing for the celebration of marriage. Not only is it a sign of your hospitality to those invited; but also, practically speaking, it serves as a worship aid for your guests so they can participate more fully in your wedding celebration. Please be sure to discuss the details and options available for preparing your program when you meet with the liturgy coordinator.

### ***Environment***

In choosing your wedding date, be aware of the liturgical seasons, especially Lent. All decorations found in the Church at the time of your wedding must remain. Examples are: Advent wreaths, Christmas trees, altar cloths, banners, etc. They cannot be changed or removed for your wedding.

## ***Florist***

The wedding couple is responsible for procuring flowers and flower arrangements are to be made with the florist of your choice. Arrangements should be a *maximum height* of 32 inches from floor. No trees, palms or bushes allowed. If your wedding is scheduled during a specific liturgical season such as Christmas or Easter, please note that your arrangements need to be planned in accordance with the liturgical environment already set. For safety reasons, aisle runners are not permitted. Please do not use staples, tacks, tape or anything that will damage or deface the pews. You will receive a more detailed summation of florist guidelines at your meeting with the Director of Liturgy and Music. Guidelines are available in advance if needed.

## ***Photographers & Videographers***

To maintain the integrity and sacredness of the Church and her sacraments, guidelines apply to photos and video taken at Our Lady of Fatima. You will be given 2 copies of these guidelines when you meet with the Director of Liturgy and Music. Please be sure the photographer and/or video personnel you have contracted for your wedding receive their copy.

## ***Bridal Room***

Situated in the back of the Church, the Reconciliation Room is available for the bride and her attendants just before the ceremony. Do not leave any valuables there or in the lay sacristy. We ask that all florist boxes, bows, etc. be removed immediately after your wedding and that you please leave the each room as you found it.

## ***Receiving Lines***

A receiving line is always seen on truly formal occasions. Originally, the purpose behind the tradition was to allow the hostess, usually the Mother of the Bride, to personally welcome the guests into the reception. Currently, the receiving line allows the bride and groom and their parents the opportunity to greet every guest personally. A receiving line is part of the reception not the sacred rite. Receiving lines in the church vestibule at the end of the ceremony will be considered only if you have a *small* wedding. You will be losing precious time that would be better spent taking formal portraits; and, you may be required to choose which you prefer.

## ***Safety and Sacred Concerns***

For the safety of you and your guests, no objects (i.e. flower petals, rice, bird seed, confetti, balloons) may be thrown on the premises, either in church or outside. Additionally, no additional flooring (i.e. runners, carpet, wood planks, etc.) may be laid on the surface. All wedding party members, guests, friends and relatives should be reminded that this is a Church - a sacred place of worship. It is expected that the Church and its property be treated with respect. Under no circumstances are food or drink to be brought into the Church at either the rehearsal or the wedding. It is absolutely forbidden to have or consume alcoholic beverages anywhere on the property of Our Lady of Fatima. This includes the bridal party, guests and drivers. Remember at all times that you are in a Church. Please show the proper respect and reverence.

## ***Wedding Offerings***

There are many expenses involved in the preparation of your marriage. The wedding offering for the Church is \$200 for regular contributing members of the parish. The fee for all others is \$425. Organist and soloist fees are listed under the music heading.

## ***Rehearsal***

The rehearsal should be scheduled with the priest/deacon as soon as the wedding is set. Only those involved with the wedding ceremony should come to the rehearsal. The wedding party; those who will serve as readers and those who will be presenting the Eucharistic gifts, ushers and parents are customarily attending the rehearsal. Rehearsal should last no longer than an hour.

## ***Timeliness***

Every effort should be made to begin the rehearsal and wedding on time. Prepare ahead as you set a realistic time schedule and inform everyone involved to plan accordingly. Courtesy requires that we should not keep guests, paid or volunteer service providers or your parish priest waiting.

## ***Rehearsal Night Checklist***

If you have not already done so, be sure to bring your marriage license and all fees to the rehearsal. It is much easier to attend to these things on rehearsal night than in the excitement of your wedding day.

- ❖ Marriage Certificate \_\_\_\_\_
- ❖ Church Offering \_\_\_\_\_
- ❖ Stipend for Priest \_\_\_\_\_
- ❖ Altar Server Fee (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- ❖ Organist/Cantor Fee(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- ❖ Wedding Program \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Living Faithfully***

The Sacred Scripture passage that many couples choose for the wedding is a marvelous blueprint for loving.

***Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. 1 Cor 13:4-8***

These words of St. Paul are worth daily meditation not only for your insight into the true shape of love, but for strengthening wills to follow this way of love. The love that he describes flourishes in faithful, stable relationships. This applies, first and foremost, to a marriage. It is true also for the entire family. When a woman and man vow to be true in good times and in bad, they are confirming a decision to love one another, but, as married couples have taught us, this decision to love in one we have to make over and over again, when it feels good and when it does not. It is a decision to look for, act on and pray for the good of the people we say we love. It is a pledge of fidelity. Our world today needs living witnesses to fidelity. These are the most convincing signs of the love that Christ has for every human being. Couples who are living faithful lives of mutual love and support – though not without difficulties-have the gratitude of the whole Church.

Excerpt from A Pastoral Message, U.S. Bishops to Families dated Nov. 17, 1992.

***Thank you*** for taking the time to read this booklet. We hope that these notes and guidelines have been helpful to you. The purpose behind them is to promote the dignity and respect of everyone involved in your preparations. If you have any other questions or ideas come to mind, please do not hesitate to ask. When making arrangements, please speak to the parish office staff directly. Unless there is an emergency, do not ask family members to speak for you. Please plan to be an active member of Our Lady of Fatima or the parish community where you plan to live. For more resources, visit [www.catholicweddinghelp.com](http://www.catholicweddinghelp.com) and [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org).

***May the Lord bless you and keep you always in His love!***

+ + + + + + +

*Wedding:* \_\_\_\_\_ *at* \_\_\_\_\_

*Presider:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Meeting times with presider:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Marriage Encounter or Pre-Cana scheduled:*  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Meeting with Director of Liturgy and Music:*

*Rehearsal:* \_\_\_\_\_ *at* \_\_\_\_\_

**Our Lady of Fatima Rectory:      Phone: (302) 328-3431**

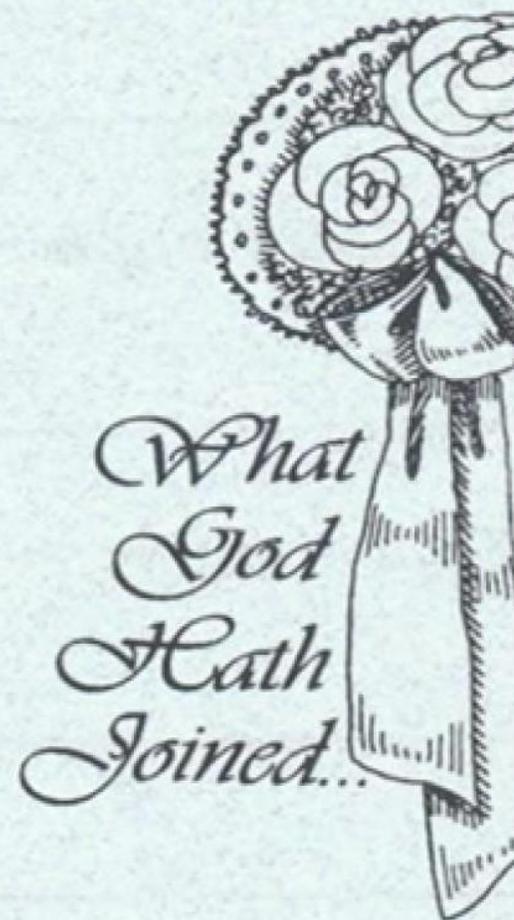
**Fax:      (302) 328-6318**

**Director of Liturgy & Music:      (302) 322-3745    Ext. 20**

**Church Address:**

**801 N. Du pont Bouleva rd**

**New Castle, DE 19720**



*What  
God  
Hath  
Joined...*