

*The Sacrament of Matrimony*  
*A Planning Guide*



Holyland Parish Cluster

*Holy Cross, Mount Calvary*  
*Saint Cloud, Saint Cloud*  
*Saint Joseph, Saint Cloud*

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*Holy Matrimony:  
a Sacrament of Vocation*

The Roman Catholic Church views the marriage of two baptized Christians, of any denomination, as a Sacrament, a bond of unity, ordained by God, to give grace to you and the Christian Community.

In choosing to celebrate your wedding in one of the Parishes of the Holyland Cluster, there are several things you must keep in mind, as well as many elements of Marital preparation and planning that must be undertaken by the couple to be married, in conjunction with the Pastor.

This guide will help you in the process of planning your wedding.

*Pre-marital Preparation*

The Church requires the couple to engage in three sessions of pre-marital preparation with the Pastor to ensure the couple is properly disposed to undertake the Sacrament of Marriage. In addition, as a couple, you must attend a pre-marriage workshop sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. We will supply you with a list of workshop days available.

In order to schedule your wedding and complete the three sessions, it is recommended that you contact the Parish Office **at least 12 months and no less than 6 months** prior to your planned wedding date. In other words, once you are engaged to be married and have begun planning your wedding, the Church should be one of the very first calls you make.

The three preparation sessions, which should be about an hour each, will consist of the following:

1. An opportunity for the couple to meet and discuss wedding plans for the first time, to book a date on the parish calendar, and for the couple to take the pre-marriage inventory, also known as FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication and UnderStanding). The pastor will also ask the couple to fill out an information questionnaire, which will help determine if there are any impediments to the marriage (reasons the couple may not be married in the Church, or, at least, permissions that must be obtained from the Archdiocese) that will require a dispensation (permission).

2. An opportunity for the couple to review the FOCCUS inventory with the pastor, and go over any potential problem areas which the inventory may have sighted. The pastor will also review the “rationale” or theology of the Sacrament of Marriage and begin the planning process for the ceremony.
3. The final session will be an opportunity for the couple to plan for the Wedding Liturgy itself, review any lingering questions, and finalize plans for the Church Wedding.

### *First Things First*

Once you have booked the date for your wedding, and begun your pre-marital preparation, there are several things you will want to do:

1. Book the place where you will have your reception.
2. Have invitations printed and mailed.
3. Get your wedding license from the court house in the county where at least one of you reside (no more than 30 days and no less than 7 days before your wedding).

### *Guidelines for a Wedding*

There are several guidelines and requirements that must be met in order to have a Catholic Wedding. While, generally, all of these guidelines must be met, please do not be concerned if you do not meet one of them, but make sure to address the matter to the pastor **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**.

Here is a list of things to consider for your first session with the pastor:

1. Are both of you baptized Christians, with at least one of you being Roman Catholic?
2. Is at least one of you a member of one of the parishes of the Holyland Cluster (Holy Cross, Saint Cloud, Saint Joseph)?
3. Have one or both of you ever been married before, even if only in a civil ceremony? *Please note*– if you have been married before, an annulment will take **AT LEAST** one year to be processed. The wedding cannot occur, or be scheduled, before this is complete.
4. Are you related to each other in any way?

5. Do you regularly attend Mass at this, or another, parish?
6. Are you open to the gift of Children? And, if one of you is not Catholic, are you willing to have your children raised as such?

The parish also has several guidelines, which may be particular to us. These are:

1. If one of you is not Catholic, generally your wedding will be held during a Liturgy of the Word, without a Mass (Eucharist)... If both of you are Catholic, it is expected we will also celebrate Eucharist at your marriage.
2. Normally the pastor presides at all weddings. However, if you want a priest other than the pastor to witness your marriage, please discuss this with the pastor as soon as possible, as special permission must be given for that to occur. That priest may also lead you through the pre-marriage preparation.
3. A unity candle MAY (but does not have to) be used in the Liturgy.
4. An aisle runner may NOT be used in any of the Churches, as it can be dangerous for those walking down the aisle. Neither may you use a decorated arch for the aisle or the wedding ceremony.
5. Birdseed and rice may NOT be strewn outside the Church as the couple leaves, nor may (real) flower petals be scattered inside the Church during the processional or recessional. If you choose to scatter artificial flower petals, it is your responsibility to see that they are cleaned up afterward.
6. You may have flowers to decorate the Church, but this is not required. If you choose to have flowers, generally, you should provide a large bouquet for the altar, a smaller one for the ambo (lectern), and, perhaps, one for the Blessed Mother Shrine. Also, you may want flowers for your unity candle, if used. Generally, these flowers should be real. These may be delivered at the rehearsal, or at least two hours prior to the wedding. If you need vases, we may have some available to use, please ask!
7. You may not tape, nail, or tack anything to any furniture, pews, windows or walls in the Church. Also, we do not provide candle holders for the pews on the aisle, and discourage their use.
8. You must provide for a liturgical musician to accompany your wedding. The pastor will ensure you have contacts for that, if you need them.
9. Generally, "secular" (or non-Church) music may not be used during the wedding liturgy; however, it may be used before or after.

10. A rehearsal time must be scheduled with the pastor at the same time you schedule the wedding. The rehearsal generally occurs the evening before the wedding. ALL members of the wedding party must be present for the rehearsal, and ***should be there on time.***
10. Please bring you wedding license to the rehearsal with you so the priest may fill out the necessary information. He will then get all the signatures and mail the license in following the wedding.
11. The size of your wedding party is up to you, however you must keep in mind the size of the sanctuary in each church when planning that. Also, please keep in mind the capacity of each of the churches as you invite guests. Here is a good rule of thumb for capacity– Holy Cross: 350 people; Saint Cloud: 250 people; Saint Joseph: 150 people.
12. There should be no flash photograph during the wedding by anyone, and this should be indicated in your bulletin. Your official photographer may take photos of the processional and recessional, and you may arrange to have group photos taken before or after the wedding. Also, you may provide a videographer, who will find a location where he/she can video the wedding without be intrusive.
13. We have no bride’s rooms in any of the Churches, however we will do our best to provide a space where the bride and her attendants may finish dressing before the wedding. If you are getting married at Saint Joseph, please keep in mind there is no water– and, thus, no bathroom– in the Church.
14. ***Consumption of alcohol is absolutely forbidden in the Church.*** Further, if any member of the bridal party is visibly intoxicated prior to the wedding, the pastor reserves the right ***to refuse to allow them to participate*** (this includes the bride and groom). In other words, don’t take the chance: save your drinking for the wedding banquet. Also, no smoking is allowed inside any of the buildings.

### *Planning the Wedding Liturgy*

In planning for the wedding liturgy, there are several things you should keep in mind, as well. The pastor (or priest working with you) will help you with these things, and the parish will provide you with a booklet, called “Together for Life”, which will help with many of these decisions. They are:

1. Which readings will you use (see “Together for Life”) and who will read them (the priest always reads the Gospel). Also, which Prayers of the Faithful (intercessions) will you use, and who will read them (see “Together for Life”).

2. Who will be the “Best Man” and “Maid of Honor”, as these will be official witnesses for the State and Church.
3. Will you have communion under “both forms” (host and wine), or just the host? If both, do you have friends or relatives who are Eucharistic Ministers?
4. Will use be using a unity candle during the liturgy?
5. Have you purchased your rings? Who will hold them during the wedding until the time they are blessed and worn?
6. Which form of the Wedding Vows will you use (see “Together for Life”)?
7. When will your flowers be delivered?
8. Who will be providing the wedding music, and what pieces will you be using?
9. When will you take group wedding photos (before or after the wedding), and who will take them?
10. Will you come dressed for the wedding? If not, have you asked about a place where you may do so in or near the Church?
11. There is a suggested donation for the minister (priest) of \$75. You may also choose to make a donation to the parish for use of the facilities. Further, you will have to negotiate with your musicians regarding their fees (these should be paid directly to them).

Most importantly, we want your wedding celebration to be a sacred and memorable experience for you and your guests. We will do everything possible to ensure this! Peace and all good!

*Brother Steve*