

the Sacrament of **MARRIAGE**



MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

St. John the Evangelist Parish
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As of January 2019

The Sacrament of Marriage

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."
—Genesis 2:24

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church.... This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband."
—St. Paul to the Ephesians 5:25 & 32-33

Marriage may seem like a contract, but it is much more: it's a **covenant**; a covenant is the exchange of two PERSONS. In a covenant, LIVES interchange. Covenants can never be broken — except by death. Marriage is a covenant of love in which God participates with a man and woman who interchange their lives with EACH OTHER and with GOD!

Your vocation is the way God has called you to live your life. By our Baptism, we ALL have a primary vocation to love God and be His children. But the way we live that out may be different; some are called to be celibate priests, some are called to be religious sisters or brothers, some are called to live single for the Lord, some are called to serve as deacons, and some are called to be married. Marriage is a **vocation**. No one vocation is better than another, all are needed to build the Kingdom of God and He gives us the gifts and grace we need to live the life He calls us to.

Fidelity, indissolubility, and openness to children are essential in Christian marriage. This means each person is exclusively to be married and intimate with only the spouse. It means covenantal marriage cannot be dissolved except through death of a spouse. And it means that every act of sexual intimacy must be aimed at the good of the other person, deepening the bond between the spouses, and open to receiving new life.

Welcome to Your Time of Preparation

On behalf of St. John Parish and the universal Church, congratulations on your engagement! Generally, in marriages celebrated at St. John, either the bride and/or groom will be registered members of our parish, celebrating Sunday Mass with us regularly. We look forward to celebrating your wedding with you, and even more so: your married life in the parish!

GETTING STARTED

Preparation time will vary, but 9-12 months is typical. Dates and times for a wedding, either at St. John the Evangelist or St. Joseph Oratory, should NOT be set prior to meeting with us. Please call the office to set up an appointment: 517-784-0553

REQUIREMENTS

St. John uses a preparation process based on the Diocese of Lansing guidelines for marriage preparation. This is not a one-size fits all checklist of steps, rather we hope to engage you in an ongoing relationship with the parish, each other, and Jesus through this time of preparation. The following is an overview of what to expect in general, but may be altered at the pastor's discretion to meet each couple's needs.

- An **MA Form** is the document that you will go over with a priest VERY early in the process of preparing to marry in the Church.
- **FOCCUS** inventory. You will take an online survey and then discuss issues such as money management, interpersonal communication, in-laws, child-raising, etc.
- **WITNESS TO LOVE** is a mentor-based program that prepares couples for both marriage and a life of relationship within their faith community and it is the foundation of our marriage preparation in the Diocese of Lansing. Couples choose their own mentors* and then together these couples journey through the time of preparation, along the way forming deeper relationships with each other and Christ.

- Each of you individually, or as a couple, must attend an **Encounter Experience** (these vary and will be offered as they are scheduled throughout the diocese).
- ***GOD'S PLAN FOR LOVE*** is a one day retreat at the parish discussing Theology of the Body as it relates to marriage and the theology of marriage in the Catholic Church.
- Attend ***NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP) Classes***. These take 3 months to complete. In-person classes in the area (usually Lansing/Ann Arbor) can be found at: **ccli.org**
- Attend the **W.E. C.A.R.E.** workshop through Catholic Charities. This is a Friday night, all day Saturday (not an overnight) workshop to help learn communication skills.
www.catholiccharitiesjacksonlenaweehillsdale.org
- Attend one of our quarterly offerings for the **Blessing of Engaged Couples**—you will be notified when these are scheduled

OPTIONAL (but highly recommended):

Catholic Engaged Encounter: a weekend retreat opportunity for the couple to build their relationship toward a strong sacramental commitment. For more info or to register: www.lansingcee.org

Catholicism 101

We strongly recommend that non-Catholics wishing to marry in the Church attend our Cat 101 class in order to better understand their future spouse's faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church in general. Classes and sessions are most Wednesday evenings. For more information, contact our Director of Faith Formation, Todd Gale or just show up, Wednesdays, 6pm, in the parish center.

Wedding Plans & Fees

Church Fee: This fee helps us cover costs for marriage prep materials, wedding sacristans, and other material/labor expenses for the preparation time and day of the wedding. This is based on the bride and/or groom being active parishioners at St. John:

Registered: \$300 Non-registered: \$500

Deposit: Typically paid at the secondary meeting, but no less than six months before the wedding. Registered: \$100; Non-Registered: \$250

Preparation only: Those preparing for marriage with us, but marrying at another location will be charged \$200 for prep materials to be paid at the secondary meeting in lieu of the deposit.

Musicians charge a separate fee for their services and you will pay them directly. You are responsible for contacting and reserving a musician. Please contact one of these:

Dominic Kryst	206-1417	dominic@saintjohnjackson.org
Julie Pienkos	764-2702	juliepienkos@hotmail.com

If you would like to have altar servers, but are unable to provide them yourself from among family, the parish can provide them for \$20/server. Please contact the marriage coordinator for more details if needed.

There is no set fee to have a priest or deacon preside at your wedding, however a gift of \$150-200 to the presider is traditional and should be paid directly to him.

State Requirements

License:

Couples apply for a Michigan Marriage license within 30 days of the wedding. Both copies of the license should be dropped off at the parish office the Monday BEFORE the REHEARSAL.

Applying For Marriage License

Jackson County Clerk's Office, 312 S. Jackson Street, Jackson, MI 49201
Court Services: (517) 788-4268 Vital Records: (517) 788-4265
Fax: (517) 788-4601

IMPORTANT:

Michigan has a **three day waiting** period for a license.

MARRIAGE LICENSES MUST BE USED WITHIN 33 DAYS FROM THE DATE OF APPLICATION!

Common Questions:

Aisle Runners? Please, no.

Alcohol? Absolutely NO alcohol is to be consumed by ANY member of the wedding party prior to the wedding. We love a party, but save it for the reception.

Booklets? You may print your own booklets / worship aids if you'd like them.

Decorations? You are welcome to provide your own decorations, however be aware that the use of tape, wire, or other adhesives on the pews/columns is strictly forbidden as they cause damage. You will be responsible for cleaning up any decorations immediately following the ceremony.

Fee for Priests or Deacons? There is no set fee to have a priest or deacon preside at your wedding, however a donation is traditional and a gift around \$150 — \$200 is typical.

Photography? Flash photography is suggested only during the processional, but video and photographs may be taken throughout the ceremony provided the photographers remain inconspicuous and discreet—most professional photographers are aware of what is appropriate.

Rice? Please do NOT throw rice, birdseed or confetti outside (or inside) the Church! Bubbles (outside!) are a great alternative.

Use of Church? Typically the wedding party will have the Church & Bride's Room available one hour before and after the actual ceremony.

Church Manners:

- 1) Please do not chew gum or eat in the church
- 2) Please turn off cell phones upon entrance into the worship space
- 3) Please remind those attending of the proper dress in church, modesty is always best and no hats inside, please (Mass veils are, of course, allowed).

Final Thoughts:

RELAX! This is a blessed, holy sacrament that you are entering into, but the wedding itself is only one day of it. Keep it simple and enjoy celebrating the start of this new life with your family and friends.

Your Questions:

St. John the Evangelist Parish

Marriage Preparation

Checklists do not prepare us for a sacrament, but we understand the value of having a handy one-sheet visual of what needs to be done. This is not all-inclusive and may vary based on a couple's needs, so it's not a checklist, but rather a guideline.

- ☐ **Initial meeting** at parish
- ☐ Begin the **process**
 - ☐ Choose mentor couple
 - ☐ FOCCUS inventory
- ☐ **Secondary meeting** with priest or staff with basic forms & paperwork
 - ☐ MA Form
 - ☐ Review FOCCUS
 - ☐ Discuss dates/pay deposit (\$100) or preparation-only fee (\$200)
- ☐ Each attend an **Encounter Experience**
- ☐ Attend **God's Plan Marriage** retreat day at St. John with mentor couple
- ☐ Meet with **Mentor Couple** (minimum of six monthly meetings)
- ☐ Attend **W.E. C.A.R.E.** communication workshop
- ☐ Attend **NFP** Classes
- ☐ Receive the **Blessing for an Engaged Couple**
- ☐ **Wedding planning**
 - ☐ Contact Musicians (*early in planning*)
 - ☐ Review wedding & rehearsal details with parish coordinator (*during last month before wedding*)
 - ☐ Marriage License & church fees dropped at parish office (*no later than Monday before wedding*)
- ☐ **Confession!** We recommend that you celebrate sacramental Confession within two weeks of the wedding date