

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church



Marriage Preparation and Wedding Policies

5830 Williams Drive
Corpus Christi, Texas 78412
www.olphcctx.org

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Marriage Preparation and Wedding Policies of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church

Dear Newly Engaged,

First of all, Congratulations! This time of preparation can be a wonderful time of discovery as well as a stressful time of planning. In order to help you in the best possible way, this booklet has been developed so that you may be able to understand more fully the Sacrament of Marriage as well as the many details that you will likely need to consider as your special day draws near.

As the stress of all the preparation becomes apparent, it is important to keep your focus on the things that matter most. So often nonessential things (ie. the site of the reception or the kind of decorations used) can drive the bulk of the planning process. In so many ways, this is difficult to avoid. Yet, it is important to remember that the two most important things for your marriage are:

1. Your preparation, and
2. The actual celebration of the wedding.

It is these two priorities that are the focal points of Our Lady of Perpetual Help's marriage preparation process. It is our hope that this process does not become a series of "jumping through hoops" but is an effective part of your journey towards a life of Christian marriage.

So in the spirit of offering you useful information as well as answers to common questions, you are encouraged to keep this booklet handy.

Peace,

Fr. Frank X. Martínez, STL
Pastor

Fr. Joseph Nguyen
Parochial Vicar

Deacon Ron Martínez
Deacon

When should we contact the parish?

Contact the Marriage Coordinator at least six months in advance of the date on which you hope to celebrate your wedding. Only the priests or Wedding Coordinator may book the date. Dates will be reserved only *after* the priests and Marriage Consultant has had sufficient opportunity to meet with the engaged couple in order to take care of necessary paperwork and to arrange for their participation in a marriage preparation program. Engaged couples should secure their date with the church *before* making commitments with caterers, reception halls, etc. Again, this may be difficult as the reception plans can easily overshadow the marriage prep., but you are urged to resist this temptation as it can create more problems later on. Remember that the wedding is more important than the reception.

We do not recommend a Catholic wedding for anyone who is not living his or her Catholic faith. If one person of the couple is not regularly participating at Mass or participating periodically in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we respect your right to believe the way you want to live your faith; however, suggest you reconsider your desire for a Catholic wedding.

What does it mean to live the Sacrament of Marriage?

Marriage is a vocation, that is, a life-response driven by a call from God. “The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1603). It is not just a human institution despite the many variations that it has held within history.

In the Roman Catholic Church, marriage is recognized as a Sacrament, that is, a practice identified by Jesus whereby the couple imitates the life of the Divine in a committed, faithful, and fruitful bond of love. Quite literally, the couple makes Christ present in their very lives as husband and wife. This presence enriches their lives, the lives of their children, and the lives of the Christian community. Thus, this Sacrament means more than a wedding ceremony; it designates the lifelong relationship of husband and wife. Marriage is not so much something that a couple receives as something a couple becomes. It follows that marriage has enduring significance for the entire membership of the Church. It is not exclusively or even primarily a private matter having to do with the couple’s welfare. As a sacrament, the couple makes a covenant between themselves and Christ. When two people marry, it becomes an important moment for the Church community and the Church has a responsibility to guide couples in preparation for life together.

What kind of preparation is needed?

Your marriage is the most significant life decision you may make in your life. As such, we want to offer you the best opportunities to discover who you are as a married couple. Therefore, advance preparation is required of every couple wishing to be married in the Catholic Church.

10 Step Preparation Process

Preparation process is mandatory for every couple wishing to be married in the Catholic Church. The seriousness of entering a Christian marriage requires the utmost diligence and willingness to be prepared in the best possible way. We recommend that you keep track of your own progress using our Marriage Preparation Checklist (download on our website www.olphcctx.org). Couples being married at Our Lady of Perpetual Help can plan on attending the following.

1.) Initial Meeting with the Priest/Deacon. This is a “get to know you” session and chance to discuss the marriage preparation process. The priest/deacon will help you fill out the initial paperwork to begin the process itself, answer any questions, and offer you advice as to how to journey towards your new life together. At this meeting you will fill out a *Pre-Nuptial Investigation* form and receive the book, *Engaged Couple Guide for Catholic Marriage Preparation*, which will help you begin planning the details of the wedding liturgy.

2.) Meet Marriage Consultant or Priest. After meeting with the priest/deacon, couples will need to set an appointment with the Marriage Consultant if an annulment is needed (see “People You May Need to Contact” p. 11). The Marriage Consultant will gather all paperwork (see #7) and assist you in the process of the annulment.

The Marriage Consultant or priest will also administer the FOCCUS Inventory tool. He or the priest will review the results with you. FOCCUS is a customized couple assessment tool that identifies a couple’s strength and growth areas. It is one of the most widely used Programs for premarital education. Based on a couple’s assessment results, the Marriage Consultant or priest provides 4-6 sessions in which the couple discuss and understand their results as they are taught proven relational skills. This inventory is not a test, but a recognized discussion tool used by couples to gain insight into the partner they have chosen to marry, learn more about themselves, and learn more about their relationship.

3.) Contact Wedding Coordinator. The Wedding Coordinator will lead the rehearsal and be present to assist you on the wedding day as well. They will assist you in planning the details of the wedding ceremony (flowers, music, programs, etc.) to make sure what you have planned will happen.

4.) NFP (Natural Family Planning) Workshop Series. In recent years, scientific investigation of a woman’s natural fertility cycle has led to a simple, safe, reliable and natural means for a couple to carefully plan their family size. Information about resources for NFP classes can be found in the back of this booklet. Do not put off these classes. It is in your best interest to begin right away in order to become comfortable and accurate with the process. NOTE: These are a series of classes that span 3 months.

5.) Engaged Encounter. This weekend program provides a couple with an atmosphere and format to deeply explore their relationship and dialogue honestly about their future lives together. Contact information can be found in the back of this booklet. You will be given a brochure for dates and time.

and/or

Pre-Cana Seminar. One day seminar designed to inform couples of the spiritual nature and practical aspects of a Catholic marriage. This seminar stresses Church teachings on the value of life, the indissolubility of marriage and the theology of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Contact information can be found in the back of this booklet. You will be given a brochure for dates and time.

6.) Complete All Paperwork. As you journey through the preparation process, you will see that various forms will need to be completed: The First is the “Freedom to Marry” form which is akin to an affidavit that the couple is able to enter into marriage. A total of four witnesses will be needed. A recently created (originals not accepted) baptism certificate or affidavit is needed for all Christian persons engaged. Dispensations, permissions, annulments may also need to be completed (see Marriage Consultant for details). The civil marriage license is best acquired one month before the wedding. Again, see the Marriage Consultant for details.

7.) Rehearsal. You will need to schedule a rehearsal at the same time you reserve the Church for the wedding. The rehearsal is intended to familiarize the wedding party with the procession, the sanctuary, ushering, and other elements of the celebration. This will be lead by the Wedding Coordinator.

8.) Sacrament of Reconciliation. Catholics can benefit from celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) before their wedding. It is a time not only to examine your conscience, but to seek to enter you marriage as selflessly and as spiritually healed as possible. Engaged couples are strongly encouraged to celebrate Reconciliation before their wedding.

9.) Final Meeting. Meet with Priest/Deacon who will be witnessing your marriage two or three weeks before wedding date for review of wedding preparation process.

10.) Wedding Day. Get committed members of family or friends to manage details; flowers placement and clean up of all spaces used after the ceremony.

Questions to Consider

Due to the seriousness of the Sacrament of Marriage and lifelong commitment it entails, we invite you to consider the following:

1.) Am I prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage? Catholic faith testifies that marriage is a serious commitment with rights and responsibilities. As a Catholic you have the right to receive the Sacraments while the Church is obliged to uphold the dignity of the Sacraments. Therefore, it is our greatest desire that all couples would take seriously the preparation process. Being engaged is a wonderful time of serious discernment. It is not a failure to decide to delay or cancel a wedding if serious doubts exist for a couple. Good preparation is the best approach for lifelong decisions.

2.) Am I a practicing Catholic? A practicing Catholic joins the Christian community for Sunday Mass on a weekly basis, has a clear understanding of the Catholic faith, and is actively involved in the activities and programs of the parish community.

3.) Am I a parishioner? A parishioner is a registered active member living their faith at Our Lady of Perpetual Help's worshipping community. If any of these questions cause doubt in your mind, we strongly suggest that you begin the reflection with your loved one and discern if you are ready to begin your married life in a community of faith and begin this journey together.

4.) What Constitutes Active Member? Active member of the Church is determined by the following:

- a.) Being properly registered in the parish for at least 1 year.
- b.) Faithful attendance at Mass on Saturday vigil or Sunday Masses and Holy Days.
- c.) Financially supporting the parish by using the envelope or electronic system of giving for support of parish.
- d.) Active in at least one parish ministry, organization or parish school

Documents You will Need

1.) "Freedom to Marry" Forms. The engaged couple provides information regarding identity, status in the Church, and freedom to marry. The parish provides a form for the parents to complete, confirming the information provided by the couple. If parents are deceased, a close friend or relative who has known the person for at least ten years may complete the form. Any needed permission forms or dispensations are discussed at this time as well. **These forms are filled out at the initial meeting with the Marriage Consultant.**

2.) Baptismal Certificates. Catholics and any baptized Christians must provide recent copies of their baptismal certificates. By "recent" is meant within the last six months. These copies can be obtained by contacting your church of baptism.

3.) Civil Marriage License. The couple must provide a valid Nueces County marriage license to the church secretary prior to the wedding date.

4.) Permissions/Dispensations/Annulments. Any needed permission forms or dispensations that are needed will be discussed and completed during the initial meeting with the Marriage Consultant. If one or both of the engaged persons have been previously married, a declaration of nullity (think annulment) from the Catholic Church is necessary. Ask the Marriage Consultant for more details if you think this may apply to you. **Delay in receiving these forms will delay the wedding dates and may take up to two years or longer to receive an annulment.**

The Wedding Ceremony

The celebration of Christian marriage is an opportunity for the whole community of faith to experience the Lord through powerful symbols: bread and wine, spoken and sung the Word, light, and the rings. In the love of the husband and wife, we come to see a reflection of God's love for us, the people of God. These signs and symbols are invitations to us to respond in faith to the Lord. It is for this reason that careful planning should take place in the selection of appropriate readings, music, etc. As you plan your wedding ceremony, there are several things to keep in mind. First, those attending are never to be considered merely guests to be entertained. The liturgical assembly is called to a role of active participation in prayer and song. Secondly, when choosing readings, songs, meditations, or other music, always ask yourself, "Can we pray these words?" The most essential elements are the proclamation of the Word of God and your response in the form of the marriage vows. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is generally not included when both parties cannot receive the Eucharist. All details should enhance your own and your guests' experience of the essential elements. The main consideration should be: "How will this or that detail help us, our families and friends enter into a prayerful celebration of God's love mirrored for them in our marriage?" With that in mind, we hope that you will find the following guidelines helpful.

A planning guide entitled *Engaged Couple Guide for Catholic Marriage Preparation* will be provided. It will assist you in choosing readings and prayers for the liturgy. In addition we offer a list with some suggestions:

1.) Setting a Date and Time of Wedding: In order to secure a wedding date, you must meet with the Priest, the Marriage Consultant, and then finally consult the parish secretary in order to make sure that all calendars coincide. Then you must pay the rental fee for the church in order to secure the date in our calendar. This is done with the parish secretary as well. Wedding rehearsals are scheduled on Friday between 5 PM and 7 PM or Saturdays between 9 AM and 1 PM. Because Reconciliation is at 3:00 PM on Saturday, please have your guests withdraw from the church by 2:45 PM.

2.) Place: Custom provides for Catholics to be married at a Mass in a church. The Marriage Rite takes place after the Gospel and the homily. If this is to be an interfaith marriage, or if the majority of your anticipated guests are not practicing Catholics, we suggest having a ceremony without Mass.

3.) Decorations in the Church and Sanctuary. Simplicity is most effective and leaves attention focused on the celebration. The altar and pulpit should get first attention. No flowers are to be set directly upon the altar. Any decoration should be carefully placed so as not to block the liturgical action or your guests' participation in what is taking place. It is customary to leave some flowers in the church next to the tabernacle for Saturday and Sunday Masses. Only fresh flowers or plants are used.

4.) Entrance Procession. Good liturgical and ceremonial practice dictates a single procession. The celebrant and the entire wedding party enter from the back of the church, as at Sunday Mass. We encourage both sets of parents to accompany the groom and bride in procession, and suggest that the attendants enter as couples. There is, of course, flexibility in planning your procession, which you may discuss with the Wedding Coordinator.

5.) Family Participation: There are several opportunities in the liturgy for parents and family members to be involved in this special occasion, including proclaiming the Scripture readings and leading the Prayers of the Faithful. Please assign the readings (except the Gospel) to a family member or friend who will proclaim the Word with reverence.

6.) Program. Printing a program of the wedding liturgy is an excellent gesture to aid in participation, especially for non-Catholic guests but not necessary. Please contact our Music Coordinator (found on pg. 11) for assistance.

7.) Music. Before planning for any music or musicians at your wedding, you must think about what you are planning. The guidelines for music at weddings is the same as those for Sunday Mass, whether instrumental, classical or "folk" style. All music used in church should be prayerful in its tone and should be carefully chosen to match the various moments of the wedding ceremony. The music coordinator can assist you in making these choices. Taped music is not appropriate. Popular romantic songs are usually not appropriate either because they don't say enough, or because they contradict the Christian understanding of committed life. Singing at least one or more hymns, songs, or responses with the entire assembly is the ideal. Active participation, not entertainment, is the goal.

Any music not in our song books must be approved by the music coordinator.

a.) Prelude music, as guests are being seated, can be instrumental or sung. If the organ is used, light bright classical music is quite effective in setting an appropriate mood.

b.) Processional music should be instrumental. Your guests' attention is focused on the wedding party, not on words to a song. The same applies to the recessional (march out).

c.) Solos may be used before the ceremony, during the Preparation of the Gifts, or after Communion if there is a Mass celebrated.

d.) Congregational Singing is encouraged. The Alleluia before the Gospel should be sung as well as the Responsorial Psalm and other Acclamations.

e.) The Lord's Prayer is the prayer of the whole assembly, and may be the only part in which most non-Catholics are comfortable joining in. It is never appropriate as a solo in the liturgy, but if the majority of guests are Catholic, it may be sung by all.

f.) Cantors and organists are available for hire from the parish if you need them.

9.) Children in the Wedding Party: Children are welcome to be part of your wedding, and based on prior experience, we have found that very young children often create unforeseen issues during the ceremony. **Choose wisely.**

10.) Pew Decorations: We suggest using plastic hangers or large rubber bands, which do not mark the pews. No tape on any wood surfaces within the church should be used.

11.) Candles: Candelabra and other sanctuary candles are welcome (dripless only, please).

12.) Local and Cultural Customs: Local and cultural customs, such as the presentation of the *arras* (coins) and the rosary (lasso), are welcome at appropriate times during the Mass (see *Juntos Para Toda La Vida* for details). As with the unity candle, these should not overshadow the primary symbols of the liturgy.

13.) Photography: Photography and videotaping during the ceremony are permitted so long as they are not intrusive. If you take formal pictures in the church, we insist that it be done quietly, quickly, and with respect due the House of God, preferably before the service. During the service, ask the photographer to be discreet and nicely dressed. Videotaping is permitted with the same reservations. **The use of extra lighting equipment during Mass is not allowed.** You are asked to inform your photographer so they will have all the information they need to have a successful day.

14.) No flower petals, rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. is permitted to be thrown on the church grounds. We might suggest a suitable mention in your invitations.

15.) Alcohol: Use of alcoholic beverages before the rehearsal or wedding is strictly forbidden. Both events require your full attention.

16.) Dressing Facilities: St. John Paul II meeting room is available in the rectory for the bride, her mother and the maid/matron of honor. The Wedding Coordinator will assist you in acquiring this room.

17.) Clean up: Please designate someone to stay after the wedding to tidy up both the church and bride's room. Dispose of all trash in the large bin behind the Parish Center.

18.) Parish Hall & Receptions: Questions about using the Parish Hall for small receptions should be directed to our Special Programs Coordinator. Call the parish office at 991-7891 for information, forms and fees (Please see pg. 11).

19) Fees and Offerings: The Marriage Preparation Fee must be paid by the time you meet with the Marriage Coordinator to take the FOCCUS Inventory. This can be given to the Marriage Coordinator at the time of the first meeting. The Church Rental Fee must be paid in order to secure a date for the wedding. Wedding dates cannot be reserved without paying the church rental fee. Catholic priests and deacons do not "charge" a fee for officiating at weddings, but if the couple wishes to give an appreciation gift, you are welcome to do so. We ask that you please designate it as such.

Marriage Fee Schedule

The prices listed below are our best estimates only and may change. Please contact the resource listed to find the actual costs. Start planning for these activities at least six months prior to your wedding date.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Fees:

These fees are paid to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church to provide the following services.

1.) Marriage Preparation: \$30.00

This covers the FOCCUS Inventory and *Engaged Couple Guide for Catholic Marriage Preparation* booklet. (Plan 6 months in advance).

2.) Church

a.) **Active Member:** Uses collection envelopes and involved in church ministry
No Cost

b.) **Registered Parishioner:** Uses collection envelopes
\$150 +\$50.00 Cleaning Deposit

c.) **Out of Parish:** Not registered within 6 months of wedding.
\$300 +50.00 Cleaning Deposit

- d.) **Out of Parish yet desires to join** parish community
\$200 +\$50.00 Cleaning Deposit

3.) **Musicians Fees:** Consult parish Liturgical/Music Coordinator

4.) **Dressing Room:** \$50.00

See the chapter titled “Questions to Consider” in this document for “Active Member” definition p. 5.

Diocese of Corpus Christi Fees:

These fees are paid to the Diocese of Corpus Christi and are required to get married at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church.

Engaged Encounter: Weekend Program to increase your communication
<http://www.diocesecc.org/EEOnline>

Natural Family Planning: Contact Natural Family Planning for exact costs
<https://www.diocesecc.org/NFPClasses>

Musicians Fees: ?

People You May Need to Contact

Pastor: Fr. Frank X. Martínez, STL
Office: (361) 991-7891
E-mail: revfmartinez@olphcctx.org

Parochial Vicar: Fr. Joseph Nguyen
Office: (361) 991-7891
E-mail: revjnguyen@olphcctx.org

Marriage Consultant: Deacon Ron Martínez
Office: (361) 765-1124
E-mail: deaconmartinez@olphcctx.org

Wedding Coordinator: _____

Music Coordinator: Steve Cortinas
Office: (361) 991-7891
E-mail: scortinas@olphcctx.org

Church Office: (361) 991-7891

Engaged Encounter:
and Pre-Cana Seminar: Diocese of Corpus Christi
Family Life Office
Office: (361) 882-6191

Natural Family Planning: Diocese of Corpus Christi
Family Life Office
Office: (361) 882-6191

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church
Marriage Preparation Process Check List**

Engaged Couple: _____ & _____

Phone Numbers: _____ & _____

Proposed date of Wedding: _____

Date for Rehearsal: _____

Marriage Prep Check List (Enter date completed):

1. _____ Initial Meeting with Priest
2. _____ Take FOCCUS/REFOCCUS Inventory
3. Meet with Priest/Deacon Review FOCCUS/REFOCCUS
 _____ Session 3
 _____ Session 4
 _____ Session 5 (optional)
4. _____ N.F.P. Classes (Attach certificate of completion)
5. _____ Engaged Encounter and/or Pre-Cana (Attach certificate of completion)
6. _____ Last Meeting with Priest/Deacon (Sacrament of Marriage & Planning)
7. _____ Complete all Needed Paperwork (see below)
8. _____ Contact the Marriage Consultant
9. _____ Pre Rehearsal Meeting
10. _____ Sacrament of Reconciliation
11. _____ Church payment

Completed Paperwork

“Freedom to Marry” forms _____
Baptism Certificate _____ (bride) _____ (groom)
Dispensations/Permissions needed _____
Annulment documentation (if needed) _____ (bride) _____ (groom)
Civil Marriage License _____ (needed one week prior to wedding)