



# Wedding Guidelines

We welcome you to Mary Help of Christians. We are glad that you have selected our church to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony. We will make every effort in helping you to prepare for this Sacrament, an important spiritual moment, one which will take you to the very presence of God.

Each wedding is unique and important. We anticipate that when the couples leave the church building on their wedding day, they will feel that their wedding ceremony was very personal, inspiring, and spiritual. Above all, we hope that when you leave the church building you will be well prepared for your new life as husband and wife.

## Preparation for Wedding Day and Lifetime Marriage

We feel that the best preparation for both events is your weekly attendance and celebration of the Holy Eucharist. As you prepare for a new phase in your lives, as husband and wife, faithful celebration of the Eucharist offers the opportunity to deepen your faith and spiritual lives.

Roman Catholic couples who go to Mass together every Sunday have the highest rate of successful marriages. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, reminds us that our Church today needs active practicing Roman Catholics, who give daily witness to their faith. As you prepare to live out together the Sacrament of Matrimony, we encourage you to attend Sunday Liturgy. We highly encourage that you participate in frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession as part of your spiritual preparation.

It is our intention that these wedding guidelines will help prepare you for the wedding ceremony. As beautiful and as spiritual as we hope this day will be, the wedding day lasts only a day. Your marriage is forever. Please reflect clearly on the mission to which God has called you.

Please prayerfully recall that these following guidelines deal only with the ceremony, not with the marriage. It is our hope that most of your time, energy and concern goes into the spiritual preparation for a lifelong marriage and not simply for all the important and necessary plans, work and time in organizing the wedding ceremony.

*What are the next steps in our sacramental preparation?*

## Steps to Receive the Sacrament of Marriage

### Step 1: Contact your parish and arrange to meet with your Priest

**When:** BEFORE you set a wedding date or begin any other steps.

When you become engaged, your first point of contact should be your parish, your home of faith, **whether or not you are being married at your home parish**. They are the ones who will guide you through the entire marriage preparation process from start to finish.

Please begin by gathering all necessary documentation:

- Recent Baptismal certificate, not more than a year old, with notations
- Communion
- Confirmation Certificates

You will both need to read all the pertinent wedding forms inside your wedding package.

- Submit the form to the Parish Office
- Mrs. Munoz will assist the couples in all the paperwork necessary for your wedding file. Please realize that once you have been given your tentative wedding date you will have one month to submit to the parish office updated baptismal certificates from the church where you were baptized. We cannot accept photo copies nor fax copies.

### *What are the "A" and "B" Forms?*

- The "A" and "B" Forms establish your canonical freedom to marry within the Catholic Church. Both the bride and groom will have their respective "A" Forms completed by the priest. Likewise, you will ask two witnesses to go before a notary public and testify to your freedom to marry (the "B" Forms).
- The two witnesses for the bride and the groom often are the parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, or cousins; in total you will have four "B" Forms, two for the bride and two for the groom. As these forms establish your canonical freedom to marry and no wedding can take place without them, please be certain that they are completed within the first two months after you have submitted your initial paperwork.

## **Special Cases**

### *What about a previous marriage?*

Some couples come to us with a history of a prior marriage. From the beginning let Mrs. Munoz know your marital status/history. We are here to help you. If you were previously married, you will need to bring the following documents:

- A copy of your prior civil wedding license certificate.
- A copy of your final civil divorce decree.
- If you obtained an annulment the original annulment decree issued by a church marriage tribunal must be submitted.

If a couple needs to begin an annulment process, please know that no wedding date can be set until the annulment process is fully resolved. No wedding date, even tentative, will be given until the issue of the prior marriage is fully settled by a church marriage tribunal.

In the event that there is a civil marriage and divorce we will submit proper canonical lack of form documentation to the Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Miami, and for this process we shall need a \$100.00 money order made payable to the **Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Miami**.

Please be completely honest in this regard. If the issue of a prior marriage should arise later, the Pastor withholds the right to cancel the wedding date and time altogether.

## Step 2: Take the Premarital Inventory and Evaluation Fully Engaged

A Premarital Inventory is a powerful tool to help you get to know each other even more deeply, and reveal relationship strengths so you may capitalize and grow in them while proactively helping identify areas that may need attention before they turn into issues later. **This step is completed through your parish.** Therefore, **be sure you've completed step 1 before you move to this step.** Your parish will then oversee the process then use the results to help guide your preparation process.

- **Assessment Process**

- Compatibility Inventory: Fully Engaged Program The compatibility inventory questionnaire is mandated by the Archdiocese of Miami for every couple preparing for marriage in all Catholic churches. This program will assist you in analyzing your readiness for marriage and many important issues present in every life-long commitment. Couples learn a great deal about themselves.

§ After we create your account, we will send you an id that you will use to access and respond an individual survey (answered separately by bride and groom) at <http://getfullyengaged.com/scoring/parish/PAMFMaryHelpofChristians>

§ The bride and groom separately read a series of statements and simply mark their individual responses with agree or disagree. The first part of the compatibility inventory questionnaire will be completed online. After the inventory questionnaire has been completed you will be assigned a trained parish facilitator couple with whom you will eventually meet and discuss differences and similarities noted on the compatibility inventory questionnaire. This is not a test, rather it is an important opportunity for you to grow and mature together as a couple. Couples may opt to complete the compatibility inventory questionnaire in their respective home parishes.

- **Instructional Process**

- Couples will also participate in a Pre-Cana, El Camino, or Engaged Encounter, or Fully Engaged pre-marriage retreat. Only one is required. You may decide to participate in one of the retreats sponsored by the Archdiocese of Miami or one sponsored elsewhere. Please be sure to provide Mrs. Munoz a copy of the retreat you attended. If the retreat was completed outside the State of Florida, please be sure to request a letter of validation from Mrs. Munoz for the purpose of obtaining a civil marriage license. No online pre-marriage retreats are permitted.

- **Planning Process**

- Mrs. Munoz will work with you in planning your wedding ceremony.
- Every wedding ceremony is unique.

## Step 3: Register and Take your Marriage Preparation Course

There are several Pre Cana programs to prepare couples for the Sacrament of Marriage offered throughout the Archdiocese of Miami in English and Spanish – *Camino del Matrimonio* and *Transformed in Love* are offered throughout the year. Please discuss with the priest/deacon, overseeing your marriage prep process, which course he

recommends best for your particular situation. Schedules of all Marriage Prep classes can be found at:

[www.miamiarch.org/familylife](http://www.miamiarch.org/familylife) Please click under “Upcoming Marriage prep events”

#### **Step 4: Natural Family Planning Instruction**

Part of a good marriage preparation process is receiving the gift of learning about Natural Family Planning (NFP). NFP uses great science to plan our families while doing so in accord with God’s plan, and 100% naturally! There is live instruction and local support to answer your questions offered throughout the Archdiocese, as well as on demand virtual classes plus plentiful resources on the subject.

#### **Step 5: Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Give yourselves the blessing of coming into your special day prepared spiritually by receiving the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the grace it provides.

#### **Step 6: Wedding preparation**

##### *Wedding dress code for the bride and bridesmaids*

We wish our brides and their bridesmaids to exercise great care and prudence in selecting their wedding dress. Please recall that you are entering the Sacrament of Matrimony before Almighty God, the priest or deacon, your family and friends. Select dresses that are dignified and beautiful.

##### *We are in the Holy Presence of God*

Mary Help of Christians strives that all wedding liturgies provide a holy, spiritual, and personal experience for the bride, groom, and guests. We wish for them to feel welcome and longing to return again to worship with us. To create this atmosphere and to maintain a sense of respect for the Eucharist, we show a sense of reverence, silence, and proper decorum within the church.

##### *Flower Girl and Ring Bearer*

We kindly request that if you decide to have a Flower Girl and/or Ring Bearer you exercise great caution in selecting these little ones. We ask that the two children selected be five years or older, and behave accordingly in church.

##### *Church Decorations*

Our church is usually decorated with beautiful flower arrangements. You may wish to make a donation towards the flower arrangements for your wedding day. You may wish to place simple flower arrangements on the sanctuary. The flowers can be brought in the day before the wedding and they must be taken with you at the end of the mass.

You may also put a “Runner”. The aisle measurement is 78.5 FT.

##### *Who may officiate or preside at the wedding liturgy?*

Generally one of our parish priests or deacons will preside at your wedding ceremony. One will be assigned to your wedding, thus you will have time to meet before the wedding date. If you wish to have a family member or personal friend who is a Roman Catholic priest or deacon, the presider/celebrant must obtain proper canonical delegation from the Archdiocese of Miami.

The priest or deacon to whom the delegation is granted must observe every guideline and all liturgical rubrics established by the Roman Catholic Church. If the presider/celebrant has any questions, please direct him to Fr. Naughton.

#### *Rice, bubbles, bird seed, confetti, flower petals, and the like*

For the safety of your guests and the cleanliness of the church and grounds, we do not allow the use of rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, and/or anything else that might be potential hazards for your guests. Bubbles may be used in the atrium.

#### *Wedding Music*

English Contact Tadeo Castro at 754-224-9273 tadecc@me.com

#### *Rest before Wedding Day*

We wish to celebrate every wedding ceremony in a very spiritual way so that your family and guests will always recall how uniquely blessed they felt for you during this wedding ceremony. Therefore, we invite all involved in the wedding party to rest well the day before the ceremony. Accordingly, enjoy the wedding ceremony and the reception in their proper manner.

#### *Arrive on time on your wedding day*

Our weddings are well planned, well-rehearsed, and scheduled with sufficient time; therefore, the wedding party, parents, bride and invited guests must arrive on time for the wedding ceremony. All wedding ceremonies begin and end with ample time. Please realize that we may very well have multiple sacramental celebrations in church on a given day. Please read the Timeliness Agreement carefully.

#### *Signing of documents after the ceremony*

Immediately after the ceremony, two witnesses will be asked to sign the church marriage certificate and/or the civil marriage license.

#### *Wedding Rehearsals*

Wedding rehearsals are usually assigned on the day before the wedding date. Please contact Mrs. Munoz and make the appropriate arrangements.

#### *How do our parents fit into our parish wedding preparations?*

From the very beginning and throughout your entire wedding preparation, we communicate only with the bride and groom. While we acknowledge, understand, comprehend, support their interest in the marriage ceremony of their son or daughter, should parents (or any other relative or friend) contact us regarding your marriage plans, we shall immediately thank them for their interest and refer them back to you, the couple. The bride and the groom together are the only persons who communicate decisions to us. Further, many couples do not appreciate their future-in-laws phoning the Pastor (or Wedding Coordinator) and trying to influence or change the decisions that they have already made and communicated to the parish priest and staff. Kindly, explain, from the beginning, that you alone will organize your wedding day and future marriage.

#### *Wedding Fees*

## **Fees for weddings at Mary Help of Christians**

Sacrament of Matrimony	0.00
Fee	
Total	\$450.00
	\$450.00

The balance of \$650.00 is due TWO months before the wedding date.

### *Final Thoughts*

Our written parish wedding guidelines are offered as a mean of assisting every couple in planning and celebrating a beautiful wedding ceremony. Naturally, our wedding guidelines cannot cover every possible questions or situation that arises in preparing any ceremony.

These wedding guidelines are in no way a legal document and can be changed by the Pastor at any time without prior notice. Our guidelines are on-going response to changing liturgical needs and customs of our parishioners. Any special concerns or questions can always be discussed with the Parish Administrator or the Wedding Coordinator. Questions and concerns are ONLY brought to our attention by either the bride or groom as we strive to maintain our couples as our primary goal. Therefore, if anyone other than the bride or groom should call or visit our offices regarding any wedding issue, we will ONLY address these with either the bride or groom. Ultimately, the Pastor has the final decisions in all matters. Again, we welcome you to our parish and look forward to celebrating with you the special joy of your wedding day.

## **Civil Wedding**

### *How to obtain a civil marriage license in the State of Florida*

Please go together and obtain the civil marriage license from any County Courthouse in the State of Florida. You can go to the civil marriage license bureau located at 1600 W Hillsboro Blvd, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442. They may be reached at (954) 831-6565. There is no need to have a prior civil marriage. Once you have obtained the civil marriage license, please be sure to bring it to our Parish Office. When you apply for a civil marriage license you will need to take your Social Security Card and your Driver's License, as well as the original certificate of Pre-Cana or El Camino or Engaged Encounter. In some cases it is necessary to take additional identification, such as passport, or any other valid form of identification. If you have a prior marriage, please be sure to take proof of the divorce decree.

You will need to purchase the civil marriage license within 30 days before the wedding date. Please be sure to check this out with the civil marriage license authorities.

Weddings cannot take place without this license from the State of Florida; equally Catholic priests/deacons cannot perform weddings without the proper State of Florida civil marriage license. Please recall that you will NOT get married civilly at the Marriage License Bureau. The final signing of the civil license will occur at the end of the church wedding ceremony.

## **Step 7: Final Meeting(s) with your Priest**

As you continue to keep in touch with your parish and working together to prepare your special day, you should meet with the Priest who will be celebrating your wedding 4-6 weeks before the wedding. If you are getting married at a different parish, do keep in close touch with your home parish and embrace any opportunities they may offer for you to receive spiritual guidance and final wedding tips there as well. They are your family of faith!

## **Step 8: Keep Connected!**

Your journey is just beginning, and there are plentiful resources and opportunities available to continue enriching your lives and marriage. By keeping connected and involved, first with your parish and second with any of the other great groups and ministries in the Archdiocese, you tap into one of the greatest resources of all: a family of faith with whom to walk and find mutual inspiration, encouragement, support, while making great new friends in the process! Last but not least, count on our Office of Marriage and Family Life as another support source. We are here to serve you!

Some of the groups we have to help support you in your new marriage are:

WorldWide Marriage Encounter [www.wwme.org](http://www.wwme.org)

Small Groups Contact Roberto & Rocio Munoz 954-323-8030.

Grupo de parejas en español Ultimo viernes del mes Salón 100 de la escuela.

We wish you a lifetime of love, happiness, and blessings!