

**THE  
SACRAMENT  
OF  
MARRIAGE**



**ST. MARY MAGDALEN**



## **THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE**

On behalf of St. Mary Magdalen Parish and the whole Church, congratulations on your engagement! As a community of faith, we look forward to celebrating your marriage with you.

The Sacrament that you are preparing to enter has an important place in the life of both the Church and the parish. We believe that the Sacrament of Marriage is a vocation, a call that God extends to a man and a woman to love each other in the same way that we are loved by God.

The Sacrament Marriage is meant to be a reflection of the great marriage between Christ and His bride, the Church. This understanding of marriage makes a wedding more than just a ceremony; it is the celebration of a love story that is meant to last a lifetime. Further, it reflects the love that God has for each of us. For us as Catholics, your wedding is very important for it celebrates our own deep and intimate love for Christ, our spouse, and it reminds all of us of our vocation to love as God loves.

The purpose of this booklet is to guide you through your preparation for that Sacramental celebration and to help you prepare for your wedding. The first section describes the steps involved in the preparation and the second section is to answer some of the questions regarding the ceremony.

Again, on behalf of all the parishioners of St. Mary Magdalen and the whole Church, we want to extend to you our congratulations and prayer filled best wishes on your engagement and forthcoming marriage!

# PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT

## A TIME TABLE

Because marriage is a relationship in love, preparation for the Sacrament focuses on your relationship. This preparation is accomplished in three phases.

**PHASE I:** Begins nine months before the **proposed** wedding date.

Soon after their first meeting with the priest or deacon, the engaged couple will begin a series of meetings with a sponsor couple.

When the meetings with the sponsor couple are completed *the engaged couple should contact* the priest or deacon to meet again. The wedding date can be finally **confirmed** during this meeting. This phase should generally take about two months.

**PHASE II:** Should be completed at least **four months** before the wedding. *The fee must be paid at or soon after this second meeting to confirm the wedding date & time.*

**PHASE III:** Begins at least **three months** before the wedding. *The engaged couple should make the contact with the priest or deacon.*

The engaged couple should apply for a Michigan marriage license **during the last month** before the wedding.

Plans for the ceremony and the license should be at the parish office **at least 24 hours** before the **rehearsal**.

Every adult Catholic has a right to enter the Sacrament of Marriage, presuming the three following conditions are met. First, that both people are truly single, or if there has been a previous marriage, a Church annulment has been obtained. Second, that one or both are practicing Catholics; and third, that both must be over 21 or have their parent's permission to marry.

## **AN EXPLANATION OF THE PHASES**

**PHASE ONE:** Began with your appointment with the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding. The purpose of this meeting was to get acquainted and to explain the Marriage Preparation process. A **tentative date** was 'penciled' in on the parish calendar, but the confirmation of this date cannot be made until after phase one is complete.

The purpose of this phase is to enable you to take a thoughtful look at your relationship. To assist you in this process, a sponsor couple will contact you and set up the first in a series of meetings. At the first meeting the engaged couple fills out a survey on their thoughts, feelings and attitudes about marriage. In the following meetings the sponsor couple will meet with you to help you examine your responses.

When you have completed the sessions with your sponsor couple, contact the priest or deacon to set up another appointment. It is at this meeting that the wedding date is confirmed. The priest or deacon will also discuss the second phase of the process.

**PHASE TWO:** This phase has two parts.

The purpose of the first part of the second phase is to help the couple deepen their relationship through better communication. This can be accomplished in two ways: One is the Engaged Encounter Weekend which lasts from Saturday morning through Sunday late afternoon. (There are four weekends each year.) The second is the WE CARE Seminar which is conducted by Catholic Social Services in Livingston County. The scheduling varies but usually begins on Friday evening and ends on late Saturday afternoon. (There are several each year.) If neither of these works out, other alternatives are available.

At the first appointment with the priest or deacon, when the wedding date is tentatively set, you will receive more information on these options. Registration for one of these options should be done quickly. The Engaged Encounter

and WE CARE Seminars fill up very quickly. The couple should attend either of these any time during the first six months of marriage prep.

The second part of the second phase focuses on faith as an important aspect of marriage. All couples must also participate in a Basic Catholic Teaching Seminar. The seminar examines the basic teachings of our faith especially as they apply to marriage. Seven sessions are scheduled annually by the parishes in Livingston County.

## THE FEE

There is a fee for the use of the facilities, the marriage prep materials, the musician (keyboard), the cantor, the liturgical coordinator and the presider:

- + The fee for parishioners (registered, contributing members of the parish) is **\$500\***.
- + The fee for non-parishioners (those who do not belong or support the community) is **\$750\***.

*\*This fee covers everything mentioned above: the use of the facilities, the marriage prep materials, the musician (keyboard), the cantor (if needed), the liturgical coordinator and the presider.*

*Additional singers or musician are paid \$75 per person.*

### **Please Note:**

1. *The fee should be given to the priest or deacon at or soon after the second appointment to confirm the date and time of the wedding. The check should be made out to St. Mary Magdalen Parish.*
2. *The couple should contact our pastoral musician, Steve Schulte, to arrange for him to play for the wedding. He will help arrange for other singers or musicians at that time. (810-923-8059)*

**PHASE THREE:** Begins about three months before the wedding. The purpose of this meeting is to plan the wedding which is first and foremost a Worship Service. You should call to arrange an appointment with the presiding priest or deacon. To this meeting you need to bring:

+ The certificate you received from the Engaged Encounter Weekend or WE CARE Seminar and from the Basic Catholic Teaching Series.

+ You should also bring a Baptismal Certificate or some proof of Baptism. For Catholics it must be a new certificate issued by the parish of Baptism within the last six months. To obtain this simply contact your church of Baptism and request a new certificate.

The purpose of this third meeting with the priest or deacon is fill out the official papers\* for the file, AND to discuss the plans for the ceremony. Materials for planning the ceremony are given to the couple at this meeting.

\*When a Catholic marries a person who is not Catholic, there is an added requirement. The Catholic promises that he/she will continue to practice their faith while respecting the conscience of their partner. In addition, they will do all that they can to see that the children are Baptized and raised as Catholics.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**Aisle Runners:** Aisle runners are *not* permitted. Since these are usually paper or plastic, both are slippery when placed down over the tile flooring. Moreover, the Baptismal font makes it impossible for the runner to reach the doorway.

**Alcohol:** Absolutely no alcohol is to be consumed by any member of the wedding party the day of the wedding prior to the wedding. Nor should it be brought onto the church property for immediately after the wedding.

**Booklets:** Or personalized booklets are very helpful to those you have invited to participate in the prayer of the wedding ceremony. These are prepared and printed by the couple. (Sample copies will be provided as a guide.)

**Candles:** Candelabra and pew candles are not permitted because of fire hazards. A **Christ or Unity Candle** is used by many couples. If the couple wishes to have one, they should purchase one about 10-12 inches high and about 3 inches in diameter. St. Mary Magdalen has a special stand for this candle, which includes a pair of individual candles.

**Ceremony:** When a Catholic marries another Baptized Christian or a non-Baptized person, it is advisable that the wedding take place within a ceremony rather than a Nuptial Mass. The primary reason for this is that only those who are practicing Catholics are allowed to receive Communion. The ceremony alone better symbolizes the unity of a couple of mixed religions. The ceremony consists of a Liturgy of the Word (similar to the first half of Sunday Liturgy) and the wedding ceremony. Other options and prayers can be added to the service. (See options below.)

**Changing Rooms:** There are facilities for all the wedding party to change at the church. However, it works best if the gentlemen come already dressed and ladies come all prepared, needing only to put on their dresses and "add the final touches". The bride's room is also the East Room with its own rest room. Because it is also used on the weekend for other activities, it must be left as it was found when you arrived for the wedding.

**Flowers:** Like everything else involved in the celebration, flowers should not distract from or interfere with the service. There are only a few places where flowers are clearly visible in church. These usually include in front of the altar and ambo or at the front corners of the altar platform. If you are having a Christ or unity candle, a modest arrangement can be hung on the candelabra. You can contact Diane Kubus, our parish liturgist to discuss the different options.

(810.229.8624).

Please note: No flower arrangements may be placed on the altar.

**Guest Books** belong at the reception, not at the church.

**Hospitality:** It is very helpful for you to have a couple of your friends or family at the church doors to hand your guests the hymnal and/or booklet as they enter.

**Music:** Because a wedding celebrates the love of God which we pray will be visible in the love of the couple, all music used in church must be specifically Christian, that is, there must be specific mention of God. Popular and secular love songs say many beautiful things about love, but not enough. They fail to speak of the origin of love, God, who is the focus of all prayer. If you have any questions or doubts about the suitability of any song, contact the priest or deacon.

**Congregational Singing & Soloist:** Whether the wedding is a ceremony or a Nuptial Mass, it is Liturgy or a Worship Service. Congregational singing is a part of our worship because it is sung prayer. You might have a soloist sing at the Unity Candle or Bouquet to Mary, but at the other times congregational singing is a part of the joyfulness of the assembly's prayer

**Instrumental Music** is usually used for the entrance procession and the recessional and instrumental music is always acceptable. If the music is connected with a song, then the song must be Christian even if the words are not sung.

**Processional:** There is ONLY ONE processional piece which is played for both the entrance of the bridesmaids and the bride.

Steve Schulte is our parish pastoral musician. You can arrange for him to provide music for your wedding by calling him at: 810-923-8059

If you would like any other musicians or soloists other than our own parish musicians, please speak to the priest

or deacon first.

**Fees:** The fee for Steve or any other parish musician or cantor is covered in the fee paid when the wedding date and time are confirmed. There is an additional fee of \$75 for additional parish musicians or singers.

**Options:** When planning the ceremony the couple has many options. The couple chooses two or three Scripture readings plus the General Intercessions for every ceremony and should ask from one to three people who read well and respect the Scriptures to do the readings and intercessions. There are also several different versions of the prayers from which to choose. Other options include having a unity or Christ candle, having both sets of parents light the side candles of the unity candle, the bouquet to Mary, presenting flowers to the parents and more.

**Pew Bows:** are attached to the pew or chairs *by tying or pinning them on. Do not use tape.*

**Pictures/Video:** When contracting a photographer, inform him/her that flash photography is permitted only during the processions at the beginning and end. Other pictures may be taken during the service without flash as long as the photographer remains inconspicuous. The same is true for video-photographers. All photographers should remain behind the assembly all during the service.

Portrait pictures of the bridal party are usually taken after the wedding but sometimes they are taken before the wedding. Since there is a limit to the time available for pictures, please discuss your plans with the presiding priest or deacon *well* before the rehearsal.

**Video:** The parish has a video system and a crew that is willing to video your wedding ceremony. If you are interested in using this service, please contact our Liturgist, Diane Kubus to make arrangements (810.229.8624). There is an additional fee of \$100 for this service.

**Rehearsals** are normally held the evening before the

wedding. The time and date of the rehearsal is made with the presiding priest or deacon. Please inform your wedding party of the time and ask them to be prompt!!

**Rice:** No rice, birdseed, confetti or anything similar at the church should be thrown on the church property.

**Use of the Church:** Wedding parties do not have unlimited use of the church. Generally, the wedding party has the church for one hour before & after the wedding and this may be shortened if there is another wedding or rehearsal.

If you need additional time for pictures, this must be arranged before the wedding day with the priest or deacon.

**Wedding Coordinator:** Our Liturgist, Diane Kubus, will be at the rehearsal. She will also be present to assist the wedding party, especially the bride, from the time the wedding party arrives for the ceremony until they depart for the reception.

Any other questions should be directed to the priest or deacon with whom you made arrangement for your wedding.

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