Dear Newly Engaged Couple,

On behalf of the Our Lady of Fatima Parish, the clergy and staff wish to congratulate you on your upcoming wedding and marriage and express our joy and excitement as we begin accompanying you in the months leading up to your wedding. While there are many practical preparations that must be made for your wedding day, our goal is to help prepare you to be faithful to the sacrament you will receive on that day; which you will be asked to live for the rest of your lives. By being faithful in your love for one another, not only will you help each other on your journey to heaven, but you will also be a sign for the Church of the very love that Christ has for each one of us.

This information is presented to you in order to help guide you through the process of marriage preparation. Please know you will be in our prayers as you continue your faith journey, and begin this new phase in your life. If there is anything that you need, or any questions that you have, please do not hesitate to contact us. May God continue to increase your love and bless you with a meaningful wedding and a joyous married life.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES INITIAL MEETING AND SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Getting married in the Catholic Church takes more than one day. The process here at our parish will include the following:

- An initial meeting with a Priest or Deacon from the parish to get to know you. It is important to set up an appointment with one of the priests of the parish to discuss your intention to get married in the Catholic Church as soon as possible (Sometimes there can be obstacles, such as previous marriages, which need to be resolved before planning can move forward. It is better to have advance notice.) We highly recommend that you meet with a Priest or Deacon at least 6 months before your planned wedding date, and if at all possible, contact us at least a year in advance. The wedding date will be tentative until this meeting takes place.

- A meeting with the OLF Marriage Coordinator to help you prepare for your wedding. If a Priest from outside our parish is presiding at your wedding, you will also need to meet with him when you get close to the date to go over the wedding liturgy plans.

- If you would like to request a particular Priest from the parish or from outside of the parish, please make your request known to the Pastor or Marriage Coordinator when you come visit us.

- You will need to arrange a meeting with your musician.

- Participation in a Marriage Preparation program is required.

- Our Diocese has a program and we can do individual preparation using an online program called Prepare and Enrich

- Please make sure to bring a “Certificate of Participation” to the parish office after you have completed the Marriage Preparation program so that we can place it in your file.

- A wedding rehearsal the day before the wedding.
PLANNING THE WEDDING LITURGY

All marriages in the Catholic Church are conducted according to the Rite of Christian Marriage. This is because a Catholic wedding is an event that involves the whole Church community. Because engaged couples are the ministers of the sacrament, they can and should be involved in making certain decisions about the wedding liturgy.

The following information and guidelines are to help you complete the Wedding Liturgy Planning Aid that is included so that you can be prepared when you come to meet with the Marriage Coordinator about the wedding liturgy. To schedule this meeting, please contact the office @ (203) 762-3928

Location/Times: You may choose to have the wedding liturgy in any our church. Weddings outside of the church require permission from the Bishop.

Friday weddings may be scheduled between 6 and 7 only.

Saturday weddings may be scheduled from 10 am to 1 pm.

Music You will need to book and pay directly for the musician for your wedding. Your music should be approved by our Diocesan Guidelines.

Readings

The Rite of Christian Marriage normally includes a reading from the Old Testament and from the New Testament in addition to a Gospel reading and Psalm. We invite you to select the New and Old Testament readings from the available options the rite gives, which are included in this guide. The Gospel reading will be chosen by the Priest or Deacon who is presiding at the liturgy. Please speak to the musician about the Responsorial Psalm since it is normally sung. You can choose from the General Intercession/Prayers of the Faithful found in the back of this booklet or speak with the Marriage Coordinator for more options. Please choose readings that enhance your wedding and are special to you.

Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and Servers

At a Catholic wedding liturgy there is need for one reader(s), and sometimes one Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. The parish is able to provide members of the community to serve at your wedding liturgy. However, if you have Catholic family members or friends who are involved in any of these ministries in their own parishes and would like to serve at your wedding, please talk to the Marriage Coordinator and indicate their names in the wedding liturgy planning aid located at the back of this booklet.

The readings are important part of your ceremony so please select people who can read in a public setting in a very large space. We can rehearse the readers on the night of your rehearsal (evening prior to wedding).

The Wedding Party

You must choose two witnesses to your marriage (normally the Best Man and Maid of Honor). Both must be present at the wedding rehearsal and at least one should be a practicing Catholic. Wedding parties should be limited in size so that they do not distract from the liturgy. Any and all groomsmen and bridesmaids, flower girls or ring-bearers, readers, and parents of the bride and groom should be present at the rehearsal.
Worship Aid

You may decide to put together a small booklet for those who will be attending your wedding. We can also provide you with a digital copy for your convenience if you call the parish office. Please bring a copy of your proposed worship aid to the Marriage Coordinator before you start printing so that you can be sure there are no errors.

~IMPORTANT~

WE CANNOT OFFICIATE AT YOUR WEDDING WITHOUT YOUR MARRIAGE LICENSE. WITHIN 90 DAYS OF THE WEDDING, PLEASE GO TO CITY HALL AND PICK UP A MARRIAGE LICENSE. MAKE SURE THAT AT LEAST ONE WEEK PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING DATE YOU BRING YOUR MARRIAGE LICENSE TO THE PARISH OFFICE AND GIVE IT PERSONALLY TO MARRIAGE COORDINATOR WHO WILL BE ORGANIZING YOUR WEDDING PAPERWORK.

CATHOLIC PARTIES MUST PROVIDE A BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE THAT HAS BEEN ISSUED WITHIN THE LAST SIX MONTHS. YOU MAY OBTAIN A CERTIFICATE BY CONTACTING THE CHURCH OF YOUR BAPTISM. WHEN ASKING FOR THE BAPTISM CERTIFICATE, PLEASE BE SURE TO TELL THEM YOU ARE GETTING MARRIED AND WILL NEED ALL “NOTATIONS” AS WELL. THESE NOTATIONS INCLUDE SACRAMENTS CELEBRATED SINCE YOUR BAPTISM. IF THE PARTY WAS BAPTIZED IN ANOTHER DENOMINATION, NO CERTIFICATE IS REQUIRED.

DECORATIONS AND USE OF THE CHURCH

A Catholic Church is a sacred space, and so it must be treated with reverence and respect. Please observe the following policies in our parish churches:

DECORATIONS:

• Flowers. If you would like special flowers for your wedding, please make sure that they are of good taste and dignified. No flowers should be placed on the altar, but may be placed around the sanctuary as long as they do not obstruct movement in the sanctuary. Flowers may also be placed around the church. Simplicity and elegance have long been a custom of our religious tradition. The church doors will be opened one hour before the wedding for the florist.

• Pew Bows. Pew bows may be used on the front pews, provided that they are attached with rubber bands or ribbon, not tape or some other adhesive.

• The Unity Candle. The use of the Unity Candle is optional. You will need to supply the candles (one large and two smaller candles). The church has a candle holder you may use.

• Wedding Carpets/Runners. While aisle runners may be used, we do not recommend them as they can be problematic with gowns with trains and high heels.

• Checking the Church to make plans. For those who would like to visit the church, please come to a weekend Mass. If you would like to visit with your florist or musician, this can be arranged. Call our office and we'll be happy to accommodate your request.
• Confetti. Absolutely no confetti or any other kind of material may be thrown or scattered within the church or on the church property for safety reasons and because of the extensive cleaning time and costs involved.

• Clean up. Please arrange to have someone stay after the wedding to pick up anything left on or in the pews. We appreciate your care of this beautiful, sacred space.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO

• Photographers and Videographers should always keep in mind that they are working in a sacred space. They should not enter the sanctuary and should be discreet and especially respectful during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Please limit photo shoots that happen on church property to half an hour before and after the liturgy. The photographer is welcome to come to the wedding rehearsal for planning. We want you to have beautiful memories of your wedding ceremony that you can look back on for years to come.

DRESSING AND COMPORTMENT

• Promptness. Please do everything in your power to arrive on time for the rehearsal and the wedding liturgy.

• Preparations. All dressing and preparations by the bride, groom, and the wedding party must occur prior to arrival at the church.

• Food and Drink. There is to be absolutely no drinking of alcoholic beverages by anyone in the wedding party prior to the wedding. No food or drink is permitted within our churches, except for bottled water in extreme circumstances.

FEES

• For the Church:

  ✷ Couples planning to wed at OLF Parish are asked to provide a donation of $100 for parishioners and $300 for non-parishioners for the use of the Church.

  ✷ This check should be made payable to the Church and should be sent to our Office or given to the Marriage Coordinator.

  ✷ Please plan to compensate the Marriage Coordinator $100 in a check made payable to him/her.

• For Musicians and Servers:

  ✷ At your meeting with your Musician, you will be informed of the fee associated with music for your wedding and that amount is to be paid directly to him/her. Usually $250

  ✷ Please plan to compensate the Altar Server who assists the Priest during the wedding liturgy at least $25.

• For the Priest or Deacon:

  ✷ Of the donation made to the Church, none of that amount goes to the Priest/Deacon planning or presiding at your wedding. It is also customary to make a gift to the Priest or Deacon. The
customary amount is a minimum of $250. If you have any questions concerning fees, please contact the Marriage Coordinator.

Readings (See attachment)
WEDDING LITURGY PLANNING AID
Your Names:
__________________________________________________________________
Wedding Date: ___________________________ Will this be a wedding ___Mass ___Ceremony
Presider:
__________________________________________________________________

INTRODUCTORY RITES
Entrance Procession: Procession of Mothers? _____Yes _____No
Mother of the Bride escorted by: ____________________________________________
Mother of the Groom escorted by: ____________________________________________
Will light unity candles? _____Yes _____No
Procession of Bridesmaids? _____Yes _____No # of Bridesmaids _____
Escorted by Groomsmen? _____Yes _____No
Procession of: Flower girl(s)? _____Yes _____No # of Flower girls_____
Ring bearer? _____Yes _____No (Flower girls and ring bearers must be accompanied by an adult during the procession if they are under 4 years old.)

PROCESSION OF THE BRIDE:
_____Bride will be escorted by _____________________________________________. _____Bride and Groom will each be escorted by their parents.
_____Bride and Groom process down together (The last option is the Church's preference because it emphasizes the equality of the man and woman as they prepare to receive this sacrament). Names of Witnesses: ____________________________________________
________________________________________________________
LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading #:_____ Read by:
____________________________________________

Second Reading #:_____ Read by:
____________________________________________

General Intercessions #:______ Read by:
____________________________________________

Gifts brought forward? _____Yes _____No
By:
____________________________________________

Eucharistic Minister: ___________________________________________________

Altar Server
________________________________________________________

CONCLUDING RITE

Recessional How do you wish to be announced (i.e. Mr. and Mrs.), etc..
____________________________________

Who processes out?
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
________________________

Please complete and bring this Wedding Liturgy Planning Aid to your meeting with the Musician and the Marriage Coordinator. Important: Make sure that at least one week prior to your wedding date; you bring your marriage license to the Pastoral Center office. If there is anything we can do to help, please let us know!