

## **CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE**



**AT THE PROTO-CATHEDRAL OF ST. JAMES THE GREATER  
VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON**

*THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE  
LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD!*

*A Message from the Pastor*

God and Mary be with you. Congratulation to you from your Proto-Cathedral Parish Family on your upcoming marriage! On the day of your marriage, you will become one in Christ and, with your families and friends, we pray that the Lord will seal and strengthen your love of God and love of one another in the presence of the Church's minister. May you remain in this love both now and forever!

In Jesus and Mary,

The Reverend W.R. Harris, Pastor



## I. Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage

The Sacrament of Marriage establishes a sacred and irrevocable covenantal bond between the spouses, forming a lifelong intimate partnership of love and mutual support aided by divine grace. Couples are to begin their formal preparation for this solemn commitment **at least six months** before the wedding date.

Marriage preparation includes:

- An initial meeting with the Pastor or his Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation to understand the couple's particular circumstances, discuss the couple's understanding of marriage, review this wedding policy and specific marriage preparation requirements
- Submission of Sacramental certificates
- Completion of interviews to demonstrate freedom and consent to marry
- Receive all required canonical dispensations or permissions
- Completion of a Marriage Preparation Program
- Completion of an introductory course in Natural Family Planning
- Obtaining a Washington State marriage license from Clark County

### Submission of sacramental certificates

**Catholics:** Please submit a recent copy of your baptismal certificate. We can't accept photocopies of the original document your family received when you were baptized. When it gets to be **within six months of your wedding date**, contact your parish of baptism, tell them you're getting married, and have them mail a copy of your baptismal certificate to the Proto-Cathedral. This copy should have all relevant notations (Eucharist, Confirmation, etc.).

**Non-Catholic Christians:** We need some kind of evidence for your baptism. If you have a copy of your baptismal certificate, this will suffice. Other evidence can work, too, if you don't have a certificate and the place where you were baptized cannot provide one. If you have questions, the Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation can help you.

### Interviews to demonstrate freedom and consent

Short interviews with the bride, groom, a witness for the bride, and a witness for the groom are required to demonstrate the couple's freedom to marry and understanding of marriage. These interviews are confidential, and take place with the pastor, Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation, or another staff

member. While witnesses don't necessarily have to be members of the wedding party, these witnesses should be people who know the bride and groom well. Parents, other family, and close friends are good choices. If a witness lives far away, arrangements can be made for the interview to take place through other means.

### Marriage Preparation Program

Marriage preparation includes two components: an inventory and course. The pre-marital inventory is a "quiz" that covers a wide variety of subjects. It helps illuminate areas where the couple agree and disagree. This isn't a test you can pass or fail, but a tool to help make sure you've thoroughly discussed important topics (faith, children, finances, etc) and practice good communication skills. We have couples take the inventory online and review it with a trained facilitator through Agape Ministries (CatholicMarriagePrep.com). They use the PREPAPRE Pre-Marital Instrument. A fee for the inventory can be paid directly to Agape Ministries when you register. Details on how to register will be provided by the Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation.

The course of study covers the theology of marriage. We use a variety of materials, based on the couples' needs and unique situation. The Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation will discuss what your marriage preparation program will look like, and any materials needed for the course are usually paid for by the couple directly.

We can provide need-based scholarships to cover the cost of marriage preparation; no couple will be turned away from marriage preparation due to lack of funds!

### Natural Family Planning (NFP) Course

Natural Family Planning (NFP), otherwise known as Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM), include several methods for observing natural bodily signs and tracking your fertility. This information helps you make informed decisions about when to get pregnant, totally in accord with the openness to life inherent in the Catholic Church's social and moral teachings. If a couple follows the rules of their method, they're just as effective as conventional methods of artificial birth control, without any of the harmful physical or spiritual effects.

Couples need to take a course to learn a method of NFP. There are many methods and courses to choose from, ranging from in-person classes to online

instruction. After completing a course, the couple should submit a certificate of completion to the Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation. In lieu of a certificate, you may also have your instructor email us attesting that you completed the course.

Some of the most common methods of NFP/FAM include:

- Sympto-Thermal Method (STM): Observe multiple qualitative (descriptive, rather than numbers) signs as well as taking your waking temperature every morning. This is one of the most effective methods, and involves learning the most signs. It's good if you have a regular sleep schedule, and a little more challenging if your sleep is very irregular. This one gives you the most data about your body.
  - Northwest Family Services (nwfs.org) in Portland. They offer in-person and online classes.
  - Couple to Couple League (ccli.org).
- Creighton Model: Using only qualitative bodily signs, chart your fertility. Creighton is highly effective and used by doctors at NaPro Technology to help diagnose and treat fertility issues.
  - Certified Instructor Caitlin Elder, here in Vancouver. Contact her at [creightonwithcaitlin@gmail.com](mailto:creightonwithcaitlin@gmail.com) or (509) 995-9081.
  - FertilityCare (fertilitycare.org)
- Billings Ovulation Method: Another qualitative bodily sign method, similar to Creighton. Sometimes it's easier to find a local Billings Method instructor.
  - BOMA (boma-usa.org)
- Marquette Model: Uses a Clearblue Fertility Monitor and a set of rules to chart fertility by measuring hormone levels. While it's more expensive than any other method (purchasing a monitor and monthly test strips), it's especially beloved by post-partum women, women with an irregular sleep schedule, and those who find it difficult to observe clear qualitative signs.
  - Vitae Fertility Education (vitaefertility.com)

## **II. Preparation for the Wedding Ceremony**

### **Selection of a Date and Time**

Weddings are scheduled in the Proto-Cathedral on Friday evenings and on Saturdays at 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. They are **not** scheduled on Saturday evenings, Sundays, Holy Days and Solemnities, the Saturday before the First Sunday of Advent, the Friday or Saturday following Christmas, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, the Sacred Triduum, nor the First Friday or Saturday of each Month. Couples should avoid setting a specific date before contacting the parish office to discuss their specific situation, preparation requirements, and the availability of church, priest, and supporting elements.

### **Rehearsals**

Rehearsals are scheduled on the Thursday or Friday prior, and normally take **30 minutes**. Rehearsals at other times are available in consultation with the Pastoral Assistant for Music and Liturgy. Rehearsals cannot take place on the First Friday of the Month due to Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

### **Dress**

It is important to remember that your wedding takes place within the house of God, and therefore, should be conducted with the utmost reverence. The dress of those in the wedding party should show reverence through modesty and dignity. No jeans, t-shirts, or sneakers are permitted to be worn by the groom and groomsmen. Neither the bride's nor the bridesmaid's dresses may be strapless. Dresses which are strapless must be worn with a shawl covering the shoulders at all times while in the church. Dresses should not reveal cleavage, have mini-skirt-like bottoms, low cut backsides, or open midsections. Be attentive and choose modest, beautiful dresses for yourself and the bridesmaids. Modesty is a virtue that shows forth one's inner beauty and keeps intact one's dignity.

### **Music**

Please call the Pastoral Assistant for Music and Liturgy before planning any music. As with all Liturgies at the Proto-Cathedral, music plays an integral role in the celebration of the Sacrament. The Pastoral Assistant for Music and Liturgy is responsible for the music at the Marriage Liturgy and will assist you in choosing and approving the music for the celebration of the Sacrament. Because of the unique acoustics of the Cathedral, it is necessary to require that the Cantors for the celebration be qualified Proto-Cathedral Cantors. The professional choir at the Proto-Cathedral (*St. James Collegium Musicum*) may also be hired if you desire choral music. Possible musical selections can be

found in the *Adoremus* Hymnal in the pews of the Proto-Cathedral or by meeting with the Pastoral Assistant for Music and Liturgy. All pieces must be Sacred in text and composition. If the wedding will be celebrated in Vietnamese, then the arrangements for music will have to be conducted with the Vietnamese Choir. All music will be planned with and approved by the Pastoral Assistant for Music and Liturgy. **Please do not make any independent arrangements with other musicians.**

### **The Liturgy**

A primary concern as you come to the preparation of the Liturgy is how this event will not only be a visible sign of your love for God and for one another, but also a celebration that includes your family, friends and the Proto-Cathedral Parish Family in the Liturgy. During the Rite of Marriage, you declare your love to each other before God and The Church. This public declaration, witnessed by a prayerful people that actively participate in the Liturgy, is the fundamental nature of good liturgical celebration. This is the prayerful celebration of the whole Church. You have an opportunity not only to express the love between yourselves, but also to strengthen the faith of those who come to worship with you.

The best model for the Wedding Liturgy is the parish Sunday Mass. Like any Liturgy of the Church, it involves active participation of the people in spoken and sung prayer.

The Rite of Marriage of the Catholic Church offers two options. The "Rite of Celebrating Marriage during Mass" is used when both the bride and groom are active and participating Catholics. When a Catholic marries a person that is not baptized, the "Rite for Celebrating Marriage outside Mass" is the choice selected. If an active and participating Catholic marries a Baptized Christian of a different denomination, they may choose between Marriage during Mass or outside of Mass depending upon which best reflects the choices of both future spouses as well as their expectations.

In the positive spirit of ecumenism, great care must be taken to respect the integrity and faith of both people in "interfaith" Marriages. Celebrating the Rite of Marriage outside of the Mass is preferred for interfaith Marriages because it contains elements in which both the bride and groom and their families can fully participate.

The Rite of Marriage celebrated during Mass, sometimes referred to as the "Nuptial Mass," is modeled after the Sunday Mass with its full complement of

ministries. The Rite of Marriage is celebrated after the homily. It should be remembered that one of the unique features of the Rite of Marriage is that the bride and groom are the ministers of the Sacrament. This is their ministerial function, and therefore, they do not serve as Readers or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

The Rite of Marriage celebrated outside of Mass, begins with the Liturgy of the Word, followed by the Rite of Marriage. The General Intercessions, Lord's Prayer and Nuptial Blessing conclude the Liturgy.

Couples are welcome to provide an *Order of Worship* for the Faithful attending the Marriage Liturgy. The Order of Worship lists the names of musical selections, acclamations and responses, as well as the names of the participants of the Marriage Liturgy. If you wish to provide this service, the Pastoral Assistant of Music and Liturgy, will assist you with this option and approve your format.

## **Participants**

**The Faithful** – this is the congregation, the guests that you have invited to the celebration. The faithful take an active part in the celebration, and so their role is not to be neglected or are they to be thought of as spectators. Please remember that this Sacramental Celebration is not “outside of the Parish”, but one more grace-filled encounter with the Lord within this Parish and the Faithful who are the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church.

**The Bride and Groom** – As ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage, it is your consent and exchange of vows that forms the focus of this celebration. *"Marriage arises in the covenant of Marriage, or irrevocable consent, which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from the other"* (General Introduction to the Rite of Marriage).

**The Celebrant** – is the Priest or the Deacon who leads the faithful in prayer to God and presides at the exchange of vows. In an interfaith Marriage, the minister of the non-Catholic spouse may be invited to participate in the Liturgy, offering prayers and blessing the couple. The Pastoral Assistant for Liturgy will give instructions for their participation.

**The Servers** – Function as cross-bearer and candle-bearers, assist the Celebrant as book-bearer, and prepare the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. There are

usually two or more servers at the Marriage liturgy. Servers are young men who are trained and active in the Proto-Cathedral Parish. It is customary to make a monetary gift of ten or twenty dollars to each Server who assist at the Liturgy.

**The Reader** – Is the person selected to proclaim the first and second readings during the Liturgy of the Word. The second reader usually leads the General Intercessions. Readers are trained and active in the Proto-Cathedral Parish and are not from the wedding party unless active prior at the Proto-Cathedral.

### **Flowers and Decorations**

The interior of the Proto-Cathedral of St. James the Greater is a grand setting for any Liturgy. Very little is needed to enhance the Proto-Cathedral for the celebration of Marriage. The following guidelines have been provided to help you as you prepare for the celebration of Marriage.

On the Altar, there are four candles and a crucifix which are not to be moved regardless of the celebrant. Please note that the Unity Candle is not a prescribed element of the Marriage Rite and therefore it is not permitted during the Marriage Liturgy. Floral arrangements are never placed on the Altar of Sacrifice. Green plants or flowers may be placed in front of and below the Altar of Sacrifice. Flowers can be placed on the High Altar and the side altars. Flowers cannot be placed on or in front of the Communion rail.

Floral arrangements placed in the Proto-Cathedral for the Marriage celebration are frequently left as a gift to the Proto-Cathedral parish for the weekend Masses. Couples should coordinate their flower selection with the parish flower decorators through the Pastoral Assistant of Music and Liturgy.

If bows or small flower decorations are to be used on the pew ends, please notify the florist that tape may not be used to attach them to the pews. These must be removed after the ceremony.

The use of aisle runners, balloons, or any other informal party decorations are not in keeping with the dignity of the Church's Liturgy and may not be used.

Please note that decorations in the Proto-Cathedral during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Easter may not be changed to accommodate a particular wedding. If you have any questions regarding the decorations particular to each Liturgical Season, please call the Pastoral Assistant for Music and Liturgy at the parish office. Church furnishings and fixtures may

not be re-arranged without consultation and approval. As it is presently arranged, the sanctuary provides for the flow of the Liturgy and for the greatest visibility.

### **Hospitality and Dressing Rooms**

The Proto-Cathedral provides a dressing room for the bride and bridesmaids to gather and prepare prior to the celebration. We are unable to provide changing rooms for the groom and groomsmen; however, they may use the upper or lower hall which does have a restroom.

### **Alcoholic Beverages**

Alcohol (and other drugs) affects one's ability to freely give consent, which is necessary for the validity of every marriage. Consequently, consumption of alcoholic beverages (or other drugs) prior to the Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is strictly forbidden. It is the responsibility of the couple to inform the entire wedding party of this rule and to comply with it. Any infraction of this policy by any member of the wedding party will result in the automatic forfeiture of the deposit and the exclusion of anyone who is intoxicated from the wedding party. If the bride or groom is found to have broken this policy, **the wedding will be canceled**.

### **Care of the Proto-Cathedral**

The Proto-Cathedral of St. James the Greater is a holy place of prayer and therefore must be regarded as such. With this in mind, a prayerful atmosphere is expected during the rehearsal, prior to the Marriage Liturgy and after the Liturgy. Please assign one or more of the wedding party to clean up the dressing area, vestibule and pews following the Marriage.

Please note that the use of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals, or bubbles within the Proto-Cathedral or outside, is considered a safety hazard and is prohibited.

### **Wedding Fees**

The fee specified for your Marriage Liturgy helps defray the cost of the services of the Parish Staff as well as the expense of maintaining the facilities, lighting, utilities, etc. Couples often ask whether it is appropriate to make a monetary gift to the Priest or Deacon who celebrated their Marriage. It is certainly customary, and many couples find this a good way to express their thanks, although it is not required.

There are two fee schedules at the Proto-Cathedral of St. James the Greater: one for parishioners and another for non-parishioners. Normally, a parishioner shall be defined as someone who has been registered, actively participating in the life of the parish, and contributing to the financial support of the Proto-Cathedral Parish for at least one (1) year prior to the proposed Marriage date. A parish staff member will help you determine your status should there be any questions. All fees must be paid in full to have a date placed on the calendar.

**No active parishioner of the Proto-Cathedral of St. James the Greater is ever turned away from having his or her Marriage Celebration in the Proto-Cathedral because of an inability to pay the fees.** If you have financial difficulties in meeting the fee plan, please discuss the matter with the Pastor.

The Payment of fees is not to be understood as either paying for the Sacrament or the renting of the Proto-Cathedral building for the celebration of the Sacrament. The fees are to offset the rising costs of maintaining the Proto-Cathedral and to adequately reimburse those ministers who offer their assistance. In all honesty, they are, or should be, a small percentage of the overall expenses that arise in Marriage celebrations in our culture and society. National statistics tell us the average cost of a wedding is well over 25 thousand dollars!

## Wedding Fees

**Fees for parishioners:** \$500 Contribution for the Proto-Cathedral plus \$500 refundable fee (if policies are met).

**Fees for non-parishioners:** \$1500 Contribution for the Proto-Cathedral plus \$500 refundable fee (if policies are met).

**Musician Fees:** Staff Organist/ Singer: \$300  
Additional Singer: \$150  
*St. James Collegium Musicum:* Contact  
Pastoral Assistant of Music and Liturgy

**Servers:** \$10-\$20 (suggested)

The Pastoral Assistant of Music and Liturgy and the wedding coordinator will approve the refund of the deposit to the wedding party if the wedding policy has been followed. No changes to the policy can be made by a visiting celebrant.

If you wish to use the Upper Hall for your reception, please obtain a Facility Use Policy and fee schedule from the Parish Office.

### **III. Convalidation**

A simple ceremony in accordance with the Roman Catholic Rite of Marriage for couples previously married outside of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church believes and teaches that Jesus Christ raised the institution of marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament. Catholics are therefore obliged to have their marriage witnessed in the Catholic Church by a bishop, priest, or deacon and celebrated according to the Catholic form of the ritual as required by canon law. Any marriage entered into by a Catholic outside of the Catholic Church is considered invalid, although the marriage is considered legal by civil authorities. (Marriages entered into by non-Catholics, or wherever they may take place, are considered valid.)

It may be that the Catholic who entered into marriage outside the Church did not realize that these requirements existed, or because one or both of the spouses was not free to marry in the Catholic Church because of a previous marriage, or because one or both of the Catholic partners may not have been actively living their Catholic Faith at the time of the civil marriage.

Whatever the reason, the Church encourages all Catholics to return to full participation in the sacramental life of the Church. If married in a civil ceremony, Catholics are asked to refrain from receiving the Eucharist until the marriage is recognized as valid by the Church.

When these couples are ready and free to do so, they celebrate what is called a convalidation, from the Latin word meaning “to firm up” or “to strengthen.” This is sometimes referred to as the blessing of a marriage. But it is important to realize that a convalidation is not merely a renewal of vows made previously but is a new act of consent by each spouse. This new act of consent is essential to marriage, and the words that the couple expresses are the outward sign of the gift of self that they exchange.

The convalidation ceremony is usually celebrated outside of Mass. Customarily, since the couple’s married life is a known and public fact and may have been so for many years, a simple celebration with just a few friends and family is appropriate. The ceremony consists of prayers, Scripture readings, consent of the couple, exchange of vows, blessing and exchange of rings, and the blessing of the couple.

Preparation requirements are similar to those listed on page 3 of this policy. Additional documentation requirements include a copy of the civil marriage certificate. Couples civilly married more than five years are encouraged but not required to complete a marriage preparation course.

## PHOTOGRAPHY FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

To maintain a prayerful atmosphere before and during the Sacrament of Marriage, we provide the following guidelines for the photographer:

- The Proto-Cathedral is available for photographs one and a half hours prior to the celebration and one-half hour (1/2) following the Marriage.
- You are most welcome to take pictures outside on the grounds of the Proto-Cathedral.
- Flash equipment and floodlights are not permitted during the Marriage Liturgy by either the designated photographer or the guests.
- As soon as the procession begins to enter the Proto-Cathedral, photographers are placed, and all pictures are taken out of sight of the people. Photographers may not move about the church during the ceremony, but must stay in the designated area.
- The area in front of the pillars marking the middle of the church may be used, however there is no crossing from side-to-side.
- Video cameras may also be placed in a location specified during the rehearsal. Roaming video cameras are not permitted.
- Do not stand on pews or other furniture, nor use tape to secure electrical cords to the pews, columns or walls.
- The photographer and video photographer may not enter the Sanctuary during the Liturgy.
- Photographers and video photographer must dress in attire appropriate to the dignity of the ceremony. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

It is the couple's responsibility to make certain that these guidelines are followed by the photographer/video photographer and by informing your family and guests.

*The entire Proto-Cathedral Parish family  
wishes to extend to you our prayerful  
blessings as you prepare for the  
Sacrament of Marriage!*