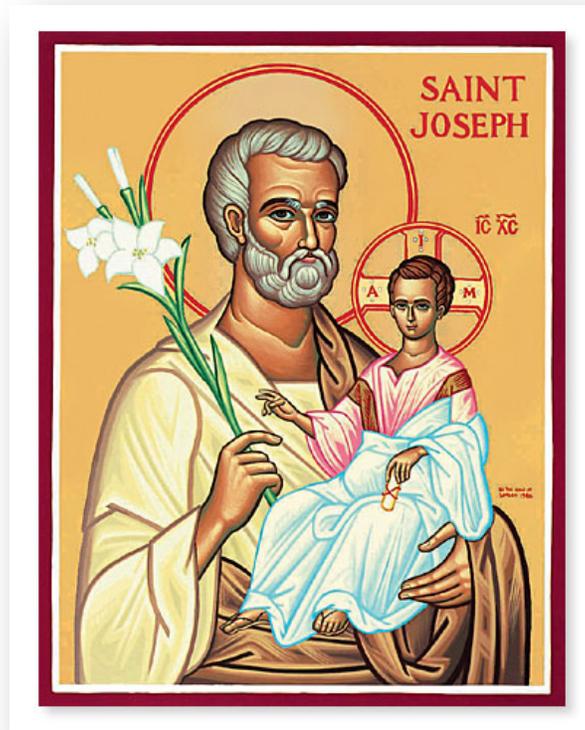


PREPARING FOR YOUR WEDDING  
AND YOUR  
WEDDED LIFE TOGETHER



CHURCH OF SAINT JOSEPH  
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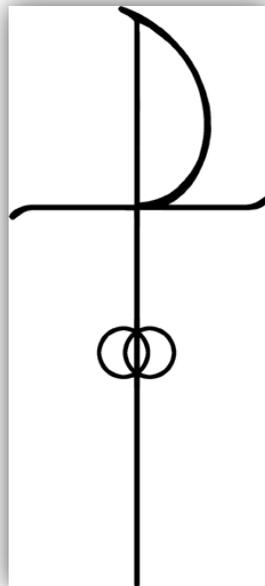
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## PREFACE

**C**ongratulations! You have accepted God's call to marriage. This is one the greatest decisions you will ever make. Your engagement is a special time in your life. It is a time when you talk about everything and a time when you make plans for the future.

**Y**ou have chosen correctly to make your love holy in this sacred ceremony. We rejoice in your decision and wish you God's every blessing. We at Saint Joseph Church want to make your engagement as carefree as possible.

**T**his booklet has been created to help you prepare for your marriage. Since marriage is so important to both the Church and to society, certain laws govern it. Some of these are contained in this guide. Be sure to read it carefully and make reference to it frequently.



For Catholics, marriage is a covenant by which man and woman make of their very lives a partnership for the whole of life. It has been raised by Christ, the Lord, to the dignity of a sacrament for two baptized persons. It takes time to understand *covenant, partnership and sacrament*. Before you run out to hire the band and book the hall, here are some suggestions.

### YOUR READINESS FOR MARRIAGE

The Catholic Church gives the priest and deacons a serious responsibility. Since no two couples are the same, the parish clergy have the delicate job of helping you discern your readiness for marriage. During your engagement, the priest or deacon will speak with you about your freedom to marry based on the requirements of;

1.) Church Laws 2.) Your Psychological Stability and Maturity 3.) The depth of commitment to each other 4.) Your understanding of Catholic Teaching about permanence, mutual fidelity and openness to children in marriage. Because marriage is a “partnership for the whole of life,” the process of making sure you are both ready of marriage is your most important obligation to one another. It is OUR most valuable service to you.

### 1. CHURCH LAW

#### A. SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:

The Eucharist is the most important of all the sacraments. Therefore, it is expected that couples seeking to be married in the Catholic Church be regular Sunday Mass participants.

To receive the Sacrament of Matrimony worthily, one must be in the state of grace. It is most important that couples make frequent use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) before marriage.

Prayer is the everyday experience of the Lord's, presence in our lives. Through prayer, we praise and thank our God; we seek HIS help and strength and hear HIS message of love and concern for us. **Prayer should be part of the shared life of couples who are married and those who are preparing to be married.** Learn to pray together during your engagement. The Lord desires to bless and nourish engage couples. Open up to HIM!

On the day of marriage some couples wish to celebrate their wedding in the context of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The priests of Saint Joseph are happy to celebrate a Nuptial Mass provided that both parties getting married are both practicing Catholics. In other circumstances a ceremony will be celebrated for the sacrament.

**B. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:**

1. Catholics must produce new records (not photocopies of originals) of baptism (issued no more than six months before the wedding date). Non-Catholic, Christians, must provide proof of valid baptism by certificate or letter.
2. Certificate of Catholic Confirmation and First Communion are to be obtained from the parishes in which these sacraments were administered.
3. A “Letter of Freedom” is needed from another not currently a parishioner of Saint Joseph Parish. This comes from your pastor, stating that you are a member of his parish and that you are free to marry in the Catholic Church. The “Freedom of Non-Catholics” to marry must be proven by sworn declarations of two witnesses, preferable parents or close relatives.
4. If neither party is currently a member of Saint Joseph Parish, a letter of permission is needed from your pastor granting permission for the wedding to take place at Saint Joseph.
5. A notarized “Letter of Permission” is to be written by your parents if either of you is under the age of 21.
6. If one of the contracted parties has been married before, either in the Catholic Church, any other religious group/denomination or before a civil magistrate; “Death Certificate” of the former spouse or a “Declaration of Nullity” from the Church must be produced. This applies to the non-Catholic parties as well. This certificate or declaration must be produced before a wedding date can be set. When filing for a “Declaration of Nullity” from the Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal, it is customary to make an offering of \$75.00 to offset the secretarial costs.

7. Marriage of mixed religious may be celebrated with the imparting of the Nuptial Blessing once the proper permissions have been obtained from the Chancery Office. It is customary to make an offering of \$75.00 to offset the secretarial costs for this dispensation.

### C. POLICIES OF THE ARCHDIOCESES OF NEW YORK:

As part of an adequate preparation for marriage, it is expected that both parties attend one of the Pre-Cana programs together. They are special workshops in communication, sexuality, conflict resolution, parenting, finances and marriage readiness. Experienced married couples, psychologists and clergy lead these sessions. An informational booklet and application form will be given to you by the parish. You may choose whichever of the following programs is best suited to your needs:

1. Engaged Encounter Weekend Program: This weekend retreat from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon offers a more intensive preparation for marriage as you “get away from it all”. Highly Recommended. **(2 Overnights.)**
2. Free to Get Married: This weekend commuter program begins with a mixer on Friday evening and all-day session on Saturday and Sunday. This highly recommended program is held in Mt. Kisco. **(No overnight stay.)**
3. Marriage Preparation Workshop: This program consists of a series of sessions dealing with communication in marriage, mature sexuality and the Sacramentality of Marriage. They are usually held in the evening or on Saturday / Sunday afternoons. **(Parts 1 and 2 must be taken.)**
4. Pre-Marital Investigation: After proper instruction on the Sacrament of Marriage has been completed each couple will answer the PMI questionnaire conducted by the priest or deacon who is planning your wedding. This is to be signed and kept as a permanent record in the parish office.

5. Natural Family Planning: With its teaching rooted in the sacred scriptures, the Church has taught from the beginning regarding the responsibility of spouses in remaining open to the gift of children. Your priest or deacon will ask you to participate in the Natural Family Planning Course, held at various locations throughout the Archdioceses of New York. This course usually requires a series of sessions on different days/evenings and is usually offered in Catholic Medical Centers and selected parishes. (Saint Barnabas School: 413 Easter 241 Street.) To register call 212-371-1000 x3189 or visit [www.flrl.org](http://www.flrl.org). Countless couples who use NFP have found it to be a wonderful enrichment for their marriage.

**D. THE PLACE OF YOUR WEDDING:**

1. The proper place for a Catholic Wedding is the parish church. No other place has sacred meaning and importance for the spiritual life of the parishioners.
2. Under no circumstance is marriage permitted out-of doors or in restaurants, hotels, or country clubs. A wedding may only take place in a sacred place.
3. Permission may be obtained for marriage in a Catholic College Chapel if one of the parties is a student, alumnus or faculty member of the college.
4. If one party is a Non-Catholic, permission may be granted, if a sufficient reason exists, for the marriage to take place in another house of worship or according to the Rite of the Non-Catholic Religion. This request is made to the Archbishop directly. Your priest or deacon will help you make this request.
5. If the case of Catholic-Jewish weddings, special permission may be sought from the Archbishop for the wedding to be celebrated in another suitable place.

**E. NEW YORK STATE REQUIREMENTS:**

Marriage besides being a covenant of Christian Law is also a Civil Contract and so is subject to the Civil Law. The state will issue a license for each marriage performed. It is valid 24 hours after it is issued and then 60 days thereafter. Both of you must be present in order to apply for a license. The Marriage License Bureau of Spring Valley is located at:

264 North Main Street 2C  
Spring Valley, New York 10977  
Phone: 845-670-0248

Be sure to call before you to get information regarding the particulars involved (e.g. applicable fees, methods of payments, acceptable forms of identification and other requirements.) A marriage license may be obtained at other regional government offices in New York State, for example, town halls in Westchester County. You must bring the license to the wedding rehearsal or prior to the rehearsal so that it can be prepared for the required signatures.

**Please note that the wedding will not occur without a valid marriage license. All respective parties in the presence of the priest or deacon performing the marriage must sign the license.**

## 2. MARRIAGE AT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

### A. ELIGIBILITY:

One of the first questions to be asked is “are you a parishioner?” Church Law allows pastors and his delegates to officiate at marriage when either the bride or the groom is one of his own parishioners. You are a parishioners if:

1. You are a baptized Catholic and live within the parish boundaries.
2. You are a baptized Catholic and have registered and are a participating member of the parish for at least six months.
3. Your parents are registered members of the parish and you live with them.

Former residence in a parish does not make you a current member of the parish. If neither the bride nor the groom are parishioners, you will have to discuss this with the parish priest or deacon.

### B. ARRANGEMENT WITH THE CHURCH:

You need to set the date for your wedding.

**Before you make arrangements for a place to hold your reception, you must first meet with one of the clergymen of Saint Joseph Parish!**

When you initially meet with the priest or deacon, you most probably will be able to set a date and time for your wedding. At this initial interview you will be asked questions to determine your readiness for marriage (i.e. How old are you? Have you ever been married before? Where do you live?)

**We usually need at least six months to help you prepare for your wedding. Wedding dates will not be set over the phone.**

**C. TIMES FOR YOUR WEDDING:**

All times are subject to the parish schedule on a given day. We reserve them on a first come basis.

**Weddings usually take place Monday through Friday no later than 2:00 p.m. One Saturday after 11:00 a.m. and before 3:00 p.m. On Sunday after 3:00 p.m.**

Nuptial Masses offered on Saturday before 4:00 p.m. do not have the character of the anticipated liturgy of Sunday. Those attending a nuptial Mass on Saturday before 4:00 p.m. or a wedding ceremony on Sunday do not fulfill their Sunday obligation.

Weddings on the Fridays of Lent are strongly discouraged due to the penitential character of the season. Those who have a reception on a Friday of Lent must seek a dispensation if meat is to be consumed.

**D. PUNCTUALITY:**

Since the priest or deacon conducting the rehearsal and wedding will likely have other duties on the same day, appointment for rehearsals and weddings must be kept on time.

**Lateness in not fashionable, causes serious inconveniences and it is rude. Please be on time. Whatever time is booked, only one hour is allotted to complete the service.**

**Please note that late starts to the wedding liturgy will result in a significant shortening of or change of the rite. Excessive lateness may result in cancellation.**

**E. OFFICIANT:**

Weddings are witnessed by one of the parish priests or deacons. However, when the family has a relative or close friend who is a Catholic Clergyman and would like him to officiate at the weddings, he must seek permission at least three months in advance. Kindly advise him to write his willingness to the pastor so that proper delegation may be granted. Guest priests and deacons are responsible for respecting the method of celebration used at Saint Joseph Parish.

#### F. REHEARSALS:

You and the celebrant will set the date and time for the rehearsal. **The wedding party and any readers at the ceremony should be at the rehearsal.** Because we want to shield the couple from any embarrassing experiences, we do not encourage you to invite preschoolers to be part of the wedding party since the behavior of the children is so unpredictable. **The marriage license is to be brought at this time or prior to the rehearsal.**

#### G. FLOWERS / DECORATION

The architectural character of our church suggests simplicity in the decorations. Two arrangements for the sanctuary are sufficient. **Please inform your florist that adhesive tape, tacks or putty should not be used to affix decoration to the pews (it removes the finish). Elastic bands are permitted.** No arches of flowers are permitted in the sanctuary as they block the view of the altar. The use of flower petals to be thrown on Church property is strictly prohibited.

Runners are permitted. 75 feet is recommended.

Wedding flowers are to be left in the Church after the service. This is a customary practice. They will be part of the altar display for the weekend Masses.

**Failure to abide with these regulations may result in florist and decorators being asked to leave the premises.**

#### H. PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Pictures of the wedding are a wonderful keepsake. However, the photographers must consult with the celebrant before the ceremony for instruction. Good taste and reverence for the Church should be part of the wedding ceremony.

**It is requested that no pictures be taken during the reading of scriptures. This is so that people may more reflectively listen to the Word of God. During Nuptial Masses, pictures are not allowed from the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer to the conclusion of the Communion Rite.**

The use of floodlights is prohibited by the Fire Department. Please inform your video / photographer of this. Because the church is a sacred place and not a studio, photographs may not be taken after the ceremony within the Church. Photos may be taken outside the church provided that it does not interfere with other services being held in the Church.

**I. REVERENCE:**

Remember that the Church is the House of the Lord and the Blessed Sacrament is present in the tabernacle. **During the rehearsal and wedding, proper and reverent behavior is expected at all times. Gum chewing and loud talking is disrespectful in Church. Smoking or drinking of alcohol would be inappropriate anywhere on Church property. This includes a champagne toast outside the limousine and in front of the Church.**

**J. OFFERING**

The Church does not charge for the sacrament. However, elaborate wedding ceremonial costs the parish time and money. The following offering should be brought to the wedding rehearsal in the form of a check or money order made out to "Saint Joseph Church."

<p><b>Parishioner Fee - \$500</b> <b>Non-Parishioner Fee - \$550</b></p>
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This offering is made to the Church to defray the costs to the parish which include the fees for: sacristan, servers, lighting, air conditioning, heat, etc. The Music Director will bill you directly for the wedding music as contracted.

## K. LITURGICAL MUSIC

Music is an important part of our worship as Catholics. As you know, we take music very seriously here at Saint Joseph Parish. Our musicians are professional and will be able to help you with your musical needs.

Often requests are made for current popular songs of questionable liturgical value. A reading of their lyrics will often reveal that they in no way refer to the sacred aspect of marriage. All music at the wedding liturgy should reflect the reverence and dignity befitting the Sacred Liturgy. A song, which has no relationship to the liturgy, has no place in the wedding celebration. Music from secular sources, (Broadway, Pop Songs, etc.) dealing with love and marriage would be more effectively used outside the religious celebration.

**All requests for music at your wedding must be discussed with and approved by, the Director of Music and the celebrant.**

The parish Director of Music / Organist will work with you to plan your wedding music. He works on a contract basis and is the only authorized organist to perform at Saint Joseph. **If you wish to retain the services of another organist, with the permission of the Director of Music, a bench fee will be issued.** The music director works with many talented cantors, soloists and instrumentalists who are available to enhance your wedding music. Please make an appointment to meet with him as soon as possible to discuss your music plans, options and music fees. Billing and payment for all wedding music is handled by the Office of Sacred Music. Please contact him at [sacredmusic@stjosephspringvalley.org](mailto:sacredmusic@stjosephspringvalley.org) or via telephone at 845-356-0311 for fees and appointment times to select your music.

## L. PLANNING THE LITURGY

Whichever marriage preparation courses you attend, you will receive a copy of *Partner for Life and Love*. This book will help you learn more about the commitment you are about to make. It contains the options for scriptural readings you can choose for your wedding. In the back of the book there is a work sheet on which you can write down your choices. You are asked to fill out this form, tear it out and give it to the priest or deacon.

#### M. RECEIVING LINES / LAST NOTE

It is possible to do this in the lobby of on the front plaza of the Church.

**The throwing of rice, bird seed, flower petals or confetti creates litter and hazards. Also, the use of rice, which is a food, is an insult to the poor and starving throughout the world. Please advise your guests of this matter.**

**We have found it necessary to remind families that alcohol of any type is NOT permitted to be used on Church Property. Littering is reprehensible anywhere and is especially so on Church Property.**

### 3. SPECIAL SITUATIONS

There are some circumstances which may not apply to you but it is important for us to mention them. In these circumstances, we may not be able to set a date for your wedding right away.

#### 1. PREVIOUS MARRIAGES:

If either of you has been married before in manner recognized by the Church Law, we can refer you to the Marriage Tribunal for possible annulment of your previous marriage.

#### 2. COHABITATION:

Our faith does not approve of “living together” before marriage. **It is reasonable to request that couples who wish their parish community to sponsor a big public ceremony must publicly respect Catholic moral standards.** Unless you are willing to separate, a small private wedding ceremony may be more appropriate for you.

**3. TEENAGE MARRIAGES:**

The Church generally discourages teenage marriages. If you are a teen, we cannot witness your marriage unless we talk with the parents of both and get their consent. Ordinarily, teens are referred to the Family Consultation Service of the Archdioceses for evaluation. This helps you determine whether you are mature enough to handle the responsibility of marriage.

**4. PREGNANCY:**

We are especially cautious when pregnancy complicates the engagement. Pregnancy is never a reason for you to rush into marriage. In this case, The Family Consultation Service of the Archdioceses, or a similar agency, can help couples make good decisions.

**5. PSYCHOLOGICAL MATURITY**

As Catholics, we understand that the decision to marry may well be the most important step you will make in your entire life. This is especially the case when we consider the fact that “marriage is for life.” After speaking with you, the priest or deacon may have doubts about your readiness to enter into a lifelong commitment. He may ask you to speak to a counselor from The Family Consultation Service of the Archdiocese, to help you to assess your readiness and to make the right decision.

**6. NON - PRACTICING CATHOLICS:**

If you were baptized in the Catholic Church, but no longer choose to exercise the right and duty of membership in the church, particularly the right and duty of participating in the Sunday worship of the Catholic community, you pose a special problem for this parish in terms of your readiness for the Sacrament of Marriage. This is because your lack of participation in the life of the Church may suggest a loss of faith. We will do our best to help you remedy this situation where it exists. Such conditions may affect the length of your preparation and the type of liturgy that may be appropriate.

## **7. CONVALIDATION:**

Because the Church does not accept the validity of a civil ceremony for Catholics who are obliged to be married in a Catholic Church, we congratulate those couples who chose to have their love for each other blessed by the Church with a sacramental bond. In such a case, though the couple does not normally need to obtain another civil license, they will be asked to go through the preparation for a couple getting married, including the Marriage Preparation Program.

### **A FINAL WORD**

**M**ost couples will spend close to one hundred hours planning their wedding while spending only eight hours planning their wedded life together. Perhaps the best way to prepare for sharing a wedded life together is to come to Church and to receive Holy Communion together. Do not forget confession during your engagement.

**T**he Lord has a special way of blessing engaged couples. Plan plenty of discussion time. Your engagement is license to ask one another difficult questions. Talk with happily married couples; they are the best teachers. Learn as much as you can about the importance of feelings in your relationship, and pray! A family that prays together stays together.

## THE SCHEDULE OF YOUR MARRIAGE PREPARATION

### **I. The Initial Meeting (Before you book the Hall)**

1. Just bring yourself and your fiancé.
2. Set the date.
3. You are told what paperwork you will need.
4. Homework for next time:
  - a. Sign up for and go to Marriage Preparation
  - b. Get all the documents and certificates.
  - c. Watch the DVD: *The Vocation of Marriage*
  - d. Come to Church together every Sunday!

### **II. The Second Meeting (Immediately after Marriage Prep.)**

1. Bring all paperwork (fill out dispensation if needed).
2. Discuss the DVD and Marriage Preparation.
3. Homework for next time:
  - a. Listen to the tape of Dr. Janet Smith
  - b. Prepare the last page of *Partner in Life and Love*
  - c. Register for and begin the NFP Class.
  - d. Contact the Director of Music.
  - e. Come to Church together every Sunday.

### **III. The Third Meeting (At least one month before wedding day.)**

1. Discuss Dr. Smith's Tape.
2. Set the rehearsal date.
3. Finalize the choices for the wedding.
4. Take the Pre-Matrimonial Investigation (PMI)
5. Homework for next time:
  - a. Obtain Wedding License
  - b. Come to Church together every Sunday

### **IV. The Wedding Rehearsal**

1. All participants arrive on time.
2. Bring the offering for the Church.
3. Bring the Wedding License.
4. Confession heard after rehearsal.

### **V. The Wedding Day**

May God Be With You and God Bless You!

## SUMMARY CHECK LIST

### DO YOU HAVE.....

- New certificates of Baptism for Catholics or proof of Baptism by letter or certificate for Non-Catholics.
- Record of First Communion and Confirmation
- Letter of freedom after the publication of Banns for Catholics or for Non-Catholics, proof by sworn declarations of freedom to marry by parents or close relatives.
- Letter of permission from your Pastor (s) if neither party is a parishioner of Saint Joseph.
- Parental permission in the form of a notarized letter if you are under age 21.
- Attendance certificate from Marriage Preparation.
- Declaration of Nullity Application (if needed) and offering.
- Dispensation Application if needed and offering.
- Complete “Partner in Life and Love” workbook.
- Attendance certificate in NFP course.
- Wedding License.
- Ceremony and reading selections for the wedding written down on the worksheet from “Partners in Life and Love”.
- Meet with the Music Director to select music.
- Offering for Church brought to rehearsal.
- Music fee for the Director of Music.