

# Marriage Procedures

## Congratulations!

Congratulations on your anticipated marriage in the Catholic Church! This information is intended to help you in your preparation for a joyous and holy celebration of marriage.

The process of marriage preparation should begin once you are engaged, ideally at least 1 year before the desired wedding date. The minimum time ordinarily needed to fulfill the following requirements is nine months.

### A. Marriage Information Meeting

To begin the process, please contact St. Benedict Church to schedule a meeting with one of the priests. At this meeting, the priest will discuss with you the marriage preparation process and will provide you with the information you will need for completion. Setting a schedule to complete the individual components during or shortly after this meeting is strongly advised.

- 1. Prior Marriages:** If you were previously married in any religious or civil ceremony and were divorced, please let the priest know. All issues related to any prior marriages and civil divorce must be settled before beginning the process of marriage preparation and may delay the marriage preparation process.
- 2. Prenuptial Inquiry:** At your meeting with the priest, you will each be interviewed separately to complete the Prenuptial Inquiry form.
- 3. Inventory:** You are joining together two lives with different experiences, family histories, and relational platforms. As a result, you may have different expectations for married life. The marriage prep inventory (FOCCUS) provides a closer look at essential topics you may or may not have discussed. After your meeting you each will be emailed the FOCCUS Inventory to complete and submit. The inventory is a series of questions designed to assist dialogue with your fiancé regarding goals, habits, expectations, and values. Your answers are then assessed, and a personalized profile is generated with your relationship's strengths and weaknesses. The inventory is an important starting point for couple discussion and offers a map of what issues need further consideration, time, attention and/or problem-solving. Completing the inventory usually takes 1-2 hours. Afterwards, you will meet with a mentor couple or priest trained to explore your results.
- 4. "Together For Life":** You will be given a *Together For Life* booklet to help you plan your wedding. It holds information on Readings selections and more.

Keep this booklet safe because you will return the completed last page to the priest helping you complete the Marriage Prep.

- 5. Paperwork:** Finally, the last part of your appointment will be to acknowledge and sign the St. Benedict Wedding Guidelines, Contract Agreement and Wedding Fees documents. Payment of the \$100 deposit is done at this time.

## B. Documents and Offerings

The following documents and offerings are required.

- **Catholic Baptism:** For all Catholics, a new baptism certificate issued within the last 6 months must be provided. You need to contact your church of baptism to receive this. The authentic certificate must be submitted to the parish. Photocopies or faxes are not accepted.
- **Proof of Sacraments Received:** First Eucharist and Confirmation.
- **Non-Catholic Proof of Baptism:** For baptized non-Catholics, any proof of baptism may take the form of, in order of preference, a baptismal certificate, a page copied from a sacramental register, and affidavit of the fact of baptism by a parent or other witness, or some other reliable proof.
- **Affidavits of Freedom to Marry:** An affidavit of freedom to marry is required for each of you. The forms will be given to you during your initial meeting with the priest. The form is completed by a parent, close relative, or, if necessary, another person who has known you at least since the age of 16. It needs to be notarized by a priest, deacon or public notary.
- **Certificate of Death or Declaration of Nullity:** A certificate of death or ecclesiastical declaration of nullity is required for each prior marriage (religious or civil), if any.
- **Offering:** Wedding offerings cover the hard costs of a wedding ceremony here at St. Benedict Church. *Please note: No couple is denied a Catholic marriage or preparation for a Catholic marriage due to poverty. If the offering to the church creates a hardship, please discuss this with the priest preparing you for marriage.*

The suggested wedding offering is approximately \$750, which includes: Pre-Marital Inventory, Wedding Planning document, Wedding Coordinator, Cantor/Pianist, *Together for Life* book, and facility fees. Couples may give a separate offering/gift to the priest the day of the wedding.

To confirm the date of the wedding, couples will need to make a deposit. The balance of the wedding offering is due no later than 1 month prior to the wedding. (If you later decide not to get married, the offering already paid will be refunded less the cost of materials already received.)

For those couples intending to marry at another parish and are only preparing at St. Benedict Church there is a suggested offering of \$200 per couple. The suggested offering includes: Pre-Marital Inventory, Wedding Planning document, *Together for Life* book, and parish expenses associated with marriage preparation.

**Important:** All canonical documents, marriage license and certificates, wedding planner, music selections and offering must be received in the parish office no later than 2 weeks prior to the wedding.

## Marriage Life-Skills Workshop

You, as a couple, are required to take one of the two classes listed below:

- **Love for Life Engaged Weekend:** This is a diocesan engaged weekend and takes place at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in downtown Phoenix. The class will begin on a Friday night and continue all day Saturday. Guided by expert presenters with a wide variety of experience, this weekend provides a comprehensive opportunity for you, as a couple, to focus on your relationship and to enter into honest dialogue with each other.
- *Information can be found at [phxmarriageprep.org](http://phxmarriageprep.org)*

## Additional Required Courses

Along with your Marriage Life Skills Workshop selection, you will also be asked to take both of the following courses listed below as a couple:

- **God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage:** This course is available in many different parishes. It offers engaged couples a refreshing, liberating vision of marriage and sexuality. It takes place one single Saturday or can be divided into two weeknight sessions.
- **Natural Family Planning:** To ensure you have the tools to plan your family effectively and in line with God's plan, you will have the opportunity to learn about Natural Family Planning by taking a full course in an approved NFP method. Classes are offered throughout the diocese in over 30 locations.
- *Information for both of these can be found at [phxmarriageprep.org](http://phxmarriageprep.org)*

## C. Frequently Asked Questions

Planning a wedding is a once in a lifetime experience and there are often many questions regarding the "how to" of it all. The following may put your mind at ease in planning this wonderful event.

1. **When can we schedule our wedding date?** A tentative date and time may be scheduled at your first marriage appointment with the priest.
2. **What days and times can weddings take place?** Weddings are typically celebrated on Saturdays at 10 am or 1 pm. Other days of the week are permitted, providing that both the church and priest are available.
3. **Are there any days that weddings are not permitted?** In the Diocese of Phoenix, weddings are not permitted on Sundays. Also, the Universal Church prohibits weddings on any Holy Day of Obligation, the Feast of All Souls Day (November 2), and during Lent.
4. **What time are we able to get into the church?** The church is available one hour before your scheduled wedding time, and one-half hour after the wedding ends. Outside vendors will not have access to the church before this time unless previously scheduled with the Parish Wedding Coordinator. We ask that your entire bridal party arrive no later than 45 minutes before the scheduled ceremony time. You are welcome to take pictures before, during, and after the wedding. Please review and share with your photographers/videographers the *St. Benedict Catholic Church Photographer/Videographer Guidelines*.
5. **Who will or can preside at our wedding?** We have two priests available at St. Benedict. Guest priests are welcome at the parish to help celebrate your special day; however, they will need to provide a Celebrant Letter.
6. **Will our ceremony be a Mass?** If both the bride and the groom are Catholic and the Eucharist is meaningful to them, celebrating a marriage within a Mass is recommended since the Eucharist is our main sign of unity. The entire liturgy will be approximately one hour in length.
  - a. If either the bride or the groom is not Catholic, it is recommended that the marriage be celebrated without a Mass. Without Communion the entire liturgy will be approximately thirty minutes in length.
7. **Who will help plan the liturgy?** The parish Wedding Coordinator will assist you in planning the details of the liturgy using the "Together for Life" booklet you received at your first meeting with the priest. Plan to meet with the Wedding Coordinator at least four weeks prior to your wedding.

8. **Can we write our own vows?** Some couples like to write their own vows; however, canon law of the Catholic Church does not permit an option for self-written vows.
9. **What about wedding customs?** Flowers to the Blessed Mother is a practice that serves as a personal religious devotion. It consists of presenting flowers to the statue of Our Blessed Mother. The couple silently asks Mary to remain close to them throughout their marriage. This custom is optional. Unity candles are permitted but are not considered a Catholic custom.
10. **How do we select Scripture readings and who should read them?** The recommended readings can be found in the book "Together for Life" and are the readings most appropriate for this liturgy. The Word of God should be the primary message which is proclaimed in the liturgy and should precede any other choice in regards to music, prayers and other details.
- a. You need to select three Readings for your wedding: one from the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures, one from the New Testament/Christian Scriptures, and one from the Gospels in the New Testament. When you have made your Scripture selections, select two wedding guests, one to read each of the first two Scriptures. The priest will read the Gospel. If you are having a Mass, the readers must be Catholic. Also, select one person to read the Prayers of the Faithful. The person reading the Prayers of the Faithful does not have to be Catholic. Please remember when selecting readers that it is best to choose people who read clearly and distinctly, who can project their voice, and who are not afraid of a microphone.
  - b. Give all the readers a copy of their Reading well in advance so they can practice. Please consider selecting readers who can attend the wedding rehearsal so that they may practice in the actual space with the sound system. If you are having a Wedding Mass, you will also need two people to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine. The gift bearers do not have to be Catholic.
11. **What kind of music can we have?** You will need to meet with the parish Music Director/Coordinator at least 1 month prior to the wedding date to select the music. The music must be liturgical in nature or instrumental. Even if you choose to bring in outside musicians (string quartets, other liturgical musicians, etc.) you must still meet with the Music Director/Coordinator to have them approved.

12. **Are flowers, rice, pew bows and runners permitted?** Rice is NOT permitted at any time. You are welcome to bring flowers to decorate the church, and please know you will need to take them with you following the ceremony. (Exception: flowers offered to Mary.) Flower girls may not drop flower petals, real or artificial, at any time. Your bridal party is welcome to carry flowers all year. You may use pew bows, but please do not use tape to attach them. If you or your florist have questions as to how to attach them, please ask the Wedding Coordinator so as not to damage the chairs. Aisle runners are not permitted.
13. **Who should be included in our bridal party?** The size of your bridal party is up to you. The Catholic Church does require that you have two witnesses present. These witnesses should be at least 18 years of age, do not have to be Catholic, and are required by the State of Arizona to sign the marriage license. . The State of Arizona requires that two witnesses sign the marriage license and must be at least 18 years of age.
14. **When do I get the Marriage License?** You should plan to apply for your Marriage License a month before your wedding date. Go to a Clerk of the Superior Court office or some authorized justice court to start this process.

## What Costs Can We Expect?

Facility/Marriage Prep: (Payable to St. Benedict Church)	\$100 deposit <u>\$250</u> \$350 total
Presider(s): (Payable to appropriate person)	Discretionary Suggested: \$100
Wedding Coordinator: (Payable to appropriate person)	\$150
Music Coordinator: (Payable to appropriate person)	\$150
*(Optional) Sound Technician: (Payable to appropriate person)	\$100

\*Musicians from outside the parish must have a parish-approved Sound Technician.

## **Wedding Preparation Checklist**

1. Meet with the Priest
2. Complete Marriage Prep Inventory (FOCCUS)
3. Meeting to Review FOCCUS outcome (possibly two meetings)
4. Return all required documents:  
     (Current Baptismal Certificates, proof of Sacraments received, other documentation)
5. Register/Complete Marriage Prep Classes, get certificates
6. Follow-up Meeting with Priest after Courses are completed (Receive Affidavits of Free Status forms to have completed, returned and filed)
7. Meet with Wedding Coordinator to plan Liturgy (Readings, vows and special customs)
8. Meet with Music Coordinator (Plan music)
9. Final meeting with presiding Priest
10. Get Marriage License
11. Go to Reconciliation
12. Wedding Rehearsal
13. Wedding Day!

### **Parish Contacts**

Fr. Manasseh Iorchir, VC, 480.961.1610 ext. 302, [frmanasseh@stbenedict.org](mailto:frmanasseh@stbenedict.org)

Fr. Emmanuel Ogla, VC 480.961.1610 ext. 306, [fremmanuel@stbenedict.org](mailto:fremmanuel@stbenedict.org)

Wedding Coord: Debbie Brines, 209.663.9405, [drabel@asu.edu](mailto:drabel@asu.edu)

Music Coord: Phil Arkfeld, 480.961.1610 ext. 311, [parkfeld@stbenedict.org](mailto:parkfeld@stbenedict.org)