

# *Marriage is a Sacrament*

A Sacrament is an outward sign of an interior grace instituted by God. *The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1799).*

## *Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix Marriage Preparation Requirements*

**In order to be married in the Catholic Church, at least one of you must be a baptized Catholic.**

In the Diocese of Phoenix, the marriage preparation process takes at least nine months – in some cases the prenuptial process may take additional time. This is a time of great joy; it is also a time of planning and preparation. That is why the Church, in her great wisdom, asks the couple to use this time to slow down and spend time preparing for this beautiful sacrament – to grow in your relationship with God and with each other. During this process you will have multiple opportunities to work with the pastor and/or the marriage coordinator who will guide you through the process.

**What documents are required for marriage preparation in the Diocese of Phoenix?**

1. A newly issued baptismal certificate **with notations**. *Please begin contacting your baptismal parish early in the process, these documents tend to take a while to receive, and they must be received 90 days prior to the wedding.*
2. Prenuptial Inquiry. *This will be completed in your first meeting with the pastor.*
3. Affidavits of Free Status. *Documents signed by your friends and family stating your freedom to marry – 2 affidavits for each.*
4. Arizona Marriage License. *This should be attained in the county where you will be married. It will be given to you blank with only your names typed. The license should be given to the pastor a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the wedding. (Out of state weddings do not need to acquire an Arizona license).*
5. Signed copies of the parish policy agreement packet.
6. Other documents on an individual basis.
  - a. Copy of your civil marriage license (civilly married couples only)
  - b. Nullity decree (if one or both parties were previously married)
  - c. Death Certificate (if you were previously married and your spouse is deceased)
  - d. Dispensations
    - i. Mixed-Marriage allows a baptized Catholic to marry a baptized person from another religion.
    - ii. Disparity of Cult allows a baptized Catholic to marry a non-baptized person.

# *Mater Misericordiae Marriage Guidelines*

The highpoint of your wedding day will be the nuptial rite, where the bride and groom become husband and wife in the lifelong covenant of marriage. Thoughtful, prayerful participation in the marriage process and wedding preparations will bring many blessings to your married life.

## **What does the marriage preparation process involve?**

**Step One:** Meet with the Pastor to complete the Prenuptial Inquiry. *This will include questions about you, your freedom to marry, and your intentions. You will each be interviewed alone, so that you may answer freely. Under no circumstances will the form be shared with the other.*

**Step Two:** Meet with office staff to review and sign Marriage Policy immediately following Prenuptial Inquiry.

**Step Three:** FOCCUS Pre-Marital Inventory. *This inventory asks a series of questions to assess your habits, expectations, and values. It provides a personalized profile of the strengths and weaknesses – an important starting place for couple discussions, and road map for areas that may need affirmation, attention, or problem solving.*

**Focus Review with your mentor couple.** *Two to three sessions with your FOCCUS mentor couple to help you navigate the results of your FOCCUS inventory.*

**Step Four:** Plan your wedding, choose your wedding date and location.

1. *A non-refundable deposit will be used to secure your wedding date. This deposit will go toward the total cost of your wedding. Please provide the parish office with 2-3 dates; we will do our best to accommodate your wishes while also ensuring there will be no conflicts with feast days.*
2. *We have two churches within our one parish community! You may choose to have your nuptials at either Mater Misericordiae or St. Edward the Confessor. Please note that any weddings that will have more than 150 guests will be limited to St. Edward the Confessor.*

**Step Five:** Attend marriage preparation classes.

1. **God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage:** *This class is based on St. John Paul II "Theology of the Body". This class is designed to inform you not only of the Church's teachings on marriage and sexuality, but also why the church teaches it. This class will also serve as your introduction to Natural Family Planning.*
2. **Natural Family Planning (NFP):** *This class has 4 sessions and will ensure that you have the tools to effectively plan your family in accordance with God's plan for your marriage. This class will be taken AFTER God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage.*
3. **Married Life Skills:** *One of our priests will walk you through an encyclical on marriage by Pope Pius XI [vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19301231\\_casti-connubii.html](http://vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html) and Three to Get Married, by Venerable Fulton Sheen [ewtn.com/catholicism/library/three-to-get-married-11222](http://ewtn.com/catholicism/library/three-to-get-married-11222)*  
***These classes should be completed at least two months prior to the wedding, and after the FOCCUS.***

**Step Six:** Planning your music and flowers.

*All music will be provided by our musical director. Musical selections and information can be found at [cantatorium.com/weddings](http://cantatorium.com/weddings)*

*The parish will provide live flower arrangements for the altar with the color specified by the couple. We cannot guarantee a particular kind of flower but will do our best to provide the color you have requested.*

**Step Seven:** Ensure all classes are complete and paperwork has been received. *The nuptial ceremony and liturgy readings will be determined by the day and are not subject to change.*

**Communication:** All arrangements and details will be discussed solely with the bride and groom. This will ensure that we have continuity and limit miscommunications.

**Setting the date:** When selecting your date, please allow sufficient time to complete all requirements – remember the diocesan requirement is **nine months or more** for marriage preparation, beginning at the completion of your Prenuptial Inquiry (PNI). Weddings typically take place at Mater on Saturdays at 3:30pm. We may be able to accommodate earlier wedding times at St. Edward. When choosing your dates, please be aware that we are unable to schedule weddings on certain feast days.

*The date of the wedding can be set following the completion of the first FOCCUS review meeting and requires that the couple sign the Marriage Policy Agreement Policy and submit the non-refundable deposit.*

*Make sure you schedule your wedding time and date before reserving your reception or printing invitations. The office staff will email the Marriage Policy Agreement Packet for you to review prior to your PNI appointment.*

**The Rehearsal:** Rehearsals are scheduled the day prior to the wedding at 4:30, with time for the bride and groom to receive Reconciliation 30 minutes prior – according to church availability.

**Music:** The Director of Music at Mater Misericordiæ, Patrick Williams, will serve as the organist and principal musician at all weddings. It is policy that Mr. Williams be engaged for all weddings where music will be offered. Not only is Mr. Williams a highly trained musician, but he is also well versed in the liturgical norms of the parish and will be able to guide you in choosing music appropriate to your wedding. All music selections and policies can be found at [cantatorium.com/weddings](http://cantatorium.com/weddings).

**Flowers and Décor:** The parish will provide live flower arrangements for the altar with the color specified by the couple. These flowers will remain in the Church for the Sunday Masses. There is a fee for this service. The couple may elect to use the flowers that are already present on the altar – in this case, there will be no floral fee.

No existing decorations, flowers, or furnishings may ever be moved or removed. Similarly, no decorations, bows, ribbons, etc., may be attached to the pews or walls within the church.

*Note: During the Christmas and Easter seasons, the church is already festively decorated.*

**Photography and Videography:** We understand the importance of capturing your wedding on film and/or video. Please remember, however, that the focus of the day is on the Sacrament. Every attempt should be made by the couple, their guests, and any professionals to be respectful and discrete.

During the celebration of the nuptial ceremony and Mass, stationery equipment may be set up in designated areas. Under no circumstances are photographers or videographers permitted to enter the sanctuary. Photographers and videographers are only permitted on the main floor of the church and are not permitted in the choir loft, nor are they permitted access to the church sound system. At no time should the photographer/videographer be on the sanctuary (behind the altar rails). Flash photography is not permitted during the ceremony. Couples and their photographer/videographer must sign the Photography and Video Agreement in the Couples Policy Agreement Packet and submit to the parish no later than 2 weeks prior to the ceremony.

**Mater Misericordiæ and St. Edward the Confessor Churches:** Both churches are sacred spaces designated for prayer and worship. Although weddings are joyful celebrations, proper reverence and respect must be maintained at all times. Loud talking and unnecessary noise which might disturb the prayer of others should be avoided.

In order to maintain the reverence of our sacred space it is important to always abide by the following policies:

1. No food or drink of any kind may be brought into the church.
2. Smoking and chewing gum are not permitted.
3. We cannot accommodate aisle runners, door hangers, or pew bows.
4. Flowers may not be dropped on the ground inside or outside the church. ***This includes flower petals real or otherwise.***
5. Candy, food of any kind, or other memorial gifts may not be distributed to guests inside or outside of the church.
6. The use of alcohol in or around the church is not permitted.
7. Please refrain from clapping and loud celebration inside the church.

Couples are asked to please inform guests of these policies.

*It is the couple's responsibility to communicate what guidelines are in all aspects of the ceremony. It is in everyone's best interest that there be no "surprises" at the rehearsal or on the day of the wedding.*

**Attire:** What may be proper and tasteful attire in the secular world may not be appropriate for a wedding that takes place in front of the Tabernacle of Our Lord. Plunging necklines, bare shoulders, bare backs, short skirts and high slits are **PROHIBITED**. If the bride or bridesmaids will be wearing dresses with plunging necklines or bare shoulders, please wear a shrug/shawl/jacket while in the church. **A member of the parish staff must approve all wedding attire in advance. If any member of the wedding party arrives to the wedding dressed inappropriately the wedding will be cancelled.**

We cannot guarantee that we will have dressing rooms available, so the wedding party should arrive dressed and ready for the wedding.

**Cultural Aspects:** For a Catholic wedding, the essential and most important rituals are those that are required by the Catholic Church. According to Catholic sacramental theology, the most important aspect of the rite of marriage is the mutual consent given at the time of the exchange of vows and rings.

When requested at least 30 days prior to the ceremony, other cultural or religious traditions such as flowers given to Our Blessed Mother, the placing of the veil around the couple, the giving of arras, and the placing of the wedding lasso are permitted. But no other part of the wedding must eclipse this most holy of rituals that defines the sacrament.

The "Unity Candle" is not permitted during the wedding ceremony. It is not, and never has been, part of the rite of marriage in the Catholic Church. Your unity is shown publicly in the sacrament on your wedding day.

Please advise you're the parish office a minimum of 30 days prior to your ceremony if, and which, cultural aspects you would like to add to your ceremony. Please also advise your coordinator at this time if you will be adding padrinos, grandparents, and/or other important people to the procession.

**Wedding Rehearsal:** All aspects of the wedding rehearsal and ceremony will be overseen by our parish wedding coordinators; in most circumstances, this will be your FOCCUS mentor couple. We do not allow outside wedding consultants to participate in the church aspects of your wedding day.

Regular parish activities and schedules require that rehearsals begin promptly at the scheduled time. Please ensure that all involved in the Rite of Marriage – bride and groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, parents of the bride and groom – should plan to arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of the rehearsal. Couples are encouraged to instruct the wedding party of proper church behavior and attire.

**The Nuptial Ceremony:** Everyone in the wedding party, including the bride and groom, are encouraged to arrive at the church one hour prior to the scheduled start of the wedding. Please be aware of other events happening around town and plan for traffic.

Couples may have the option to participate in the rite of marriage either in the sanctuary (within the altar rails – at Mater only) or in the nave (outside the altar rails). They will remain in this position throughout the marriage rite and the Mass following. The first two rows of pews will be reserved for the remainder of the wedding party.

**Marriage Prep Out of Parish:** If neither of the couple is a parishioner of Mater Misericordiæ but is a registered parishioner in another parish within the diocese, we require said couples to complete all marriage prep through their home parish.

If completing marriage preparation out of state/diocese, please allow for 60 days for the prenuptial file to be sent between the home diocese and the Diocese of Phoenix. Couples prepared out of state/parish will be required to complete the following in order to secure a wedding date at Mater Misericordiæ or St. Edward the Confessor.

1. Email [marriage@phoenixlatinmass.org](mailto:marriage@phoenixlatinmass.org) for initial introduction and to determine if the chosen date is available.
2. Thoroughly read through the Marriage Policy and contact the parish office with any questions.
3. Provide a letter from the pastor of your home parish stating that marriage prep has begun, you are free to marry and have been given permission to marry at Mater Misericordiæ.
4. Once the letter has been received, the couple will be asked to sign the Marriage Policy agreement and submit the non-refundable deposit.
5. Contact Mr. Patrick Williams at least one month prior to the wedding to plan music. [cantatorium.com/weddings](http://cantatorium.com/weddings)

At all times, arrangements and details are discussed exclusively with the couple. Outside wedding consultants, parents, and siblings are advised to refer all matters to the couple preparing the marriage. This will ensure that we have continuity and limit miscommunication.

**Marriage Prep Only:** Couples who will be getting married in another diocese and seek only Marriage Prep from Mater Misericordiæ are required to fulfill the Diocese of Phoenix required preparation (minimum of nine months).

The Marriage Prep Only fee for Mater is due prior to the first FOCCUS meeting. The couple will need to:

1. Contact the parish office to set up a meeting to begin the marriage preparation requirements.
2. Provide the following information:
  - a. Scheduled date of marriage
  - b. Name and address of the church where the wedding will take place.
  - c. Name and contact information for the priest who will be receiving the vows.
  - d. Name and contact information for the marriage prep coordinator at the parish where the wedding is to take place.

Please allow extra time to complete all requirements to ensure that the prenuptial file may be properly sent through the required channels between the Diocese of Phoenix and the diocese where the wedding will take place. Couples are required to fulfill the marriage prep process laid out by the Diocese of Phoenix, to include the nine-month timeline, regardless of where the wedding will take place.

**Unregistered Couples:** Because sacraments are community celebrations, they are normally celebrated in the church where the person is registered and attending. Those seeking to be married here who are not registered parishioners are welcome to be married here but must first receive the permission of their home parish pastor in writing and must complete their marriage prep at their home parish.

**Fees:** All fees must be paid in **cash** by the due dates outlined below.

**Here is the fee schedule:**

FEES	AMOUNT		DUE DATE
	REGISTERED PARISHIONER	UNREGISTERED COUPLES	
Non refundable deposit will be applied toward Church Fees	\$250	\$250	At time of booking.
Church Fees	\$700	\$850	60 days before wedding date.
Sacred Music	<b>Options include but are not limited to:</b> Organist only: \$250 Organist & Schola: \$350-\$570 Organist, Schola, & Chior: \$720-\$1,355		30 days before wedding date.
Wedding Coordinator	\$100	\$100	60 days before wedding date.
<b>Altar Servers</b> 4-for High Mass 2-for Low Mass	\$50 per server	\$50 per server	60 days before wedding date.
Flowers (Optional)	\$300	\$300	60 days before wedding date.
Marriage Prep Only	\$250	\$250	Prior to receiving FOCCUS assessment link.

# *Mater Misericordiae Marriage Policy Acknowledgement Packet*

By signing this document, we acknowledge that we have received, read, and understand the wedding policies at Mater Misericordiae Parish. We agree to abide by these policies and to comply with all requirements. Email the signed document to the Marriage Prep Coordinator to include in your file. Violation of these policies may result in the cancellation or postponement of your wedding.

Groom's Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Groom's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Special Notations or Comments:**

# Mater Misericordiae Photography and Video Guidelines

Due to the sacramental nature of the wedding ceremony, photographers and video technicians must be respectful and must be discrete during the ceremony so as not to disrupt the prayerfulness of the event. The following guidelines are enforced by Mater Misericordiae Parish. All aspects of the ceremony are facilitated by the parish coordinator assigned to the couple. Any directions and/or warnings should be followed at all times. The sacredness of this sacrament is first and foremost upheld at all times.

## **Regarding Reverence**

- At all times the sacredness of the church and the surrounding areas must be respected.
- No loud talking; speak softly in the church.
- Photographers are asked to use discretion in setting up photographs.

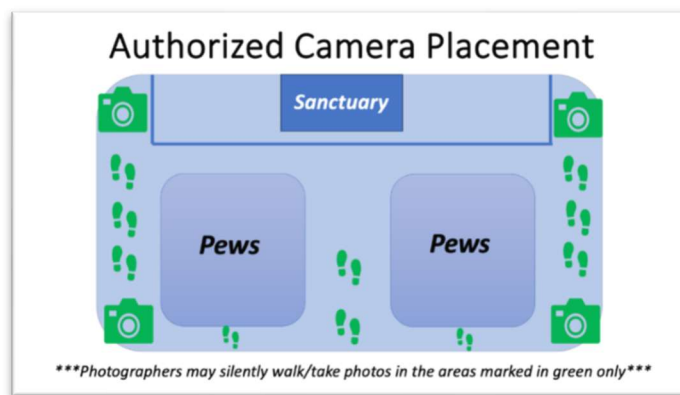
## **Before the Wedding Ceremony**

- Photos are permitted one hour before the wedding in the rear of the church or outside.
- Photos may not be taken at the altar before the ceremony.

## **During the Wedding Ceremony**

- No flash photography is permitted in the church as it disrupts prayer.
- During the ceremony, photos may be taken from the side aisles, or other areas designated on the map provided.
- At no time are you allowed to stand, kneel, or place a tripod in the sanctuary or altar area.
- Please do not block the aisles.
- The photographer may not step into the aisle during the procession to or from the altar area unless he/she is at the back of the church.
- The videographer must confer with the wedding coordinator as to the proper location for filming.
- Access to the choir loft is not permitted.
- In order to maintain a sense of reverence, and avoid distraction, please refrain from walking about the church.

**After the Wedding Ceremony:** Photos of the signing of the wedding certificate will be taken in the sacristy. (Flash may be used at this time). Photos may be taken in front of the altar (Flash may be used at this time.)



**Please submit this signed agreement at least 30 days prior to the wedding date**

Signature of Photographer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Bride \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Groom \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# *Mater Misericordiae Marriage Preparation Checklist*

## Introduction:

- Notification to marry – Note the date the office was contacted.
- Complete and return the Marriage Prep intake form.
- Complete Pre-Nuptial Inquiry with Father.
- Sign Marriage Policy Agreement Packet.

## Week 1:

- Complete FOCCUS inventory; schedule meeting with marriage coordinators.
- Send out Affidavits of Free Status for both bride and groom – two each.
- Register for God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage [phxmarriageprep.org](http://phxmarriageprep.org)

## Weeks 3-4:

- First FOCCUS review meeting with marriage prep coordinators.
- Non-refundable deposit, to be applied toward wedding fees.
- Contact parish with two desired wedding dates, location, and celebrant.
- Submit Affidavits of Free Status (2 each).

## Months 2-6:

- Obtain a **newly issued** baptismal certificate **with notations**.
- Register for Natural Family Planning, to be taken after completion of God's Plan.
- Read *Three to Get Married* [ewtn.com/catholicism/library/three-to-get-married-11222](http://ewtn.com/catholicism/library/three-to-get-married-11222) and *Casti Connubii* [vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19301231\\_casti-connubii.html](http://vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html) in preparation for Married Life Skills Class.
- Register for Marriage Life Skills classes; to be taken after FOCCUS sessions completed.

## 2-3 Months Prior to Your Wedding:

- Submit newly Issued Baptismal Certificate.
- Contact with Patrick to arrange music [cantatorium.com/weddings](http://cantatorium.com/weddings)

## 1-2 Months Prior to Your Wedding:

- Complete all Classes and submit certificates.
- Confirm wedding details with coordinator – music, flowers, bride's room.
- Balance of wedding fees paid in full 30 days prior to wedding date.
- Turn in marriage license to marriage prep coordinator 2 weeks prior to wedding.

# *Notes*