

# **WE'RE GETTING MARRIED!**

## **WHAT DO WE DO?**

"No greater blessing can come to your married life than pure conjugal love, loyal and true to the end. May, then, this love with which you join your hands and hearts today never fail, but grow deeper and stronger as the years go on. And if true love and the unselfish spirit of perfect sacrifice guide your every action, you can expect the greatest measure of earthly happiness that may be allotted to us in this vale of tears. The rest is in the hands of God. Nor will God be wanting to your needs; He will pledge you the lifelong support of his graces in the Sacrament which you are now going to receive."

Exhortation From the "Rite of Marriage"



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***Our Lady of the Lake is a Roman Catholic Church. All ceremonies taking place in our church must follow Erie Diocesan Marriage Policies and Canon Law, meaning only Catholic priests and deacons may officiate and only the Catholic Marriage Rite may be used.***

## **CONGRATULATIONS!**

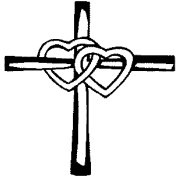
The people and pastoral ministers of Our Lady of the Lake Parish wish to extend to you our congratulations and best wishes on your forthcoming wedding. Your marriage is a sign — a sign of God's love for people. Just as God entered into a deep, personal, and permanent relationship with people, so too are you about to enter into a deep, personal and permanent relationship. Your love is a sign — a sign of hope. For in this day and age of haste, when nothing seems to last, your loving commitment is a sign of hope to all of us.

The following information is assembled to help you with your wedding plans. Organization and attention to details can make the preparation enjoyable and the actual ceremony a memorable experience. Last minute planning and omissions could rob your wedding of much of its natural beauty and joy. The time of preparation for a marriage should be days of peaceful and joyful cooperation among the parties and families involved. Mutual respect, understanding, and real giving of self will result in this peace and joy, and will most probably be a sign of how the days and trials of married life will be worked out. We urge you not to let your wedding be a source of family feuds, temper tantrums, and selfish displays.

The wedding day, and its ceremony and Liturgy, is not to be an isolated event for show, but has dimensions that begin long before it and extend to the years ahead. Ask God then for blessings of peace on your plans, and make a promise of special charity to others at this time.

Many changes have taken place in the world and in the Church over the years. A marriage ceremony today should speak of two people using today's forms and Liturgy to express their commitment to each other and to God as they look forward and move into the future.

We're here to help this happen for you.



## **BASIC QUALIFICATIONS FOR MARRIAGE**

- A. At least 18 years of age or with legal permission to be married.
- B. Registered member of Our Lady of the Lake Parish or written approval from your pastor.
- C. Demonstration of proper faith normally indicated by frequent reception of the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation and attendance at Church.
- D. No previous marriage or proof of freedom to marry.
- E. Fulfillment of Diocesan Policy for Marriage Preparation
- F. Pre-Cana instruction or Engagement Encounter Weekend, and fulfillment of other laws of the Church concerning marriage.
- G. Marriage License.

### ***First Step***

The first step after the decision to get married is to schedule an Initial Interview with one of the priests at Our Lady of the Lake Parish. The Guidelines of the Diocese of Erie recommend that this be done AT LEAST SIX (6) MONTHS prior to the wedding. The priest will discuss with you the preparations necessary for marriage at Our Lady of the Lake Church and in the Diocese of Erie, and will assist you in scheduling the date, place, and time for your wedding.

Priests or ministers from outside the parish are always welcome to assist or officiate at weddings at Our Lady of the Lake Parish. Whatever your particular situation, our priest will let you know how to proceed from this point.

### ***If your Presider is not from Our Lady of the Lake...***

If you have a special priest or deacon who is close to you, we are most happy to welcome him to officiate at your wedding in our parish. In the case of an inter-faith marriage, a Protestant minister is welcome to have a role in the ceremony as the guest of the Catholic priest or deacon presiding. The following is expected of guest presiders:

- A. The priest or deacon should complete all the necessary paperwork and prepare the couple according to the Diocesan Marriage Policy.
- B. If the presider is unable to fulfill the above request or any part of it, the priests at Our Lady of the Lake will be happy to assist in any way possible.
- C. The priest or deacon preparing the couple should make sure that all the paperwork gets to the parish priest, for Canon Law demands that the file be kept at the Church of Marriage.
- D. He must also sign and return the duplicate Marriage Certificate to the parish priest or send to the courthouse within 10 days after the marriage.
- E. The priest should be given a copy of this booklet. If he has any questions he should contact one of the parish priests.
- F. Finally, he should make arrangements well in advance for any assistance needed, e.g., rehearsal time, lights turned on, parish customs, microphones, overnight accommodations, etc.

## **PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE**

### ***Pre-Cana and Engagement Encounter***

Diocesan law requires that the engaged couple attend either the Pre-Cana Program or the Engagement Encounter Weekend as part of the preparation for marriage. A certificate verifying this has must be presented to the priest preparing you for marriage. Details regarding this requirement will be discussed by the priest at the initial interview.

### ***Place of Marriage***

The proper place of marriage is the parish church to which the bride belongs. However, it may take place in the church to which the groom belongs if both parties agree to this arrangement. If the bride is not of the Catholic Faith, the marriage may be performed in her church with the proper permission. Please discuss this with the priest or deacon.

We are not permitted — by Diocesan law — to celebrate weddings in homes, gardens, or parks. The proper place for celebrating the Sacraments — with the

exception of emergency baptisms and confessions, and the sacrament of the sick — is the place where community gathers for worship, the Parish Church.

### ***Time of Wedding***

On Saturdays, weddings may be scheduled at any time between 10 AM and 2 PM. We cannot schedule weddings after 2 PM on Saturdays due to the Confession and Evening Mass Schedules.

On other weekdays, weddings may be scheduled at any time from 10 AM up to and including 8 PM, providing they do not interfere with previously scheduled events in the Church (including wedding rehearsals).

Weddings are not permitted on Sundays or Holy Days.

### ***Photographer***

Photographers are welcome to record your marriage. Our rule is that the photographer does not interfere with the ceremony or block the view of parents, etc., or distract worshippers.

### ***Fees***

The Catholic Church does not impose fees for administering any of the Sacraments, nor does the priest. We gladly give ourselves to your preparation and marriage as an act of our commitment toward you and your families, hoping that you will do the same toward one another. **The suggested donation for use of the church by non-parishioners is \$300.**

Remember, however, that musicians and soloists are arranged for and paid separate. Make these arrangements with them personally when you engage them.

### ***Marriage License***

Marriage licenses are valid to 60 days. You must apply for it as a couple, and can do so at the courthouse of any county in Pennsylvania for it to be valid anywhere in Pennsylvania. We suggest that you obtain the license approximately one month before your marriage.

### ***The Rehearsal***

Rehearsals are held the night before your wedding, in the church. Rehearsals can be scheduled anytime from 4:00 – 6:00pm. A wedding coordinator, who is a volunteer of our parish, will be present during rehearsal and at the beginning of your Nuptial Mass/Ceremony to help you along.

You are asked to **bring your Marriage License** to the rehearsal and give it to the priest. In return, he will give you a Certificate of Marriage on the day of the wedding.

*Who do you invite to the rehearsal?*

Of course, the Bride and Groom, the Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor, and those in the wedding party, the parents of the Bride and Groom and anyone who will take an active role during the celebration of the Liturgy this will include your altar servers (if not from our parish), reader, gift bearers, and musician/cantor.

**\*\*Alcohol use during the rehearsal in the church is prohibited. Any evidence of alcohol use at rehearsal is grounds for canceling the ceremony.**

### ***Flowers***

We know you want the Church to look as beautiful as possible for your wedding. Flowers are expensive. We might suggest that, because of limited space in our sanctuary, you choose a florist who is familiar with Our Lady of the Lake. Choose simple over elaborate.

Candelabra, pillars, stands, etc., are the responsibility of the florist and should be removed after the wedding ceremony before the next scheduled event. Flowers may be left in the church. *Aisle runners, consistently a problem, are prohibited.* If flower petals are tossed down the aisle during the processional, please assign a friend or family member to pick them up immediately following your ceremony.

### ***Music***

Music for the wedding should be compatible with the dignity of a Catholic Church Liturgy. Guidelines for suitable music will be given to you. Secular music is not appropriate and is not permitted during the Liturgy, but is fine for the prelude. Participation by the assembly is a priority. This is not the time for ‘performances’. Instead, congregational singing is expected.

The parish does not supply the organist, soloist or other musicians for weddings, although we will refer you to some parishioners who do this ministry at weddings. People from outside the parish are most welcome.

You should discuss fees with your musicians and singers when you contact them. Musicians from outside the parish should arrange a meeting with a parish musician for orientation purposes. If there is any doubt regarding the propriety of music selected, the priest will be happy to help you in your quest for appropriate music.

### ***Banns of Marriage***

If both parties are of the Catholic faith, Banns of Marriage are to be announced in both the bride's and groom's parishes.

This is done on the three consecutive Sundays before the marriage. The priest will arrange for this.

### ***Official Marriage Forms***

Several forms must be filled out for our parish marriage files. These required formats are intended to establish that the parties are free to marry, that no one or any situation is forcing the couple to marry against their will, and to apply for necessary dispensations in some instances.

If one of the parties is not of the Catholic faith, it is also necessary to have one or two witnesses, preferably parents offer testimony regarding this freedom. Again, this will be explained thoroughly by the priest.

In addition to these forms, the bride and groom must provide Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates (issued no more than 6 months prior to meeting with the priest), and the Pre-Cana or Engagement Encounter certificate.

Photo copies are not acceptable but can be supplied for your own records, if requested.

### ***Witnesses***

The Best Man and the Maid of Honor are the official witnesses to a marriage, and they represent the Christian Community.

The priest is the official witness of the Church. A Protestant clergyman/woman, in the case of inter-faith marriages, is cordially invited to take an active part in the ceremony according to the guidelines of the Church. This will be explained as the situation occurs.

### ***Altar Servers***

Two Altar Servers are needed for a Nuptial Mass (one for a Nuptial Ceremony outside of Mass) and they will be provided by the Parish, if needed. It is customary to offer a nominal stipend to each server. However, if the bridal couple has relatives or friends whom they want to invite to serve in this capacity, we will accommodate them.

### ***The Wedding Ceremony***



It is expected that the Nuptial Mass is primarily a religious event as it is the reception of a Sacrament. To receive the Sacrament of Matrimony in all its fullness it must be the intention of the bride and groom to receive it, and they should be in the state of grace. If the bridal couple has not celebrated reconciliation - you may ask to do so either before or after your rehearsal.

### ***The following guidelines should also be observed:***

A. The ceremony must follow that established by the Church as found in the booklet, ***"Together for Life"***, which is given to the couples at Pre-Cana and Engaged Encounter.

If both parties are Catholic, the Nuptial Mass should be the form followed. If the couple is inter-faith, the Nuptial Ceremony outside of Mass would seem appropriate, taking into account the sensitivities of the Non-Catholic family. If an inter-faith couple wishes to have a Nuptial Mass, it is permissible.

B. Charity and consideration should assure punctuality of the wedding party at the rehearsal and the wedding itself.

C. There are basic facilities for the bride and her attendants to dress at the church if they wish. *A note on attire: We are aware that fashion dictates the popularity of strapless dresses and shorter hemlines on the bride and attendants; however, keep in mind that, while in church, proper & modest coverage is expected.*

D. Food or drink is not to be consumed in the day chapel or anywhere in the church proper. It is fine to have light beverages and snacks in the Bride Room provided that everything is cleared away before the bridal party vacates. ***Smoking and alcohol consumption is strictly prohibited anywhere in the church building. Any evidence of alcohol consumption is grounds for canceling the ceremony. This is a serious matter.***

F. We do not engage a worker to clean up - we expect the wedding party to leave the church in the condition it was found. This includes the condition of the floor, aisles, outside walkways, parking lot, and disposal of trash. A suggestion is to assign a family member or close friend with checking the church, Bride Room, and grounds before they leave for the reception.

*Note: If you choose to have a reception line/send off your guests may only use bubbles or toss bird seed. No confetti of any kind, no flowers or flower petals and no rice may be thrown.*

## **Conclusion**

The Parish family at Our Lady of the Lake wants to help in every way to ensure a beautiful and meaningful beginning to married life. We know how important this is to you. To do this well, we ask you to make your arrangements well in advance, and thus solve problems before they become critical. If you have questions, please ask.

We wish you our blessings and joy at this time in your life, and may the spirit and peace and excitement with which you enter marriage follow you all the days of your life. With Christ's blessings!