

# Marriage Preparation at St. Therese Church



## **Congratulations!**

We rejoice with you in your decision to celebrate your love in the Sacrament of Marriage.

On your wedding day, you will declare your love and commitment to one another before God and his Church. You will become a sacrament - a visible sign of invisible grace. The world should be able to look at you and see a physical sign and reflection of God's love. Through this holy sacrament, you will receive an outpouring of God's help, strength and grace upon your marriage.

Our parish is committed to helping you receive the best preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage. This booklet outlines the preparation process for marriage in the Catholic Church. It also explains the rules and procedures for weddings at St. Therese.

## **Meetings with a Priest or Deacon**

Your meetings with the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage provide an opportunity to get to know one another. He will meet with you periodically to talk about your progress and concerns. Please return all calls and messages from him promptly. Because of parish meetings, Fr. Fain is generally unable to meet in the evening or on the weekend. A short time before the wedding you will meet with your celebrant to discuss the wedding liturgy. You will be able to select the Scripture readings for the liturgy from the book, *Together for Life*.

## **Regular Practice of the Faith**

All couples seeking the Sacrament of Marriage are expected to practice their faith regularly. For Catholics, this includes attendance at Mass every Sunday. It is also customary to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before being married. Couples are expected to be involved in the life of their parish community, through registration, active participation and tithing.

## **Baptismal Certificate**

If baptized, both the bride and the groom must provide a copy of their Baptismal Certificate. If you are Catholic, please do not bring the original certificate. Instead, contact the parish at which you were baptized for an updated certificate which will list all of the sacraments received.

## **Annulments**

A person who has been divorced and is seeking remarriage will generally need to procure an annulment or dispensation before they can marry in the Catholic Church. A copy of the annulment or dispensation must be filed with St. Therese Church.

## **Dispensations**

When a Catholic and a non-Catholic marry, the Catholic party is required to obtain a dispensation from the local diocesan bishop. In this process, Catholics affirm their intention to live out the Catholic faith, to respect the conscience of their spouses, and to promise to do all that they can to share their faith with their children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics.

## **The Marriage Preparation Program**

Please start to complete these requirements soon after your initial meeting with your presider. Please remember that Marriage is a religious Sacrament of the Catholic Church. A wedding can occur only in accordance with the Code of Canon Law and the policies of the Lansing Diocese and St. Therese Church and only after the pastor or his delegate have determined that a couple is ready to marry and that they have fully completed this religious program of marriage preparation.

### **A. The FOCCUS Program**

Each engaged couple meets with a married mentor couple who has been trained to administer the FOCCUS compatibility inventory. This process helps couples to recognize their areas of agreement and difference and to foster healthy communication skills. You will be assigned to a couple who will call you to set up a meeting time. You will meet in the couple's home to take the compatibility test and then meet a few more times to discuss the results.

## B. Engaged Encounter / “We Care” Program

Engaged Encounter is a two-day, overnight retreat experience for engaged couples preparing for marriage. The closest Engaged Encounter is held at St. Joseph Retreat Center in Jackson. The Encounter focuses on healthy communication, problem solving, conflict resolution, goal setting, as well as formation in the Catholic view of marriage.

Couples who are preparing for a second marriage attend the **Remarriage Encounter**. This two-day, overnight retreat experience addresses issues specific to those who have been widowed or divorced and who are preparing for a second marriage.

An alternative to Engaged Encounter that is permitted in some situations is the “We Care” Program sponsored by Catholic Charities. Each couple takes 2 “We Care” classes facilitated by Catholic Charities. There are sessions offered in Flint and in the Lansing area. There is a \$75 fee for this program. Please send your fee and registration form directly to Catholic Charities. Some of the skills covered include communicating your needs, resolving conflict, reducing arguments, solving problems, and keeping friendship and intimacy in your marriage.

## C. Catholic Information Series

This four-course series provides an explanation of the Catholic understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage. There are also opportunities to ask questions about any dimension of the Catholic faith. This series is especially essential for couples from different religious backgrounds.

As part of the Catholic Information series, the *Introduction to Natural Family Planning* is presented by the NFP coordinator of the Diocese of Lansing. This two-hour presentation provides a basic understanding of the Church’s teaching on family planning and contraception, as well as the various natural methods of family planning. There is a \$5 fee to be paid at the first session of the Catholic Information Series. Completion of the *Introduction to Natural Family Planning*, which is part of the Catholic Information Series, is the minimum requirement of St. Therese Church. However, there are other more detailed and informative programs, especially those taught by the Couple-to-Couple League, that couples may want to take. Please ask your presider for more details.

Some couples, especially those who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation, may be asked to take a different series of classes. The sacrament of Confirmation fully initiates a person into the Catholic Church, and the Code of Canon Law states that every member of the Catholic faithful is obliged to receive this sacrament. Those couples in the Confirmation program must also complete the *Introduction to Natural Family Planning*.

Non-Catholics are warmly invited to consider joining the Catholic Church. Catechumens and candidates are received into the Catholic Church at a special liturgy on Holy Saturday. Completion of the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program may be substituted for the Catholic Information Series. Couples in the RCIA program must also complete the *Introduction to Natural Family Planning*.

# Weddings at St. Therese

## Music

The selection of music for any Catholic liturgy is a serious task which carries with it great responsibility. For this reason, we require each couple to schedule a music planning session with our Director of Music, Gordon McMann. At this session you will have the opportunity to hear musical selections and to receive guidance in selecting appropriate music for the wedding. All music must enhance the beauty, uphold the dignity, and serve the purpose of the liturgy. The main function of the music is to worship God and to assist those gathered to enter more fully into the prayers and actions of the liturgy. For this reason we require that our Director of Music be retained for all weddings at St. Therese. While it is advisable to use singers and musicians from our parish, others may be used, provided they are approved by, and operate under the direct supervision of, our Director of Music. Generally speaking, all music performed in the church must reflect the sacramental nature of the occasion, and conform to guidelines set forth by the Catholic Church. Secular music and showtunes are not allowed. Final approval of all musical selections rests with our Director of Music, in conjunction with our Pastor.

## Wedding Sacristan

St. Therese requires that you contract one of our Wedding Sacristans to assist at the rehearsal and the wedding. Wedding Sacristans help organize the entrance procession, set up for the liturgy, provide directions, answer questions, and assist with some clean-up. Their fee is \$50. You will be assigned a Wedding Sacristan. In planning weddings, some couples choose to hire “wedding planners” or “wedding consultants” to help organize their receptions and other aspects of their weddings. To avoid confusion or miscommunication, we do not permit wedding planners to have any role in the performance of the wedding rehearsal or the celebration of the wedding liturgy. The sacristan is trained in the details of Catholic liturgy and etiquette of St. Therese.

## Church Decorum and Etiquette

For Catholics, marriage is a sacrament and a wedding is a sacred event, something that we show the highest respect. In our day and age, people have weddings in a variety of places with varying degrees of decorum. Some people are not familiar with the seriousness with which Catholics regard marriage and weddings. Further, Catholics believe that our church buildings are sacred places which must be treated with a spirit of respect and reverence. We ask that you remind your wedding party to respect our beliefs and practices, both at the wedding and at the rehearsal.

- 1) Please turn off your cell phone in the church. If you have ushers to assist with seating, please ask them to remind guests to turn off their cell phones.
- 2) Appropriate dress is expected in our church. Men do not wear hats in churches.
- 3) Please do not chew gum in our church worship area. Please do not bring food or drink into the church.
- 4) At a Wedding which takes place in the context of a Mass, non-Catholics are invited to come forward for a blessing at the distribution of Communion. Please either raise your hand or cross your arms.

## **Alcohol and Smoking**

The usage of alcohol by any member of the wedding party prior to the wedding and to the rehearsal is strictly prohibited. For reasons of sacramental validity, the consumption of alcohol by the bride or groom will result in the delay or cancellation of the wedding. A member of the wedding party who has been consuming alcohol will not be permitted to participate in the wedding. The consumption of alcohol by guests is prohibited in the buildings, grounds and parking lots of St. Therese Church. Also, St. Therese Church is a non-smoking facility - this includes all rooms on the premises.

## **Advent / Lent**

Weddings are not permitted during the season of Lent. In rare circumstances, weddings may be permitted during the season of Advent. In requesting a date during the Advent season, the couple must understand that the sanctuary will be decorated for Advent. The decorations for Advent will not be moved from the sanctuary. Christmas music cannot be played during the Advent season.

## **Bride and Groom Rooms**

Rooms are provided for the bridesmaids and groomsmen to get ready for the wedding. Please remember, these are parish rooms used for a variety of purposes. We ask that you treat them with respect. Please clean the rooms before you leave. Food and drink, except bottled water, are not allowed in the bride and groom rooms or in any other parish room or meeting space.

## **Photography and Video**

Please tell your photographer or videographer to speak to the officiant and to the Wedding Sacristan about the procedure and rules for taking pictures and videos at St. Therese. Flash photography is not permitted during the wedding liturgy. Photographers are asked to be discreet in taking photos. They must not disrupt the liturgy or stop the procession in any way.

Photographers are not permitted in the sanctuary during the liturgy. They are expected to dress appropriately. These rules also apply to any guests taking pictures. The presider and Wedding Sacristan will instruct photographers about the appropriate areas of the church in which to take pictures and set up equipment. Couples often find it very helpful to take at least some of the professional pictures before the liturgy. Also, your presider is very happy to take a photograph with you after the liturgy. Please ask your photographer to take this photograph first.

## **Flowers**

Couples are permitted to place flowers in the sanctuary of the Church. Someone from your wedding party should be present for the flower delivery; florists should not ask our office personnel to accept delivery. The Wedding Sacristan will help you to arrange flowers in an appropriate manner. No church furniture may be moved when arranging flowers. Typically, flowers are left in the sanctuary as an offering to the parish. For planning purposes, please keep in mind the colors of the liturgical seasons of the Church.

## **Decorations**

Couples may decorate pews with ribbons or floral arrangements; these should be secured with rubber bands or special holders. Tape and wire are strictly forbidden as they damage the pews.

Decorations must not hinder the ability of guests to enter and exit their pews, and they must be removed after the liturgy. Aisle runners do not work well with our carpet, and they are not safe.

### **Rice, Confetti, Birdseed**

The throwing of anything, whether flowers, rice, birdseed, confetti, etc., in the church or anywhere on the church grounds, is not allowed.

### **Unity Candle**

The Unity Candle is not part of the Catholic wedding liturgy. However, the use of the Unity Candle is an option permitted at St. Therese . Couples furnish their own candles and candle stands. Some couples like to have their mothers light the tapers prior to the entrance procession. This is an option permitted at St. Therese . Please let your presider know if you would like to use a Unity Candle and if you would like to have your mothers or grandmothers light the tapers.

### **Flowers to Mary**

As a sign of their devotion to the Blessed Mother, many Catholic couples choose to place a flower or a bouquet of flowers before the statue of Mary during the wedding liturgy. The *Ave Maria* or another Marian hymn is sung while the couple says a prayer. Flowers to Mary is an option allowed at St. Therese. The bouquet of flowers need not be anything overly expensive. Please let your presider know if you would like to present flowers to Mary during the liturgy.

### **Food for the Poor**

Like the priesthood or religious life, marriage is considered a vocation by the Catholic Church. The love between a husband and wife is not closed in on itself, but is generous and giving, building up the Church and serving humanity. During the Offertory, at a wedding liturgy that is a Mass, couples may choose to present a basket of non-perishable food items as a gift to the poor. These items will be donated to the St. Vincent de Paul. These items will be brought forward by your gift-bearers in a wicker basket provided by the church. Please let your presider know if you would like to present a gift of food for the poor during the Wedding Mass.

### **Wedding Programs**

Many couples choose to prepare a booklet or program that outlines the order of the wedding liturgy and that lists participants (parents, wedding party, officiant, musicians, readers, etc.). Programs are very helpful to non-Catholic guests, but one is not required. Programs often include Scripture citations and the titles of hymns. Many hymns, particularly contemporary hymns, have copyrights. To print the music of a hymn, you may need to procure copyright permission. Gordon McMann can answer questions about hymn citations and copyrights. Feel free to ask your officiant for advice in designing a program.

### **Rehearsals**

Rehearsals will generally be scheduled at 5:30PM on the Friday evening before the wedding, unless there is a church scheduling conflict. It is very important that all members of the wedding party be on time for the rehearsal. The larger a wedding party, the more difficult it is to organize. Please tell your wedding party to arrive at least 15 – 20 minutes early and to be seated in the front pews of the church so that the rehearsal can begin promptly.

### **Readers, Ushers, Gift-Bearers**

It is very helpful to have readers, ushers and gift-bearers attend the wedding rehearsal so that they may practice their roles.

### **Church Usage and Receiving Lines**

Because of these tight time constraints, we strongly discourage receiving lines at the church. They shorten the time that you have to take pictures. We encourage you to hold your receiving line at the wedding reception. We also ask that you reserve the custom of signing a guest book for your reception since it delays the seating of guests and the start of wedding liturgy. St. Therese has Confessions at 3:30PM on Saturdays; for this reason, the church must be vacated by 3:20PM.

### **Visiting Clergy**

Visiting Catholic clergy, particularly if they are a relative or close friend of the couple, are typically allowed to preside or to concelebrate at weddings at St. Therese with the permission of the pastor. For sacramental validity, the Canon Law of the Catholic Church requires visiting Catholic clergy to obtain a letter of delegation from the pastor to preside at a wedding in his parish. This request may be made by phone or in writing to Fr. John Fain.

### **Marriage License**

Michigan residents must apply for a marriage license in the county in which one of the applicants live, not where the marriage is going to take place. There is a four-day waiting period following application. Once the license is issued, it must be used within 30 days. In other words, do not apply for a license more than one month before the wedding. Out-of-state residents who are being married at St. Therese must apply for a marriage license through Ingham County. Please bring the marriage license to the wedding rehearsal. Immediately following the wedding, the bride, the groom and two witnesses, typically the best man and maid-of-honor, will sign the license in the presence of the presider. Often, the photographer likes to take a picture of this moment. The parish will file the official license with the county; the souvenir copy will be given to the witnesses at the time of signature.

### **Fees**

<b>Church Fee</b>	<b>\$100 (Parishioners)</b>
	<b>\$250 (Non-Parishioners)</b>
<b>Wedding Sacristan</b>	<b>\$50</b>
<b>Musical Director</b>	<b>\$125</b>
<b>Priest / Deacon</b>	<b>Stipend</b>

Please bring all fees to the wedding rehearsal and give them to the Wedding Sacristan. It is customary to provide any visiting clergy with an honorarium.

### **Important**

To avoid confusion or miscommunication, the presider will only work with the bride and groom, not parents or members of the wedding party, in making arrangements for the wedding liturgy. Likewise, the couple should pose all questions and concerns directly to their presider.

### **Lastly... A Word of Advice**

Some couples and their families unnecessarily stress themselves out in planning the details of a

wedding. It is our experience that “simpler” weddings are often more enjoyable and meaningful for everyone. Relax and enjoy the day.

## **Checklist**

- \_\_\_ **Registration and Active Participation at Parish**
- \_\_\_ **Baptismal Certificates (Issued within 6 months)**
- \_\_\_ **Obtain a Dispensation from the Bishop if one party is not Catholic**
- \_\_\_ **Meetings with FOCCUS Couple**
- \_\_\_ **“We Care” Class or Engaged Encounter Weekend**
- \_\_\_ **Catholic Information Series**
- \_\_\_ **Natural Family Planning Class**
- \_\_\_ **Contact Russell Beaudoin about Musical Arrangements**
- \_\_\_ **Sacrament of Reconciliation**
- \_\_\_ **Choose Readers for the Wedding Liturgy**
- \_\_\_ **If a Wedding Mass, choose Gift-Bearers for the Offertory**
- \_\_\_ **Complete *Together for Life* and submit to your presider**
- \_\_\_ **Obtain a Marriage License no earlier than 30 days before Wedding**
- \_\_\_ **Pair Bridesmaids and Groomsmen together before the Rehearsal**
- \_\_\_ **Inform Your Wedding Party of Church Decorum and Remind Them to be On-Time for the Rehearsal and Wedding**
- \_\_\_ **Bring Your Marriage License to the Church no later than the Rehearsal**
- \_\_\_ **Pay all Fees to the Wedding Sacristan at the Rehearsal**
- \_\_\_ **Have Your Photographer / Videographer Speak to the Presider**



**and Wedding Sacristan**



