



# A GUIDE FOR YOUR WEDDING PREPARATION

Saint Margaret Mary Parish

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## **CONGRATULATIONS! YOU ARE ENGAGED AND CONSIDERING MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH!**

We are happy for you. These months before your wedding will almost certainly be filled with hectic planning, financial concerns, stress and crucial decisions. The community of Saint Margaret Mary wants to take the opportunity to assist you as you prepare for married life. Our Marriage Preparation Program is fairly demanding, but perhaps we can provide the kind of attention that would help you to continue to grow in your relationship with one another throughout your years of marriage.

By deciding to have your wedding at Saint Margaret Mary, you are expressing your faith. You seek to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church. God's love for all people is faithful and everlasting—Christian Marriage reflects this kind of love. Together, you will serve as reminders to the world of God's concern and attention to humanity.

The following guidelines should answer many of your questions about the wedding day and the Marriage Preparation Program.

### **“WHEN SHOULD WE CONTACT THE PARISH REGARDING OUR MARRIAGE?”**

Contact us at least six months or more in advance of your preferred wedding date (in practice to get a specific date and time, most couples have to plan at least a year in advance). When you contact the Parish Office, you will be sent further information and will need to come into the Parish Office and complete several inventories including the FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study). Next, you will need to arrange an initial interview for you and your fiancé with one of the priests.

### **“WHAT HAPPENS AT THE INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIEST?”**

We will discuss any questions that you may have regarding the preparation program and give you further specific information. Father will go over the results of the several inventories you have taken. Please plan on being at the Parish Office for about 2 hours for this first appointment.

### **“HOW DO WE ESTABLISH A DATE FOR OUR WEDDING?”**

With the assistance of the priest, you will tentatively schedule your wedding date at the initial interview. **However, please do not reserve your reception hall, photographer, etc. until after the date is finalized at the Church.** Weddings are becoming more popular on Friday Evenings. They may be scheduled at a variety of times. On Saturday Weddings, we have only 11 AM and 2 PM times. There can be weddings on other days or evenings of the week. Weddings are normally not scheduled during the Season of Lent and our Diocese of Rockford **does not permit Sunday Weddings.**

### **“DO WE NEED TO BE A CERTAIN AGE?”**

Church law requires you to be 14 years of age for women and 16 years of age for men, but the Diocese of Rockford does not permit marriages of people under the age of 19 years without extensive evaluation of the maturity of the person preparing for marriage, since couples marrying under 19 year of age have an extremely high rate of divorce.

**“DO WE NEED TO BE MEMBERS OF SAINT MARGARET MARY PARISH TO BE MARRIED HERE?”**

Church Law only allows the pastor, of the Parish in which you are registered, to celebrate your marriage. If you are members of another parish or do not physically live within the boundaries of Saint Margaret Mary, you will have to obtain written permission from your Pastor to have your wedding celebrated here at Saint Margaret Mary. Your Pastor is the Pastor of the Church, whose boundaries you live within. Couples who grew up at Saint Margaret Mary, but live elsewhere, still need permission from their present Pastor.

**“ONE OF US IS NON-CATHOLIC, CAN WE STILL HAVE OUR MARRIAGE AT SAINT MARGARET MARY CHURCH?”**

It is common that many of our Weddings are between Catholic and non-Catholic people. Normally, however, the Wedding Ceremony would take place without the Mass in these circumstances. It is also possible for the non-Catholic's Minister to also participate in the ceremony.

**“CAN WE HAVE OUR WEDDING ANY EARLIER OR LATER ON SATURDAY?”**

No, it is not possible. We must keep the Church free on Saturday Mornings in case there is a Funeral. Since Reconciliation (Confessions) begins at 4 PM, the schedule does not allow for weddings to begin later than 2 PM. Once the Sunday Vigil begins with the 5:15 Mass, no Weddings are to be celebrated later on that weekend.

**“WHAT IS THE FOCCUS PROGRAM AND THE OTHER INVENTORIES THAT ARE GIVEN?”**

The FOCCUS instrument was created so that engaged couples would be able to identify not only the strengths of their relationship, but also the areas of their life together that call for extra attention and support. Once you take the inventories, a priest or a trained married couple of the parish will arrange to discuss the results with you. The other inventories help you know about your personal characteristics and that of your fiancé. Six hours are typically required for these discussions. Remember these are aids and not a test.

**“DO WE HAVE TO ATTEND A PRE-CANA CONFERENCE?”**

We require that couples attend a weekend experience called **Engaged Encounter**. They are held from Saturday Morning at 7 AM to Sunday Afternoon. A schedule will be given at the first interview.

**“HOW DO WE PLAN FOR OUR WEDDING CEREMONY?”**

With our Director of Music and Liturgy, we will present several Wedding **Liturgy Planning Workshops** during the year, and will address music, Scripture and Flower decisions, along with the policies on Video/Photography. Couples must attend one of the four dates to learn the process of planning for your wedding ceremony. These Sessions are approximately two hours and both bride and groom are expected to be present. The exact dates for these **Wedding Liturgy Planning Workshops** will be given to you by the priest at your first meeting.

**“WHO IS AT THE REHEARSAL?”**

Everyone who has a special part in the wedding ceremony should be at the rehearsal. This may include the ushers, groomsmen, bridesmaids, parents and lectors. Allow at least one hour for the rehearsal on the night before the wedding.

**“DO WE NEED ANY DOCUMENTS?”**

**You need to collect the following as soon as possible:**

1. Newly issued Baptismal and Confirmation certificates for both Groom and Bride from the Churches where each was baptized and confirmed. These must be dated no longer than 6 months prior to your meeting the priest.
2. If one party is non-Catholic, it is necessary that the Catholic party sign a document promising that the children will be Baptized and raised Catholic.
3. A civil marriage license must be obtained from the MC HENRY COUNTY CLERK's Office, located in the GOVERNMENT CENTER in Woodstock. This should be presented to the priest at the rehearsal or before. This license is valid for only 60 days after it is issued so do not buy it early.
4. Other special documents as needed.

**“WHERE DO WE GET READY ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING?”**

The men must come prepared and the women may prepare in the Brides Room (Liturgy Room).

**“WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE DAY OF THE WEDDING?”**

1. When in the church and the chapel, please respect the presence of the Eucharist and ask others to maintain that respect.
2. The use of alcohol and/or other drug substances is strictly prohibited on the day of the rehearsal or wedding until off the parish grounds.
3. Reconciliation (Confessions) begin at 4 PM. All photography in the Church must conclude by 3:45 PM.
4. For reasons of safety and maintenance, the use of rice and/or bird seed on the church property is strictly prohibited. Balloons or other signs of celebration should be discussed with the Priest or Deacon.
5. We encourage you to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for your Wedding Day. Please set an appointment with one of the priest, or come to the Church any Saturday between 9 and 10 AM or 4 and 4:45 PM.

### **“HOW MUCH SHOULD WE GIVE TO THE CHURCH?”**

There is a fee of \$150, if you are a registered, regularly contributing member of the parish. If you are not registered or contributing regularly to the support of the Parish, the fee is \$300. This fee includes your gift for the use of the Church for your Wedding Rehearsal and Wedding, for the materials and services offered here from Saint Margaret Mary in preparing you for your wedding. This fee does not include the cost for the Engaged Encounter Weekend, the fees to your Wedding Musicians or your gift to the Priest or Deacon.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for taking time to read this brochure. You may have other questions. Please make sure to ask them as soon as possible. The Church desires that your marriage genuinely reflects God's love for the world and Christ's love for the Church. The community of Saint Margaret Mary believes in the grace of God freely offered through the celebration of the Sacraments. May these days of preparation lay a firm foundation for your married life together.