



Sacred Heart Parish

Sacred Heart Church
Holy Rosary Chapel
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel

Marriage Preparation

at

Sacred Heart Church

Holy Rosary Chapel

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel

The two shall become one flesh.”

Mark 10:9

We are honored that you have come to our parish family for your preparation for the beautiful Sacrament of Matrimony! Through this Sacrament, two are united as one so that they may experience the incredible depth of God’s love and help each other on the journey toward the eternal love of heaven. The mission of a married couple is nothing less than to be a living beacon of God’s free, faithful, fruitful, and total love in the Church and in the world.

This is an exciting time in your lives, and we are committed to helping you prepare not only for your wedding, but for the rest of your married lives as a couple and a family. We want to walk together with you in this, so that you may live God’s love in your lives and out in the world.

Couples who are married in our parish are expected to follow the process outlined within these pages. Our wedding preparation has been specially designed to help you open your hearts, minds, and relationship to the graces and love that God wants to give you in this Sacrament, as well as to help you deepen your relationships with our parish community and other couples. We follow the guidelines of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Colorado Springs, yet we have tailored our formation program to draw on the unique character, strengths, and gifts of our parish family.

Per the guidelines of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, couples should contact the parish at least a year before the proposed wedding date.

Formation

Marriage preparation involves more than mere education or training (as helpful as that can be) because new couples are looking for more than just knowledge and skills. They want to grow, to be *transformed* into a new person, a new creation. More specifically, Christian couples want to be *transformed* to live and to love more like Jesus; to take on the *form* and shape of His life and the relationships which He enjoyed with God the Father and with others. *Formation* enables that total change of life, of one’s very self.

Our *formation* program includes important knowledge and skills for your married life together. But given how all-encompassing marriage is, involving the totality of your lives, you can see why more than just new knowledge and skills are needed to live marriage faithfully and joyfully. Our *formation* program seeks to help you encounter God’s Love and fullness of Life through Jesus Christ more deeply, so that you are *transformed* into a new creation, so that “the two shall become one flesh.”

YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL OF THE FOLLOWING FORMATION PIECES BEFORE YOU CAN CELEBRATE YOUR WEDDING DAY:

CONVERSATION WITH A PRIEST

Your first contact with our *Marriage Preparation* will be with one of our parish priests. You will meet to go over the entire process and to sign the *Wedding Contract and Liability Waiver* in order to set a date. This will also be an opportunity to talk more about the sacramental nature of married life and the ways the Church will continue to be with you in living out your vocation in the future.

As you complete all of the other formation pieces, you may meet again to discuss and review your preparation. These conversations are your chances to ask questions that may come up during your preparation, although you are encouraged to contact a priest at ANY point in the process if you need assistance or have doubts or questions.

◇ **PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE OF THE PARISH**

As Catholic Christians, we believe that do not walk alone but that God walks with us. And, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we also walk with each other. We build each other up in our holy desires and strivings, and we are there to pick each other up after we stumble and fall.

God forms us as a community by gathering us together every Sunday in the celebration of the Mass. In the Scriptures we hear proclaimed, God nourishes us with the Word of promise and hope. Through the Eucharist, God nourishes us with Life through Christ's Body and Blood which we receive. We are nourished with Love in the communion we share with God and with one another. By seeing God each Sunday in the bread and the wine and in the men and women who share the pews with us, we come to see God, as Pope Francis says, "in all things" throughout the week. It is the amazing grace that we need.

The relationships we deepen with God and with each other each Sunday are the brick and mortar not just of our lives of faith, but our lives in their entirety. Relationships are key to life and faith, and it is in the Church that we find the concrete relationships and support that we need to live out our commitments faithfully and joyfully.

The preparation for and the living out of your vocation to married life begins with actively participating in the life of our parish community, especially each and every Sunday in the Eucharist. We ask you, as well, to deepen your participation in the life of our parish by becoming involved in a ministry or group. Pope Francis describes a parish as a "community of communities," and it is often when we find community within the wider community of the parish that our lives in Christ and within the Church really come alive for us.

◇ **FOCCUS CONVERSATIONS**

Study after study has shown that one of the keys to a healthy and happy marriage is good communication. The written FOCCUS Inventory that you will take ("*Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study*") helps us assess your communication as a couple in all the areas that are a part of married life: finances, family backgrounds, problem solving techniques, personal interests, spirituality, and sexuality.

After you complete the initial FOCCUS Inventory, we will pair you with a married couple who will meet with you personally at their home. We have a diverse group of couples who assist us with the FOCCUS, so we can find a good match to work with you. The mentor couple will contact you to set up the sessions. You will meet with them to help you explore your relationship and communication. Guided by the results of your FOCCUS Inventory, your mentor couple will serve not as teachers, but facilitators — helping you engage in and deepen your communication with each other.

Note: You must complete all of your FOCCUS sessions prior to your wedding.

◇ **MARRIAGE PREPARATION CLASSES (*JOINED BY GRACE*)**

Joined by Grace is the “theological” component of your marriage preparation. These class sessions, created by Ave Maria Press, a ministry of the Congregation of Holy Cross, are designed to help you encounter the love of Jesus, particularly through the sacraments, so that, as you are joined together by the grace of God, you can love as Jesus loves in all areas of your life. Three class sessions, typically with groups of two to four engaged couples, are taught by trained married couples in their homes, often on Friday or Saturdays. This class format enables us to engage you on a more personal level, and allows you to continue to meet mentor couples from our parish as well as deepen your bonds with other engaged couples.

Joined by Grace classes are offered by the parish at no charge to you. The standard classes are offered three or four times a year, depending on the number of engaged couples. We also offer a version for couples who are older, who have been married previously, or who have other special circumstances.

Although we strongly encourage you to attend the classes in our parish in order to continue deepening your relationships with others in our parish family, there are other options, if needed: the Diocese has approved an online marriage preparation program, available at www.catholicmarriageprep.com (nearly \$200). Classes are also offered each fall and spring at Holy Apostles Church in Colorado Springs (\$75; call 719-597-4249).

Note: You must complete your marriage preparation classes prior to your wedding.

◇ **RETREAT (*BUILT ON ROCK*)**

To help you deepen your relationships with Jesus, each other, the community, and the Church, our parish offers a day-long retreat for all couples in marriage preparation. *Built on Rock* refers to the passage in the gospels in which Jesus says, “Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock” (Mt 7:24). His words and actions lead us to know of the amazing, unconditional love that God has for us, and that love is the rock on which Jesus is inviting us to build our lives. This is most especially true of your married and family life.

The retreat gives you an opportunity to meet and begin forming friendships with other parish couples who are preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony. You will also have the chance to meet married couples from our parish who can help mentor you both in your preparation for marriage and in your living of it.

The retreat focuses on the amazing hope and joy that God seeks to give us through this great Sacrament and vocation. There is also time for prayer and reflection, as well as a host of practical advice and tips to deepen and strengthen the key relationships in your life, including your relationship with God, so that God’s love is your rock, your foundation. At the end of the retreat you will be prayed for and blessed in the midst of our parish community at the Vigil Mass.

The retreat, held on a given Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., is a gift from our parish to you and there is no charge to attend. For the upcoming schedule or more information, please visit the parish Facebook page (www.facebook.com/tricomunity) or contact the parish office (719-633-8711).

We recommend our *Built on Rock* retreat, but if you are not able to attend one of the parish retreats, or if you would like something additional, *Engaged Encounter* is offered both in Colorado Springs (www.coscee.org) and Denver (www.denvercee.org). You can check those websites for more information as well as for a schedule of upcoming retreats.

Note: You should participate in a marriage preparation retreat prior to your wedding.

◇ NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING CLASSES (NFP)

A more in-depth exploration of sexuality is included through NFP classes, which give you the knowledge and resources to grow in sexual intimacy and plan the size of your family according to God's design. Please contact:

- St. Francis Medical Center (Creighton Model) — 719-571-3472
- Couple to Couple League — www.ccli.org
- Natural Family Planning International — www.nfpandmore.org
- www.catholicmarriageprep.com

Note: At least one set of NFP classes needs to be completed prior to your wedding date.

Special Circumstances

The path into the Sacrament of Matrimony is unique for each couple. Our parish seeks to walk with each couple in their particular circumstances in order to best help them grow and be transformed.

COUPLES WITH MIXED RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS AND PRACTICES

If only one of you is Catholic, you are still welcome to celebrate your marriage in the Church. We have many couples in our parish community who have different religious backgrounds, and they are beautifully and faithfully living the gift of marriage. **The Catholic Church asks couples of mixed religious backgrounds and practice to receive either a dispensation or permission to celebrate their marriage in the Church.** One of our priests will help you complete this simple process. The purpose is to ensure that the couple can share faith, spirituality, and prayer in a way that draws them closer together, rather than pulling them apart. The Church also wants to ensure that the Catholic spouse is able to continue to practice his or her faith and to raise children in the Catholic faith. In addition to the dispensation/permission process, there will also be opportunities during the various formation pieces to explore how you as a couple can share faith, spirituality, and prayer in a unifying way.

COUPLES PREVIOUSLY MARRIED

If either of you have been previously married, a declaration of nullity is required prior to the marriage preparation process. The Catholic Church draws from the teachings of Jesus that marriage is to be until death parts us, because “what God has joined, no human being must separate” (Mark 9:10). A declaration of nullity means that you are free to marry. There are many different types of annulments, depending on the context of the previous marriage as well as the faith traditions of both parties (*this includes non-Catholics who have previous marriages*). **If you have had a previous marriage, please notify one of the parish priests immediately so they can guide and assist with the annulment process.** We will also take your experience into account in tailoring your marriage formation process—there are special classes, for example, for those who are older or previously married.

COUPLES ALREADY CIVILLY MARRIED

If you are already civilly married and this is the first marriage for both of you, then you are free to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in the Church—known as a convalidation. **All we need, in addition to the standard documentation, is a copy of your civil marriage license.** We will then tailor your formation process, including, for example, a special set of marriage classes for those who are older or previously married.

CELEBRATING YOUR WEDDING IN ANOTHER PARISH

If you are celebrating your wedding in another church, **plan to complete all of your preparations, both the formation pieces and the required documentation, at least two months prior to your wedding date.** This gives us the necessary time to forward the packet to our diocesan offices, where everything will be reviewed before being sent on to the diocese, and then the particular parish, where your wedding will be celebrated.

Documentation

You will need to provide all of the following documents , which can be brought to the parish office. Our regular business hours are:

Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - noon
Monday to Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (closed 12– 1 pm for lunch)

- Parish Registration Form** If you have not already formally registered as members of our parish, **please complete a parish registration form** so that we can keep in contact with you about parish life and worship.
- Wedding Contract and Liability Waiver** As part of reserving your rehearsal and wedding on our parish calendar, you will need to complete a contract that specifies the dates and times. It also includes a liability waiver for the church. **The *Wedding Contract and Liability Waiver* must be completed in order to finalize your rehearsal and wedding date.**
- Marriage Information Form** Each of you will be interviewed by one of our parish priests to ensure you understand the responsibilities of marriage and are freely entering into the marriage. The interview covers basic background information and takes about 10 minutes.
- Freedom-to-Marry Witnesses** **Each of you needs one person, usually a family member, to testify that you are free to be married in the Church and that you understand God’s vision of marriage.** The people testifying for you can, but need not be Catholic, but they do not fill out the forms by themselves. They must take them to a Catholic church (not necessarily our parish) and fill them out in the presence of a priest or deacon there. If they would like to fill them out at our parish, simply make an appointment.
- Baptism Certificates** **Catholics need a BRAND NEW baptism certificate issued within six months of the wedding date.** A copy or even an original certificate issued over six months ago will not work—it must be a new certificate from the parish of your baptism.
Christians baptized in another church need to provide a certificate or a letter attesting to your baptism. A copy will suffice.
- Other Sacramental Certificates** **Catholics need to provide copies verifying that they have received all other Sacraments of Initiation.** (Confirmation & First Communion).
- Civil Marriage License** **All engaged couples will need to obtain a marriage license from the office of the Clerk and Recorder** (in Colorado, the earliest you can do so is 35 days before your wedding date). Your wedding cannot be celebrated without the license. The couple and their witnesses will typically sign this at the rehearsal. The priest will sign it after the wedding.
Couples already civilly married (for the first time) and seeking convalidation in the Church need to provide a copy of their marriage license.

Liturgy Planning

When you meet with one of our priests to discuss your wedding and confirm the date, you will receive a copy of the book *Together for Life* to help with planning your celebration. This book includes various choices for the readings and prayers to be used during your wedding.

Additionally, you will need to meet with our parish Wedding Music Director **at least five months before your planned wedding date.** Please schedule a meeting as soon as you have a confirmed wedding date.

For more information on the way we celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony in our parish community, please consult the *Wedding Liturgy Guidelines*. This document also includes the policies for musicians and photographers/videographers.

Logistics and Other Matters

WEDDING DATES

Weddings in our parish community are generally celebrated on Saturdays at 1:00 p.m.

Rehearsals are usually on the Friday prior to your wedding at 6:00 p.m. To review possible dates, please contact the associate pastor at the parish office. **Reservations are not finalized until a completed *Wedding Contract and Liability Waiver* is signed and the fee is received.**

WEDDING FEES

Our parish charges a fee to help cover the expenses of your wedding. The fee includes use of the facility, materials and resources used in your preparation, music planning and performance, and a person who serves as Wedding Coordinator (overseeing the rehearsal, setting up, and cleaning up after the ceremony). **The total fee amount is \$1000**, which includes a refundable deposit. If you have financial concerns, please speak to the priest when you begin your preparation so that we can address your concerns.

- \$300 fee for the use of the church;
- \$150 fee for the Wedding Coordinator;
- \$200 fee for the Wedding Music Director;
- \$150 fee for the Cantor;
- \$200 deposit, which will be refunded to you after the wedding, provided the wedding begins and ends on time, is not cancelled for any reason, and that there are no additional cleaning costs or other problems incurred by the parish.
- *Fees for any extra musicians are not included above.* All extra musicians must be approved by our Wedding Music Director, and you must pay them directly.
- \$150 fee for assisting in the preparation for any weddings that will take place at another church. (The above fees will not be necessary in these cases.)
- Tribunal fees: *For individuals who have already been married before*, statements of nullity will be required before your wedding may take place. Much time is needed to process the paperwork involved, and there are typically fees involved, which must be paid directly to the Tribunal Office of the Diocese of Colorado Springs.

INVITING ANOTHER PRIEST TO CELEBRATE YOUR WEDDING

You are welcome to invite a Roman Catholic priest or deacon you know personally to come and celebrate your wedding, but any priest or deacon from outside the Diocese of Colorado Springs must have his Ordinary (his bishop or superior) complete the *Testimonial of Suitability for Clergy* form, which we will send to him. The completed form, which serves both as a letter of good standing and documentation of compliance with the Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, will then be mailed back to the Office of the Bishop here (the address will be at the top of the form).