

# CORPUS CHRISTI CATHEDRAL



DIOCESE OF CORPUS CHRISTI  
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

## **Wedding Planning Guide**

Updated August 2011

## 1. Required Documents

*Baptismal Certificate* A NEW copy of your baptismal certificate, issued within the past six months, is required for those who are Catholic. This can be obtained by contacting the church of Baptism and requesting a new certificate, complete with First Communion and Confirmation information documented on the back of the certificate. For those baptized in another Christian faith, a copy of the original baptismal certificate is sufficient.

*First Communion and Confirmation Certificates* If this information is not included on the back of the baptismal certificate, then copies of the original First Communion and Confirmation certificates are required of all Catholic parties.

*Affidavit of Free Status to Marry* This is a sworn statement, witnessed by a priest or notary public, attesting that there are no known impediments to this marriage. Parents normally fill this out, or others who have known you most or all of your lives may complete it.

*Matrimonial Dispensation* For various pastoral reasons, some couples may need to obtain dispensations from certain conditions in order to marry. The most common dispensation is that required of couples entering an interfaith marriage; that is, where one party is Catholic and the other is from another faith tradition. The priest will discuss with you the reason and the process for obtaining this or any other dispensation.

*Civil License* The State of Texas requires a waiting period of 72 hours from the time the marriage license is issued and the celebration of the wedding ceremony. A license can be obtained from the Nueces County Courthouse, Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. THE MARRIAGE LICENSE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE PRIEST, DEACON, OR PERSON CONDUCTING THE REHEARSAL. (There must be two witnesses for the wedding. Generally the Best Man and Maid of Honor are listed as the witnesses. They need not be Catholic.)

*Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire* This takes place with the priest and is for the purpose of determining your freedom and appropriate intentions in your preparation for marriage.

ALL PAPERWORK MUST BE COMPLETED AT LEAST ONE MONTH  
BEFORE THE DATE OF THE MARRIAGE.

## 2. Marriage Preparation Programs

*Sponsored by the Diocesan Office of Family Life*

*Pre-Cana (required – not optional):* Pre-Cana Seminars are scheduled each month. Please refer to the published schedule for dates, places, etc. Pre-Cana Seminars and similar programs are also offered through the Catholic Chaplain's Office at military installations and the Campus Ministry Center at most colleges and universities.

*Catholic Engaged Encounter:* Engaged Encounter Weekends are scheduled as indicated on the enclosed pamphlet. The Marriage Sponsorship Program will be explained on an individual basis.

*Sponsor Couple Program:* The parish arranges sponsor couples. These are couples who have been married on average over twenty years and are capable of sharing with the engaged couple the fruits of their experience. Often times the friendship that is born out of these lasts for the life of the two couples.

### 3. Natural Family Planning

The Catholic Church approves of the natural method of family planning called The Billings Method. The Billings Method has warranted national and international attention because of its effectiveness. For more information please call Natural Family Planning. This program is now required for marriage. Enrollment in the program for use as a post-wedding program is acceptable in some cases.

Your wedding may be celebrated at any time on Friday or on Saturday up to 2:00 p.m. If neither Catholic party is a member of the Cathedral parish, written permission must be given from the pastor of his or her respective parish. In addition, the required fees must be paid.

The Rector, Parochial Vicar, or Deacons of the parish are available to officiate at weddings of parishioners. Other priests or deacons are of course welcome to officiate at your wedding, but must have prior delegation from the Rector of the Cathedral before final plans are made. Contributing parishioners get priority over non-contributing or nonparishioners.

Not all weekends are available for weddings due to the diocesan calendar and liturgical seasons or feasts. Also, no more than two weddings will be scheduled for any one weekend. While a minimum of six months is required for preparation, it is in your best interest to contact the parish as soon as possible about any possible wedding in order to secure a desired date.

#### 4. Address for Invitations

Corpus Christi Cathedral  
505 N. Upper Broadway  
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401

## 5. Planning the Ceremony

Together with the priest, who will be presiding at your liturgy, you will have a part in planning your ceremony. This planning should always keep in mind that the ceremony is first and foremost a moment of prayer for all who are present. All aspects of the celebration should reflect the noble simplicity befitting Christian worship. On your final meeting with the Priest, you will discuss the specific readings from Scripture and liturgical options that you have chosen. He will help clarify any further questions you may have regarding the ceremony at that time.

While it is necessary that an official witness of the Church preside over the celebration, (normally this a priest together with two witnesses) our Catholic tradition holds that the couples themselves confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church. As such, the active involvement of the couple in every aspect of planning the memorable moment is encouraged.

*Mass or Ceremony?* Should you celebrate your marriage in the context of a Mass or a non-Eucharistic service? First, let's understand the difference. Every celebration of Mass consists of a Liturgy of the Word (entrance rite, readings, homily, prayers of the faithful) and a Liturgy of the Eucharist (presentation of bread and wine, the Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion). When a wedding is celebrated at Mass, the Rite of Marriage takes place after the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful; the Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows. When a wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, it is celebrated in a Liturgy of the Word in which the Rite of Marriage takes place after the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful. This rite concludes with prayers and blessings.

You should make your decision in consultation with the priest who is assisting in the preparation of your marriage. You will want to consider:

What is your relationship to the Sunday Eucharist? Are we faithful to the churches Sunday prayer? Have we been away from the community's prayer? Have we committed ourselves to returning? In light of your answers to these questions: Is Mass or a Liturgy of the Word the better context for the celebration of our marriage?

If one of you will be unable to share Holy Communion because of another faith tradition, and the wedding is celebrated during Mass, you may want to consider what this means. Do you want to include something in this celebration in which only one of you will be able to take part? Normally the

Eucharist is not celebrated at an interfaith marriage. However, for pastoral reasons the exchange of vows may take place within the context of a Mass.

Who will your guests be? Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them to be with you and pray at your wedding? If many of your guests are from outside the Catholic community, you may want to consider celebrating your wedding in a Liturgy of the Word. In mixed marriages, which are celebrated without a Mass, the non-Catholic party is always welcome to invite his or her minister to take part in the ceremony. However, the Catholic priest or deacon is the minister who will always receive the consent of both parties.

Be open and honest with the priest with whom you are preparing your wedding and make the decision that will provide the best context for prayer and celebration.

*Rehearsal* An important part of the ritual preparation for the wedding celebration is the rehearsal. The wedding rehearsal is normally scheduled with the priest at the time when the date for the wedding is determined and is conducted by our parish Wedding Coordinator. It is critical that all members of the wedding party be present for this rehearsal, as well as any individuals whom you have selected as lectors and gift bearers. Since rehearsals are conducted in the Church, proper dress should be observed. Out of respect for both the Wedding Coordinator, as well as any other rehearsals that may be planned, please make sure that your entire wedding party arrives on time.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) is strongly recommended for all who share the Catholic faith as part of your spiritual preparation for Christian marriage. We remind all Catholics that the sacrament of marriage must be received in the state of grace. Confessions will be held during the rehearsal.

For any further questions prior to your wedding rehearsal, please contact your Wedding Coordinator at the number located on the Name and Telephone Directory Sheet.

*Ministers of the Celebration* There are many people who take part in your wedding celebration. Members of your wedding party, particularly ushers, will greet the invited guests in a spirit of hospitality and welcome. Our parish pastoral musicians will provide a musical setting that respects the dignity of this moment and will support sung prayer by all who gather.

Beyond these ministries, we ask you to consider individuals who might function in the following special roles in your wedding:

*Lectors* The lector is the person that proclaims the Scripture readings during the Wedding Liturgy. This is an opportune time for one of your family members or friends to participate in the celebration. Please choose someone to read the Scripture readings you have chosen for your wedding. If you have a Mass with your wedding, the person who does the readings must be a Catholic in good standing.

*Gift Bearers* For those who choose to celebrate the Nuptial Mass, it will be necessary to invite two people from the assembly to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine, which will be placed upon the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is often the practice that mothers of the bride and groom are asked to share this function, but others may be chosen. The fullest form of participation is best served by inviting active, practicing Catholics to act as gift-bearers; however, any baptized Christian may fulfill this role.

*Holy Communion* Communion under both Species is offered only for the bridal couple. If you expect non-Catholic guests at your wedding, you may want to include in your wedding guide the following policy of the Catholic Church regarding intercommunion:

"We welcome to this celebration of the Eucharist those Christians who are not fully united with us. It is a consequence of the sad divisions in Christianity that we cannot extend to them a general invitation to receive Communion. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness in faith, life and worship of the community. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we must all pray."

National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1987

*Unity Candle* The so-called "unity candle" is a commercial product of which no mention is made in the liturgical books of our church, and which has no real history or tradition behind it. For this reason, it is normally not included in wedding celebrations at the Cathedral. If this element is important to you, however, you may discuss its use with the priest who is assisting you with your wedding preparations.

*Flowers to Mary, the Mother of God and the Church* This is a gesture of prayer and petition that normally takes place toward the end of the

wedding celebration. The newly married couple (never the bride alone) invites Mary, as Mother of the Church and model disciple of Christ, to become part of their marriage and to remember them in her unceasing prayer.

*Arras and Lasso* Within the Hispanic culture, these elements, which symbolize mutual support and unity in love, may be integrated into the celebration of Christian marriage. Keep in mind that anyone participating in this portion of the celebration is considered a part of the wedding party, and **MUST** be present at the rehearsal. If you wish to integrate similar symbols from another culture, that too can be easily arranged. Please inform the wedding co-ordinator and the priest preparing you as early as possible.

## 6. Decorum in the House of God

In each Catholic Church there is reserved the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Tabernacle or safe so that the Eucharist can be taken to the sick and worshipped in prayer. Therefore, we ask that all who enter the Cathedral at any time, whether before, during, or after the rehearsal or during the wedding celebration itself, observe these basic principles.

Silence, respect and reverence while in the Cathedral

No food, drink or chewing gum

No alcoholic beverages on the church grounds, including the Cathedral parking lot

Because a church wedding is a gathering of the community of faith to witness the exchange of vows and offer prayers of praise and petition through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, care must be taken to select music that is appropriate for this occasion. No matter how personally meaningful love songs and secular ballads may be to the couple, these are best left to the reception where other dimensions of the wedding celebration prevail.

Couples selecting music for their wedding should first consider how that music aids the prayer of the gathered assembly. The singing by all of the acclamations of the Mass (Alleluia, Holy Holy, Memorial Acclamation and Great Amen) and the Responsorial, such as the Gloria and Lamb of God, may also be sung by all, if this is deemed appropriate for those who will be present. At the Cathedral, if the acclamations are going to be sung, the music director will assign a cantor to assist the assembly in singing the acclamations of the Mass.

Secondly, couples should consider the music for the processional and recessional. Traditionally, the processional and recessional have been accompanied by instrumental music, usually the organ. However, it is possible for the organist to lead the gathered assembly in hymn of praise. A tape of possible selections for organ processionals, recessionals, appropriate hymns of praise and possible vocal solos will be supplied to you.

Finally, couples may wish to consider an enhanced program of music for their wedding by engaging one of the Cathedral choirs (if schedules permit) or a soloist. Other instruments, such as the harp, violin or trumpet are also

possibilities.

The Cathedral organists and soloists are responsible for planning the music with the couple, and are normally the musicians who perform the music at the wedding. After the initial meeting with the priest, and after setting a date for the wedding, couples should contact the Office of Liturgical Music to set up an appointment. It is the responsibility of the music director, with the approval of the Rector of the Cathedral, to ensure that the music used in the Wedding Liturgy follows the guidelines for liturgical music given to us by the Church. That is, that the music is indeed good music, that it is liturgical, and that it is applied pastorally.

If, for a legitimate reason, the couple desires the services of another organist or soloist, the director of music for the Cathedral must first approve the competence of these musicians, and then approve the music selected.

Out of respect for our belief that this is a dwelling place of the living Christ, silence, respect and reverence should be observed while in the Cathedral. In addition, no smoking, food, drink, chewing gum or alcoholic beverages are permitted in any place in the church. The vestibule, sacristy, and bride's room are also part of the church and should receive the same respect as the principal part of the church. **THROWING FLOWER PETALS, RICE, CONFETTI, OR BIRDSEED IS PROHIBITED IN OR AROUND THE CHURCH BUILDING.**

## 7. Wedding Coordinator

Our Wedding Coordinator is available to confer with you regarding any questions about the ceremony and the day of the wedding itself. The Wedding Coordinator will also conduct the rehearsal and be present one half-hour (30 minutes) prior to the wedding ceremony to attend to the bridal party, open doors, assist the florists, photographer and ushers. She will be present throughout the ceremony to assure the smooth and orderly flow of the liturgy. A stipend is required. (Please refer to the Schedule of Fees.)

Questions regarding the wedding ceremony should be directed to the Wedding Coordinator, Seline Smith, at 361-537-5443.

Please be aware, however, that due to the expense, the Wedding Coordinator will NOT make long-distance phone calls unless prior arrangements are made for her to make collect calls.

## 8. Liturgical Seasons / Decorations / Wedding Party

The liturgical seasons of Advent or Lent are not festive seasons in the Church's liturgical life, but reflect a penitential character. Liturgical decorations in the sanctuary and throughout the church have a permanent place over wedding decorations during these seasons.

*Antique Candelabra* Cathedral candelabra (including candles) may be used for a small donation. (Please refer to the Schedule of Fees.) However, we ask that no other candelabra be brought into the Church, since the candles of the altar are the primary symbol of Christ.

*Aisle Runners* Because the Cathedral floor is a slick surface and there is a danger of tripping, we do not allow the use of aisle runners.

*Bride's Room* A bride's room is available for the convenience of the bride and her attendants. Boxes, paper and personal belongings must be removed immediately after the ceremony. We are not responsible for lost or misplaced articles.

*Photographs* Photographs and videotapes of your wedding can bring back memories for many years to come, but they can also serve as a distraction for everyone involved if proper etiquette is not followed. If you plan to have photographs taken, or have the ceremony videotaped, you are asked to give the photographer a copy of the attached Policy for Photographers. NOTE: Any photographer or video technician who becomes disruptive or in any way violates the guidelines will be invited to leave.

*Flowers* Flowers are not permitted on top of the Altar of Sacrifice, but can be placed to the side of the altar and at other places in the sanctuary which are not in spaces used by the ministers or the bridal party. Any flowers are considered donations to the church and cannot be removed after the wedding. Only fresh flowers or greenery are allowed in the Church for weddings or other celebrations. Tape, adhesive materials, nails or tacks cannot be used on the carpet or pews. Under no circumstances may furniture or other liturgical objects in the Cathedral be moved from their locations to accommodate flowers or other decorations. Remember that you are responsible for removing all decorations, (flowers excepted) from both inside and outside the Cathedral. (You may arrange with the Wedding Coordinator to do this for you for an additional fee. If required, a fee for cleaning and/or repair will be assessed.) Please give your florist a copy of the attached Policy for Florists and Flower Designers.

*Altar Servers* Altar servers enhance the beauty and flow of your wedding. Should you wish to include altar servers in your celebration, we will provide them (two of them). If you have relatives or friends whom you would like to serve at your wedding, please let us know beforehand so that we can make the necessary preparations. A stipend for each server is required. (Please refer to the Schedule of Fees.)

*Sacristan* A sacristan is always present to set up the Cathedral prior to the rehearsal and the wedding and to prepare the altar vessels for the priest. A stipend is required. (Please refer to the Schedule of Fees.)

*Ushers* It is helpful if you choose family members or friends to serve as ushers to seat guests. Ushers should be instructed to seat guests in the front section of the church as much as possible.

*Ring Bearers and Flower Girls* Certainly, the day of your wedding is one that will hold wonderful memories for you as the years unfold. With this in mind, we ask that Ring Bearers and Flower Girls be between the ages of five and nine years. Older children may be included as Junior Bride's Maids.

*The Wedding Party* Please note that the wedding party can include no more than ten couples, in addition to the Bride and Groom.

*Printed Order of Service* An Order of Service for an individual wedding liturgy is an excellent participation aid for guests, some of whom may not be Catholic and thus unfamiliar with the liturgical celebration. It is the responsibility of the couple to secure the necessary copyright permissions. (Check with the Office of Liturgical Music for more information on copyright permissions.) An Order of Service typically provides an outline of the service, words and music to those parts which the congregation is expected to sing and speak, directions and explanations of unfamiliar items, and an attractive appearance which contributes to the beauty of the liturgy. The printed Order of Service, if used, must be approved by the Office of Liturgical Music or by a Cathedral priest, and the cost is always the responsibility of the couple.