

# **Marriage Preparation and Wedding Policies**



**St. Anne Catholic Church  
Grants Pass, Oregon**

*www.stannechurch.com*  
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Dear Newly Engaged,

First of all, Congratulations! This time of preparation can be a wonderful time of discovery as well as a stressful time of planning. In order to help you in the best possible way, this booklet has been developed so that you may be able to understand more fully the Sacrament of Marriage as well as the many details that you will likely need to consider as your special day draws near.

As the stress of all the preparation becomes apparent, it is important to keep your focus on the things that matter most. So often nonessential things (ie. the site of the reception, the wedding dress, or the kind of decorations used) can drive the bulk of the planning process. In so many ways, this is difficult to avoid. Yet, it is important to remember that the two most important things for your marriage are:

1. Your preparation, and
2. the actual celebration of the wedding.

It is these two priorities that are the focal points of St. Anne marriage preparation process. It is our hope that this process does not become a series of “jumping through hoops” but is an effective part of your journey towards a life of Christian marriage.

So in the spirit of offering you useful information as well as answers to common questions, you are encouraged to keep this booklet handy.

God bless you!

Fr. William Holtzinger  
Pastor

Maureen Hutcheson  
Wedding Coordinator

## **When should we contact the parish?**

The couple must contact the pastor or parochial vicar at least six months in advance of the date for which they hope to celebrate their wedding. Only the pastor, parochial vicar, or parish secretary may book the date. Dates will be reserved only *after* the priest has had sufficient opportunity to meet with the engaged couple in order to take care of necessary paperwork and to arrange for their participation in a marriage preparation program. Engaged couples should secure their date with the church *before* making commitments with caterers, reception halls, etc. Again, this may be difficult as the reception plans can easily overshadow the marriage prep., but you are urged to resist this temptation as it can create more problems later on. Remember that the wedding is more important than the reception.

We do not recommend a Catholic wedding for anyone who is not living his or her Catholic faith. If one person of the couple is not regularly participating at Mass or participating periodically in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we respect your right to believe that way, but suggest you reconsider your desire for a Catholic wedding.

## **What does it mean to live the Sacrament of Marriage?**

Marriage is a vocation, that is, a life-response driven by a call from God. “The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1603). It is not just a human institution despite the many variations that it has held within history.

In the Roman Catholic Church, marriage is recognized as a Sacrament, that is, a practice identified by Jesus whereby the couple imitate the life of the Divine in a committed, faithful, and fruitful bond of love. Quite literally, the couple make Christ present in their very lives as husband and wife. This presence enriches their lives, the lives of their children, and the lives of the Christian community. Thus, this Sacrament means more than a wedding ceremony; it designates the lifelong relationship of husband and wife. Marriage is not so much something that a couple receives as something a couple becomes. It follows that marriage has enduring significance for the entire membership of the Church. It is not exclusively or even primarily a private matter having to do with the couple’s welfare. As a sacrament, the couple make a covenant between themselves and Christ. When two people marry, it becomes an important moment for the Church community and the Church has a responsibility to guide couples in preparation for life together.

## What kind of preparation is needed?

Your marriage is the most significant life decision you may make in your life. As such we want to offer you the best opportunities to discover who you are as a married couple. Therefore, advance preparation is required of every couple wishing to be married in the Catholic Church.

## Preparation Process

Preparation programs are mandatory for every couple wishing to be married in the Catholic Church. The seriousness of entering a Christian marriage requires the utmost diligence and willingness to be prepared in the best possible way. We recommend that you keep track of your own progress using our Marriage Preparation Checklist (available for download). Couples being married at St. Anne must complete the following:

**1.) Initial Meeting with the Priest.** This is a “get to know you” session and a chance to discuss the marriage preparation process. The priest will help you fill out the initial paperwork to begin the process, describe the preparation process itself, answer any questions, and offer you advice as to how to journey towards your new life together. At this meeting you should receive the book, *Together for Life*, which will help you begin planning the details of the wedding liturgy.

**2.) Contact the Marriage Coordinator.** After meeting with the Priest, couples will need to make contact with the Marriage Coordinator (see “People You May Need to Contact” on p. 11). The Marriage Preparation Coordinator will assist you in the preparation process by administering the FOCCUS Inventory (see #4 below), connecting you with a Sponsor Couple, tracking your progress in the preparation process, and notify you of important meetings. The Marriage Coordinator is required to be present at the rehearsal and wedding day as well. Therefore, their availability will influence the date you may wish to have the wedding itself. The Marriage Coordinator will assist the couple in planning the details of the wedding ceremony (flowers, music, candles, etc.) to make sure that what you have planned will happen.

**3.) Take FOCCUS Inventory.** The FOCCUS Inventory is not a test, but a recognized discussion tool used by couples to gain insights into the partner they’ve chosen to marry, learn more about themselves, and learn more about their relationship. After

taking the FOCCUS, administered by the Marriage Coordinator, the response sheets are mailed off to be scored. Within two weeks, the results are then returned to the Church whereupon the couple will be contacted. From there, the couple will be matched up with a Sponsor Couple who will facilitate several conversations about the results of the FOCCUS Inventory.

**4.) Meet with a Sponsor Couple.** A Sponsor Couple will be assigned to you to discuss the results of the FOCCUS inventory. These couples have been chosen because of their example of Christian marriage and they have been trained in discussing FOCCUS. Total time with the Sponsor Couple will be about 4-6 hours.

**5.) Theology of the Body Workshop.** Twice a year (Fall and Winter) this two hour workshop is given at the parish for all engaged couples. Professionally trained instructors in NFP offer a more in-depth reflection on the Church's understanding of sexuality and it's meaning in marriage. Check the bulletin and verbal announcements at Mass for specific dates and times.

**6.) NFP (Natural Family Planning) Workshop Series.** In recent years, scientific investigation of a woman's natural fertility cycle has led to a simple, safe, reliable and natural means for a couple to carefully plan their family size. Information about resources for NFP classes can be found in the back of this booklet. Do not put off these classes. It is in your best interest to begin right away in order to become comfortable and accurate with the process. **Note that this is a series of class spanning four months.**

**7.) Engaged Encounter.** This weekend program provides a couple with an atmosphere and format to deeply explore their relationship and dialogue honestly about their future lives together. Contact information can be found in the back of this booklet.

**8. Complete All Paperwork.** As you journey through the preparation process, you will see that various forms will need to be completed: The First is the "Freedom to Marry" form which is akin to an affidavit that the couple is able to enter into marriage. A total of two witness will be needed. A recently created (originals not accepted) baptism certificate or affidavit is needed for all Christian persons engaged. Dispensations, permissions, annulments may also need to be completed (see priest for details). The civil marriage license is best acquired one week before the wedding. Again, see the priest for details.

**9.) Rehearsal.** You will need to schedule a rehearsal at the same time you reserve the Church for the wedding. The rehearsal is intended to familiarize the wedding party with the procession, the sanctuary, ushering, and other elements of the celebration. This will be lead by the priest/deacon and the Marriage Coordinator.

**10.) Sacrament of Reconciliation.** Catholics can benefit from celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) before their wedding. It is a time not only to examine your conscience, but to seek to enter you marriage as selflessly and as spiritually healed as possible. Engaged couples are strongly encouraged to celebrate Reconciliation before their wedding.

## Questions to Consider

Due to the seriousness of the Sacrament of Marriage and lifelong commitment it entails, we invite you to consider the following:

**1) Am I prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage?** Catholic faith testifies that marriage is a serious commitment with rights and responsibilities. As a Catholic you have the right to receive the Sacraments while the Church is obliged to uphold the dignity of the Sacraments. Therefore, it is our greatest desire that all couples would take seriously the preparation process. Being engaged is a wonderful time of serious discernment. It is not a failure to decide to delay or cancel a wedding if serious doubts exist for a couple. Good preparation is the best approach for lifelong decisions.

**2) Am I a practicing Catholic?** A practicing Catholic joins the Christian community for Sunday Mass on a weekly basis, has a clear understanding of the Catholic faith, and is actively involved in the activities and programs of the parish community.

**3) Am I a parishioner?** A parishioner is a registered and practicing member of St. Anne worshipping community.

If any of these questions cause doubt in your mind, we strongly suggest that you begin the reflection with your loved one and discern if you are ready to begin the marriage preparation process at this time.

# Documents You will Need

1) **“Freedom to Marry” Forms.** The engaged couple provides information regarding identity, status in the Church, and freedom to marry. The parish provides a form for the parents to complete, confirming the information provided by the couple. If parents are deceased, a close friend or relative who has known the person since age 12 may complete the form. Any needed permission forms or dispensations are discussed at this time as well. These forms are filled out at the initial meeting with the priest.

2) **Baptismal Certificates.** Catholics and any baptized Christians must provide recent copies of their baptismal certificates. By “recent” is meant within the last six months. These copies can be obtained by contacting your church of baptism.

3) **Civil Marriage License.** The couple must provide a valid Oregon marriage license to the parish office one week prior to the wedding date.

4.) **Permissions/Dispensations/Annulments.** Any needed permission forms or dispensations that are needed will be discussed and completed during the initial meeting with the priest. If one or both of the engaged persons have been previously married, a declaration of nullity (think annulment) from the Catholic Church is necessary. Ask Fr. Bill for more details if you think may apply to you. Delay in receiving these forms will delay the wedding date.

## The Wedding Ceremony

The celebration of Christian marriage is an opportunity for the whole community of faith to experience the Lord through powerful symbols: bread and wine, spoken and sung the Word, light, and the rings. In the love of the husband and wife, we come to see a reflection of God’s love for us, the people of God. These signs and symbols are invitations to us to respond in faith to the Lord. It is for this reason that careful planning should take place in the selection of appropriate readings, music, etc. As you plan your wedding ceremony, there are several things to keep in mind. First, those attending are never to be considered merely guests to be entertained. The liturgical assembly is called to a role of active participation in prayer and song. Secondly, when choosing readings, songs, meditations, or other music, always ask yourself, “Can we pray these words?”

The most essential elements are the proclamation of the Word of God and your response in the form of the marriage vows. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is generally not included when both parties cannot receive the Eucharist. All details should enhance your own and your guests' experience of the essential elements. The main consideration should be: "How will this or that detail help us, our families and friends enter into a prayerful celebration of God's love mirrored for them in our marriage?" With that in mind, we hope that you will find the following guidelines helpful.

A planning guide entitled *Together for Life* will be provided. It will assist you in choosing readings and prayers for the liturgy. In addition we offer a list with some suggestions:

**1) Setting a Date and Time of Wedding:** In order to secure a wedding date, you must meet with the priest, the Marriage Coordinator, and then finally consult the parish secretary in order to make sure that all calendars coincide. Then you must pay the rental fee for the church in order to secure the date in our calendar. This is done with the parish secretary as well. Weddings are scheduled on Friday between 5 PM and 7 PM or Saturdays between 9 AM and 2 PM. Because Reconciliation is at 4:00 PM on Saturday, please have your guests withdraw from the church by 3 PM.

**2) Place:** Custom provides for Catholics to be married at a Mass in a church. The Marriage Rite takes place after the Gospel and the homily. If this is to be an interfaith marriage, or if the majority of your anticipated guests are not practicing Catholics, we suggest having the ceremony without Mass.

**3) Decorations in the Church and Sanctuary.** Simplicity is most effective and leaves attention focused on the celebration. The altar and pulpit should get first attention. No flowers are to be set directly upon the altar. Any decoration should be carefully placed so as not to block the liturgical action or your guests' participation in what is taking place. It is customary to leave some flowers in the church for Saturday and Sunday Masses. Only fresh flowers or plants are to be used.

**4) Entrance Procession.** Good liturgical and ceremonial practice dictates a single procession. The celebrant and the entire wedding party enter from the back of the church, as at Sunday Mass. We encourage both sets of parents to accompany the groom and bride in procession, and suggest that the attendants enter as couples. There is, of course, flexibility in planning your procession, which you may discuss with the celebrant.

**5) Family Participation:** There are several opportunities in the liturgy for parents and family members to be involved in this special occasion, including proclaiming the Scripture readings and leading the Prayers of the Faithful. You may also wish to involve your sponsor couple. Please assign the readings (except the Gospel) to a family member or friend who will proclaim the Word with reverence.

**6) Vows.** *Together for Life* lists several options for wedding vows. You might also consider writing your own vows, so long as you maintain the core vows. Any changes must be approved by the celebrant.

**7) Program.** Printing a program of the wedding liturgy is an excellent gesture to aid in participation, especially for non-Catholic guests.

**8) Music.** Before planning for any music or musicians at your wedding, you must think about what you are planning. The guidelines for music at weddings is the same as those for Sunday Mass, whether instrumental, classical or “folk” style. All music used in church should be prayerful in its tone and should be carefully chosen to match the various moments of the wedding ceremony. The priest or pastoral musician can assist you in making these choices. Taped music is not appropriate. Popular romantic songs are usually inappropriate either because they don’t say enough, or because they contradict the Christian understanding of committed life. Singing at least one or more hymns, songs, or responses with the entire assembly is the ideal. Active participation, not entertainment, is the goal. *Any music not in our music issue or Missal must be approved by the music coordinator and the celebrant .*

a) Prelude music, as guests are being seated, can be instrumental or sung. If the organ is used, light, bright classical music is quite effective in setting an appropriate mood.

b) Processional music should be instrumental. Your guests’ attention is focused on the wedding party, not on words to a song. The same applies to the recessional (march out).

c) Solos may be used before the ceremony, during the Preparation of the Gifts, or after the exchange of rings, and during Communion if there is a Mass celebrated.

d) Congregational Singing is appropriate during the preparation of the Gifts, or for Communion meditation. The Alleluia before the Gospel should

be sung, if a cantor is employed, also the Responsorial Psalm and other Acclamations.

e) The Lord's Prayer is the prayer of the whole assembly, and may be the only part in which most non-Catholics are comfortable joining in. It is never appropriate as a solo in the liturgy, but if the majority of guests are Catholic, it may be sung by all.

f) Cantors, organists and lectors are available for hire from the parish if you need them.

**9) Children in the Wedding Party:** Children are welcome to be part of your wedding, and based on prior experience, we have found that very young children often create unforeseen issues during the ceremony. Therefore, the minimum age for participation is 5 years old.

**10) Pew Decorations:** We suggest using plastic hangars or large rubber bands, which do not mar the pews. No tape on any wood surfaces within the church should be used.

**11) Candles:** Candelabra and other sanctuary candles are welcome (dripleless only, please). A *unity candle*, though not liturgical in nature, may be used during the ceremony. It is not one of the primary symbols of the wedding liturgy and should not overshadow the primary symbols--the giving of consent and the exchange of rings.

**12) Local and Cultural Customs:** Local and cultural customs, such as the presentation of the *arras* (coins) and the rosary (lasso), are welcome at appropriate times during the Mass (see *Juntos Para Toda La Vida* for details). As with the unity candle, these should not overshadow the primary symbols of the liturgy.

**13) Photography:** Photography and videotaping during the ceremony are permitted so long as they are not intrusive. If you take formal pictures in the church, we insist that it be done quietly, quickly, and with respect due the House of God, preferably before the service. During the service, ask the photographer to be discreet and nicely dressed. Videotaping is permitted with the same reservations. The use of flash or extra lighting equipment is discouraged. You are asked to inform your photographer so they will have all the information they need to have a successful day.

**14) No rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. is permitted** at any time on church grounds. We might suggest a suitable mention in your invitations.

**15) Alcohol:** Use of alcoholic beverages before the rehearsal or wedding is strictly forbidden. Both events require your full attention.

**16) Dressing Facilities:** Space can be made available for the wedding party. Please appoint someone to have these areas cleaned out of all personal articles immediately after the ceremony.

**17) Clean up:** Please designate someone to stay after the wedding to tidy up both the church and bride and groom's room. Dispose of all trash in the large bin south of the Church Building.

**18) Parish Center & Receptions:** Questions about using the Parish Center for your reception should be directed to the secretary. Call our secretary at the Main Office at 541-476-2240 for information, forms and fees.

**19) Fees and Offerings:** The Marriage Preparation Fee must be paid by the time you meet with the Marriage Coordinator to take the FOCCUS. This can be either paid in advance at the office or given to the Marriage Preparation Coordinator at the time of the FOCCUS. The Church Rental Fee must be paid in order to secure a date for the wedding. Wedding dates cannot be reserved without paying the church rental fee. Catholic priests and deacons do not "charge" a fee for officiating at weddings, but if the couple wishes to give an appreciation gift, you are welcome to do so. We ask that you please designate it as such.

# St. Anne Fee Schedule

<b>Marriage Preparation Fee</b> FOCCUS Inventory, books, & misc. materials during preparation process (Note: This fee applies to St. Anne part of marriage preparation and <u>does not</u> include fees for other services such as NFP or Marriage Encounter, etc.)	\$50
<b>Keyboard Accompanist &amp; Soloist/Cantor</b> Paid directly to the person	Fees vary
<b>Church Reservation Fee*</b>	\$150 (in-parish) \$200 (out-of-parish) + \$50 cleaning deposit
Also see Rental Policy in the parish office See "Am I a registered Member" above	
<b>Parish Hall Rental</b> (optional) See Kathy Zahniser in the main office	Fees vary

## Other Fees

<b>Engaged Encounter Fees</b> Contact Engaged Encounter for fees	Fees vary
<b>Natural Family Planning</b> Contact the local NFP coordinators for fees	Fees vary

\* Church Reservation Fee may be waived if ceremony to take place in an already scheduled liturgy.

# People You May Need to Contact

**Liturgy Planning:** Fr. William Holtzinger  
*wholtzinger@stannechurch.com* 503-357-2989

**Wedding Coordinator:** Maureen Hutcheson 541-474-2711  
• FOCCUS Inventory  
• Wedding Rehearsal & Wedding Day  
*thutcheson1@charter.net*

**Music Selection/help:** Rita Hanks

**Church/Parish Hall Rental:** Kathy Zahniser 541-476-2240  
*kzahniser@stannechurch.com*

**Engaged Encounter:** *oregonengagedencounter.org*  
Michael and Nancy Fisher 503-466-2224  
*fishers042@live.com*

## Natural Family Planning:

### **Northwest Family Services**

nwfs.org or more directly  
[nwfs.org/couples-a-singles/natural-family-planning.html](http://nwfs.org/couples-a-singles/natural-family-planning.html)  
6200 SE King Rd., Portland 503-546-6377  
Online classes available

### **Couple to Couple League** *ccli.org*

- Kevin and Lisa Mangers (Salem) 503-363-4589  
*stvyam@hotmail.com*
- Joshua & Stephanie Sanders (Brownsville) 503-401-8751  
*sandejosgirl@yahoo.com*

# St. Anne Catholic Church

## Marriage Preparation Process Check List

Names of Engaged Couple: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Addresses: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed date for Wedding: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time for Rehearsal: Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Marriage Prep Check List (Enter date completed):

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial Meeting with Priest
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Contact the Marriage Coordinator
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Take FOCCUS Inventory
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with Sponsor Couple
  - \_\_\_\_\_ FOCCUS Interview #1
  - \_\_\_\_\_ FOCCUS Interview #2
  - \_\_\_\_\_ FOCCUS Interview #3
  - \_\_\_\_\_ FOCCUS Interview #4 (optional)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Theology of the Body Workshop
6. \_\_\_\_\_ N.F.P. Classes (Attach certificate of completion)
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Engaged Encounter (Attach certificate of completion)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Rehearsal
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Complete all Needed Paperwork (see below)
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Sacrament of Reconciliation

### Completed Paperwork

"Freedom to Marry" forms \_\_\_\_\_ (bride) \_\_\_\_\_ (groom)  
Baptism Certificate, recent \_\_\_\_\_ (bride) \_\_\_\_\_ (groom)  
Dispensations/Permissions needed \_\_\_\_\_  
Annulment documentation (if needed) \_\_\_\_\_ (bride) \_\_\_\_\_ (groom)  
Civil Marriage License \_\_\_\_\_ (needed one week prior to wedding)