

*St. Joan of Arc Parish Family*

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*St. Joan of Arc*



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# MARRIAGE PREPARATION PACKET

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## Congratulations on your Engagement!

*“I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and honor you all the days of my life.”*

These are the words that you will speak to one another on the day of your wedding. They echo the very same promise that God makes to each one of us. As a sacrament, your marriage is a sign to the whole Church of the very real and loving presence of God. You are therefore called to love each other as God loves us: faithfully, freely, joyfully, passionately, patiently and permanently.

As a faith community, we share your joy and applaud your decision to marry at St. Joan of Arc Parish. We offer you our support and we will do our best to help you prepare not only for a beautiful wedding day but also for a successful marriage. A wedding day is a very important day in life. A marriage is a lifetime.

Because we care deeply about your relationship, we ask you to be part of the Marriage Preparation Program outlined in this packet.

We sincerely hope that you find the guidelines and policies included helpful, as together, we prepare a wedding celebration that is joyful, reverent and truly meaningful. Once you have read through the packet, please sign the WEDDING CONFIRMATION SHEET (it's the pink one!) and return it in person to the parish secretary. Thank you.

Please be assured of our prayers during this happy time!

Priests, Deacons, and Parish Staff

## WEDDING GUIDELINES

1. The first step in planning your wedding is to meet with our parish secretary to schedule your wedding date. Weddings are scheduled with respect to the couple's wishes and the availability of the Church building and parish ministers. We ask you to secure the date and time with our secretary before making other arrangements. **No date can be set without making an initial contact with the parish secretary.**

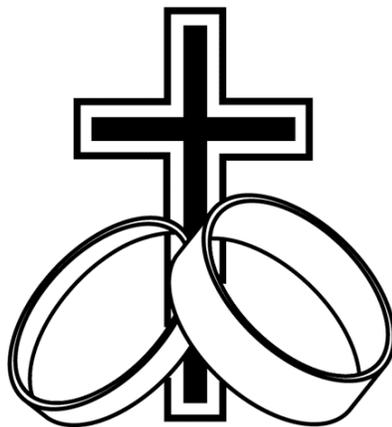
A priest or deacon will meet with you and complete the Pre-nuptial inquiry form. You will receive a call from the priest or deacon to set up your first meeting. During this first get-together you will receive an explanation of the Church's guidelines for marriage preparation and an understanding of its purpose.

You will be asked to attend a marriage formation program for engaged couples called **Pre-Cana Conference**. This program is offered in many parishes throughout the year. You may attend Pre-Cana here in our parish or in any other parish. Please register on line at: [dioceseoftrenton.org/go/precana](http://dioceseoftrenton.org/go/precana)

Six months prior to your wedding, please secure the following documents:

- a. **Pre-nuptial inquiry** (to be filled up with the assigned priest or deacon)
- b. **Recent baptismal certificate** (if non-Catholic, an original document or some other proof of baptism is fine)
- c. **Confirmation certificate** (Catholics only)
- d. **Marriage Preparation Program Certificate** (Pre-Cana)
- e. **Needed dispensations and permissions** (if asked for)

- ) . At the beginning of your preparation you will be asked to take the **FOCCUS** Pre-Marriage Inventory, which is a survey that facilitates open communication about various marital and premarital issues that are important to your relationship. The parish secretary or the priest/deacon will make arrangements for you to complete the FOCCUS on line. Once it is completed, the assigned priest/deacon will discuss the answers with you.
  
- \*. Please contact Sister Stephanie Cymerman, our director of music, to begin your music planning. Sr. Stephanie will assist you in choosing appropriate **music for the ceremony**. You may contact her at: 856-983-0258 or 856-985-5461. E-mail: stephaniessj@aol.com.
  
- + . Seven weeks prior to the wedding please schedule an appointment either with Evesham Township or the county of residence for either party in order to obtain a **marriage license**. (See the enclosed letter from Evesham Township.) You must deliver your marriage license to the parish office the week before the wedding or bring it with you at the day of the rehearsal.
  
- , . Four to six months prior to your wedding, please call the parish secretary to schedule a **wedding rehearsal** date and time. Rehearsals are normally the evening before the wedding.



## SPECIAL QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

- **Will we have a Mass or Ceremony?**

You have an option to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage at either a Nuptial Mass or a Nuptial Ceremony. The decision to have a Ceremony or Mass does not have to be made immediately, but should follow a discussion with the priest or deacon working with you.

- **What should we wear at the wedding?**

There is no specific dress code for a wedding. A simple and modest dress will be appropriate for the sacred environment and the sacredness of the occasion. Contrary to what is seen on television and magazines, wedding attire does not have to be expensive.

- **How much does it cost to get married at a Catholic church?**

The Church of St. Joan of Arc does not “charge” for sacraments. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we all should be faithful and good stewards of our time, talents and treasures. Therefore, we encourage you prayerfully consider making a donation to the church in gratitude to God for all the many blessings you have received. Your gift will help us to continue the mission of Jesus Christ – that is to bring the joy of God’s love to all we encounter. In addition, you may want to consider making a donation to another charity of your choice in order to share your blessings with the poor.

- **Are there other costs?**

While there is no charge for the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage, there are other expenses related to the wedding ceremony, such as fees for organist, cantor/vocalist, altar servers, and a rehearsal assistant. Please see the following list of fees:

▪ Organist	\$150.00
▪ Cantor/Vocalist	\$150.00
▪ Rehearsal Assistant	\$50
▪ Altar Server	\$10
▪ Church Donation	\$Discretion of couple
▪ Priest/Deacon	\$Discretion of couple

- **Flowers and Decorations in Church**

We ask that flowers and other decorations for the wedding be in keeping with the liturgical season. If the church is already decorated for a particular season, those decorations will remain. So, for example, if you are getting married in the Christmas season, you better love poinsettias! It is a good idea, therefore, to check with the priest/deacon who is preparing you; it may not be necessary for you to purchase flowers. Sometimes, if there is another wedding that day, you can share expenses.

Pew decorations such as bows and ribbons are fine. Please, no tacks or tape!

- **Photographers and Videographers**

You are welcome to have your ceremony photographed and/or videotaped. Photographers should consult the priest or deacon on the day of the wedding (prior to the celebration's beginning.) Time permitting, photographs may be taken in church after the wedding.

- **Previous Marriage**

If you or your intended spouse have been previously married and divorced, a church annulment will be necessary before a wedding date can be scheduled. If your former spouse is deceased, a death certificate is necessary.

- **Sacrament of Reconciliation**

If you would like to receive the sacrament of reconciliation before your wedding, we recommend to do it a week before the ceremony. Confessions are heard every Saturday at 4 pm or by appointment with a priest.

- **Wedding Procession**

The wedding is a liturgical celebration. The processional symbolically represents two things: the couple's transition from their individual lives to the union of marriage and the wedding attendants' support of the union by taking part in the same walk. Therefore, like all processions in our church, the wedding procession is led by a cross bearer. Normally, the cross bearer is followed by deacon, priest, groom with his parents, mother of the bride (if not escorting bride), bridesmaids escorted by groomsmen, bride with father/parents.

- **Readers**

We invite you to ask family members or friends to proclaim God's Word and the general intercessions during the nuptial Mass or Ceremony. This is an important ministry; please carefully choose readers who will proclaim the Scriptures boldly and sincerely.

- **Rehearsal**

Rehearsals are an important part of preparation before a wedding. The rehearsal helps the wedding proceed smoothly and participants to be more relaxed and confident. Unless otherwise noted, the wedding rehearsal will be normally held at the church on the evening before the ceremony at a time arranged by the couple with the parish secretary and then confirmed with the priest or deacon who will be officiating the ceremony. In many cases, a rehearsal assistant will be assigned by the parish to conduct the rehearsal.

The rehearsal should last approximately one hour. Please encourage members of the wedding party to be prompt and allow enough time for rush hour traffic. The following should be present for the rehearsal – the Couple, Best Man, Maid/Matron of Honor, bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls, ring bearers, parents, grandparents, and readers. Participants are reminded that the rehearsal is in preparation for a worshipful celebration, so conduct and dress should be in keeping with a reverent atmosphere.

All items the couple is providing (wedding programs or booklets, bubbles, decorations) should be brought to the wedding rehearsal along with the marriage license and fees. The items will be stored in the deacon's closet.

- **Wedding Rehearsal Assistant**

If a rehearsal assistant is assigned, it will be her responsibility to conduct the wedding rehearsal, as well as ensure all is set up and prepared on the day of the wedding. The rehearsal assistant ensures that the Wedding Liturgy proceeds smoothly and in an orderly fashion, according to our parish guidelines.

- **Times for Wedding**

You may schedule a wedding at our parish at the following times, upon availability:

Friday evenings:	between 3 pm and 5 pm
Saturdays:	11 am, 1 pm, 3 pm.

Each wedding will be allotted two hours: 30 minutes before the scheduled wedding time, 1 hour for the ceremony, and 30 minutes for pictures afterwards. So, for example, if your wedding begins at 3 pm, you have the church from 2:30 pm until 4:30 pm.

- **Visiting Clergy**

Visiting clergy who are a family member or friend of the couple are always welcome at our parish to witness their marriage. We do ask visiting priests or deacons to forward to the pastor of St. Joan of Arc a letter of good standing from their bishop or religious superior requesting delegation. If the visiting clergy is also going to do all the marriage preparation and paperwork, he must inform the pastor in his letter.

- **Runners**

Our aisle is sloped and carpeted. Runners can easily tear and become dangerous. Therefore, the use of runners of any kind cannot be used here.

- **Rice, bird seed, etc.**

We kindly ask that you refrain from throwing rice (it's food) or bird seed (it's a mess.) Both are also safety hazards on the steps. Be creative!

- **Unity Candle**

Many people are surprised to learn that the unity candle is not an official part of the Catholic Ceremony. It is a beautiful tradition in some cultures, but in the Catholic tradition, the married couple are themselves the primary sign. Therefore, we will not use a unity candle during a wedding Mass. If a couple feels strongly about using it, we recommend it be included in the reception as part of the invocation to signify that "two have become one" and as part of the blessing before the meal.