



## MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

These guidelines have been prepared for you, the engaged couple, as you consider God's call to married life and to make arrangements for your wedding ceremony at Holy Family Church. This is a happy and blessed time in your lives. The staff and people of Holy Family Parish offer you their congratulations on your engagement and their best wishes for a joy-filled wedding day and a truly happy married life.

We hope these guidelines will answer some of your questions and relieve your worries. We offer you our support and assistance in every way possible. Our aim is to enable you to make the most of this important time to grow as a couple in a deeper love for God and for each other. Our prayer is that you will be able to focus on the challenges as well as the joys that lie ahead.

The United States culture has a multibillion dollar industry with weddings. The average wedding is now beyond \$27,000. Excess and vanity are never the center of a sacrament; Jesus is. Half of all marriages end in divorce; one out of five, if married in a church or synagogue end in divorce. In following Christ we are not statistics but the Church in action. The stronger your marriage; the stronger the Church. The domestic church is the home you are to build on rock.

A wedding is a day. Your marriage is a lifetime. We want both to be holy and wonderful. During your engagement, a good rule of process for these is to focus your first six months on the relationship/marriage; focus the second six months on the wedding. Even though these overlap, the engagement period does have stages of growth. This is natural order.

Marriage is based in good and holy communication. Communication must be good with God, within you, and with each other. The Church has introduced the period of preparation following the arranged marriage times of society. In our post-arranged marriage society, people dated and married. The Church has used this preparation time to reintroduce the engagement journey with the couple.

A Roman Catholic wedding is awesomely beautiful. It is simple and straight forward: public consent and vows. Once. Forever. The bride and groom are the presiders reigning over the day in God's love made manifest.

Weddings in our churches have become secularly orchestrated. We are doing Hollywood weddings and Las Vegas chapel weddings in Catholic Church buildings. Weddings in our culture have become soap-opera style. In using these models to imitate our clothing choices, lifestyle, music, and partying manners, we lose our sacramental focus.

Beyond the long aisle and stained-glass windows, is a longer aisle of married love in the Eternal Bridegroom. Bless this journey of grace in the holy sacrament of matrimony in



your Roman Catholic Church. This is God’s time and we are honored to be part of it all with you at Holy Family Parish. May God bless you with His grace and peace!

## A Wedding is a Day, Marriage is a Lifetime.

### **The Sacrament of Marriage**

The Sacrament of Marriage is an invitation from God for a man and woman to deepen their experience of the love of God by joining in a covenant relationship with each other. As a sacrament, their relationship must be an “outward sign,” or give witness, to others as a faithful, life–long union which is open to bringing life into the world. The vocation of marriage requires that you enter into this sacrament with freedom and with full knowledge of the challenges, responsibilities and joys of married life.

This sacrament is the beginning of your life–long commitment and it is rooted in love of God and supported by the community of faith. The exchange of marriage vows in the sacrament is a pledge to love, respect and nurture each other all the days of your life together.

### **Meetings With the Marriage Ministry Team**

The marriage preparation program at Holy Family Church will consist of approximately four or five meetings with the priest. After you initially contact the parish office expressing interest in celebrating your wedding at Holy Family, you will be contacted by the priest to arrange to meet at the parish office at a mutually convenient time. Because your time of preparation will also include programs outside the parish, like Engaged Encounter, it is important that you allow yourself enough time (four to six months) to benefit the most from these sessions. Your lives are very busy at this point, yet it is important that you devote time to talking about and thinking about being emotionally and spiritually ready to make the serious commitment that you want your marriage to be.

Marriage preparation meetings consist of one engaged couple and a priest and are completely confidential. They are based on mutual respect and trust.

### **Marriage Preparation Sessions**

These may vary in number and length. Here is just a sample outline:

#### **Session 1. Initial Meeting**

This will include completion of the diocesan questionnaire by each of you. The questionnaire consists of the gathering of basic needed information about you and about your freedom to enter into a Roman Catholic marriage at this time. You will be asked to supply certificates of Baptism and Confirmation from the church or churches at which you were baptized and confirmed. The Baptism certificate must be dated within the past six months.



### **Session 2. FOCCUS Inventory**

At the second meeting we will discuss the value of open communication in a relationship receiving results of the FOCCUS Inventory. The FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study) Inventory gives you insights into your relationship and provides topics for discussion in follow-up meetings.

### **Session 3. FOCCUS Results**

We will discuss the results of your FOCCUS inventory. This is only an assessment for you of how you as a couple face and discuss important issues critical to a healthy and happy marriage.

### **Session 4. Follow-up Session**

At a follow-up meeting we will discuss any concerns you want to bring up about the FOCCUS, Engaged Encounter, changes in your relationship, how you view marriage, issues surrounding sexuality, and your faith life now and in the future.

Throughout the four sessions we will continue to discuss how we can make the liturgy of the Sacrament of Marriage meaningful to you and expressive of your faith. We will talk about the rite of marriage, the movement that takes place during the ceremony.

### **Parish Policy regarding Church Use for Catholic Ceremonies**

Holy Family Church facilities are available to Catholics who are presently registered members of Holy Family Parish or who are sons or daughters of presently registered members of the parish; also, to practicing Catholics who are not registered members of Holy Family, but who live within the boundaries of the parish. This happens only after they have actually registered and will have been registered for a period of six months or more before the proposed wedding and have given evidence of their intentions to participate in the life of the parish. Non-Holy Family members may get married here with written permission of their pastor. They may do the marriage preparation in their home parish or at Holy Family Parish.

### **The Marriage Rite of the Roman Catholic Church**

Holy Family Parish offers you the beauty and simplicity of a marriage ceremony conducted according to the Roman Catholic Rite of the sacrament of Matrimony. The rite is part of a centuries old tradition of recognizing God's presence to us in the sacraments. The rite allows us to focus on the sacramental, grace-giving nature of the sacrament.

Our culture is experiencing Hollywood style weddings in celebrity clothing using Roman Catholic Church buildings. Additions to the form of the rite, then, clouds the focus. Over the years, traditions or customs such as lighting a unity candle, the exchange of roses, and bringing flowers to Mary have crept into the marriage ceremony. These non-intrinsic



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practices are discouraged during a Catholic wedding. They make the ceremony more theatrical and less liturgical.

For the same reason celebrity–style dress is discouraged. Our clothing reflects our attitude. Church should always be a place of modesty. This is in keeping with the beauty and simplicity of the Catholic rite.

### **Church Environment and Etiquette**

Holy Family Church is a sacred space to the members of the parish who worship here. You are not renting a building. You are using our parish worship space. It is the common gathering point of the faith community who come together here as a family to pray and to worship. An atmosphere of reverence and respect must be maintained in the church at all times. Loud talking, smoking, eating, drinking and boisterous behavior are unacceptable in the church at any time. Your decision to be married in Holy Family Church means that you are on “holy ground” treating it as such.

### **The Wedding Liturgy**

At a Catholic wedding, the bride and the groom are the ministers of the Sacrament. It is in their consent to freely give themselves to one another and in their vows to make their love a life–long commitment that God is present to them in each other. The priest is present only as the Church’s official witness who presides at the ceremony and blesses the couple in their new life together.

### **Bride and Groom are both Catholic**

In the tradition of the Catholic Church, the exchange of vows between two Catholics is to take place within the context of a Mass. A priest will witness the rite. (If one is Catholic in name only not being catechized or communed, the wedding is not the time for First Communion. A Mass would not be appropriate.)

### **One Party is not Catholic**

If one of the parties is not Catholic, the marriage rite outside of Mass is the prescribed norm. This offers the couple being married the opportunity to join two families together at the wedding liturgy without fear of excluding members of the congregation who would not be invited to Holy Communion. A priest will witness the rite.

### **The Ceremony**

The priest will assist you in selecting Scripture readings and prayers that will make your wedding ceremony a beautiful and personal celebration.

You are required to prepare a worship aid or booklet that will enable guests to follow the ceremony. Such a worship aid would introduce the wedding party, participants in the liturgy (priest, lectors, gift bearers, servers, Eucharistic ministers, musicians, etc.) and would include the main parts of the wedding rite. The booklet should be helpful and will



make the guests, especially non-Catholics, feel more welcome. It will also enable all guests to participate more fully in the celebration.

At least a week before the wedding a copy of the program should be submitted to the parish. Do **not** do final printing until it is approved.

### **The Music**

Keep in mind these simple guidelines in selecting your songs and music. No recorded music is permitted in Roman Catholic liturgies. All music is to be sacred Church music. Popular tunes belong at your reception. The priest and the organist will help you with your selections. Schedule a time to meet with them.

Remember that good liturgical music includes the assembly and expresses its joyful prayers for you. Also arrange for and get approval for any instrumentalists or cantors you use.

### **Photographers/Videographers**

The liturgy must be protected as sacred and not become a “Kodak moment.” The lower the profile on photography is kept during the liturgy, the better. Professional photographers and those videotaping should be appropriately dressed and asked to not move around during the liturgy. They are **not** to interfere with or move the furnishings of the church.

Everyone involved must maintain respect for space. Nothing is to be set on the altar. Flash or lights may be used during the service, but discreetly. Photographers/videographers are not allowed in the sanctuary during the service but should stay behind the pew line.

During the processional and recessional, photographs may be taken from the pews by anyone in the congregation.

No cameras of any kind are allowed in the sanctuary during the service. Video cameras should be stationary. A tripod may be set up. No taping of cords to the floor is allowed. No tape on wood is allowed.

### **Florists**

Roman Catholic liturgical norms require that the church environment remain through the liturgical season. That means that altar appointments and floral arrangements may not be moved or removed for a wedding. Seasonal arrangements such as Christmas poinsettias or Easter lilies or flowers and other parts of the environment stay undisturbed.

Other arrangements may be added if you desire. The best placements for flowers are in front of the altar and in front of the ambo (pulpit).

Unity candles are not part of the Roman rite. Their use is encouraged at the reception rather than during the wedding ceremony.



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Ornamentation such as arches or trellises is not permitted because of the integrity of the space and their hampering of mobility. Pew candles are not allowed for safety reasons. For safety and maintenance reasons, aisle runners are not permitted in the church. Pew ornamentation may not be taped. Elastic, clips and pipe cleaners work well.

Your florist is welcome in the church two hours before the wedding. Everything brought in is to be removed immediately following the wedding. If you are leaving floral arrangements for the church, thank you. They may be left in place.

Remember, it is your responsibility to be sure that your photographer and florist adhere to these norms.

### **Church Fees**

The wedding fee is \$250 payable to Holy Family Church. This amount is not refundable. When you pay the fee, the date for your ceremony is entered into the parish calendar. If you cancel the wedding, the amount paid will be converted to a tax-deductible contribution. This fee is the same for both parishioners and non-parishioners.

The fee for music during your wedding liturgy should be paid directly to the organist and cantor before the day of the ceremony. This amount is not included in the above fee to the church. The organist and cantor will discuss fees and services when you meet. If a musician is used who is not the Holy Family Parish organist, a \$50 bench fee will apply.

There is a \$50 fee for the wedding coordinator who will assist you at the rehearsal and be present on the day of your ceremony. This amount is not included in the above fee to the church. This should be paid to the church.

### **Guidelines for Wedding Ceremonies**

The times of scheduled weddings at Holy Family Church are Saturdays at 10:30 am and 2:00 pm. Talk to the priest about other days and times during the week. Weddings are not scheduled during the Lenten season – between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday – or on certain Church feasts.

The church is open to you two hours before the scheduled time and one hour after the service for pictures. Please be considerate of other weddings, Saturday evening Mass, etc. leaving the church on time free of items in the aisles or pews.

### **Wedding Party**

The number of attendants should be no more than six couples, not including the bride and groom. This is in keeping with the sacred nature of the ceremony. Having children in the wedding party, as flower girls or ring bearers, can be a negative experience for the children. This is often too much pressure on a child. If children are in the procession, they may be



placed with an adult and may be seated during the ceremony. Usually five years or older is a safe age for realistic expectations.

### **Head Usher**

Designate a “head usher” from among your ushers to be responsible for your guests and for final details on the day of the ceremony. A job description will be provided.

### **Marriage License**

Your marriage at Holy Family Church is also a legal civil union. You must obtain a marriage license from the Asotin County Clerk to be legally married here. The license should be obtained not more than 60 days before the wedding. Once the license is procured, drop it off at the church office. It must be on file before the rehearsal begins. A priest violates the law if he witnesses a marriage without the license.

Both of you must apply in person for the license. Proper proof of identification and age are required, and there is a cash-only fee to apply. For further information, contact the Clerk’s office at: 135 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Asotin 509-243-2027.

### **Visiting Priests and Deacons**

You are welcome to have your marriage witnessed by a priest or deacon who is not associated with Holy Family Church. Please let us know at your first meeting if you wish to have a friend or family member preside.

Details need to be worked out regarding who will be responsible for handling the marriage papers and preparatory sessions. Your visiting priest must obtain written delegation from the pastor at Holy Family Church for validity of the marriage. You should make stipend arrangements with your visiting priest or deacon. All church norms contained in this booklet remain the same with guest clergy.

### **Maintenance**

Rice, birdseed, confetti, balloons, bubbles, etc. are not permitted. Please make your guests aware of this. Your regard for the safety and maintenance of the church as well as for those attending the service is greatly appreciated. However, it is possible that your reception hall allows such items and your guests may be able to celebrate in such a way there.

### **Alcohol, Drugs**

The informed consent of both parties is an essential requirement of a valid, licit, sacramental marriage. PLEASE BE AWARE THAT IF ALCOHOL IS PRESENT OR IF PERSONS APPEAR DRUNK OR DRUGGED, THE WEDDING CEREMONY MUST BE AND WILL BE CANCELED. This applies to rehearsals as well as to ceremonies. This is a non-negotiable policy and applies to all church property including the parking lots.

### **One Final Word**



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Know that our prayers are with you on your wedding day. Pray for each other and with each other as you near the day of your wedding. This is a wonderful opportunity to invite God into the life you are about to share. Put yourself at peace with God by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of your marriage preparation.

One of your weekly dates should be Church, attending Mass together regularly and becoming involved in a ministry that enables you to channel your love to others.

Know that we want to help you live a happy and blessed life after you are married. Be grateful to God for the gift you are to each other.

***God, the best maker of all Marriages,  
combine your hearts into one.***