

ST. CLEMENT CATHOLIC CHURCH

MARRIAGE
PREPARATION
BOOKLET

1104 N. ALEXANDER ST.
PLANT CITY, FL 33563
813-751-8251

Marriage Preparation Booklet

Dear Couples,

Welcome to St. Clement Catholic Church! I extend a welcome because it has been my experience that too many of our good Catholic people become lax in the practice of their faith, especially during their young adult years when the modern world demands so much time and attention. Whether you are a regular here or a visitor, I want you to know that we are happy to have you share this extraordinary moment in your life with us. God's love for you is the underlying reason that you can love one another. This booklet has been put together to assist you with some of the "nuts & bolts" of weddings held at St. Clement. We want to make the experience of marrying in the church a pleasant one. Remembering that, as they say in Engaged Encounter Circles, "the wedding is a day and the marriage is a lifetime" will help us to see this sacramental preparation process as a truly worthwhile endeavor filled with graced moments. God's grace is abundant here at St. Clement and it is truly good to come together for this happy occasion. My prayer for you is that God's love will grow stronger in our midst as your love for each other is strengthened over the years of living your sacrament of marriage here with us or wherever you might settle.

Peace & Love in Christ,
Fr. Tom J. Anastasia,
Pastor

Spiritual Preparation for a Catholic Wedding

"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament" (code of canon law, c.1055).

Christ the Lord raised the union of man and woman to the dignity of a sacrament; therefore, the church has the privilege of assisting couples in growing in holiness and preparation for marriage.

St. Paul tells us that the love of a husband and wife should image the love of God for His church. A Catholic wedding should be an expression of the faith of the couple and their conviction that God is uniting them in an indissoluble bond, so that in sharing one life, they may work out their salvation together. Christ is invited to be an essential participant in this celebration. He is sacramentally present, uniting, establishing and blessing this new community of life.

Your Faith Commitment

Ideally then, the couple should prepare for their marriage by daily prayer, regular attendance at the

liturgy, and frequent reception of the sacraments. They are about to receive a sacrament, which will change their whole lives. Such commitment cannot be made without prayer and the grace of God. Spiritual preparation is absolutely necessary for any Catholic marriage. If the faith is not being practiced, the wedding ceremony will be at least an empty formality and at worst, hypocrisy!

A marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-catholic is also a sacramental marriage. The obligation to seek salvation together, to grow in faith and grace, is just as binding and strong as in the union of two Catholics. Difference of belief and religious practices may make it more difficult to reach an understanding and unifying faith. However, such differences can be a blessing to enable each party to grow in their understanding of God's gift of faith.

Sometimes it may be very difficult for a Catholic and a committed Christian of another denomination to come to an agreement about faith and faith practice. The question of faith, its importance to each person, and its place in the marriage needs discussion and agreement. It is not safe to put it aside thinking, "It will take care of itself" after the wedding. Private prayer and prayerful discussion must precede the marriage.

Despite popular misconceptions, a non-catholic is never asked to convert as a prerequisite to marrying a Catholic in the church. However, in cases of marriages of mixed religions, Catholic parties are required to sign, or affirm orally that they will continue to practice their Catholic faith and do all *in their power* to baptize and raise their children in the Catholic faith.

Pre-nuptial Investigation Requirements and Expectations

The Catholic Church takes seriously her mission of assisting couples in assuming the duties and responsibilities of the sacrament of matrimony. Therefore, a pre-marriage process is utilized to assist the church in determining a couple's readiness for marriage.

The engaged couple who plans to celebrate the sacrament of marriage at St. Clement must first contact a priest or deacon at the parish office. This contact must be at least six months in advance of the proposed date of the marriage. The wedding date can be set only by the priest or deacon and will be confirmed once all the necessary paperwork is completed. These documents include:

- A. An **updated** copy of your baptismal record with sacramental notations (dated within six months of the wedding date). If your spouse is non-catholic, yet Christian, some proof of baptism *may* be requested from the church of baptism.
- B. A prenuptial form (**Form A**) is to be completed by the couple with the priest or deacon. It is absolutely essential that either party seeking marriage in the church inform the priest or deacon about any previous marriages - whether or not those marriages took place in the Catholic Church.
- C. The testimony of the two witnesses - usually parents or other close relatives - certifying the couple's freedom to marry (**Form B**) should be completed and returned to the priest or deacon.
- D. Anyone who is not registered as a member of St. Clement Catholic Church (or only recently registered within the past six months) will be asked for a letter of permission from the pastor of their previous home parish, giving us

permission to witness the sacramental exchange of vows.

The engaged couple must obtain a civil marriage license before the marriage can take place. This license will be issued from the proper local government agency. Note: A discount will be given by the office issuing the license when the engaged couple presents a letter from St. Clement stating that they have done their marriage preparation through the church. Additionally, if applicable, necessary dispensations and or permissions will be obtained by the parish priest or deacon from the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal. All fees for dispensation and/or permissions are the responsibility of the engaged couple.

All weddings at St. Clement are scheduled on a first come, first served basis, usually on Saturdays no later than 1:00 p.m., however, a later time can be set with the permission of the pastor. ***Again, only the parish priest sets the date or deacon once the necessary paper work is completed.***

The requirements and expectations of the Diocese of St. Petersburg include:

- A.) Completion of the FOCUS or PMI (Pre-Marital Inventory). These programs involve a questionnaire which scan items of mutual interest and areas of mutual concern to the individuals entering the Sacrament of Marriage. It is not a test, but rather an inventory, that helps the couple learn more about each other and where they can strengthen their relationship. Once completed here at our office (Usual time is 30-45 minutes) this inventory is scored and the results are tabulated. Once reviewed by the priest or deacon, this confidential tool is discussed with the couple.
- B.) The couple must attend an Engaged Encounter Weekend to receive a pre-cana enrichment experience. This event is sponsored and conducted by specially trained teams of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Brochures for registration are available from the parish. It is the couple's responsibility to register and attend this conference at least one month prior to the setting of the wedding date.

Please keep the appointments you have scheduled with the priest or deacon. If you must cancel an appointment, please notify the church office at least 24 hours in advance.

THE PLANNING OF YOUR WEDDING LITURGY

A. The marriage ceremony is important because it enshrines and shows forth to your family and friends, the meaning of your marriage. Surely, you have been to weddings before, talked with your friends and exchanged ideas that suit the kind of ceremony you desire. We are very happy to work with your ideas and will do our best to accommodate ourselves to them.

B. The basic decision to be made is whether to enhance the marriage ceremony with the Mass or not. If the man and woman are both Catholic, then only very serious reasons should prevent celebrating with a Mass. Why? Because the Mass resonates with the ceremony, showing tremendous unity that has been made between man and woman in Christian marriage. Not only is there more time at the ceremony to reflect on the meaning of the marriage, but the depth of prayer and feeling which only the Mass provides gives the ceremony tremendous riches. When husband and wife share the Bread and Cup of Christ, their oneness in God is unmistakably demonstrated. In the Catholic tradition, the right moment for a man and woman to give their lives away to each other is at Mass, when we are banqueting the memory of God's only Son, who gave His life away that we might know the heart of the Father.

C. It may not be desirable to have a Mass at the ceremony since one of the parties may not be Catholic. His or her sensitivities on this should be carefully considered, and many of the participants will, in all likelihood, not be Catholic either. In this case, the ceremony basically consists of a reading or readings from the Bible followed by the exchange of vows and rings. This in itself is a beautiful ceremony. If one of the parties would like a Minister or Rabbi to be present and take part in the ceremony, the Minister or Rabbi will be very welcome at St. Clement.

D. Things to consider with reference to the ceremony are the possibility of having a friend or two do the readings at the celebration; or if the ceremony

includes the Mass, having friends or family bring up the gifts of bread and wine. This is an excellent way to involve people when you cannot have them as attendants. Also, there are occasions in any ceremony when the families of the bride and groom can be greeted by the couple, perhaps with a gift of some flowers for the mother, or at the Sign of Peace.

E. Music provides the tone of the ceremony. Some people favor music using the organ, others favor guitar music, some violins and cellos. Regulations covering all weddings insists that the MUSIC DURING THE CEREMONY BE OF A RELIGIOUS NATURE. If you have some favorite song or tune which is not religious, please keep this for seating, recessional or for the reception. The Music Director at St. Clement must be contacted and the music for the wedding discussed with him/her, prior to the wedding.

F. Sometimes people are anxious about time. "Will it take too long?" A beautiful ceremony never takes too long. The average length of a ceremony with celebration of the Mass is 45 minutes, without the celebration of the Mass it is 30 minutes. Time is an insignificant factor when you consider the full meaning of the wedding day in your life, as well as the fact that an average reception is 3-4 hours.

G. Suppose you have a friend or relative who is a Priest and you would like to have him preside at the ceremony. This is fine with us. We would like you to discuss the ceremony with the Priests here and make arrangements through us, since visiting priests often are not familiar with our traditions and our church. A representative will be present at the rehearsal and ceremony to ensure that all goes well.

H. You may wish to be married in a church of another faith. This, for good reason can be arranged. The priests at St. Clement will be glad to be present at your ceremony and take part in it. The marriage is still a very sacred sacrament in the eyes of the Catholic Church. In this case you will have to make arrangements and have interviews with a priest, as if you were to be married here at St. Clement.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I. MUSIC FOR WEDDINGS –

Piedad Mendoza, Dir. of Music: 813-335-1908

a. Please call the Music Director about 6 weeks

before your wedding date. He/she will set an appointment with you and your fiancé to plan your music selections. He/she will be pleased to offer suggestions if you like.

b. At St. Clement Church, we respect the Guidelines for Music as stated by the Conference of Bishops and the policies of the Diocese. You will find these to be very agreeable when properly explained.

II. SACRISTAN & WEDDING COORDINATOR

Janice Putvin – 813-752-8251, ext. 305

As your Wedding Coordinator, assistance will be provided as follows:

- a. Provide assistance necessary in regard to the use of the Church.
- b. Represents the priest at the wedding rehearsal; directing the proceedings so that both the liturgical and other guidelines set for Church celebrations are followed.
- c. Be present at the wedding to ensure the smooth completion of the celebration.
- d. Sets up the Altar, and acts as Sacristan for the service.
- e. Oversees photography and video set-up, decorating of the sanctuary and seating of family and guests.
- f. Assists groomsmen with boutonnieres and bride's attendants with their flowers.
- g. Removes and puts away articles from the Altar that were used in the service.

III. TIMES FOR WEDDINGS AT ST. CLEMENT

The time of day is an important consideration for you and also for us. At St. Clement we hold rehearsals and marriages in the Church based on available times and in relation to current Mass schedules. The priest or parish secretary will assist you in setting the dates and times for your rehearsal and wedding.

Wedding rehearsals and ceremonies will start on time. The members of the wedding party are required to be in the church no later than 30 minutes before the start of the celebration. If you choose to be late, your ceremony will be shortened appropriately and no photographs will be allowed after the ceremony. A rehearsal for members of the

bridal party and readers is usually conducted within the week of the wedding. The priest or deacon secures a date and time.

Due to time constraints, receiving lines should be reserved for the reception.

IV. FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS & OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

We do not allow rice, birdseed or confetti to be thrown inside or outside the church; nor is it allowed for flower girls to drop rose petals in front of the bride as she processes down the aisle. Such materials cause safety hazards as well as difficulties with maintenance and insurance. The florists usually provide runners. The length of the aisle is 50 feet. Runners often present difficulty in walking and sometimes represent an unnecessary danger. Therefore, while permitted, the use of runners is discouraged.

V. PHOTOGRAPHER

Photographers and those operating video equipment must follow the liturgical guidelines of this parish. Photographs may be taken but the photographer or video operator or equipment may not enter the sanctuary during the celebration of the sacrament. After the ceremony has ended the photographer has 30 minutes to finish taking pictures. Photographs should be modest and in remembrance of the sacredness of the place and event. Please give a business card of the photographer and/or video operator to the priest or deacon as part of your marriage preparation.

VI. YOUR WEDDING GARMENTS

ALL IN THE BRIDAL PARTY - INCLUDING THE BRIDE - MUST COME DRESSED FOR THE WEDDING. Bride and Bridesmaids may relax in the Baby Cry Room before the wedding. This room has a large rest room attached.

VII. RECEIVING LINES - Due to time constraints, receiving lines should be reserved for the reception.

VIII. FEES - PARISHIONERS & NON-PARISHIONERS

Fees must be paid in full (in the Church Office) at




St. Clement Wedding Fees

The following fees must be paid at least two weeks prior to the wedding date.
Please be sure these responsibilities are met before you assume the greater responsibility of marriage.
Thank you.

Please fill out and return this form when you come in to pay your Wedding Fees (one check payable to St. Clement).

___ Offering for Church\$500.00




Includes:

-  Music Director & Cantor
-  Marriage Preparation Fee
-  Wedding Co-Coordinator

___ Non Member Offering for Church.....\$700.00

(Mandatory for non-members of St. Clement – see VIII in the packet)

Includes:

-  Music Director & Cantor
-  Marriage Preparation Fee
-  Wedding Co-Coordinator

___ Unity Candle (Optional)..... \$ 25.00

TOTAL _____

Date Fees Paid _____

___ Altar Server(s) - (\$10.00 Each in cash – Paid directly to Altar Server)

Groom's Name _____

Bride's Name _____

Wedding Date _____ Time _____

Priest/Deacon _____

Couple's Future Address:

