



OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS ABINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA WEDDING PREPARATION

Dear Bride and Groom,

Congratulations on your decision to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage! May God bless you in a special way while preparing for this sacred union.

We will assist you in planning for your wedding ceremony. Please read through this booklet carefully so you will be familiar with the policies of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Our Lady Help of Christians. We are sure you have many questions regarding what is appropriate and what is allowed at this church. This booklet will address some of those concerns. Should other issues arise, please phone us at the rectory and we will answer your questions as soon as possible.

Your marriage is much more important than your wedding. Your wedding only lasts a day; your marriage will last a lifetime. Please don't put your wedding preparations ahead of your marriage preparations. Remember to take time for one another and for God. Be considerate and understanding of each other's feelings. Include God in your daily lives and include each other in your daily prayers.

We look forward to your Wedding Day and we will ask God to bless you both as you prepare to begin your lives together as husband and wife.

Sincerely,

Father Anthony Janton, Pastor

SETTING A TIME AND DATE

It is important to contact the priest as soon as possible to ensure your choice of date and time for the Sacrament of Marriage.

Arrangements must be made at least six months in advance.

This is due to the Pre-Cana instructions required by Church Law and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Most couples prepare at least one year in advance. Please be sure to arrange a date and time with the priest before committing to a reception hall.

Wedding times for Saturday: 10:00AM - 12 Noon - 2:00 PM

Weddings are available on Friday evenings.

CHOICE OF RITE

The Catholic Church celebrates the Sacrament of Marriage either in a Wedding Mass or a Wedding Ceremony (Liturgy of the Word with the Rite of Marriage).

If both of you are Catholic, the assumption is that you will plan for a Wedding Mass out of the conviction that you believe the Eucharist is the most important sign of the unity you are declaring in the marriage. If reception of the Eucharist at Sunday Mass has not been your practice in recent years or months, your personal faith preparation for marriage should incorporate your return to full participation in Catholic life including reception of the Eucharist.

The Wedding Ceremony, which is not a Mass, includes the Liturgy of the Word, the Rite of Marriage, and the Nuptial Blessing. Holy Communion is not distributed within the ceremony. If the bride and groom are not both Catholic, the Wedding Ceremony without the Eucharist may be an option to consider.

It is permissible for a Catholic and non-Catholic to have a Wedding Mass if a dispensation is received. However, the non-

Catholic party is not able to receive the Eucharist.

PLEASE NOTE: ONLY BAPTIZED CATHOLICS PROPERLY DISPOSED ARE INVITED TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION DURING YOUR WEDDING MASS.

PRE-MARITAL INSTRUCTIONS

Your preparation for marriage calls on you to deepen your relationship by sharing key aspects of married life regarding your thoughts and feelings, beliefs and doubts, strengths and weaknesses. To assist you in this serious and intense sharing, the Family Life Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia offers the following programs.

Engaged Encounter is a weekend away with other engaged couples. There is plenty of private time for the two of you to plan for your marriage. These weekends are held at various locations in the Philadelphia area.

Pre-Cana Series is a four-session presentation on communication, lifestyle, sexual and spiritual adjustments, as well as other pertinent topics. These are held at numerous locations around the Archdiocese and on various days of the week.

You can enroll in a Pre-Cana program/Pre-Cana Day at Immaculate Conception Parish in Jenkintown. They conduct these programs on selected dates during the year.

While you must participate in one of these programs, you are free to choose between them. The priest will give you a booklet with further information on these programs. You are also welcome to contact the Family Life Office at 215-587-5639.

Baptized Catholics who have not completed Christian initiation are encouraged, if possible to make their First Penance, receive First Communion and Confirmation before the Sacrament of Marriage. Our Lady Help of Christians welcomes you to consider participation in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RICA). This program is offered here at our church. You may wish to prepare for the reception of these sacraments before or even after your marriage.

Additionally, as an engaged couple, it is recommended that you receive the Sacrament of Penance as part of your preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage.

Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire and Required Documents

Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire ~ Under the direction of the priest, every couple is to complete a questionnaire dealing with family, religious and faith back-

ground items. Issues regarding your intentions concerning the Sacrament of Marriage are also discussed. In conjunction with the completion of this questionnaire, you will also need to provide the following documents.

Certificates of Baptism ~ The bride and groom must both present their Baptismal Certificates. The certificate of a Catholic **must** be issued from the church of Baptism within a six-month period immediately before the marriage is to be celebrated. A baptized non-Catholic must also present a certificate from the church where their Baptism took place. The priest will be happy to assist you with any complications or difficulties regarding Certificates of Baptism.

Civil Marriage License ~ This may be issued in **any** county in the State of Pennsylvania. This must be presented at the wedding rehearsal. A marriage **cannot** take place without a valid Pennsylvania Marriage License. Pennsylvania Marriage Licenses are valid for sixty days.

Certificate of Attendance ~ You must present the Certificates of Attendance you received during your pre-marital instruction.

PLEASE NOTE: Provision of the above documents is the Church's **minimal** requirements before receiving the Sacrament of Marriage. Individual circumstances specific to you may require additional documents. Situation such as previous marriages (Catholic or civil ceremonies) or the unavailability of non-Catholic Baptismal Certificates would be the most common examples needing additional documentation. It is very important that the priest is informed of these circumstances when setting your wedding date.

INTERFAITH MARRIAGE

Regarding marriage between persons of different faith, you must share those things that your faiths hold in common. Where your faiths differ, concerned understanding and loving cooperation will be needed to respect and honor important convictions.

In arranging for an interfaith marriage it is necessary, according to Church Law, that permission (sometimes called a dispensation) be obtained from the Archbishop. This requires the Catholic party to assume the responsibility of baptizing and raising the children in the Catholic faith.

Present Catholic legislation does not permit inter-communion. Some couples might consider the Wedding Ceremony rather than a Wedding Mass for the celebration of their interfaith Marriage.

The non-Catholic party's minister is most welcome to participate in the wedding ceremony within appropriate norms and customs. Any marital instructions or input the minister would be able and willing to provide would be most helpful.

PLEASE NOTE: ONLY BAPTIZED CATHOLICS PROPERLY

**DISPOSED ARE INVITED TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION
DURING YOUR WEDDING MASS.**

LITURGY PLANNING

Guided by the priest, you are encouraged to select the scripture readings, prayers, and blessings to be used in the liturgy. It is hoped that you will invite others to participate in the liturgy as readers and gift bearers. Family members and friends often serve in these roles and are happy to join you at the altar. The book, Together for Life, contains the selections and the options for readings and prayers for either a Wedding Mass or Wedding Ceremony. We will provide you with a copy of this book that also includes an outline detailing your choices regarding the Liturgy with respect to reading, prayers, etc. This is especially helpful if you are planning a wedding booklet.

We are happy to officiate at and assist you in preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage. If you wish to have a visiting priest officiate, please inform us during our first meeting.

Some couples wish to provide a worship aid or booklet for their guests. The parish church does not supply these. Couples who wish to create their own personalized booklets should seek the priest's assistance to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the text **before** getting the booklets printed. Copyright laws apply to all music and texts you plan to duplicate.

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

Music at the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage serves the words and actions of the rite to more effectively express the faith celebrated in the liturgy. Music does more than simply provide a nice touch to the liturgy. Sacred music invites all present to actively join in the celebration by raising their voices in prayer through song.

All music used in the celebration of the sacrament must express the Catholic faith and be liturgically appropriate. Therefore, all selections are to be truly religious compositions, and not contemporary romantic songs from stage, screen, or pop sources.

Linda Sniscak, our parish singer, will consult with you regarding your choice of music and musicians. She will direct you to choices that will be liturgically correct as well as add to the uniqueness of your celebration.

If you choose to use our parish singer and/or organist, their fee is \$150.00 each. If you choose to use your own organist and/or singer, they must consult with Linda Sniscak and have her approval. This is necessary to ensure the ability of the singer/musician of your choice to properly execute all the parts of the Mass as well as use liturgically correct music. She receives a \$50.00 fee for this service.

This \$50.00 fee is waived if you use OLHC's organist and singer.

REHEARSAL

The rehearsal is scheduled according to the mutual convenience of the couple and the priest. If a visiting priest is officiating at your wedding, he should conduct the rehearsal as well.

It is very important that the rehearsal begins promptly. There is much to be accomplished in a short amount of time.

Please advise your family members and wedding attendants that confessions will not be heard on rehearsal night. Such preparation should be made at another time. Confessions at OLHC are only on Saturday afternoons from 4:00PM to 4:30 PM. All are welcome to receive the Sacrament of Penance at that time.

The following information and documents are to be presented at the rehearsal:

- Marriage License (official copy will be returned to couple at wedding)
- Wedding Fees (Church/Altar Servers)
- Copy of Wedding Program for Priest Officiant

PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER

Choose a good photographer/videographer who knows how to be unobtrusive and has a sense of decorum and dignity. Their task is to memorialize, not direct, delay or interrupt the ceremony. He/she is not to enter the sanctuary at any time during the wedding ceremony. Please inform your photographer/videographer of these guidelines.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the photographer may take photos in the church as long as consideration is given to incoming weddings and/or evening mass. The church grounds, local parks and most reception halls offer ideal settings for formal poses as well.

MISCELLANEOUS

PROMPTNESS: It is imperative that you be on time for all appointments. When unexpected difficulties do arise, please notify the priest as soon as possible. Please be considerate of others and be sure that the wedding and rehearsal begin promptly as well.

WITNESSES: You need two witnesses of sufficient age to fulfill this function. Neither witness needs to be Catholic or even baptized.

FLOWERS: In consideration of the cost of flowers, we remind you that

the architectural beauty of our sanctuary may suggest that you do not need flowers. You are certainly welcome to provide the floral arrangements for the altar. If two or three weddings are scheduled for the same day, the couples may wish to share the cost of the church flowers. **Flowers are to be delivered on the day of the wedding after 9:30 AM.** They cannot be accepted prior to the wedding day.

WEDDING OR UNITY CANDLE: The Wedding Candle is no longer permitted in our Archdiocese.

SIGN OF PEACE: The sign of peace expressed the peace of Christ already present among those celebrating the Eucharist. The sign of peace is intended to be a simple, noble and clear gesture of peace and communion shared by the couple with their parents and the wedding party.

PRAYER AT THE ALTAR OF MARY: The practice of the couple visiting Mary's Altar should reflect sincere devotion to Our Blessed Mother. No reference is made to this devotional practice in the Rite of Marriage. It is not a necessary part of the ceremony. If the devotion does take place, it is to occur after the Concluding Rite of Mass. It is customary to present a small bouquet at this time, but again, it is not required.

RECEIVING LINES: Receiving lines are allowed at OLHC as long as they do not interfere with preparations for later weddings or the evening Mass.

AISLE RUNNERS: Aisle runners are **NOT** permitted in the Church. Please note that strewing of flowers or flower petals is also **NOT** permitted during the procession. Both of these restrictions are for safety purposes.

TAPE: Please do not use tape on the pews or the floor. Be sure to inform your florist and photographer that **NO TAPE** is allowed.

RESTRICTIONS

Please advise your guests that **RICE, BIRDSEED AND CONFETTI ARE ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED**. This is out of respect for the sacredness of church property and out of concern for the safety of church visitors.

Also, **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ARE ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED**. Please remind your drivers, ushers, etc. that no alcoholic beverages of any kind will be tolerated in, on or near church property. This restriction applies to the wedding as well as well as the rehearsal.

CHURCH DONATIONS AND FEES

The following fees are to be in separate envelopes clearly marked as to their purpose and can be delivered to the rectory during regular business hours (9AM to 3:30 PM, Monday through Friday) the week prior to the wedding. It might also be convenient to bring all fees and the marriage license to the rehearsal. **The marriage license must be given to the priest at the rehearsal.**

The following fees are for the church and the musicians. They should be placed in an envelope and clearly marked with their purpose. The Church Fee should be given to the priest prior to or on the night of the rehearsal. The singer and organist fees should be given to a reliable person who will present the musicians with their payment **before** the ceremony begins.

Church Fee: **\$250.00 for parishioners; \$300 for non-parishioners**
(Check to OLHC or Cash)

Custodial Fee: **\$50.00** (non-refundable)

Parish Singer: **\$150.00 Cash** (Linda Sniscak ~ 215-357-3433)

Parish Organist: **\$150.00 Cash**

Music Fee **\$50.00 cash***

Two Altar Servers **\$10.00 cash each**

(in separate envelopes)

*This fee is waived if you use OLHC Parish singer **and** organist.