

# *Marriage Guidelines*

St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church  
200 N University Drive, Plantation, FL 33324

*Revised July 2011*

*A wedding day is one of the most important days in a person's life; and a lot of time and effort goes into the details and planning of this special occasion. St. Gregory's Catholic Church is happy to provide the sacrament of marriage for of its registered parishioners. This booklet is aimed to assist a couple preparing for marriage with information that is necessary in planning a church wedding. Above all, remember that the Church is helping to spiritually prepare you not just for your wedding day, but most importantly for your marriage.*

*Please read the following information carefully as it will provide you with many answers that you may have as you prepare your wedding.*

*It will be the responsibility of the couple for whom we are preparing the necessary marriage documentation to see that all required paperwork is completed for the wedding ceremony to take place. You should contact the Rectory frequently until the paperwork is completed. Please note that all the planning of weddings at St. Gregory Catholic Church is made with the Bride and the Groom only.*

## **FORMS AND MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

### **• BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE AND FREEDOM TO MARRY:**

A recent baptismal certificate (issued within six months of the wedding) is required for all Catholics intending to be married, regardless of age. The original certificate is not acceptable because it may not have necessary notations on the reverse side. A recent certificate can be obtained by calling or writing to the parish in which you were baptized, (include your name, date of birth, father's name, mother's maiden name and date of baptism). A baptized, non-Catholic party's certificate of baptism, even if it is the original copy, is also required.

Please note, that the baptismal certificate is needed to reserve a date for the wedding. No possible wedding dates can be discussed or reserved unless the priest has both baptismal certificates and has verified that the couple is free to marry. If either of you have been married before, even if only in Civil Court, you must discuss this with the priest, and he will assist you in preparing the necessary paperwork so that you are able to enter into a marriage.

The following is a list of forms and procedures necessary for marriage preparation. Usually, they are completed or given to you by the priest or deacon witnessing your marriage”

- “A” Form: The Bride and Groom are required to sign 1 each in the presence of a Priest or Deacon indicating his/her freedom to marry.

- “B” Form: Witnesses must sign 2 each for Bride and Groom, usually the parents or someone who has known you most of your life. Again, this form is to establish your freedom to marry. It may be witnessed by a Priest, a Deacon or by a Notary Public.

### **• FOCCUS:**

(Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study) This is an important and required part of the marriage preparation process. FOCCUS is a self-diagnostic inventory designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their unique relationship. It is not a test nor meant as a predictor of success or failure in marriage. Rather it is an important tool to help couples name and work through issues before marriage. FOCCUS provides individualized couple feedback on where each partner stands in regard to topic areas important to marriage. The results of the inventory point to issues or areas that may need to be addressed. This tool requires 2 or 3 meetings with a qualified couple from St. Gregory's Marriage Preparation Ministry. The first meeting includes completing the FOCCUS instrument. The second consists of a review and discussion of

the topics contained in the instrument. You will be contacted by a Facilitating Couple. Please respond immediately and keep your appointment with the couple. They are parish volunteers who generously take time to assist you to experience this program and to be of service to you. Following your appointment with the priest, if you do not hear within a month from anyone regarding FOCCUS, please contact Ext 153 or 167.

• **PRE-CANA OR ENGAGED ENCOUNTER:**

This is part of the Archdiocesan requirement for marriage preparation. It is usually scheduled for an entire day and consists of a series of presentations on topics helpful to building successful marriage relationships such as Communication, Spirituality, the Sacrament of Marriage, Finances, Parenting, etc. A Certificate of Completion is given at the end of the day. Please provide a copy of the certificate to the priest preparing your marriage file. The certificate also entitles you to the reduced fee for the Marriage License Application (see sheet from County Courts). St. Gregory's is pleased to offer a Pre-Cana Day twice a year here on the parish grounds. Please register as soon as possible for this Pre Cana Day. If for some reason you are unable to attend one of our dates, you may attend an Archdiocesan sponsored Engaged Encounter/Pre-Cana. Application forms for these Archdiocesan programs and dates are available online at [www.miamiarch.org/familylife](http://www.miamiarch.org/familylife).

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

*This section contains guidelines and general information about planning your wedding ceremony.*

### SETTING THE TIME:

- Weddings can be scheduled Monday through Friday, but no later than 7:00 P.M.
- Saturday weddings are held at 10:00 A.M., 12:00 P.M. and 2:00 P.M.
- If you have scheduled a Saturday 12:00 Noon wedding, the entire bridal party must exit the church no later than 1:30 P.M.
- Likewise for a 2:00 P.M. wedding, plan to exit the church no later than 3:30 P.M.
- Please follow this schedule as a courtesy to other groups and to the volunteer sacristans who need adequate time to prepare for the next liturgy and for the parishioners to enter the church for the 4:00 P.M. Vigil Mass.

*Thank you for your cooperation and understanding in this matter.*

### NUPTIAL MASS:

- As marriage is a very sacred event, it is appropriate that the Sacrament of Marriage is celebrated within a Mass.

### SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: (Confession)

- If you and or members of your wedding party have not recently received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, please contact the priest celebrant so that the opportunity for the Sacrament may be provided prior to the wedding date.

### REHEARSAL:

- Rehearsals are generally held the Thursday or Friday before the wedding. Please contact the officiating priest for the exact time and date of your rehearsal. Should the couple have a personal Wedding Planner/Coordinator, those persons and their associates have NO authority or say on the Church premises, and they are NOT to interfere with either the wedding rehearsal or the wedding ceremony itself.
- All those who are participating in the wedding (bridal party, parents, lectors, gift bearers) should attend the wedding rehearsal. We kindly ask that you NOT INVITE anyone not participating in the wedding to the rehearsal because they tend to slow down the rehearsal process.
- The wedding rehearsal should take no longer than 30 minutes, and the rehearsal itself will not be repeated.

#### PUNCTUALITY:

- As a courtesy to others, please ensure that you and your wedding party arrive in advance of the scheduled wedding time and for the rehearsal. It is important that the procession begins at the appointed time of your celebration. This will enable you to complete the celebration and the picture taking within the time frame designated. A delayed start may result in changes in the liturgy and reduced time available to use the Church after the marriage ceremony.

#### MARRIAGE LICENSE (Civil Law):

- It is not possible to be married in the State of Florida without a Marriage License. It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain the license. Please see the information sheet from the Broward County Clerk of Circuit and County Courts. This sheet is included at the end of this Guidelines Booklet.
- The couple will need to present the full and completed marriage license to the priest/deacon officiating at their wedding either in the days before or at the wedding rehearsal.
- After the marriage ceremony, the maid of honor and best man will sign the Marriage License with the priest or deacon who witnessed the marriage. It is the responsibility of the parish to forward the marriage license to the relevant authorities for the marriage to be registered.

#### PHOTOGRAPHER:

- A visual record of your marriage ceremony is something to be treasured during your lifetime together. A good photographer will help you preserve these memories.
- Your photographer may feel free to take pictures (still and/or video) during and after the liturgy and ceremony. It is essential that the photographer not detract from the solemnity of the occasion and remain as unobtrusive as possible. The photographer is not allowed to stop anyone walking in the entrance procession or the recessional. All photography should be done with the natural flow of this sacred ceremony. During the ceremony, the photographer is not to step on to the marble of the sanctuary.
- Please remind your photographer that the church is a place of sacred worship and is not to be used as if it were a secular studio. Hence, while group photographs after the ceremony are allowed, photographs of various poses not connected with the church marriage ceremony are therefore much more suitably taken at the reception site.
- Please note that because of the regularly scheduled Masses, other weddings, and other church services, the wedding party should vacate the church 30 minutes prior to the next scheduled service.

#### FLOWERS:

- If flowers are desired you may contact a florist of your choice. Please make arrangements with the florist to have flowers delivered to the church one hour prior to the ceremony. It is not fitting to take the altar flowers away after the ceremony.
- Two pedestals for flowers are available in the church. Pew bows may be used, but should be secured with non-abrasive devices.

#### AISLE RUNNERS and SWAGS:

- Aisle runners are NOT permitted in the church aisle. Nothing such as swagged tulle should block the movement of your guests in or out of any pews. They are potential tripping hazards.

#### RICE, CONFETTI AND CANDY

- Please do not throw any of these items in or out of the church. Three to four thousand people use the church entrance weekly and unfortunately there have been accidents and liability suits associated with this hazardous practice. Please be sure to inform all your guests of this regulation.

#### FLOWER GIRLS & RING BEARERS:

- Flower girls and ring bearers may be part of your wedding. Please arrange that flower girls do not drop or throw petals or flowers. Ring bearers should have only token rings attached to the pillow.

#### CHANGING ROOM FOR THE BRIDE:

- The Chapel is available for the bride and her attendants to wait before the wedding ceremony. It may not be used as a changing room. Please leave this area is left clean and neat.

#### DEPOSIT

- A \$250.00 deposit is asked from the couple to ensure that all the guidelines stated above for the wedding ceremony are adhered to. This deposit will be returned to the couple immediately after the wedding if all guidelines concerning the ceremony are followed.

#### CHURCH OFFERING:

- It is customary to make a monetary offering to the church on the occasion of a wedding. A suggested \$1250.00 offering to the church is asked for your wedding. This is to underwrite the cost of marriage preparation documentation processing, air conditioning, maintenance and general parish support. The entirety of the church offering should be made no later than one month before the wedding date.
- Altar Servers – the usual custom is to give at the end of the service, a small gratuity to the two Altar Servers assigned.

#### OUT OF TOWN WEDDINGS:

- It will be the full responsibility of the couple for whom we are preparing the necessary marriage documentation to see that they are completed. You should contact the Rectory frequently until all the necessary paperwork is completed.
- It is necessary to provide the name and address of the church in which the ceremony will take place, the pastor's name, and the name of the Diocese where the church is located. This is necessary in order that the papers may be forwarded upon completion to the proper church authorities. A suggested offering of \$250.00 is asked for this type of preparation.

#### AFTER THE WEDDING:

- A certificate of your marriage will be mailed to you shortly after your marriage.
- After you have begun your married life together, please consider becoming active in one of our many parish activities, groups, and ministries. We look forward to having you become a vital part of our faith family. Please refer to our bulletin or parish website to learn more about our many ministries.
- Please be sure to provide the parish with the address where you will reside after the ceremony. If you will reside in our parish and are currently registered (either with your family or individually), be sure to call the rectory at 954-473-6261, and ask that your registration be put in your married name. Otherwise, we may not easily locate you in our records.

### **PLANNING YOUR WEDDING CEREMONY**

Since the marriage ceremony centers on the two of you, it is only natural for you both to participate actively in the service and to plan the details. A couple spend many hours and days planning various aspects of their marriage. We invite you to spend such time in the planning and participation of the actual celebration of the Sacrament. Today's marriage ritual of Marriage for Catholics makes that possible.

## MUSIC AND LITURGY:

- The Director of Music and Liturgy, Jim St. John, is responsible for helping you plan the music and wedding liturgy. The organist and/or vocalist services are arranged directly with the Director. Please call the Director regarding your musical and liturgical needs 954-473-6261 ext. 145 at least TWO months before your wedding date.
- The priest or deacon to officiate at your wedding liturgy is willing to be of assistance to you in planning your Wedding Liturgy. A booklet entitled TOGETHER FOR LIFE by Father Joseph M. Champlin is provided to you by the church. All of the authorized readings, prayers, prefaces and blessings are contained in this book, as well as comments and reflections which are of interest to a couple about to marry. The book is provided to you to study the material, then select the texts you like best and mark those choices on the selection form provided in the back of the book. They have been arranged according to the order of the ceremony. You may employ other scriptural passages not in this booklet if you wish, but consult the priest/deacon in this process.

*May the Lord Jesus who was a guest at the wedding in Cana be with you and guide you in the important months ahead and may He be an ever welcome guest in your home long after your wedding day is over.*

Broward County Courthouse  
201 S.E. 6th Street, Room 270 | Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301  
Telephone: (954) 831-6525 Ext. 7842  
Business Hours: 8:00am- 4:30pm (Monday - Friday)

Residents of the State of Florida have the option of attending a premarital course from a registered provider, or waiting 3 days for the marriage license to become effective. A directory of the premarital course providers is available at all court locations to browse through (the Marriage License Office does not offer this course). Non-Florida Residents are exempt of any waiting period.

Visit our online [Premarital Course Provider Search](#) to locate a registered premarital course provider near you. (See clerk for certificate requirements.)

- Both parties (bride & groom) age 18 and over *must* apply in person, at the same time.
- There are two (2) forms of identification that may be required.
  1. The first form of identification required is a valid photo identification issued by the federal or state government. The photo identification must have the correct legal name, date of birth and signature of the applicant.  
The following valid proofs of photo identifications are accepted:
    - Driver's License (U.S. State or Government)
    - Passport
    - U.S. Military identification
    - State Identification Card (U.S. State or Government)
    - Alien Registration Card
  2. A second form of identification is required if the applicant has been issued a U.S. Social Security number. In accordance with Florida State Statute, any person who has been issued a Social Security number shall provide that number. Any person who is not a citizen of the U.S. may provide either a Social Security number or an Alien Registration number, if one has been issued. If neither has been issued, another form of ID may be required.
- There are no blood tests required.
- You do not need to be a resident of this county or the State of Florida to obtain a Marriage license. Marriage licenses are for use within the State for sixty-60 days from the date of issue.
- The "Family Law Handbook" should be read prior to obtaining the Marriage License. The "Family Law Handbook" is available for viewing in the Clerk of Courts Marriage and One-Stop-Divisions or on the Internet at [www.flclerks.com](http://www.flclerks.com).
- If either applicant has been previously married, the *exact date* of the last divorce, death, or annulment must be provided.

Applicants who are 16 or 17 years of age: In addition to the above listed requirements, the following documents must be presented when one or both of the applicants are within this age bracket:

Any applicant under the age of eighteen (18) must have the consent of both parents or guardian. If custody of such minor has been granted to one parent, original proof must be provided. You may obtain consent forms from this office.

If one parent is deceased, a certified copy of the death certificate is required. Proof of age and parents identity is required. This may be done with a certified copy of the person's birth certificate. If the parent's names do not match, additional proof may be required.

Applicants under 16 years of age: Clerk will explain procedures.

In order to speed up the process, please fill our online pre-application, print it and bring it with you to one of the Broward County offices for the application process to be completed.