

A GUIDE TO THE PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

We at Holy Cross rejoice with you in your decision to love and marry each other.

We are happy that you have decided to come to Holy Cross to consider entering into the Catholic SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY. As a symbol of Christ's marriage to His bride, the Church, the marriage sacrament is vitally important to us. It reminds all of us of our covenant with God in Christ, and, in a sense, it creates us as a Church.

In order to make sure that you are willing and prepared to enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony, and in order to preserve the sacredness and meaning of this sacrament, Holy Cross presents these guidelines to our couples. It may seem like a lot of information, but please read over carefully so that you have no problem with what is required.

It is our hope that your wedding will be a beautiful celebration not only of one special day, but of a life of faithfulness and commitment to God, the Church and to one another

WHY MARRY AT HOLY CROSS CHURCH?

Today, couples have many options available to them in the way they choose to live their commitment to one another. In choosing to be married "in the Church," couples are expressing not only their commitment to one another, but also their commitment to the Faith and the community of Catholics. Therefore, a choice to be married "in the Church" at Holy Cross makes sense if:

- + *A person has a faithful relationship with Jesus.*
- + *At least one person is a practicing, active Catholic who worships on a weekly basis.*
- + *Both are physically, psychologically and emotionally mature enough to make a permanent, exclusive commitment.*
- + *The couple gives witness to their Faith and to their appreciation of the SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY by striving to live according to the moral teachings of the Church*

Therefore, these reasons to be married "in the Church" are NOT compelling:

- *A couple likes the appearance of Holy Cross.*
- *The Church is close to your reception hall.*
- *A couple's family is Catholic*
- *One or the other person received the sacraments at Holy Cross as a child.*

Furthermore, in order to protect the integrity of the SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY, a priest or deacon is seriously obligated to question a couple's readiness to celebrate their marriage at

Holy Cross if:

- * He has no knowledge of either party and the Parish records indicate NO CURRENT involvement with the Parish.*
 - * The couple does not evidence a mature Christian Faith.*
 - * The couple is living together as husband and wife before they have made the commitment of marriage.*
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WHAT PREPARATION IS INVOLVED?

Marriage requires a period of preparation and discernment to be celebrated fully and faithfully. It includes:

- * At least a year of planning and prayerful reflection on the part of the couple, in contact with their parish priest, deacon or pastoral assistant.*
 - * A series of at least three meetings with the priest and/or pastoral assistant:
 - First Interview: 9 to 12 months before wedding.*
 - Second Interview: 5 to 6 months before wedding*
 - Third Interview: 2 to 3 months before wedding for liturgical and rehearsal planning.**
 - * A marriage preparation program conducted by the Diocesan Office of Family Life. Couples may select Pre-Cana sessions or Engaged Encounter Weekends which are given monthly in*
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WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE NEEDED?

- * A Baptismal certificate dated within ONE YEAR of the wedding (not your original), along with certificates of First Communion and Confirmation if the person is Catholic.*
- * In special cases, a letter attesting to the bride's or groom's freedom to marry, or dispensations or permissions to celebrate the marriage in a particular way.*
- * The certificate attesting to the completion of the Pre-Cana session or Engaged Encounter.*
- * A Marriage License obtained from the Town Hall within 30 DAYS OF THE MARRIAGE. It is obtained 1. From the town in NJ where the bride resides or 2. From the town in NJ where the groom resides or 3. From the Rumson Boro Hall if the legal residence of both bride and groom is outside the state of New Jersey. The witnesses sign the license and all fees are submitted on the EVENING OF THE REHEARSAL.*

WHAT ABOUT THE CEREMONY ITSELF?

The actual details of the ceremony are the last thing to plan. Before they discuss the ceremony, a bride and groom need to talk about their relationship to God and one another, their plans for family and the practice of their Faith and their understanding of the commitment and responsibility of marriage.

At Holy Cross Church we strive to make it very clear how the Sacrament of Marriage is celebrated in our community according to Liturgical and Diocesan guidelines. These simple guidelines help to ensure that the sanctity and sacramental nature of the celebration of weddings is respected. Although there are many options and some flexibility, the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is not just about the couple, but the Church at large. All sacramental celebrations belong to the community of the church and thus must be guided by Church procedures. In choosing Holy Cross Church for your wedding, we assume you agree to our policies. We thank you for your cooperation as we work together for the beauty and prayerfulness of your wedding ceremony. In order for the ceremony to fully reflect its religious and spiritual nature, it requires:

PLANNING

- * *The date should be arranged with the Church **FIRST**. Holy Cross celebrates almost 50 weddings a year, and is booked far in advance. In addition, the reception is secondary to the Sacrament, and should be planned only after arrangements have been confirmed with the Church.*
- * *The priest and/or pastoral assistant and the couple plan the marriage together. All wedding plans need to be approved by Fr. Hughes or the Pastoral Assistant at Holy Cross.*
- * *A Late Policy Agreement is signed at your initial meeting with the priest or pastoral assistant. At the Planning meeting scheduled 1 to 3 months before the wedding, you are asked to submit a check for \$200 payable to Holy Cross Church. This check is kept in your file and will be returned to you if you are on time for the rehearsal and the wedding. This policy is necessary to respect the time and talent of all the personnel involved in each wedding.*
- * *The preparation of a Program for your guests is optional. You are responsible for writing and printing the program, should you choose to have one. The pastoral assistant will help with this.*
- * *Readings: You must choose one Old Testament and one New Testament Reading for your wedding. You may choose the Gospel reading or have the priest choose it for you. Three readers will be needed and we encourage you to use your family or friends.*
- * *Visiting Priests: Visiting priests are most welcome and they are asked to respect the practice of the celebration of weddings at Holy Cross Church. As a courtesy, they are asked to request delegation from the Pastor to perform the ceremony. Please inform your priest that the Pastoral Assistant of Holy Cross always conducts the wedding rehearsal.*
- * *Witnesses: At least one witness (the Best Man or Maid of Honor) must be a practicing Catholic.*

* *A rehearsal is planned for the evening before the wedding, and includes the wedding party and anyone else taking part in the ceremony. Flower girls and/or Ring Bearers in the wedding party should have received their First Communion (7 YEARS OLD OR OLDER). The fees for the musicians, donation for the Church, and the marriage license should be brought to the rehearsal. Please make sure that **ALL** those participating in the wedding are at the rehearsal and are on time.*

* *The Sacrament of Marriage can be celebrated as a Mass or a Ceremony. In the case of a marriage of a Catholic and non-Catholic, a ceremony, not a Mass, is the usual form of celebration.*

MUSIC

* *Music has long been a part of the Church's tradition of prayer. The wedding liturgy is a moment of sacred worship and prayer, in which we ponder God's word and allow ourselves to be formed by his grace. Therefore, the music selected should be sacred, religious and prayerful in its content and tone. We will assist you in the selection.*

* *Popular songs that have special meaning for the couple are more appropriate at the reception.*

* *At Holy Cross, it is not an option to omit any music of the Liturgy whether it be a Nuptial Mass or simple ceremony as directed by Liturgical and Diocesan regulations.*

* *Mr. Thomas Hinz, 732-531-6870 is our full time organist responsible for all wedding and musical preparation in concert with the rules and regulations of the Diocese of Trenton. He should be contacted by the couple 2 to 3 months before the wedding. If a couple wishes to utilize another organist or soloist, Mr. Hinz must approve the musicians and their musical selections at least one month prior to the wedding and he must be paid even if another musician or soloist is selected. The standard fee is \$200 for the organist and \$150 for the vocalist. These fees should be brought to the rehearsal.*

FLOWERS AND WEDDING DECORATIONS

* *All flowers which are placed in the Church must be fresh and of superior quality. There are two large urns on the Main Altar, two smaller vases at the Tabernacle and one at the Statue of Our Lady. These are the ONLY containers allowed.*

* *It is the responsibility of the florist to pick up all five (5) vases on Friday after the 9:00 AM Mass or at the latest 11:00 AM and have them in place at Church on Friday afternoon before 5 PM or notify Mrs. Godvin.*

* *The flowers which are placed at the Church are considered a DONATION to Holy Cross and therefore must remain in Church after all ceremonies. Please call the Parish Office with the name of the florist from the Holy Cross approved florist list at least 6 months prior to the wedding.*

* *Often there will be two weddings scheduled at Holy Cross on the same day. We require that the brides share flowers and expenses for the Church decorations. If the brides cannot agree on flowers, Holy Cross will assume the responsibility of placing appropriate flowers on the altar and the brides will be asked to make a donation. Coordination of flowers and other matters referring to the decorations of the Church are made through Mrs. Nonnie Godvin, 732-870-0241. Please call Mrs. Godvin at least 6 months prior to the wedding.*

* *Guests are requested to congratulate the bride and groom with applause in place of rice, birdseed or confetti. You are not permitted to have rose petals or anything else thrown inside or outside the church. Because of insurance regulations, runners are not permitted down the center aisle.*

* *Full color postcard size photos of Holy Cross Church imprinted with clear directions to the Church from the Garden State Parkway are available as enclosures for wedding invitations. The cost is \$15 for 50 and are available at the Parish office.*

CHURCH

* *The Church is our home as a Catholic Christian community and, since it is reserved to the Lord, a place that is sacred to us. Therefore, any ceremony in the Church should respect its use by the broader community and exhibit reverence in the presence of the Lord.*

* *Photography and video-taping during the actual ceremony is permitted as long as it is discreet and unobtrusive. Photographers are asked to speak with the priest performing the ceremony beforehand and should be no closer than the 5th pew from the Sanctuary.*

No extra lights or microphones are permitted in the Church. Media specialists should never enter the sanctuary area or obstruct the view of the congregation. Videographers are allowed to film only from the choir loft.

* *Holy Cross makes its facilities and staff available to the couple during the preparation and actual wedding ceremony. For these services, a donation is generally made which goes to the Parish, not the priest performing the ceremony. For registered parishioners the fee is \$400 and for a non-parishioner couple, if accepted, \$500. Altar Servers are usually given a donation in the range of \$10 - \$20 per server. These fees should be brought to the rehearsal along with the fees for the organist and soloist.*

PRIEST

* *It is my great desire and privilege to be part of this most important decision in the Sacrament of Matrimony and I will assist in any way possible as you accept this wonderful gift from God.*

*Rev. Joseph Hughes,
Pastor*