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POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS AT OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CATHOLIC CHURCH

At Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, all Statewide and Diocesan Guidelines are in effect as listed beginning on page 10. Additionally, the pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel has established other policies and regulations, which are detailed below.

SCHEDULING A WEDDING

Reservation In Person or by telephone

A request to schedule a wedding and reserve the Parish's Church and other facilities must be made in person at the parish office or by telephone; reservation requests are not taken by fax or email. **A marriage ceremony is celebrated *only* in the church edifice.**

Officiant Must Agree

No reservation will be accepted until the proposed officiant contacts the parish office and affirms **in writing** through a letter or email sent to the office that he will officiate and assume responsibility for all pre-marital preparations. Thus, a couple who wishes to schedule a wedding at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel should first approach a Catholic priest or deacon to ensure that he will provide the necessary premarital preparation and then officiate. Catholics who are *not* active parishioners of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel should approach their *own* pastor, for his permission is needed. He or one of the other clergy assigned to the couple's "home" Church parish are the best persons to choose as officiant as well. **Again, if *not* active parishioners of OLMC, it is the COUPLE'S RESPONSIBILITY to provide a priest or deacon to officiate at the wedding.**

Required Documents

Engaged persons must provide the following documents to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel's Parish Office at the time of the request to schedule a wedding:

1. A **signed wedding reservation form** indicating they have read and agree to abide by all of the regulations governing weddings at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.
2. **Payment in full of the ordinary fee.** The current schedule of fees is part of this Policy, but note that these fees are subject to change at any time. Please also note that a portion of the fee is *non-refundable*.

3. A written request for a **letter of delegation** to supervise the prenuptial preparation and officiate at the wedding liturgy from the priest or deacon who will preside at the wedding. This request is not necessary if a priest or deacon at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel will preside.
4. A **letter of permission** for the wedding from the pastor of a Catholic party who is not a parishioner of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

Also, engaged persons in time must provide the following **documents** to the priest or deacon who will officiate at the proposed wedding. He will in turn provide this to the Parish Office as part of the prenuptial file he creates.

1. **Recently-issued certified copy** (that is, with the originating parish's seal affixed) **of the baptismal certificate** (if Catholic). If non-Catholic and baptized in another faith, it would be helpful (although not mandatory) to provide a copy of that baptismal certificate for the wedding file.
2. A **certified copy** of any **prior civil or church wedding certificate(s), divorce decree(s), or annulment(s) for any prior marriage, and death certificate(s) of any previous spouse.**

FEES

Full Pre-Payment Required

The **fee** for a wedding at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel is **\$100.00 for registered, active parishioners** and **\$500.00 for others**. The fee, which includes rental of the church, preparation in the hall prior to the ceremony, utilities and maintenance must be paid in full at the time the reservation is requested. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the fee paid is *non-refundable*. This fee is to be paid by check or money order, payable to “Our Lady of Mt. Carmel”. A second payment of \$400, also required at the time of registration, acts as a **security/cleaning deposit**. All (or part) of this deposit is *refundable*. The amount refunded will be determined following the ceremony, and will be based upon the level of adherence to the policies set forth in this document.

Fees For Musicians and Vocalist

All fees for the organist or pianist, vocalist(s) and other musicians should be paid directly to them by the engaged couples. For additional details related to music, see **MUSIC** below.

Officiant Fee

There is never any required fee for the priest or deacon who officiates at a wedding at Our Lady of Mt Carmel. Should individuals or families wish to provide him, or other attending ministers, servers, etc., with a personal gift, this must be paid directly to the priest, deacon or other attending ministers and servers. That being said, it is customary in the United States for the bride and groom to give a gift to the officiant on the occasion of the wedding.

LOCAL PRE-MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Preparation Programs

Many programs of premarital preparation, which supplement the sessions offered by the priest or deacon who officiates at the wedding, are offered in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. **One of these *must be completed by the engaged couple*.** However, if the couple is being prepared outside of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, other similar programs may be accepted – if you have any questions, please call our office.

1. Engaged Encounter. (*recommended*)

- a. Weekend retreat
- b. Conducted by married couples;
- c. Insights into communication;
- d. Principal aspects of married life; the focus of marital commitment;
- e. Engaged couples are provided opportunities to talk and make decisions together;
- f. Held at the Catholic Life Center in Baton Rouge;
- g. Contact the diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life at 225-242-0323.

2. Called to Love.

- a. Virtual two day retreat
- b. Conducted by married couples;
- c. Focuses on a) helping the engaged couple deepen their relationship with God since they will need God's help to live out their marital covenant, and b) strengthening the engaged couples commitment in preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage;
- d. Contact the diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life at 225-242-0323 or e-mail mgernon@diobr.org.

3. Couple-to-Couple marriage preparation programs

- a. offered by some church parishes – not available at this time at OLMC.

For further information on these programs, please see the **brochure** supplied in this packet or visit diobr.org/programs-for-engaged-couples

Evaluation Instruments

The couple will be required to take a **premarital inventory**. The purpose of taking a premarital inventory before your wedding is to help the couple receive an **objective assessment** of not only the “strengths” of their relationship, but also help identify areas for potential “growth” as well as issues which might merit further discussion. They are NOT designed to tell you whether or not you should get married, but to help you realize and deal with differences in your expectations, family backgrounds, and personality traits. Ignoring these issues in your marriage could result in serious marital problems.

There are a number of premarital inventories that are commonly used by counselors, pastors, mentors, and marriage educators when working with an engaged couple. The two most common are the **PREPARE/ENRICH** premarital inventory and the **FOCCUS** inventory (“Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study”). The choice of inventory is usually made by the priest or deacon preparing the couple. Normally, the couple will take the inventory separately (usually online), and then, once completed, will meet with the priest or deacon for further discussion of the results.

**Doctrinal
Instruction**

Beyond these two aspects, it is typical for an engaged couple to meet with the priest or deacon who will officiate at their wedding at least three other times during the course of their premarital preparation. In these sessions, the Catholic Church’s doctrines regarding matrimony are carefully explained and agreed to by the engaged couple. These appointments are made directly with the officiant.

FACILITIES REGULATIONS

Times of Weddings

Weddings may be scheduled on most Tuesdays through Fridays at any reasonable hour and on Saturdays until 1:00 pm or after 6:30 pm. **Saturday daytime weddings cannot begin later than 1:00 pm** in order to allow time for any photography after the wedding liturgy and the removal of all decorations. The church must be vacated for confessions at 3:45 pm and the Saturday evening Mass at 4:30 pm. Saturday evening weddings cannot begin prior to 6:30 pm in order to allow time for parishioners to vacate the church following 4:30 pm vigil mass.

Weddings during Lent

At Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, weddings may be scheduled during the Lenten season, yet the decoration of the church must reflect the reverence of the season as well as care given to Lenten observances such as Friday abstinence from meat.

Rehearsal

In addition to the wedding ceremony, a wedding rehearsal is usually scheduled. It may be held up to eight days before the wedding, at a time approved by the officiant, who usually leads the rehearsal. It is expected that the entire wedding party, parents of the bridal couple, persons serving as readers and ushers, and all others with special roles in the ceremony attend the rehearsal. It is helpful for organists, vocalists and photographers to attend, particularly those unfamiliar with the church environment. A list of all attendants and the order of procession should be provided to whoever conducts the rehearsal. **PLEASE NOTE: The engaged couple SHOULD bring the civil license to the rehearsal.** This will allow for the completion of the license *prior* to the wedding.

OTHER FACILITIES

Parish Hall

The **parish hall** is available to the bride and bridal attendants for gathering 90 minutes prior to the wedding liturgy. The groomsmen typically meet and remain in the church sacristy. There are two small public restrooms in the parish hall. Members of the wedding party are required to come to the church dressed for the wedding. The Parish Hall may be rented for the reception. However, if the wedding occurs on a Saturday during the day, please note that the rented hall **MUST** be vacated by 3 pm. For fees and rules concerning the hall rental, please call the office.

IMPORTANT: Under no circumstances are alcoholic beverages allowed on the church premises before or during a wedding liturgy. Nor are

alcoholic beverages allowed after the wedding liturgy unless the hall is rented for the reception. No member of the wedding party is allowed to participate in the wedding liturgy if he/she is intoxicated when they arrive on the church premises. As such, if he deems it to be so, the officiant reserves the right to postpone the wedding liturgy. Any and all fees due to such postponement are to be completely incurred by the wedding party.

MUSIC

Appropriate Music Required

The music for the wedding must be appropriate for liturgical use and assist the gathered assembly's worship and prayer. Any questions of suitability should first be discussed with the music director. Final approval, however, is reserved to the pastor.

To assist with musical selection, a **listing of recommended music** can be found in this packet. Other specific selections can be discussed with the parish representative and submitted to the pastor for approval.

Organist / Pianist

The couple may use the organist/pianist of their choice. The church organist is listed on the attached contacts. The fee is paid directly to the organist/pianist.

Cantor

If the wedding liturgy includes Mass, a vocalist must serve as cantor, and the responsorial psalm and "ordinary" parts of the Mass are usually sung. Cantors for Our Lady of Mt. Carmel are listed on the attached contacts. You may use another cantor, but he/she must be approved by the pastor or parish wedding coordinator.

If the wedding takes place apart from Mass, a vocalist may or may not be used, since all music at such a service may be instrumental.

It is required that skilled, experienced singers serve as vocalists to minimize rehearsal time.

The fee is paid directly to the cantor/vocalist.

Additional Musicians

The couple may contact, employ, and pay directly any additional musicians. Please keep in mind, however, of the space limitations near the altar and in the choir loft.

DÉCOR AND ENVIRONMENT

Flowers and other elements of decor are frequently part of the wedding environment. These guidelines should be shared with the florist. **The church decor, including decor for a particular liturgical season, does *not* change for the wedding liturgy.** The parish wedding coordinator will explain what items may not be removed.

Given the size of our sanctuary, no more than one floral arrangement should be placed in the sanctuary area. The arrangement must be anchored or secured to avoid collapse or breakage. Flowers are *not* permitted in front of the altar table. Florists and decorators are encouraged to visit the church beforehand to become familiar with the environment.

Simple ribbons may be attached to the tops of the pews. **No tape, tacks, nails, or any other fasteners that can damage the pews may be used to attach ribbons. Nor can these items be used to secure any other decorations in the church.** Check with the parish representative concerning decorations.

All flowers, pew ribbons, and other decorations MUST be removed within ONE HOUR following the ceremony.

NOTE: Failure to abide by these rules could lead to loss of security/cleaning deposit.

Candles

Candles other than the altar candles may not be used. Floor candles are **not** permitted.

Aisle

The aisle of the church is 5 feet wide by 45 feet long, with 14 pews on each side. Aisle runners are permitted.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Professional photographers and videographers are highly recommended. We strongly recommend that photographers and videographers unfamiliar with the church attend the rehearsal or visit the church beforehand to become familiar with the liturgical space and to predetermine areas for photos or video. It is also recommended that the photographer discuss these issues with the officiant prior to the service.

Photographers must do their job with reverence and dignity and in such a manner that is quiet and not distracting. Photographers should dress and conduct themselves professionally, and setup and use their equipment in a clean and non-distracting manner.

Photographers shall not obstruct the "line of sight" of the officiant or congregation throughout the ceremony. Flash photography is best reserved for pictures before and after the wedding liturgy. It is permitted during the liturgy only if it does not cause disruption.

At no time will photographers be allowed up in the sanctuary.

Photography may take place in the church before the ceremony and for an hour after the ceremony but no later than 3:00 pm for Saturday daytime weddings.

LITURGY

Weddings at Mass

The laws of the Catholic Church provide that weddings between two active Catholics should take place within the context of a Nuptial Mass.

Weddings Without Mass

When a Catholic marries a baptized person of another religion, church regulations indicate that a Nuptial Mass is *not* part of the wedding ceremony. An important reason for this is that non-Catholics are not permitted to share in Holy Communion, and a wedding celebration is meant to emphasize the couple's and family unity, *not* the points for which they cannot agree. For serious reasons, a Mass may be permitted for a so-called "Mixed Religion" wedding, but at OLMC this is the rare exception. When a Catholic marries an unbaptized person, Mass is even more strictly unwarranted.

Any further questions regarding this matter should be addressed to the presiding officiant.

Size of Bridal Party

Given the small size of the church and sanctuary area, a **maximum of 10 bridal attendants and 10 groomsmen** is allowed. These attendants customarily are seated in the pews on either side of the sanctuary. Flower girls, ring bearer(s) or junior bridesmaids are not included in this number. However, it is expected that these "junior attendants", once they have processed down the aisle, will be seated with family members in the pews

Readings

It is customary to have **three readings** from Sacred Scripture at the wedding ceremony. The first and second readings are taken from the Old and New Testament, respectively, with the third reading taken from one of the four Gospels. **Readings from any other sources are *not* allowed.**

Prayerful selection of these readings should be made through the assistance of the officiant. A helpful resource for the selection of the readings (as well as for the remainder of the parts of the wedding ceremony / Mass) is included in this packet: ***"Together For Life"***.

STATEWIDE / DIOCESAN GUIDELINES

When a couple marries, not only those present at the wedding but also the wider community rejoices and benefits. Marriage is a foundational institution within both civil society and the Church, so both take interest and rightly insist that it be accomplished properly.

Civil License Needed

Civil requirements in Louisiana for marriage are fairly minimal. A couple must obtain a license to marry from the Clerk of Court of a civil Parish, and then profess their vows before someone authorized to officiate at weddings in the State. ***The marriage license must be issued at least 72 hours before, but not more than 30 days prior, to the wedding.***

More Strict Church Requirements

The Catholic Church demands more, of course. Since Jesus Christ Himself identified marriage as absolutely permanent and faithful (see Mk 10:9), the Christian community must do everything it can to help spouses achieve this.

Minimum Six-Month Church Preparation Program is Mandatory

For this reason the Church helps persons seeking marriage to prepare for it. This aids them to make a good decision to commit themselves totally. In 1978, the Catholic Bishops of Louisiana established a common “**Catholic Marriage Preparation Guidelines**” which was refined and updated in 1988 and 2008. It can be accessed at <http://www.mfldiobr.org/diocesan-marriage-documents.html> both in summary form and in its complete text.

Its highlights are:

1. Church marriage preparation must begin **at least six months** before the anticipated date of the wedding. The parish priest or deacon who officiates at the wedding normally has primary responsibility for conducting this preparation process, which includes preparation sessions with him as well as other sessions organized by married laypersons.

2. Special circumstances (such as marriages involving minors, extramarital pregnancy, parental disapproval, psychological and problematic behavioral issues, etc.) will necessitate additional evaluation by a diocesan counselor.
3. A priest or deacon may refuse to witness a wedding for various reasons, such as non-practice of the faith, lack of appreciation for the spiritual aspects of marriage, perceived lack of readiness, refusal to participate in required marriage preparation programs, etc. Yet, in so doing, he will explain how the couple may overcome the specific circumstances that caused the problem.
4. In cases of delay or refusal to witness the marriage, appeal may be made to the Bishop directly or through the Dean. No other priest or deacon may officiate at a wedding which another cleric has delayed or refused to witness without permission.
5. If a couple attempts marriage contrary to the laws of the Church, a **validation** (i.e., “blessing”) is permitted **only** after the couple has completed the above requirements and a period of **six months** has elapsed since their wedding “outside the Church”.

