

Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church
559-226-1163 ✉ olvchurch@gmail.com

Guidelines for Marriage Preparation



Table of Contents

Marriage Preparation Check List.....	3
General Policy for Marriage	4
Notification to the Parish	4
The Parish Priest	4
Reasons for Delay	4
The Preparation Process.....	5
Pre-Marital Preparation Programs	5
Interfaith Marriages	6
Required Documents.....	6
Location of the Wedding.....	7
Witnesses	7
Types of Ceremonies.....	8
Date & Time of Wedding	8
Invitations	8
Visiting Priests	8
Musicians & Soloists	8
Rehearsals & Punctuality	9
Proper Conduct	9
Proper Dress.....	9
Guest Book & Receiving Line.....	9
Church Decorations	10
Use of Ethnic Traditions	10
Photographers	10
Donation to the Church.....	11
Wedding Coordinators	11
Clean Up	11
Notes	12
1 Corinthians 13:4-8a.....	14

Marriage Preparation Check List

To set a date the couple must:

- Schedule initial interview with the Priest.
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Copy of Baptismal Certificate with Notations (dated within the last six (6) months)
- Copy of Death Certificate if either party has been widowed.
- Copy of Decree of Nullity if either party has a prior marriage.

To be completed during the wedding preparation process:

- Certificate of completed Marriage Preparation Program (Engaged Encounter Weekend or other approved program.)
- Certificate of completed Natural Family Planning (NFP) course

The following must be 4 to 6 weeks prior to the wedding.

- Schedule appointment with the priest one (1) month before the wedding to complete pre-nuptial investigation and discuss the ceremony.
- Marriage license must be obtained within one (1) month of the wedding date. It should be brought to the parish office for the final appointment with the priest/deacon.
- Music and musicians should be selected at least one (1) month in advance and submitted to the Parish Music Coordinator for final approval and to request any assistance that may be needed.
- The stipend for the marriage ceremony needs to be paid off one (1) month before the wedding date.
- Select scripture readings for the ceremony from the booklet that you received from the wedding coordinators. Selections should be given to the coordinators **NO LATER** than the wedding rehearsal.
- If you would like to donate some or all of your flowers to the church for that weekend's Masses, please notify the wedding coordinators.

GENERAL POLICY FOR MARRIAGE

We the faith community of Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church and the Diocese of Fresno, care about you and your future success in marriage. We want to help you in the growth of your relationship to each other and to God. Our goal is to assist you to prepare, not just for your wedding day, but for your married life together. This policy is not intended to make it difficult for couples to marry in the Church. Rather, it recognizes the seriousness of marriage and the responsibility of a caring church to help couples prepare adequately for communal life and love together.

NOTIFICATION TO THE PARISH

Couples should contact the parish office at least six (6) months before the proposed wedding date to set the initial meeting with the priest. Because many couples are planning a year in advance, it is advisable to plan early to ensure that the date you desire is available.

THE PARISH PRIEST

The parish priest who will witness the marriage has the responsibility to make a two-fold assessment:

1. The couple's readiness for marriage.
2. The level of faith of the Catholic parties.

A wedding date may be scheduled at the initial meeting with the parish priest. However, the couple is advised that if serious reasons surface during the preparation time, the priest may delay the wedding until the matter is resolved.

REASONS FOR DELAY

The Church believes that the right to marry is an important natural right. However, it is not an unrestricted one. Some of the serious reasons for delaying a wedding include:

- 1. Refusal of the couple to participate in the preparation process.**
2. It is expected that the Catholic party to the marriage is attending Mass regularly. A reason for delaying the wedding would be the non-practice of the faith by the Catholic party/parties with no intention of returning to the practice of the faith. This may also include the lack of intention to provide for the children of the marriage the required Catholic religious education.
3. Inability of the couple to enter into a valid marriage due to some canonical impediment (i.e. previous bond, denial of some essential element of marriage, etc.)
4. Serious lack of maturity as assessed by the priest.
5. If either party is under 18 years of age.
6. Separation of the couple for an extended period before the wedding.
7. Non-fulfillment of Church Canon Law.

There is always the danger that a couple may enter marriage with major problems that can later threaten the marriage. These could even render the marriage invalid. It is the responsibility of the priest to

be sensitive to such a possibility. If a major obstacle to marriage is discovered, the priest will make the decision if there is to be a delay of the wedding after proper consultation and evaluation with the couple.

If the wedding is delayed, the couple has the right to appeal the decision to the Bishop.

THE PREPARATION PROCESS

The proximate preparation for marriage consists of the following steps:

1. The couple should call the parish office to set an appointment with the priest.
2. The initial meeting with the priest will serve to:
 - a. Determine the eligibility of the engaged couple according to civil law and Church law.
 - b. Explain the preparation process.
 - c. Pay the deposit of \$250 of the total church fee of \$500.
 - d. Set a date for the wedding ceremony and provide the required documents.
3. The couple will be contacted by the wedding coordinators who will guide them through the preparation process.
4. The couple must participate in an approved marriage preparation program.
5. Gather all the necessary documents.
6. A final session with the celebrant of the wedding to complete the Pre-Marriage Investigation and discuss the ceremony.

PRE-MARITAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

A minimum of 8 hours is to be spent in the formal preparation for marriage. Couples seeking to validate a civil marriage or who seek to enter a second marriage should follow the same procedures.

At our parish we recommend the couples participate in the *Engaged Encounter Weekend*. You can register for a weekend online at www.ccefresno.org or by calling 559-265-3365.

If the couple wishes to fulfill this requirement in a program offered by another parish the program must be pre-approved by the priest/deacon working with them. Some other options include:

- St. Paul Newman Center, Fresno – 559-436-3434
- St. Joachim Catholic Church, Madera – 559-673-3290
- St. Joseph’s Counseling Center, Fresno – 559-438-1200

Participation in a *Natural Family Planning Seminar* is also required. Contacts for these seminars are listed below:

Creighton Model Fertility Care

- Angelica Valverde – 559-435-4700, extension 108; angelica.valverde@ccfmg.org. Español & English
- Linda Garcia - 559-392-2119; English

Couple to Couple League

- www.ccli.org
- Ramon & Maribel Alvarado, Madera CA: 559-674-3062; maribel4avon@comcast.net (English & Spanish)
- Vincente & Laura Cantu: 559-916-4144; vincecantu@yahoo.com (English & Spanish)
- Anthony & Veronica Fortunato: 559-221-1538; anthonyfortunato@att.net; veronicafortunato@att.net

If you are unable to schedule classes with any of the above, our office has contact information for other certified locations.

INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

Faith and religious practice are meant to be a source of unity in marriage. When a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, special attention is required so that the difference in faith traditions does not become a cause of conflict and division.

An interfaith marriage may not have two religious ceremonies or use both rites in a single ceremony celebrated jointly or successively.

Permission can be obtained for a non-Catholic minister to be invited to participate in the Catholic marriage ceremony when appropriate.

To be valid marriage, a Catholic priest/deacon must be the one to receive the consent of the couple and to witness their vows.

The Catholic party of such a marriage must make two explicit promises:

1. That he/she will continue to practice the Catholic faith.
2. That he/she will see to the baptism and education in the Catholic faith of any children born of the marriage.

For an interfaith marriage to be celebrated in the Church a dispensation from the Bishop will be required. The priest will discuss with you the reason and process for obtaining this or any other dispensation needed.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

A Birth Certificate and a ***CERTIFICATE OF BAPTISM WITH NOTATIONS*** must be submitted for each baptized party. The certificate for the Catholic party must be issued within six (6) months of the proposed marriage date. Simply contact the church where you were baptized and request an updated copy of your baptismal certificate with notations. A non-Catholic Christian must provide proof of baptism along with proof of freedom to marry.

Certificates for First Holy Communion and Confirmation should be submitted **if** this information is not already provided on the updated Baptismal record.

The ***Freedom to Marry*** form is a solemn attestation by someone who knows you well (i.e. parent or sibling) stating under oath that you have never been married before. This is required of non-Catholic parties or Catholics who are not members of our parish.

If either party is widowed, a **Death Certificate** of the former spouse is required.

If either party was involved in a **previous marriage** which ended in **divorce**, the following is required:

1. **Marriage license for the previous marriage**
2. **Finalized divorced decree**
3. **Decree of Annulment**

A **CIVIL MARRIAGE LICENSE** must be submitted to the Church office at least one (1) month prior to the wedding. The license may be obtained at any County Clerk's office. ID is required.

The Fresno County Clerk Office is located at 2221 Kern Street, Fresno, 93721; 559-488-3246. Fee: \$58.00 cash or credit/debit only. (No \$100 bills accepted).

One (1) month to two (2) weeks before the wedding, an appointment should be made with the priest/deacon who will be witnessing the wedding to complete the **PRE-MARRIAGE INVESTIGATION** for the parish records. An appointment will be made for you the day you reserve your wedding date.

LOCATION OF THE WEDDING

The wedding *should* take place in the parish church of the bride, but *may* take place in the church of the Catholic groom. In the case of an interfaith marriage, the wedding should take place in the church of the Catholic party.

The Catholic party must obtain permission from the pastor of their home parish if they wish to be married in a parish other than their own.

Weddings in private homes, outdoors or in wedding chapels are not permitted in the Diocese of Fresno.

In serious and unique circumstances, a Catholic party can petition the Bishop for permission to marry in a place other than a Catholic church. This permission is called a "*Dispensation from Form*" and must be requested by the priest/deacon witnessing the marriage.

WITNESSES

You must choose any two adults (at least 18 years of age) to serve as witnesses (i.e. Best Man, Maid/Matron of Honor). They need not be Catholic. They will sign the marriage license immediately after the ceremony is completed.

TYPES OF CEREMONIES

Marriages celebrated in a Catholic church may take two forms:

1. **NUPTIAL MASS**: In this celebration the rite of Marriage is celebrated within the Eucharistic Liturgy. The Nuptial Mass is recommended when both parties are Catholic. In this way the union of your marriage is strengthened and nourished by receiving Holy Communion together. It is expected that as many as possible of those present at the wedding will participate in the prayers and responses of the Mass and share in Holy Communion.

2. **NUPTIAL CEREMONY.** In this celebration the full rite of marriage is celebrated within the Liturgy of the Word, without sharing in Holy Communion. This option should be considered especially when one of the parties is non-Catholic. Remember that non-Catholics do not normally receive Holy Communion with us.

DATE & TIME OF WEDDING

Weddings are not celebrated on Sundays. They may be scheduled for any other date of the week. It is most common to have a Saturday celebration.

On Saturdays, a wedding may be scheduled for either 11:00 am, 1:00 pm or 3:00 pm. On any other day of the week the time can be worked out with the celebrant.

INVITATIONS

For your invitations, the physical address of church is:

Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church
2838 North West Avenue
Fresno, California 93705

VISITING PRIESTS

If you have a priest/deacon friend that you would like to witness your marriage, please feel free to invite him to do so. You should clear this with the priest/deacon who is helping you prepare. All paperwork and preparations will be done with the priest/deacon of the parish in which you will be married.

MUSICIANS & SOLOISTS

You must make your own arrangements for music for the wedding ceremony. For your convenience, a list of recommended musicians and soloists can be found below.

The music chosen for your wedding should be of a religious nature that expresses the beauty and richness of the sacrament.

Recorded music is not recommended. Mariachi bands are also not recommended due to their limited knowledge of sacred music.

You should make your musical selections and have them reviewed by **the wedding coordinator (559-286-0930)**, at least one (1) month before your wedding date.

Approved Musicians & Soloists

1. Choir Las Victorias, 559-970-0707
2. Pianist/Organist: Astghik “Star” Levoyan-Gervorkyan, 559-226-1163
3. Eduardo Ruiz, 559-892-3455
4. Jose Maldonado, 559-287-0673

5. Javier Martinez, 559-779-4366

Please note: The musicians/soloist mentioned are the only ones approved by the parish, for any questions please contact the wedding coordinator. Fees for Musicians/Soloists' services are to be determined in discussion with the Musicians/Soloists, and are separate from any donation you may offer to the Parish.

REHEARSAL & PUNCTUALITY

The rehearsal can be scheduled for a time mutually convenient for the wedding coordinators and the couple. All participants should be present and on time. If you are late for your rehearsal, it could be canceled.

All churches have a very tight schedule on weekends so it is imperative that the rehearsal and wedding start on time. Twenty (20) minutes before the time set for the wedding, your wedding party, parents, grandparents, etc. should be lined up and ready.

PROPER CONDUCT

Since the church is the House of God, the bridal party should keep in mind that a respectful silence is to be maintained before, during and after the ceremony. The use of cell phones (except for an emergency) is prohibited in the church. Please be sure to turn them off during the rehearsal and ceremony.

Please do not bring food, gum or drinks into the church. The drinking of alcoholic beverages on church grounds is forbidden before and after the ceremony. Anyone under the influence of an intoxicating substance will be asked not to participate in the ceremony.

PROPER DRESS

Clothing worn by the party (including the bride and groom) must be modest and appropriate for the sacred moment we are celebrating. Though it is not our desire to act as fashion police, it is important that we all remember that this is not a fashion show or a spectacle but the celebration of a Holy Sacrament.

- **Women including the Bride:** Shoulders must be covered, no bare backs, mini-skirts, excessively high skirt splits, low-cut, or revealing tops are allowed.
- **Men including the Groom:** No t-shirts, shorts or hats are allowed.

The wedding coordinators' judgment will be final. If you have any uncertainty as to what might be appropriate, check with them ahead of time. Please plan ahead so that we don't have to exclude someone on the day of the wedding for inappropriate attire.

GUEST BOOK & RECEIVING LINE

Signing of the guest book before the ceremony is not permitted. Neither is a receiving line after the ceremony. These things take away from the limited time you have in the church and belong to the reception hall.

CHURCH DECORATIONS

All church furnishings, decorations and environment must remain in place and are not to be moved during your ceremony. That being said, couples are permitted to enhance the decoration of the church in a manner that expresses the beauty and nobility of this sacrament. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Flowers:** arrangement are permitted but must be placed where they will not obstruct the congregation's or priest's view of the ceremony. We do not recommend flowers for the altar.
- **Pew Bows:** these are permitted but must be attached with rubber bands or pipe cleaners, and must not impede the flow of people in or out of the center aisle. Tape, staples or thumb-tacks are not permitted.
- **Aisle Runners:** for safety and practical reasons these are NOT permitted.
- **Candelabras:** No 3rd party candles may be used. Only the candles that the church provides are allowed.
- **Arches:** are allowed at the entrance of the main aisle but not near the sanctuary.

If there is a doubt concerning a specific decoration, please check with the wedding coordinators.

USE OF ETHNIC TRADITIONS

We encourage the use of ethnic or cultural traditions that enhance or symbolize the meaning of the sacrament.

- Bouquet of flowers for the Blessed Mother
- Use of arras, lasso, etc.

The use of rice, confetti, flower petals, etc. in or outside the church is NOT permitted.

PHOTOGRAPHERS

The church remains a place of worship before and after the wedding. Occasions like this are to be recorded in remembrance. For this reason the use of cameras, flash bulbs, digital recorders is allowed to the extent that they do not interfere in the liturgy or become a distraction to the people.

No photographer is permitted within the sanctuary (the elevated area around the altar and ambo). They may take pictures in the aisles as long as they do not impede the natural flow of the ceremony. No posing during the ceremony. They should limit roaming around the church during the ceremony.

Posed pictures may be taken before or after the ceremony. The time for these pictures should be limited to twenty (20) minutes in each case.

Studio equipment, such as screens and special lighting are not permitted in any area of the church building.

DONATION TO THE CHURCH

Marriage, like all the Sacraments, is a gift of God that expresses and enriches the beauty of human love between a man and a woman. While there is no “fee” for the sacrament, we request a \$500.00 stipend to cover the use of our facilities, our weddings coordinators and the expenses for the church building. Included in the \$500.00 stipend, is **the \$250.00 non-refundable deposit to reserve your wedding on our calendar.**

The remaining balance of your stipend is due one (1) month before your wedding date.

Any gift offered to the priest/deacon who witnesses your marriage is completely optional and personal matter. If the priest/deacon has traveled a long distance or had to make special arrangements to be present it might be a way of showing your appreciation.

WEDDING COORDINATORS

We have two fine people available to help you coordinate your ceremony. Their responsibilities include helping you select scriptures and other elements of your ceremony; leading you through your rehearsal; setting up and being available to you on the day of your ceremony.

They will be glad to help you throughout your preparation for the wedding ceremony. They can be reached via email at **olvweddings@gmail.com** or at **559-286-0930**.

CLEAN-UP

Clean-up of the bridal room, church and church entrance is your responsibility. No boxes, ribbons, flowers, etc. should be left behind. We need to keep in mind the parishioners who will be using the church after you. You may want to ask a friend or family member to assume the responsibility.

Notes

Notes

Love is patient, love is kind.

It is not jealous, love is not pompous,

it is not inflated, it is not rude,

it does not seek its own interests,

it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.

It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

