

The community at **Church of the Ascension** warmly welcomes you as you prepare for your forthcoming marriage. We care about your relationship and want to help you prepare for your lifelong commitment to the Sacrament of Matrimony.

To assist with your preparation, the Diocese of San Jose has developed a set of guidelines for "Marriage Preparation." These guidelines recognize the seriousness of marriage and the responsibilities of a caring Church in helping couples like you prepare for their life together.

There are two very important aspects of preparing for your marriage in the Church: **first**, preparing for married life; and **second**, preparing for your wedding celebration. With this in mind, we offer you the information that follows.

### **Preparing for Married Life**

The Marriage Preparation program in the Diocese of San Jose requires that arrangements for marriage be at least **six** months in advance. If one or both of you are under the age of 19, we ask that you allow additional time, beyond the normal six months, for preparation.

### **Required Marriage Arrangements**

Set up a conference with your parish priest at least six months prior to your **tentative** wedding date. The date and time of the wedding will not be finalized before meeting with your parish priest.

The priest will ensure that the following documents are in order before the marriage:

1. A recent copy of your baptismal certificates. You will need to obtain this from the church where you were baptized. If you are a Christian of another denomination you may provide a photocopy of the original certificate.
2. Complete self-testimony forms for both the bride and groom. (Form A).
3. Completed questionnaires for witnesses (Form B). Ordinarily, a parent of the bride and a parent of the groom will be interviewed by the priest for the purpose of completing these forms.
4. Permission/dispensation (required only for Catholics marrying someone who is not Catholic).

You will also need a civil marriage license. Please call the County Clerk's Office at **(408) 299-5664** for information.

**There are two marriage preparation program alternatives.**

The parish **Marriage Preparation Program** consists of five sessions presented by couples from the parish that have been trained by the diocese. The purpose of the program is to enhance your understanding of married life through discussion and sharing in a workshop atmosphere. The presenting couples share experiences in communication, conflict, intimacy and the Sacrament of Matrimony. The workshops are limited to four to six engaged couples per class and are given in the home of one of the presenting couples. Engaged couples must attend all five sessions to fulfill their requirement. There is no fee for this program.

A second alternative is for you to attend the **Engaged Encounter Weekend**. This is a unique retreat experience shared by approximately 25 couples. The weekend, Friday night to Sunday afternoon, is led by two married couples and a priest who have been trained by Engaged Encounter. For further information, cost and available dates, please call the San Jose Engaged Encounter Registrar Couple at **(408) 978-3320**.

In addition to the above preparation process, you are required to attend, as a couple, one informational session on **Natural Family Planning** at the Center for Life, San Jose. The registration form can be obtained from the parish office.

When you have completed these parts of the parish preparation program, you will have a follow-up session(s) with the priest in order to **finalize** your wedding date and plan the ceremony.

### **Preparing for Your Wedding Celebration**

In planning the wedding ceremony, it is important to realize that you give the Sacrament of Matrimony to each other. Most importantly, the ceremony should reflect your good taste and love for one another. You may choose to celebrate the sacrament in a simple marriage ceremony or as part of a Mass.

Each couple will receive a copy of a workbook “Together for Life” to help plan the wedding ceremony. Please carefully review the readings and other details for the ceremony and discuss them with the priest in advance of the wedding.

### **Wedding Rehearsal**

The date and time for your rehearsal must be set up in advance through the Priest or wedding coordinator, and the parish office. The rehearsal usually lasts 30 to 60 minutes and should be scheduled a day or two before the wedding.

All who are involved in the wedding ceremony should attend this rehearsal to practice their parts and receive instructions. This would include: parents, bridesmaids, groomsmen, special participants, musicians, photographer and videographer.

You are expected to bring your wedding license to the rehearsal.

Any donations are best handled the night of the rehearsal. The customary donation for the use of the church is \$600 for Parishioners and \$900 for non-Parishioners and the priest \$150.

Ascension has a wedding coordinator who will review the preparations for the wedding celebration. The coordinator will attend the rehearsal and be present the day of the wedding to see that the details of the wedding ceremony are carried out according to your wishes. The coordinator’s fee is \$150.

Also, bring with you, the last page of the “Together for Life” workbook filled out, with all the readings selected, and any other material for the wedding ceremony.

### **Ceremony**

Procession - There are various types of processions. In the traditional procession, the father walks with the bride, and the bride and groom meet at the steps of the sanctuary near the altar. Other variations include both parents walk with the bride; both sets of parents walk with the bride and groom; the priest meets the bride and groom at the vestibule of the church and precedes the wedding procession. Please discuss your plans with the priest or wedding coordinator in advance of the wedding.

Church Rooms - Several rooms are available near the altar that the bride and groom may use while they are waiting for the ceremony to begin.

Vows - Wedding vows can be exchanged facing each other, facing the community that is assembled or facing the priest. The vows may be memorized, read from a book or repeated after the priest. If you choose, you can write your own vows.

Readings - There are usually three scripture readings in the wedding ceremony, whether or not it is a Mass: one from the Old Testament, a Responsorial Psalm, and a reading from the New Testament. The Gospel, New Testament, which the bride and groom can choose, is always read by the priest. If you have a special relationship with others, you may wish to have them do the readings. Be sure that the people you ask are good readers in front of a group and have voices that project, so their participation will truly add to the ceremony.

Altar Servers - You may arrange for altar servers at the ceremony but they are not required. Altar servers must be Catholic; they should be knowledgeable about the Mass and the wedding ceremony.

Special Ceremonies - Special ceremonies must be discussed with the priest and wedding coordinator in advance of the wedding. You may want to show your appreciation for someone special during the ceremony. This can be done according to you own wishes, as long as it is carried out with dignity and love.

**Environment**

Music helps to enhance the special meaning of the occasion. It should reflect the prayerfulness of the celebration. To avoid last minute confusion, musicians who are not familiar with Ascension should make advanced arrangements to familiarize themselves with the sound system and general layout of the church. Because the Catholic wedding ceremony is a religious event, most popular music is *not* appropriate during the ceremony proper. However it may be incorporated into the day while the guests are being seated. The following people are familiar with Ascension and are available for wedding ceremonies:

Barbara Mandal	257-5549
Mauricio Martinez	309.8738
Nomer Rios	725-3939
Bob Leano	799-2399
Michael Wright	293-1821
Doris McCune-Mouton	252-0281

Musicians' fees are arranged directly with them.

Flowers are used to enhance the setting of the wedding ceremony. Three pairs of flower stands are available from the church for your use: two pairs of white wicker baskets; one pair of adjustable height large brass bowls. These flower stands must remain at the church.

When there are two or more weddings scheduled on the same day, the church may give, with your consent, the names and phone numbers of the other parties to the brides. Color schemes may allow the flowers to serve for both weddings. Ascension does not require that you leave the flowers in the church after the wedding.

Special Environments - There is an environmental theme for each Church season. The setting often includes special banners, statues and furniture arrangements; sometimes the environment is large and elaborate. You can arrange to have these items temporarily removed as long as they are replaced at the end of your ceremony. You may choose to leave the environment intact and work around it or incorporate it into your wedding theme. In working with any special environment, we request that you simply leave the church as you found it.

Photographs & Video Taping - Flash photographs may be taken as the couple enters and leaves the church. Because it is a sacred time, only non-flash pictures may be taken during the actual ceremony. After the ceremony formal flash pictures may be taken at the altar. Videotaping may be done provided there are no distracting lights and the camera operator(s) are in one position off to the side of the altar during the ceremony.

Rice, Bird Seeds & Flower Petals - The throwing of rice, bird seeds and flower petals after the ceremony can be very dangerous underfoot and is difficult to clean up. These practices are prohibited.

Aisle runners – For safety reasons, the use of aisle runners down the center aisle of the church is prohibited

Finally, this is a very special time for you. We at Ascension will do our very best to make this a memorable event for the start of your married life together. If you have any questions, please contact the priest who is preparing you for marriage or Ascension's wedding coordinator.

**NOTES**