

**SEVEN STEPS TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND  
THE PROCESS FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION  
AT THE CATHEDRAL PARISH OF SAINT PATRICK**

1. All weddings are scheduled through the Parish Office. Contact the Parish Office to schedule a date for your wedding and find out about the practical aspects of planning your wedding.
2. Couples are required to enter the pre-marital preparation process 9-12 months prior to the date of their wedding.
3. The process of preparation begins with a meeting with clergy. At this meeting, the priest or deacon will get to know you better and learn your unique story. He will also fill out the pre-marital questionnaire with you which asks important questions about your faith practice, your understanding of the Catholic teaching of marriage, and whether you've been married before.
  - a. You will be asked to provide information about your Baptism and Confirmation. If you know where and when these events took place, please bring that information along.
  - b. You will be asked if you've been married before, in any capacity or manner whatsoever. This includes being married outside the Church or civilly. Please bring any information about past marriages such as a decree of divorce or death decree, any annulments you may have received in the past.
  - c. If you have been married before and need an annulment, the priest or deacon will discuss this process with you. Please know that this may delay the date of your wedding, so please notify the priest or deacon about this before booking a date. The process has been simplified for annulments and financial aid is available should you need it. Please don't let fear or questions hold you back.
4. Once the pre-marital questionnaire is completed, the priest or deacon will explain the next steps. You will have some choices to make.
  - a. Every couple takes a pre-marital inventory called **FOCCUS**. It assesses areas for discussion on a wide range of marriage-related topics. It is taken online, independent of one another.

- i. You will discuss the *FOCCUS* results with the priest or deacon.
  - ii. You will discuss the *FOCCUS* results with a mentor couple.
- b. You then will embark on the main journey of marriage preparation via one of two paths:
  - i. A **Mentor Couple** will be assigned to you to work through a process of preparation that fits you and your needs. The couples have been trained and have Church approval. You will meet with the couple at mutually beneficial times 3-6 times, depending on your needs and requests.
    - 1. In addition to the Mentor Couple preparation, you are asked to sign-up for “**God’s Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage,**” a seminar that lasts one day or two evenings. They are scheduled throughout the Diocese over the course of the year. The priest or deacon will give you a brochure with the latest information.
  - ii. An alternative to the Mentor Couple process is **Engaged Encounter**. This weekend long retreat meets in Mechanicsburg and is scheduled by the Diocese of Harrisburg. You will join other couples and cover the material provided by the Mentor Couple and “God’s Plan” throughout the entire weekend (Friday evening through Sunday evening).
  - iii. Sometimes a couple requires another path. In special circumstances, couples may be permitted to complete the marriage preparation on an online course.
- c. Couples will be asked to provide two witnesses each who can attest to their **Freedom to Marry**. This may be your parents or siblings, or even a lifelong friend. These meetings are to take place with a member of the clergy either at the Cathedral Parish or may take place at another parish, if needed.
- d. The marriage preparation concludes with 2-3 meetings with the priest or deacon, as needed.
  - i. A meeting to discuss how to choose the Scripture readings for your wedding day. This meeting will discuss the process of selecting the readings and the spirituality of marriage.
  - ii. A meeting to discuss the readings that have been chosen and why you’ve selected them. This meeting will also explore the need for

forgiveness and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in your married life. You will be asked to make time before your wedding day to go to Confession.

iii. Additional meetings may be scheduled as the clergy or you deem necessary.

5. The Parish Wedding Coordinator will contact you to walk you through the entire ceremony. You will be asked important questions about your wedding party, your flowers, your expectations and hopes for the ceremony. The Wedding Coordinator will facilitate the rehearsal scheduling and be present for the rehearsal and the wedding day. Outside coordinators are not permitted.
6. The Parish Organist will help you select the music for the wedding ceremony. The Parish provides a program/worship aid for your wedding that contains all the important information about your wedding and all the needed prayers and music to help your guests participate.
7. You will need to get your marriage license **NO** sooner than 60 days prior to wedding date, but at least 3 days prior to the wedding. This must be brought to the rehearsal.