



*Celebrating the*  
*Sacrament*  
*of*  
*Matrimony*

*St. Bernard's Catholic Church*  
*Tracy, California*

*209-835-4560*

*(Revised September 2024)*



# Catholic Marriage

Marriage in the Church is a sacred event — a sign of God's active love within the Catholic community. This love is made visible in the Sacrament of Matrimony: a man and woman promising to be faithful to each other through life as husband and wife. The expression of this mutual love is a source of joy to the entire Catholic community.

St. Bernard's Parish looks forward to celebrating your love on the day of your wedding. In order to promote the sanctity and dignity of your marriage, we offer you this booklet of guidelines and suggestions. It provides details which will facilitate the organization of your wedding plans.

May you find true joy as husband and wife on your wedding day and all the days of your life.

Rev. David Dutra  
Pastor

# The Preparation Process

The Diocese requires this first contact to be a minimum of nine months before the wedding. (It is the policy of the Diocese of Stockton that there be nine months of preparation for marriage before the wedding date in accordance with the comprehensive plan of the Diocese).

## Your meetings with the Deacon / Delegate —

They will:

- a. Have an introductory meeting
- b. Have you complete a pre-marital questionnaire (F.O.C.C.U.S. Test) and go over it
- c. Help you complete a pre-marital declaration of intention & freedom. (Form A)
- d. Ask you to invite parents or someone who has known you your whole life to swear to your freedom to marry and understanding of the responsibilities of marriage. (Form B.)

## You are responsible for the following:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete a natural family planning (NFP) class Visit <https://stocktondiocese.org/natural-family-planning> to learn the instructors and methods available.
- \_\_\_\_\_ On-line Marriage Preparation Class paid by couple the link is:  
[www.catholicmarriageprep.com](http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 fee for Marriage prep paperwork—this fee is waived for weddings that take place at St. Bernard's
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact the Wedding Coordinator. (9 months prior to wedding)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with Director of Music. (2 months prior to wedding)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact the Director of Liturgy on décor (2 months prior to wedding)
- ② \_\_\_\_\_ Make an appointment with the presiding priest/deacon one month before Wedding date

# Necessary Documents

- Baptismal Certificate - a Certificate of Baptism must be submitted for each baptized party. For Catholics, the Certificate must be dated within the past six months.
- First Communion and Confirmation Certificates - Though not required, it is recommended that each Catholic submit the date and place where these Sacraments were received.
- If you were married before, you will also need a copy of the Declaration of the Annulment or a copy of your former spouse's Death Certificate. (The Priest/Deacon will inform you of the documents you will need.) **Wedding date will be discussed upon receipt of documentation.**
- A civil marriage license must be submitted to the Parish Office one month prior to your wedding date. **(Please include the envelope that comes with it.)**
- Certificate showing Natural Family Planning (NFP) course has been completed per Diocesan requirements 2 months before. See the enclosed brochure.
- Any clergy from outside our Diocese must have a Letter of Good standing from their Bishop or Religious Superior a minimum of 1 month before the wedding.

## Wedding Fees

In order to reserve the church for your wedding, you need a down payment of \$250 minimum and full balance due two months prior to the wedding. Failure to do so will be regarded as cancellation of your wedding. The \$250 will be kept in the event of a cancellation or marriage at another church to cover the expenses of the Marriage prep paperwork.

# Planning Your Marriage Ceremony

A Catholic Marriage is normally celebrated with a Nuptial Mass. However, when one party is not Roman Catholic, it is often preferable to have the Marriage Rite celebrated as a part of the Liturgy of the Word. The Deacon will discuss these options with you and encourage you to make choices which will personalize your ceremony.

## Sacrament of Reconciliation

As part of the preparation for your marriage, we encourage Catholic couples to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to their wedding, according to the schedule for confessions at their Parish or when they meet with their presiding priest they can confess with him.

## Times for Wedding Liturgies:

Weddings are held at 11:30 am and 1:30 pm.

Please be on-time. Your wedding will be changed as stated below if you are late:

10 minutes late: Changed to a Liturgy of the Word

20 minutes late: Simple Vows

40 minutes late: Cancelled due to tardiness

We understand that it is our responsibility to follow the guidelines and timelines set forth in the St. Bernard's Sacrament of Matrimony handbook.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Important Church Protocol:

Please inform all participants that the Church is a place of worship and reverence. In order to keep an environment of worship please dress modestly (**no midriff showing, no low cut back or front**). Church regulations do not allow smoking or gum chewing anywhere inside the church.

**No rehearsal or marriage ceremony will be conducted if any member of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including marijuāna).**

## Wedding Coordinator

The services of a Wedding Coordinator are required by St. Bernard's Parish. They should be contacted immediately after your meeting with the Deacon. They direct the rehearsal; they will also help coordinate the wedding party, ushers, presider, and musicians so that the ceremony starts on time. The Wedding Coordinator makes decisions and speaks with the authority of the presider. Any questions regarding your ceremony may be addressed to the Wedding Coordinator any time prior to the wedding. If wedding party is **over 12 individuals** than a second coordinator is needed for an additional fee of **\$150**.

## Rehearsal

The rehearsal will begin at the time scheduled. Depending on availability the rehearsal times are **Thursdays at 7pm, Fridays at 6:30 pm & 7:30 pm**. Everyone is to arrive fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled time. The bride and groom are asked to urge all members of the wedding party to be as prompt for the rehearsal as for the wedding. This is necessary because of other scheduled activities.

# Music Director

More than any other single element, music has the power to unite the assembly. Because the Liturgy has a meaning of its own over and above the Marriage Rite which takes place within it, the music used at weddings must be consistent with the sacred nature of the ceremony. It's focus is related to the Church's blessing of the marriage and the couple's vows made before God. No matter how meaningful certain music may be to the bride and groom, the guiding rule is: **secular songs are not permitted during the Liturgy** but should be used when most appropriate - at your reception.

ALL music and musicians must be approved by the Music Director two months in advance NO EXCEPTIONS!

Contact the Director of Music as soon as you learn of your wedding date to make an appointment for an initial meeting. There is a large selection of music from which to choose. We have a beautiful organ with added orchestral sampling, and a qualified organist. The Director of Music will discuss with you the various vocalists, musicians and ensembles to help make your wedding beautiful and memorable. No outside musicians are allowed unless cleared with Director of Music.

Mariachis are not allowed for the wedding ceremony; please save them for your reception.





# Flowers, Decorations and Assorted Decor

We have a beautiful church and sanctuary. In keeping with this conviction, the Church has carefully developed this policy to guide you and your florist in making plans for the wedding. We ask that you contact the Director of Liturgy for your decorating questions.

**Your full cooperation is expected regarding the following regulations (no exceptions):**

No décor or furnishings are to be moved for the wedding, so it is important that you know ahead of time what the season is and what colors are used in the church decor!

Christmas Season (until mid-January)	White and Red
Easter Season (7 weeks after Easter)	White and Gold
Pentecost (last Sunday of Easter Season)	Red
Fall	Seasonal colors
Ordinary Time (except major Solemnities)	Green

1. No fresh or artificial flower petals may be strewn in the aisles. Aisle runners or arches are no longer permitted due to liability reasons.
2. No alterations of the physical appearance of the church which would detract from the altar. (e.g. candle stands down the aisle, candelabras, etc.)
3. No tacks, pins, nails, glue or tape shall be used to fasten any decorations to the furniture of the building. Only large rubber bands, ribbon, pew clips or pipe stem cleaners may be used to fasten bows. No candles or vases with water are allowed on the pews.
4. Florist may set up a **half hour** before the wedding and are responsible to remove decorations after ceremony. All flower arrangements must be pre-made and not arranged at the church!!

A **maximum** of two standing floral arrangements may be placed in the front of the nave of the Church/sanctuary steps in the designated places (no exceptions).

In keeping with the penitential spirit of the season, marriages are not held during the six weeks of Lent or four weeks of Advent.

# Photography and Videography

The Church remains a place of worship before, during and after the wedding. Respectful conduct must be observed at all times. We allow, to a certain extent, the use of cameras, movie cameras and video taping, but, only in as much as they do not interfere in the liturgy or become a distraction to the people.

Studio equipment, such as screens, artificial lighting, elaborate video and sound equipment are not permitted in any area of the church building.

A video camera is permitted, provided it does not distract from the prayerful atmosphere of the celebration.

The cameras must be set or held in place without benefit of artificial lights.

Photographers are not allowed in the sanctuary or side altars i.e. baptismal font or cantor area for any reason (if you go up a step you should not be there), nor should they roam around inside the church, especially up and down the center aisle. Once the wedding procession has started, photographers are not permitted to stop the procession to take pictures. No flash photography is allowed during the ceremony. No standing on pews or in the side altars to take any pictures.

The maximum amount of time allotted for taking pictures after the ceremony is 20 minutes. However, this time may be less depending on the length of the ceremony and the time the wedding actually begins. Requesting only the Marriage Rite in order to have more time for pictures will not be permitted. In this case 20 minutes is also the maximum.

Your Photographer/Videographer must sign the "Photographer/Videographer Agreement Form". This Form must be given to the Wedding Coordinator (2 months before the wedding) in order for your Photographer/Videographer to be allowed to take pictures in the church the day of your wedding.

It is the responsibility of the bride, groom and their families to review these instructions with the florist, photographer and videographer in making plans for the wedding so that there will be no misunderstandings or deviation from these established rules and policies. The Wedding Coordinator will be available to answer any questions you may have.

## Please Note:

Rice, confetti, petals and birdseed are not allowed to be thrown inside or outside of the church!

Bubbles are allowed OUTSIDE ONLY!!!

BRIDES AND BRIDESMAIDS NEED TO COME DRESSED IN THEIR GOWNS. We do not have a changing room!!

# Timeline for Sacrament of Matrimony

## Minimum 9 Months Prior to Wedding:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Set meeting with Deacon to begin the process of your wedding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule wedding dates and times.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact and meet with Wedding Coordinator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pay the Wedding deposit fee or the \$250 fee for Marriage preparation paperwork for weddings that do not take place at St. Bernard's
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact the Director of Music to schedule appointment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take on-line Marriage Preparation Class paid by the couple the link is: [www.catholicmarriageprep.com](http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com)

## 2 Months Prior to Wedding:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with Director of Music.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with Wedding Coordinator to select readings, etc...
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pay the balance to the church (if there is a balance to pay)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Liturgy Director if you are bringing flower arrangements
- \_\_\_\_\_ Photographer/Videographer Agreement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete a natural family planning (NFP) class Visit <https://stocktondiocese.org/natural-family-planning> to learn the instructors and methods available.

## 1 Month Prior to Wedding:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Bring to Parish Office to the attention: Wedding Coordinator your Marriage License.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make appointment with the Priest/Deacon presiding for your wedding.

## Rehearsal Night:

**September 2024**