

# **St. Helen Wedding Policy**

## ***I INTRODUCTION***

## ***II ARRANGEMENTS***

## ***III CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT***

## ***IV PRE-CANA PROGRAMS***

## ***V DIOCESAN POLICY REGARDING COHABITATION***

## ***VI DOCUMENTATION***

## ***VII PLANNING THE CEREMONY***

## ***I INTRODUCTION***

Congratulations on your engagement! Please know that we are here to support you as you prepare for your marriage. The entire community of St. Helen shares your joy and excitement as you anticipate your wedding day. Your marriage will form a community of life and love for it constitutes a supernatural setting in which the presence of God will be experienced.

For many couples, the wedding day is of greatest concern once they approach the Church and declare their intentions. Indeed, it will undoubtedly be one of the most significant events in your life. The years will pass, but you will always remember what happened, who was there and how it felt. Your wedding day is but a fleeting moment. It is the marriage that will last forever. Thus, professional assessment and thorough preparation are considered essential for Christian marriage.

These guidelines are provided to assist you in your preparation and help us to fulfill our pastoral responsibility to you. Please take time to read them carefully.

## ***II ARRANGEMENTS***

The initial interview with the priest/deacon should be more than 6 months before a planned wedding in accord with the policy of the Diocese of Cleveland. This allows us adequate time for dialogue and evaluation of your readiness for marriage. It is actually best to set this appointment as soon as you are engaged. The process of marriage preparation will be explained to you and you will be asked for basic information

## ***III CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT***

### **SPIRITUAL**

At St. Helen's we require that at least one party is a registered parishioner in good standing. This means that they attend church weekly. This also includes the acceptance of the religious and sacramental nature of marriage. When one party is not Catholic the wedding will take place outside of Mass, since the non-Catholic cannot receive Communion at the Mass. A dispensation may be able to be obtained but not guaranteed.

### **B PERSONAL**

Maturity needs to be evident in several areas. These include the following: self-sufficiency, reality awareness, responsibility, selfless relationships and self-acceptance.

## **C CANONICAL**

Through dialogue, it must be determined that a couple is free to marry within the church and that there are no impediments of the law. In the case of a re-marriage or validation of an existing union, we will be happy to assist you in taking the necessary steps to ensure compliance with the Diocesan Tribunal.

**NOTE:** All of the items described above will be evaluated during your meetings with us and through a pre-nuptial evaluation called the "Prepare and Enrich" which is required and will be administered by our staff.

## ***IV PRE-CANA PROGRAM***

We require that all couples participate in a Pre-Cana program. At St. Helen's we offer several methods of pre-nuptial preparation. These are as follows:

**Pre-Cana Day** – is offered by St. Helen's and Sts. Edward and Lucy once each year – in the fall. Or you may attend Pre-Cana Day at another parish.

**Engaged Encounter Weekend** – The Diocese also sponsors Engaged Encounter Weekend as an option for Marriage preparation. This is an intensive three-day retreat for engaged couples. It is typically held at a retreat facility or a hotel.

**Cana II** - (for those previously married). For couples who have been previously married, the Diocese offers a Cana II program to meet their special needs. This program is recommended if you are planning remarriage (or the validation of an existing union).

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**NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP)** – We at St. Helen’s offer an NFP information session. We also have classes once a year to teach natural family planning. We strongly encourage couples to take these classes. We do require couples to attend the information session.

**NOTE:** Our office can provide you with information on some of the programs being offered locally. For details on what is available throughout the Diocese, please call the Marriage and Family Office at 216-696-6525. Ext. 3570 or view the Catholic Charities web-site.

<http://www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/mfm/index.html>

## ***V DIOCESAN POLICY REGARDING COHABITATION***

Couples who are living together prior to marriage present a serious pastoral concern to clergy and pastoral ministers whose responsibility it is to convey the Church’s teaching and tradition. By living together outside of marriage, a couple says publicly that they do not choose to follow the beliefs of the Church community and wish to be treated as married.

When the couple approaches the Church to plan a wedding, they are now asking to be treated as unmarried and asking us to plan a public celebration as a witness to that fact.

God has revealed that living together and sexual relations prior to marriage are wrong. Sexual relations are a sign and symbol of a total gift of one person to another. That gift is made in the marriage vows when two people give themselves to each other publicly for life. To engage in sexual relations before making that formal, public, permanent gift and commitment in marriage is to falsify the sacred symbol of sexual intercourse. God’s laws regarding sexual behavior are not whimsical or arbitrary, but are guidelines to the sacred significance of sexuality in our lives. They are in direct opposition to the shallow view of sexuality that is found so much in our culture.

While we can sometimes recognize the social and economic pressure and the feelings that have led a couple to live together, it is the Church’s responsibility to discuss other options and the manner in which your marriage can be witnessed within the Church.

## **VI DOCUMENTATION**

In order to prepare for marriage, the following documents will be required:

**A new record of Baptism**—obtained by phoning the Church of your Baptism. This record should be issued no more than six months before the marriage.

**Communion/Confirmation Certificates**—if not indicated on the Baptismal record should be obtained from the Church where each Sacrament was received.

**Marriage forms**—will be completed by the staff member who helps plan your wedding.

**Prepare and Enrich** will be administered by our staff. The Diocese charges us to process this evaluation, the expense is covered in the offering to the Church.

**Dispensation**—if required, as in a case of a mixed marriage, will be submitted to the bishop's office. The Diocese charges us to process the paperwork, the expense is covered in the offering to the Church.

**Civil License**—a marriage license must be obtained no more than 60 days prior to the wedding in the Ohio county of residence of either party. The license should be given to the priest/deacon no later than the rehearsal. The ceremony cannot be started until this document is presented to the priest/celebrant.

## **VII PLANNING YOUR CEREMONY**

**Setting the time** -- Suggested times for your wedding include: Friday evening or Saturday at 10:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, or 2:00 p.m. WEDDINGS ARE NOT CELEBRATED ON SUNDAY. Weddings are discouraged during Lent.

**Music/Liturgy**—All music played during a Church ceremony is to be liturgical music. Secular music, while it might be significant in your lives, is out of place in the liturgy of the Church. No CD's or tapes are permitted.



It is the responsibility of the couple to provide the music for the wedding. Couples are to speak to the music director in choosing appropriate music for weddings. The music

director will provide you with a list of songs that are appropriate for liturgy and point out songs that are not. The music director is Jack Tayek 440-564-8019. Because it is important that the ceremony be appropriate to our tradition, before you ask any musician outside the parish to play at your wedding, please consult with the priest/deacon performing the ceremony. This can help avoid any embarrassing situations. Financial arrangements are contracted between the couple and the musician.

During your marriage preparation, you will receive a wedding planning booklet. The following recommendations might be helpful:



Prayerfully choose the readings, prayers and liturgy options. Two options not listed are:

Visit to the Holy Family Shrine—we encourage both the bride and groom to visit the Holy Family Shrine.

Lighting of the Unity Candle – Usually the couple will provide their own or the parish will provide three dinner

size candles. If you do purchase your own large candle, you should also purchase smaller matching candles.

You may choose individuals to do the scripture readings and petitions and bring up the offertory gifts (if the wedding is during Mass). Those who do the scripture readings must be practicing Catholics.

**Flowers/Runner** – Flowers should be in good taste and should not detract from the altar as the focal point of the sanctuary. Usually, two sprays around the altar are sufficient. Pedestals are available if needed. A visit to the Holy Family Shrine requires a small bouquet or a single rose. For a runner the aisle is 85 ft.



Should other weddings be scheduled on the same day, you may share the expense of the flowers (with other couples) if you wish. Or if the wedding is scheduled during the Easter or Christmas seasons (Easter through Pentecost or Christmas through Epiphany), when the altar is already decorated, a donation of \$125.00 to the St. Helen's Ladies

Guild is expected to cover the cost of replenishing the flowers.



**Photography** – The photographer must consult with the priest/celebrant before the Mass. Further instructions will be given before the ceremony commences. The photographer should not pose a distraction to the couple, celebrant, or congregation. (Most professional

photographers are sensitive and use discretion when photographing a wedding. Please give your photographer a copy of the photographer guidelines).

**Offering to the Church.** It is customary to give an offering to the Church at the time of the wedding. This offering includes the use of the facility, the Prepare and Enrich costs, and the stipend offered for the officiating priest/deacon.

The months of June and October are reserved for Parishioners only. We will not be able to accommodate a non-parishioner wedding during those two months

For parishioners this cost is: \$350.00

For Non-parishioners: \$500.00

Payment is due two months prior to the wedding date.

Remittance to:

St. Helen Church  
12060 Kinsman Rd  
Newbury, Ohio 44065

Please include a notation of the wedding involved.

The above costs do not include musicians or floral arrangements.