

Getting Married

FROM ENGAGEMENT TO THE HONEYMOON



TIPS FOR A LESS STRESSFUL, MORE
MEANINGFUL CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE



Dear Engaged Couples,

Your wedding not only brings the two of you together in marriage; it brings your two families together to share in your new life for decades to come. In fact, your marriage creates a new family, and it is families that are the foundation of both church and society. Your marriage matters to all of us, for we will be enriched or discouraged by how your married life unfolds.

Your wedding is indeed a momentous occasion for all involved. Most likely you haven't planned a celebration quite this all-encompassing before. And of course you hope you won't ever be planning a wedding again. You want to get it right.

There are a lot of people out there ready and willing to "help" by pressuring you to overspend and "over worry" about clothing, food, invitations, flowers, etc. We'd like to help by sharing ideas about how to plan without so much stress, how to celebrate without spending more than is comfortable. Then you will be free to plan a wedding day that speaks of the uniqueness of your relationship, the depth of the lifelong commitment you are making, and the presence of God in your love for one another.

We don't want you to be like the bride who dreaded her own wedding day, complaining, "I just want my wedding to be over; I'm so sick of all the details and I can't stand the stress." We hope you will sound like the couple that said, "We are looking forward to our wedding day with confidence and excitement."

Engagement Prayer

Soon we will recite our wedding vows, making a lifetime commitment to be true in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love and honor all the days of our life.

Show us how to be people of our word.
Be with us as we sharpen the tools of communication, decision-making and prayer—
tools required to build a strong and life-giving marriage.

Help us guard and nurture the love we have found for you
and for one another. Amen.

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ENGAGEMENT

PURPOSE:

- Discussing hopes and expectations for your marriage (not just the wedding day).
- Deepening your relationship with one another, saving full sexual expression until marriage.
- Deepening your relationship with God as you prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage.
- Strengthening bonds with both families and building bridges between your families.
- Interfaith couples: Learning about each other's religious beliefs and practices.
- Exploring the Catholic Church's rich vision of marriage and family.
- Deciding on a morally and physically safe family planning method. Learn about Natural Family Planning at www.familyministries.org, www.usccb.org, or www.boma-usa.org.
- Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation (a tradition for Catholics before marrying). Find a priest with whom you feel comfortable.
- Healing past wounds that can jeopardize your marriage and future parenting relationship. See www.hopeafterabortion.com.



STRESSORS:

- Parents not ready to let go or not approving of your choice of marriage partner.
- Decisions about careers and where to live.
- When the wedding planning takes over the relationship, the couple growth slows.
- Negotiating with parents about wedding plans.
- Partner not willing to help with some of the planning.

IDEAS: KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE!

- Decide wedding planning priorities; budget the majority of your time and energy on the most important items.
- Delegate as much of the

wedding planning as possible, except for the ceremony! Does it really matter what guests eat as long as they are well fed?

- Keep things in perspective. No

wedding is ever perfect, but no marriage is either! The way you respond to the things that go awry now says a lot about how you'll respond when things go wrong later.

- Plan now to carve out a few hours on your wedding day or the day before for just the two of you to reflect on the commitment you are about to make. Invite God!
- Chat with parents and grandparents about their experiences of becoming engaged, being welcomed or not welcomed into their partner's family, their wedding, and adjustments after marriage.
- Ask your parents and grandparents to give you their own engagement blessing. Invite members from both families, if possible.
- Take time getting to know your partner's family better.
- Find interesting activities and discussion topics in addition to wedding planning!
- As a couple, write an engagement prayer to use daily, or use the one in this resource.



PLANNING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

PURPOSE: To work together to plan a ceremony that speaks to the depth of the Christian commitment you are making.

STRESSORS:

- Not knowing where to start.
- Not understanding the reasons for Church policies.
- Expectations about music, misunderstanding of the place of secular and sacred music in ceremony.
- Interfaith marriages: Non-Catholic not understanding the religious ceremony.

IDEAS: LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS!

- Wedding planner books are available. Ask your pastor. *A Marriage in the Lord*, which you may have received at your PreCana or marriage preparation class, has ceremony selection readings and prayer choices. Order it at www.familyministries.org.
- The church ceremony should be the focal point of the whole wedding day. It deserves your best time and energy. Plan it together!
- Interfaith couples: Make sure

you both understand the various elements of the wedding ceremony.

- Ask your priest to help here.



- Marriage will occur within Mass or outside Mass.
- Make quality time to choose the readings and music. What do you want them to say about you as a couple and the kind of marriage you desire?
- The liturgical season (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time) needs to be considered when planning the marriage liturgy.
- Attempt to involve as many people as possible in the liturgy.
- Readers (one or two people)

- Commentator (for the General Intercessions)
- Eucharistic Ministers (inside Mass)
- Presentation of Gifts (inside Mass)
- Cantor/Psalmist (one or two people)
- Servers (two people)
- Entrance procession: Options are available. Think through the symbolic meaning before you choose.
- Music should be God-centered and reflect the theology of marriage. The ceremony is a worship service: “Worship the Lord, not the bride!”

SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS: OPTIONAL

- Unity candle
- Flowers to Mary and mothers of the couple
- White runner (Some couples skip this and donate the money to a charity.)
- Reception line
- Provide a program to encourage the full and active participation of your guests. Include a note of thanks to family and friends for their support. Add your married address.

WEDDING SHOWERS

PURPOSE: A chance for relatives and friends of both families to meet one another and offer material and personal support to the new couple.

STRESSORS: Expense, decorations, deciding which games to play (hosts) or dreading all those games (guests).

IDEAS: AIM FOR MORE MEANING, LESS FUSS.

- Invite guests to bring spouse or partner.
- Lead the prayer as a couple.
- Ask guests to bring a bit of wisdom for developing a strong marriage to share with you.
- Introduce members of the bridal party in terms of what they mean in your life. “This is Jen, my sister-in-law, who stood by

me when I lost my job.”

- Guests share a story, memory, or old photo of bride or groom.

Gathering for eating and celebrating is holy and a basic element of Catholic tradition. It can remind us of and lead us to the Eucharist.

INVITATIONS

PURPOSE: To inform and invite those you love and who love you.

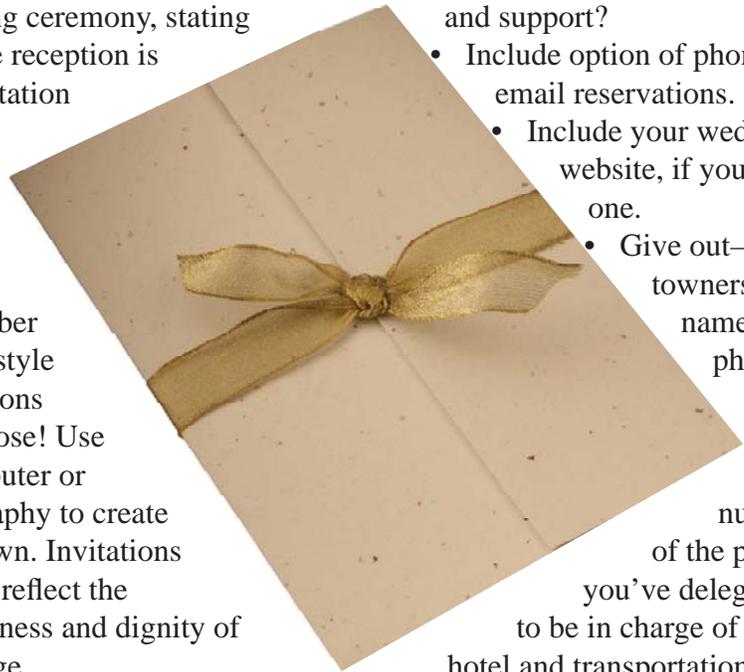
STRESSORS: Guest list, choice and cost of invitations.

IDEAS: KEEP IT SIMPLE, SWEETHEART!

- See the messy process of deciding the guest list as a way of getting to better know your own family and the family into which you are marrying.
- Consider inviting cut-off relatives; just the invitation can begin the healing.
- If you decide not to invite children, what message is this sending?
- Through the parish bulletin, issue a general invitation to parishioners to attend the

wedding ceremony, stating that the reception is by invitation only.

- No one will care or remember which style invitations you chose! Use a computer or calligraphy to create your own. Invitations should reflect the seriousness and dignity of marriage.
- Does the script include the spiritual dimension of this lifelong commitment you are inviting people to witness



and support?

- Include option of phone or email reservations.
- Include your wedding website, if you have one.
- Give out-of-towners the name and phone

number of the person you've delegated to be in charge of hotel and transportation arrangement questions. Tourist info websites are appreciated too.

WEDDING ATTIRE

PURPOSE: To express the joy and sanctity of the occasion.

STRESSORS:

- Trying to choose clothes that are as expensive or trendy as those you've seen at other weddings.
- Effect of choosing tuxedos and bridesmaids' gowns on your friendship with the bridal party.
- Expense: What is fair to ask friends to spend?
- Picking up tuxes on wedding day or day before; returning them on time. What if they don't fit?

IDEAS:

- Only two witnesses are needed. You could find alternative ways



to honor friends other than having them in the bridal party.

- Groomsmen can wear suits instead of tuxes.
- Bride suggests a color or a fabric; bridesmaids pick their

own pattern, or wear a dress they already have.

- Check consignment shops or borrow dress or suit.
- Modesty is a concern; shawls can help.

WEDDING REHEARSAL DINNER

PURPOSE: Bonding of families.

STRESSORS:

- Expense and nervousness over wedding day.
- Concern about members of bride and groom’s families feeling comfortable with one another.
- Possible awkwardness of having estranged or divorced family members together.

IDEAS: ASK YOURSELF, “WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?”

- Have a catered meal or gather at a home or park for a picnic, barbeque, or pot luck. Informal settings allow more socializing.
- Delegate dinner details. Use your energy to introduce guests to one another and enjoy their company.
- Invite guests to circle around you; the eldest relative or parents of the couple give a blessing; others follow.
- Honor the longest married couple present.



- Table conversation ideas: the marriage I most admire and why; hopes for the bride and groom.

FLOWERS, DECORATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHER

PURPOSE:

- To create an appropriate atmosphere of celebration.
- To capture the wedding day for the future.

STRESSORS:

- Thinking of ideas and carrying them out.
- Expense; worry about last minute details.

IDEAS: KEEP IT SIMPLE, SWEETHEART!

- Delegate flowers and decorations to someone who

would enjoy doing it.

- Use large potted flowers (azaleas, mums) at church and leave them there as a gift to parish. Your pastor can put a note in the bulletin announcing your gift.
- Reception: Use informal bouquets from someone’s garden or potted plants which guests can take home or you can plant at your new home.
- Bridesmaids could carry a single flower.



- Check parish policy on photography. Policies are written to safeguard the flow and sacredness of the wedding ceremony.
- If a photographer is financially out of the question, ask a few friends who take good photos to take candid photos and a few formal ones.
- Give your photographer a list of photos you would like taken.
- Take the majority of wedding photos before the ceremony.

RITE OF MARRIAGE

PURPOSE:

- To worship God, not the bride.
- To unite the couple in the Sacrament of Matrimony.
- To receive the support and prayers of the family, friends, and parishioners.



STRESSORS:

- Keeping track of all the details: corsages, seating, programs.
- Worry about remembering what to do when.
- Worry about family members getting along.

IDEAS: DON’T MISS YOUR OWN WEDDING!

- Don’t sweat the small stuff! Concentrate on what’s important—God, your marriage, the ones you love!
- Greet your guests at the door; or have family members do it for you.
- Intermingle seating for guests of the bride and groom.
- Provide a program so all can participate.

RECEPTION

PURPOSE:

- To celebrate your marriage and the gift of family and friends.
- The first opportunity for the newly married couple to offer hospitality to their guests.
- Enjoying the company of your guests!

STRESSORS:

- Worry about expense and quality of food.
- Making sure caterer, DJ, servers do what you want them to at the right time (cake cutting, serving food, when music begins).

IDEAS: ENJOY YOUR FIRST PARTY AS HUSBAND AND WIFE!

- Spend your time interacting with and enjoying your guests, not handling details. Don't miss your own wedding reception!
- Delegate the job of making sure reception runs as planned to a



responsible, assertive friend, as their wedding gift to you.

- Arm yourself with a sense of humor. The event being celebrated is more important than any of the details!
- Have a potluck or simple buffet; a more formal dinner does not mean more fun.
- Use the unity candle here instead of at church.
- Bride and groom can offer the blessing before the meal. This is your first dinner hosting

guests!

- Write your own blessing and use it again later at meals in your home.
- Serve your guests at the buffet line—a nice chance to chat with each of them and a symbolic gesture of your hospitality and service to others as a married couple.
- Remember to eat!
- Sign a check to a charity to feed the hungry as your first act as a married couple. You married love will “feed”

many.

- Hire a friend to DJ, using music you have selected.
- Maintain control of sound level of music, writing it into contract if you hire musicians.
- Include line dancing and group dances.
- Refuse to follow a tradition just because everyone else does. Do you agree with its meaning? For instance, do you really want to throw the garter?

OUT OF TOWN GUESTS

STRESSORS:

- Family members haven't met one another.
- Logistics—pick up at airport, transportation, meals, entertaining.

IDEAS:

- Delegate responsibilities for housing, transportation, day-after-the-wedding activities to specific relatives.
- Refer all questions to them.
- Keep your home to yourself so

you can relax and have family time on your wedding day.

- Provide “welcome bags” containing fruit and simple snacks for your hotel guests when they check-in.
- Add a personal welcome note from the two of you. Include maps to wedding and reception.
- Include time in your schedule to enjoy your out-of-town guests.



A simpler wedding really helps here! Include out-of-town guests in group activities before the wedding day: swim

party, picnic at park, trip to tourist site, playing games.

- If one side of the family can't attend the wedding due to distance, have a reception later for them where they live.

DIVORCED OR BLENDED FAMILIES

STRESSORS:

- Will they get along?
- Seating at church and reception.
- Are they meeting ex's new spouse or new or step children for the first time?

IDEAS: THINK POSITIVE! WEDDINGS ARE A TIME FOR FAMILY HEALING.

- Focus on the present celebration, not the past hurts.
- Make clear that even though your parents are divorced, they are still your parents and you wish to have both of them witness this transitional event in your life.

- Ask divorced family members where they would feel comfortable sitting at the church and reception.
- Intermingling bride and groom's family and friends at the church could make the situation less awkward.
- Acknowledge the awkwardness but let divorced parents and stepparents know that you are honored by their presence. "I realize being here together is awkward for you, but I trust that we can all celebrate this happy occasion together."
- Refuse to listen to disparaging remarks from one divorced



parent about the other. "That is between you and Dad (or Mom)."

- Honor stepparents with a corsage or boutonniere, or a mention of thanks in your program. Seat them with their current spouse, if possible.

HONEYMOON

PURPOSE: To allow leisurely time and space for the newly married couple to experience the unity unique to the vocation of marriage.

STRESSORS: Deciding where to go, packing, expense.

IDEAS:

- Pack your honeymoon suitcase two weeks ahead of your wedding, even if it means buying duplicate items.
- Pack your sense of humor! This is a getting-to-know-you time, so be prepared for surprises and minor disappointments.
- Plan a schedule that allows you to recuperate from the excitement and energy of the wedding.
- Leave an emergency contact number with a key family member on both sides.
- Money can't substitute for sensitivity, patience, or understanding.
- A honeymoon is a new beginning. You are decades away from having it all together as a married couple.
- Start a simple couple prayer tradition thanking God together for the blessings of the day before you go to bed, holding hands in bed and asking God's blessing on your married life together.

