



Sacrament of Marriage Preparation Requirements

Padre Serra Catholic Church
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Purpose of Marriage Preparation

When a man and woman make a commitment to marry each other in the Catholic Church that decision is not only joyful but very serious and sacred. Through the Sacrament of Matrimony, Jesus calls the couple to draw closer to each other, to God and to God's people, the Church. Because marriage is a permanent commitment to a partnership of life, it requires careful thought, much prayer, and intense preparation. As a parish, we are pleased to journey with you during this special time.

Requirements

The Catholic Church and our Los Angeles Archdiocese have asked for the following to help us assure the sacredness of the Sacrament and to facilitate marriage preparation.

1. Couples need to contact the parish at least six months prior to the date they hope to celebrate their wedding. It would be best if couples contacted the parish as soon as they are engaged. The more lead time, the better.
2. Weddings are celebrated in the parish of the Catholic bride or groom. If both are Catholic, they may approach either of their parishes.
3. Because marriage is sacred, intimately connecting the couple with God and God's people, weddings are celebrated in churches, and occasionally synagogues. Catholic weddings do not take place in any outdoor setting, restaurant, hotel, wedding chapel, community center, or other similar setting.
4. Dates for weddings are made after an initial face-to-face meeting with a priest or deacon. We regret that dates cannot be set over the telephone before that encounter. If either fiancé has ever been married, even by a non-Catholic church, justice of the peace or common law union, no date can be made until the freedom to marry has been settled. This may require a death certificate of the former spouse or a declaration of nullity by a tribunal of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.
5. We ask all couples to participate in a richly informative marriage preparation program, the Engaged Encounter Weekend or, if necessary, a one day program offered by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.
6. Couples will take a marriage communication survey, *FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding & Study Inventory)*. This tool helps engaged couples appreciate their unique relationship, learn more about themselves, and discuss topics important to their lifelong marriage.
7. The couple is asked to provide some documents as part of the marriage preparation process.
 - At the first meeting, the priest or deacon will complete a prenuptial questionnaire clarifying the couple's freedom to marry.

- Each Catholic will need to ask the parish where they were baptized for a brand new certificate of Baptism. Originals are not useful in this case.
- Catholics will also need to bring in their certificates of First Communion and Confirmation. Originals are fine.
- Sworn affidavits (aka *Witness Forms*) of at least two witnesses, usually parents or siblings, verifying the freedom of the bride and groom to marry, are provided at the first meeting. The couple will need to help their family members complete the forms in the presence of a priest or deacon from their parish or neighborhood. A notary public is also acceptable.
- Other documents such as dispensations, certificates of death, or reports from counselors may be needed, depending on the circumstances.
- Usually, the couple will need to obtain a marriage license, but no sooner than 90 days before the ceremony. Couples who have already been civilly married will bring their marriage certificate instead.

8. When Catholics marry non-Catholics, as part of their practice of their own faith, they need to share their belief with their children. The non-Catholic spouse has that same right, but needs to know of this expectation of their Catholic spouse. To avoid having religious differences create stresses that undermine marriage, the Church asks that these issues be addressed in the marriage preparation process.

9. If there is a need or desire to have a priest or deacon from another parish preside at the wedding, it is the normal practice for him to ask for permission from the pastor of Padre Serra.

10. The Catholic wedding ceremony offers the couple many selections to choose between a variety of set prayers and readings. A booklet will be provided by the parish to help the couple choose elements that speak to their hearts.

11. The ceremony is deeply religious and all of its elements, including the music, reflect the union of the bride and groom with God. Popular music, even when it beautifully expresses the feelings shared by the couple, normally neglects God's special place in that relationship, and is more suitable to the reception or party than the ceremony itself. The parish music minister will help the couple make the best choices for their wedding.

Planning Checklist ~ after your first appointment with your preparing minister:

Liturgy

- Contact Teresa Runyon to schedule your wedding date and time.
- Notify your preparing minister and Teresa Runyon if you are having a Mass or a service.
- If you are inviting a particular priest or deacon who is not from Padre Serra, please indicate the priest/deacon's name, parish, address, phone, and email. Our pastor will happily grant permission to any Catholic clergy. The visiting priest should request delegation from Fr. Patrick Mullen by writing him at the address above or emailing frpatrick@padreserra.org.

Documents to be submitted as early as possible:

- Baptism certificate. Reminder – this must be a brand new certificate.
- First Communion & Confirmation certificates. Copies of the originals are acceptable.
- Sworn affidavits by parents, siblings or close friends.
- Completed FOCCUS Inventory
- Certificate of completion of Engaged Encounter or eight-hour program
- Marriage license to your preparing minister or Teresa Runyon one month prior to your wedding