

**CELEBRATION
OF THE
SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE**

**GUIDELINES
FOR
SAINT URSULA PARISH**

Congratulations! We are delighted that you are planning to marry at Saint Ursula Church. Undoubtedly,

the coming months will be a hectic time as you prepare for your wedding day. Countless details will need your attention: the reception, dresses, invitation, and a myriad of other issues too numerous to count. Take heart, for the effort and energy put into making your wedding special and sacred are well worth it.

Right now, we ask you to put aside all the details of that special day. We want to spend some time talking about the two of you and the relationship you bring to your marriage. This is the purpose of our meetings and of the Pre-Marriage Preparation Program, which you are required to attend. (Arrangements should be made AS SOON AS POSSIBLE for Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter. These classes fill-up very quickly.)

This booklet contains important information concerning your wedding plans. Please read it carefully. We sincerely hope that the months of preparation and the wedding day itself will be the beginning of many happy years together.

Policy For Reserving A Wedding Date

Do not sign any contract with a reception hall, caterer, etc., until the parish priest or deacon, with whom you will meet, has confirmed the date and time for your wedding.

The date for the wedding is confirmed only when he meets with you to determine if you are prepared and free to marry.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore requires that you notify the parish at least six months before the time that you hope to marry. This allows sufficient time to attend to

the necessary preparatory meetings and to discuss both the wedding day and your marriage.

Time Schedule

We schedule weddings on Saturdays at 12:00 noon and 2:00pm.

The weekend is a busy time for our parish, with many events scheduled. Please be conscious of beginning on time (REHEARSAL AND WEDDING) and remind your wedding party to be prompt. Delays ARE inconvenient for priests, deacons, organist as well as your family and friends.

Your wedding party and guests must be out of the Church 30 minutes before the next church event. We do not permit a receiving line in Church because of the tight scheduling of weddings. The wedding party must immediately proceed to the designated spot in the Church for photographs.

There is sufficient time for all your plans if you are prompt.

Ceremony or Mass

During your preparation with the priest or deacon you can decide whether to have a wedding Mass or a wedding Ceremony. The Church encourages a wedding Mass, but if one of you belongs to another religion, the wedding Ceremony may be more appropriate, with its emphasis on the Word of God and The Exchange of Vows.

If you choose to have a Mass, non-Catholics are not permitted to receive Holy Communion due to their faith

differences. This moment in the Mass can be an awkward time for non-Catholic guests. It is a consequence of these sad divisions of Christianity that we cannot extend a general invitation to receive communion. Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is an action signifying a oneness in the faith and worship of the community. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not exist, and for which we must pray.

Documents

1. A Certificate of Baptism for both parties. Catholics must obtain a recent copy (within six months of the wedding). Contact the church of your baptism for copies of this document. They will remain here on file with the other documents. If you were baptized at St. Ursula, the certificate is not required.
2. A Marriage License from Baltimore County (obtained at the Court House, 401 Bosley Ave., Towson, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Only one party need apply for the license, but documented proof of age for both must be presented, and a 48-hour waiting period is required before the license is issued. It is valid for six months from the date of issue. We must have this document to witness your marriage.
3. A certificate stating that you have completed the Pre-Marriage Preparation Program (this is mandatory).

4. In the case of a Mixed Religion Marriage, permission, in the form of a dispensation, must be obtained from the Diocesan Chancery Office.

Floral Decorations

You are responsible for floral arrangements.

Flowers must remain on the altar after the wedding.

Flowers should be in paper containers only other wise we are not responsible for the container. The wedding runner should be ordered from the florist (Only disposable runners are allowed). Please tell them that the main aisle in Church is 100 feet. The church does have a Unity Candle that you can used (but it is the property of the Church and must be left here).

Couples who have their wedding scheduled on the same day may find it economical to share the expense of flowers by ordering one arrangement for the weddings. Call the parish office (410-665-2111) for the names and phone numbers of the other couples.

Do not fasten ribbons, etc., to the bench with tape, wire or metal fasteners. Elastic bands are allowed. Candles on the pews are forbidden. There are 30 rows of pews (15 on each side).

Music Arrangements

Saint Ursula Church maintains the tradition of a quality music ministry. It is important that the music for your wedding meets the guidelines as set forth by the Catholic Conference, Secretary of Liturgy and the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Once your wedding date is finalized, please contact Chapman Gonzalez, our Director of Music, as soon as possible. Mr. Gonzalez will schedule a convenient meeting time with you at the Church. At that meeting, he will help you select the music for your wedding and review the various options available to enhance your marriage celebration.

You may reach Mr. Gonzalez by calling his home number, 410-821-9489 or email: chapmanp@comcast.net.

Lectors/Readers

We encourage you to ask some of your family members or friends to do the readings at the wedding or a parish lector. Also, choose someone to lead the Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions). The people chosen should be able to read well in public.

Ushers

The ushers (groomsmen) should be at the Church ready to seat guests one half hour before the wedding. They should reserve the first pews on either side of the main aisle, when necessary, for the wedding party and immediate family.

Altar Servers

They are assigned to all weddings. If you have friends or relatives who wish to serve, please inform the parish office at least two months in advance of the wedding.

Photographs

You are responsible for choosing the photographer and informing him/her of Saint Ursula's guidelines for taking pictures. The guidelines are below.

The Sacristy and Sanctuary are off limits during the wedding. This is strictly enforced. There is no flash photography apart from the opening and closing procession. The photographer is not to stop the procession march to take individual shots of each person in the bridal party. Make sure he/she is aware of this regulation.

Only your photographer can take pictures during the wedding (without flash). Wedding guests are not permitted to take pictures during the wedding.

Photographs after the wedding must be accomplished quickly and in a dignified fashion respecting the Church as a place of worship. The Church is not a photo studio. Studio umbrellas and like equipment are forbidden.

The time limit for pictures is fifteen (15) minutes following the wedding. The entire wedding party and guests must leave the Church at least 30 minutes before the next church event.

When you make arrangements with the photographer, please inform them of what group pictures you want taken in Church after the wedding (i.e. bridal party, parents, family, etc.). This will save you time and confusion on the wedding day.

Video Equipment

In general, the rules for photographers apply to videotaping. No additional lights can be used. A stationary video must be set up in the choir loft or the side aisles of the Church (no moving about the church). No video is allowed in the main aisle, front of the church, sanctuary or sacristy.

Rice, Birdseed, Confetti...

Please inform family and friends that the throwing of anything – rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. – either inside or outside the Church is forbidden. No balloons are allowed inside Church.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

If you or any members of the wedding party wish to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, contact any priest at Saint Ursula and make arrangements before the time of the marriage rehearsal.

Rehearsal

Rehearsal should be scheduled with the priest or deacon celebrating your marriage. Please do this well in advance to avoid conflicts with other church events. The practice is limited to one half hour. Make sure that all members of the wedding party are there on time. If you are late, you will only have the remaining time of your scheduled rehearsal. You should bring the marriage license and any other necessary documents to the rehearsal. Also have a list of your attendants and the order in which you wish to place them in the bridal procession.

Visiting Priest or Deacon

If a visitor is presiding at your wedding, please supply his name, address and phone number. It is expected that the priest or deacon who officiates at your wedding will be responsible for filling out all necessary paperwork unless other arrangements are made with St. Ursula. Remind the visiting priest about keeping to the designated times for the rehearsal and wedding.

Church Offering

The Church Offering is \$250.00 for parishioners (you must be registered here at St. Ursula at least six (6) months prior to setting your wedding date) and \$350.00 for non-parishioners. This offering covers the fee for the celebrant, sacristan and the servers (the fee for the organist and singer is not included). The remainder is an offering to the parish for the use of the church for the wedding and the rehearsal. **This fee is due in the parish office at least one month before the wedding date.** *It is appropriate to offer a personal gift to the priest or deacon who celebrates the wedding.*

Why does the Church require Marriage Preparation Programs?

Some engaged couples resent this required preparation for sacramental marriage. And how strange that is! For no one seems to quibble when required to make some lengthy and difficult preparations for career choices. Doctors, lawyers, clergy, teachers, plumbers, electricians- all of them receive extensive preparation. Yet somehow, many feel that their lifetime commitment to marriage will

“just happen,” without any formation of values, skills and directions.

The Church is vitally interested in the sanctity and success of the marriage of its members. Marriage is much more than the beautiful ceremony and reception. The finest caterer and the most skilled photographer cannot assure a happy marriage. So, the Church insists that time and effort is put into preparation for a life which includes the very presence of Jesus Christ Himself. When it comes to marriage as an act of worship, as an act of faith, the Church must be true to itself as it seeks to make the wedding more than just an event to be reported on the society page of the newspaper.

Programs such as Engaged Encounter and Pre-Cana invite couples to see Christ as part of their marriage commitment. His grace makes marriage a sacrament; His grace brings the couple through the inevitable stormy times their relationship must endure. Communication through dialogue; planning for the future; the Christian attitude toward sexuality; the meaning of being “couple,” marriage as “sacrament;” all of these topics are discussed during the preparation programs. They are merely a beginning, a hint at the skills that a married couple will need on their common journey through life.

In primitive societies, the skills needed in a marriage were simple and very basic. Life is no longer simple. Couples learn their values, not just at home or at school, but on the streets and in the media that is often “valueless”. In the light of today’s complexities, the Church lovingly demands that engaged couples step aside long enough to reflect on the holiness of their vocation and the importance of the step they are about to take.

(Excerpted from “Three To Get Ready,” Oblates,
July/August 1987)

Options for Pre-Marriage Preparation

1. Engaged Encounter. This program is a weekend program offered by the Archdiocese of Baltimore. It is held in various places in the Baltimore area. You will receive a brochure explaining the procedure for registration.

A team of married couples and a priest or deacon staffs the weekends. The number of engaged couples attending depends on the size of the facility.

The format includes presentations on married life; time for private reflection; time to share your reflections with each other; and a chance to interact with the other engaged couples.

Topics frequently covered include: building confidence and skill in communication; adjustment and the stages of a relationship; areas for deeper understanding, i.e. money, time, and mutual goals; sex and sexuality; vocation and sacrament. These weekends include prayer services and often close with Mass on Sunday.

If you choose this program, register as soon as possible. The popular times and places fill up quickly.

2. Pre-Cana. This program is offered by the Archdiocese. Meetings are held in various parishes. You will receive a brochure explaining the procedure for registration. This also includes a list

of the participating parishes, dates and times. These classes fill-up quickly, make your arrangements **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**. **Also current availability can be accessed on the Archdiocesan web site www.archbalt.org homepage under Religious Education click on Marriage Preparation and Enrichment.**

This program consists of two four-hour sessions, or four two-hour sessions, depending on the parish. It is staffed by trained married couples and priests. The number of engaged couples varies according to the locale. The format includes leader presentations and group discussions. Topics include: marriage as a sacrament, love, communication, sexuality, finances and children.

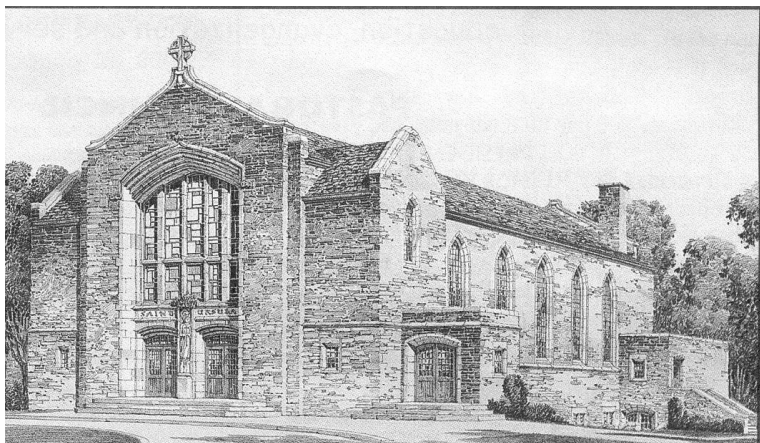
An important reminder: You must attend one of these approved programs to be married at Saint Ursula's. This is an Archdiocesan regulation. Note: Although we set a date for your wedding on our calendar, this date will be canceled if we do not receive a certificate stating that you have completed the required preparation. We hope this doesn't happen. We take this requirement seriously.

Again, congratulations on your upcoming marriage. May God continue to bless you all the days of your life! If you have any other questions, please contact the Parish Office at 410-665-2111.

January 2008

Marriage Guidelines

Saint Ursula Church
8801 Harford Rd.
Parkville, MD 21234
410-661-0600





“Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense, and is not resentful.”

1Corinthians 12:31

