

Guidelines for Engaged Couples

St. Dominic's Catholic Church, Los Angeles



Welcome!

Preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage is the beginning of a life-long process of growing in Christian love with the person you mutually commit your love to through the Sacrament and Vocation of Marriage. We are here to assist you in that preparation, not only in the beginning stages, but throughout your new life together ...

A Catholic Wedding

A wedding in the Catholic Church is a Sacrament, requiring a public act of faith by the couple who are asking the Church to witness their marriage. The Sacrament of Matrimony is a matter which concerns the whole Church and thus is not a private matter or a family affair. The priest or deacon, with the assembled community, witnesses the couple's exchange of vows and pray that this new covenant of mutual life and love will continue to be an enduring sign to others of Jesus' intimate and faithful covenant with the People of God.

Marriage Preparation

You will need to schedule an appointment with one of the priests or the deacon at St. Dominic's no later than six months before your hoped-for wedding date. This initial meeting is introductory and one for gathering initial information to start the preparation process. *[If you have been preparing elsewhere, documentation of the six-month pre-marriage preparation must be supplied to the priest or deacon.]* Generally, it is at this initial meeting that the tentative dates for your rehearsal and wedding are scheduled in the parish calendar. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles requires that a couple planning to marry in the Catholic Church attend one or more marriage preparation programs. The priest or deacon will go over these with you.

In the Archdiocesan marriage guidelines pamphlet, a number of documents are listed which each of you will need to obtain. If you need assistance obtaining any of the required documentation, the priest or deacon will assist you.

Part of the preparation process will include the taking of the FOCCUS Inventory. FOCCUS is an acronym for Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study. It is an inventory used by the Catholic Churches throughout the United States. This inventory helps you as a couple to see more clearly any areas of agreement or disagreement in your relationship, as well as to surface important topics that you may not have discussed as of yet. The priest or deacon will arrange a date to have you take the survey online and then will schedule additional appointments to go over the results. It will take about an hour to complete the FOCCUS survey.

State of California Marriage License

You will need to obtain a marriage license from Los Angeles County or from the county of your legal residence. A marriage license is valid for 90 days. Unless the marriage license is obtained beforehand and given to the priest or deacon, no wedding can take place.

You may obtain a marriage license from:
 The Office of the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
 4716 East Cesar E. Chavez Avenue
 Los Angeles, CA 90022
 Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
 (213) 260-2991

For more information, go to
www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/birthdeathmar/Pages/MarriageLicenseInformation.aspx

Planning the Wedding Liturgy

The Wedding Coordinator

St. Dominic's has several individuals who serve as wedding coordinators. You may request one of them to be present to direct your rehearsal and assist you and the wedding party the day of your wedding. They know the guidelines for marriages at St. Dominic's.

The Music Director

The Music Director for St. Dominic's is Mr. Rudy Acosta. He oversees all the music at the parish. He will assist you in planning your music. He is a very capable musician, and can play the organ and/or piano for your wedding ceremony. Also, he can assist you in choosing other musicians, if he is not able to provide music for your wedding. If you wish to use musicians other than Mr. Acosta or the musicians he recommends, it will be your responsibility to pay them directly. If he is available for your wedding and you choose not to use him, you will still have to pay him a 'bench' fee.

Wedding Ceremony Guidelines

Music

All music selected for your wedding needs to be liturgically appropriate, reflecting the Sacrament that the bride and groom are entering into. Any 'secular' music or songs will have to be approved by the priest or deacon, and may only be used as a prelude or postlude. Mr. Acosta, the Music Director, can aid you in choosing appropriate music for your wedding.

Rehearsal

Rehearsals are reserved for the Wednesday or Friday prior to the wedding. They are normally scheduled at 7:00 PM. A rehearsal will take at least one hour, depending upon the size of the bridal party. The rehearsal date is reserved at the same time that the wedding date is scheduled.

Please note: ALL PARTICIPANTS in the wedding ceremony NEED TO BE PRESENT at the rehearsal. This includes: readers, best man and maid of honor, ushers and bridesmaids, sponsors, flower girl, ring bearer, offertory gift presents, parents of the bride and groom, etc.

Please plan on arriving 15 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time – we will start on time. The priest, deacon or wedding coordinator will direct the rehearsal.

The Wedding Day

The church is reserved for 2 ½ hours for each wedding.

One hour *before* the ceremony:

- Begin setting up flower arrangements, decorations and seating guests who arrive

One hour for the *nuptial Mass*:

30 minutes *after* the ceremony for photographs and cleaning up

Any delays in the beginning of the Mass will decrease the time you have for photographs afterward.

Church Decorations

Please plan according to your budget. The only requirements for a valid Catholic wedding are the couple, the minister and two witnesses! A wedding is a celebration of God's love for you and your love for one another. Do not be pressured into doing things your budget cannot afford. You will need to supply your own flowers, dripless candles and other decorations for the ceremony as the church does not supply these. Of course, altar candles, etc., are provided by the church.

Flower Arrangements

Flowers are allowed in the sanctuary. Florists must provide their own pedestals, if these are required. You may take your flower arrangements with you after the wedding to use at the reception, if you wish. If you choose to present a bouquet of flowers to the Blessed Virgin, please make sure the stems are free from any water, as we want to avoid water stains on the woodwork.

Pew Decorations

Bows, silk flowers, fresh flowers and greens are permitted. They must be secured by plastic floral hooks or large rubber bands. NO TAPE of any kind is permitted. Any pew decorations need to be removed after the ceremony. Access to the center aisle from the pews cannot be blocked.

Aisle Runner (Optional and not recommended)

You may use a runner made of durable materials (canvas, fabric-like or plastic). The florist normally sets up the runner. It will take twenty minutes or so to line it up and tape it, so make sure they start early. The runner will have to be removed, along with the tape, immediately following the wedding. It is good to keep in mind that flimsy and cheap runners are easily punctured with heels

Flower Petals, Rice, Bird Seed, Confetti

All of the above are **forbidden** to be used in or outside of the church. It is your responsibility to make sure that this policy is adhered to by everyone in attendance at your wedding.

Dressing Room

St. Dominic's does not have the facilities of a dressing room. Everyone in the wedding party will have to show up at the church already fully attired for the wedding ceremony.

Wedding Ceremony Programs (Optional)

Some couples like to have a program to give to their guests. This is entirely up to the couple. However, if you do wish to have a program printed, a draft of it will need to be submitted to the priest or deacon for final approval. You would need to appoint someone to distribute them and collect them if they are left in the pews.

Photography/Videography

The wedding coordinator will need the name and phone number of your photographer and/or videographer; she will need to go over the guidelines for St. Dominic's with him or her. Flash may be used before the ceremony begins and may be used once the ceremony ends. The photographer will be instructed to use non-flash film during the wedding rite.

We recommend that all formal church pictures be taken and completed within 30 minutes after the ceremony. The photographer and/or videographer should arrive 30 minutes before the ceremony begins in order to have everything set up. Photographs may be taken before the ceremony begins up to thirty minutes before the ceremony. The last thirty minutes before the Mass begins is the time for the bride and groom to recollect and prepare themselves to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage that they are about to confer on each other.

Fees

Parishioners with a record of giving at the parish are asked to make a donation to the Church of \$600.00, though no one is denied a Catholic wedding for lack of finances. A parishioner is someone who lives within our parish boundaries, whether or not they are registered, or someone who lives outside our parish, but is registered and attends Sunday Mass at the parish. A parishioner with no record of giving is asked to make a donation of \$850.00. Catholics who are not parishioners at St. Dominic's, but desiring to be married here, are asked to make a donation to the Church of \$2,000.00. The donation for the Church is to be paid in full 2 months before the wedding date. In addition, the fee for the Director of Music is \$200.00 and the fee for the Wedding Coordinator is \$150.00. If you wish to have altar servers at your ceremony, it is customary to pay them each \$25.00. The fee for the Director of Music and Wedding Coordinator must be paid directly to them by the time of the rehearsal.

Couples being prepared for marriage at St. Dominic's but planning on being married elsewhere are asked to make a donation to the Church of \$200.00 to help defray the cost of their preparation.

In the event a check is returned due to lack of funds, the couple will be responsible for covering the cost of any bank fees that are charged.

Outline of the Wedding Rite

Music Prelude

Procession

Greeting, Gloria, Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

Old Testament Reading *(you will need to select a lector)*

Responsorial Psalm

New Testament Reading *(you will need to select a lector)*

Alleluia *(sung, not recited)*

Gospel and Homily

Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage

Exchange of Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Blessing and Exchange of Coins, conferring the Lazo/Veil (optional)

if you use any of these customs, the sponsors will need to be at the rehearsal

Prayer of the Faithful *(you will need to select a lector)*

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Offertory *(you will need to select two people to present the bread & wine)*

Eucharistic Prayer

Our Father & Nuptial Blessing

Exchange of Peace

Communion

Presentation of flowers to the Virgin Mary (optional)

Prayer after Communion and Final Blessing

Recessional

Checklist for the Couple

Appointments	Date	Time
Initial visit with Priest or Deacon		
Schedule FOCCUS inventory		
Tentatively reserve church for rehearsal and Wedding		
Contact Rudy Acosta, Director of Music 323-258-9854		
Documents	Bride	Groom
New copy of Baptismal Certificate from church of baptism – dated no more than 6 months before wedding date		
First Communion Certificate (Catholics)		
Confirmation Certificate (Catholics)		
Pre-Nuptial Witness Form		
Witness Documents (2 each for the bride and groom) – preferably completed by parents or older siblings before a Catholic priest or his delegate		
Dispensation(s), if necessary		
Completion of Archdiocesan approved Engaged Program		
Civil Marriage License from state of California		
To Do	Date	Time
Register for Engaged Encounter or Parish Marriage Prep Program		
Submit all required documents		
Schedule to meet with Wedding Coordinator		
Plan Wedding Liturgy – turn in Liturgy Planning sheet to priest or deacon		
Pay fees and Church donation no later than 2 months before the wedding date		
Meet with Music Director to select music		
Give the civil marriage license to the priest or deacon or wedding coordinator no later than the rehearsal – no license, no wedding!		
Complete the FOCCUS Inventory and follow-up conversations		
Pray for your fiancé(e)		

Questions? Make sure to ask your priest or Wedding Coordinator

We have read the Guidelines for Couples Planning on Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at St. Dominic's Church. We agree to abide by and observe all the norms as written.

Groom

Bride

Priest / Deacon

Date