

Wedding Preparation at Nativity

May the grace and peace of almighty God and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you both! Congratulations on your upcoming nuptials. It will be our pleasure to assist you in the coming months as you prepare for your wedding day, and more importantly, for your married life together.

The Sacrament of Matrimony is a great gift from the Lord. He has already consecrated you in holy Baptism, and now, through the Sacrament of Matrimony, He strengthens you with the grace you will need to live out your marriage vows in fidelity and assume the roles of husband and wife with faith and dedication.

This special sacrament is quite different, sadly, from the secular understanding of marriage. The baptized man and woman who are united by God in the Sacrament of Matrimony are wed to each other in an unbreakable bond and are fortified with the grace to give witness to Christ in their married life as husband and wife for the rest of their lives. Matrimony is, by its very nature, open to the gift of children, exclusive in the fidelity the spouses promise one another, and an indissoluble partnership for the whole of life.

The following is a checklist of the various documents, meetings and other preparatory elements you will need to complete before your wedding day. We have also provided a list of wedding guidelines to assist you in preparing for the celebration. The preparation for the wedding will take 6-9 months, so you should contact the parish office well in advance of your desired wedding date. The priest will discuss all of these preparatory elements with you, and should you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

Initial meeting with the priest

Your first step will be to schedule a meeting with one of our Nativity priests. At this first meeting, the priest will take the time to get to know you and will make an initial determination as to your freedom to marry in the Catholic Church. Please note that the date for the wedding cannot be finalized until your freedom to marry is established.

Several additional meetings with the priest will be scheduled in the following months.

Initial documentation

You will be asked to obtain a 'recent' copy of your baptismal certificate dated within six months. We cannot accept the original. Typically, these are easily obtained by contacting your parish of baptism and requesting a new copy. Do not delay in requesting it, especially if your baptism was in a foreign country, as the baptismal certificate is a necessary document to establish your freedom to marry.

You will also be given Witness Testimony Forms (called 'B Forms'), to be filled out by your parents, godparents or other family members. These forms are designed to provide additional testimony as to your baptismal status and freedom to marry. Two forms each for the bride and groom are required, and the forms must be notarized.

Please note that the date for the wedding cannot be finalized until the baptismal certificates and B Forms are received.

Fully Engaged

After your initial meeting with the priest, you will receive an email with a link to the Fully Engaged pre-marital questionnaire. Fully Engaged is designed to discover and promote discussion about the attitudes and beliefs of the bride and groom regarding a number of marital issues, including married life, children, career, faith, etc. Both the bride and groom will complete this questionnaire online and separately, after which you will have several meetings to discuss the results with the priest or a designated couple from the parish.

Marriage Prep Seminar

Both the bride and groom must together participate in the Archdiocese's "Transformed in Love" marriage preparation seminar. These are held over two days and are offered in a number of parishes in Miami-Dade and Broward. The seminars are by reservation only, and we recommend that you register as soon as possible to ensure your enrollment.

To register, go to the Archdiocese of Miami website – www.miamiarch.org/familylife. Please register for the "Transformed in Love" seminar only.

Please note that the couple must attend this seminar together. If you are residing outside of the Archdiocese of Miami, arrangements can be made for a similar seminar in your area. There is a small cost associated with these seminars. Those who successfully complete the marriage preparation seminar may be eligible for a discount on their civil marriage license.

Natural Family Planning (NFP)

NFP is a general term for natural and moral methods of family planning. Since the methods of NFP respect the love-giving (unitive) and life-giving (procreative) nature of the conjugal act, they support God's design for married love. The Marriage Preparation Group Program will introduce you to what NFP is and why the Church supports it. These classes will teach you signs to recognize your own fertility. You can choose a live in-person class, a live online class, or a self-paced online class. Depending upon the method you choose, it will take 3-6 months to

complete this element of your preparation. The priest will provide you with information about upcoming NFP seminars during your initial meeting.

Declaration of Nullity

You cannot marry in the Catholic Church if you have had a prior marriage - unless you are widowed or unless the Church has declared that prior marriage null and void. This is called a Declaration of Nullity (or, inaccurately, an annulment).

During your initial meeting with the priest, he will determine what course of action should be taken, depending on the nature of the prior marriage. Obtaining a Declaration of Nullity may involve a lengthy process, so it is best to discuss the details of the prior marriage with the priest as soon as possible. No date for a prospective wedding can be set until a declaration of nullity of the prior bond is received.