

# HAPPY AND HOLY

## CATHOLIC MARRIAGE PREPARATION

*at*

Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church | Stillwater, OK

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SAINTS JOACHIM AND ANNE, GRANDPARENTS OF JESUS CHRIST

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*"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."*

- CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #1601



Everyone wants to be happy. It's a universal desire. But what does a happy marriage look like? That's our goal for you. We believe, backed up by Scripture and Christian Tradition, that holiness leads to happiness and that every marriage should strive for both.

As you prepare for your wedding day and a life long commitment to one another, it is the goal of the people of St. Francis Xavier, our priests, deacons, and office staff to get you off to the best start we can and to support you throughout your married life. To do that, we offer this plan of action ahead of your wedding to get you ready for the happiest and holiest marriage possible. We want you to be saints.

## THE BASICS:

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**Every couple should be in contact with the priest or deacon who will witness your vows on your wedding day. Contact with the priest or deacon should take place before a date is set.**

- The priest or deacon will ask both of you if you've ever been married before. If one of you has been married before and doesn't have a declaration of nullity (commonly known as an annulment), the priest will assist you in the annulment process if that's the route the previously married individual wishes to go. No wedding date can be set, only *after*, and *if*, an annulment is granted by a diocesan marriage tribunal.
- The priest or deacon will check his calendar and the church calendar to find a mutually agreeable date and time. Keep in mind that priests and deacons often have weekend responsibilities including Confessions, Saturday evening Mass, Sunday Mass, baptisms, and other meetings. Priests and deacons also spend some time away from the parish for their annual retreat or rest, so they are not universally available but they will do their absolute best to find a date that works.
- After a date is set, you'll work with the wedding coordinator at the church. The coordinator will guide you through various steps to secure your date for the church and/or parish hall. Every couple should meet with the wedding coordinator before the wedding to go over the practical details of the rehearsal and wedding day.

## THE REQUIREMENTS:

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Our hope is that marriage preparation is not hoops to be jumped through to get the prize, but rather that every couple will truly engage with the process, be open to the wisdom of the Catholic Church, the experiences of others, and the whole process in order to have the happiest and holiest marriage possible.

Before a couple can get married at Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church, the following requirements must be met:

- Meetings with the priest or deacon (see below for information).
- A weekend retreat (see below for information).
- Completion of the three part course (about six hours total) in Natural Family Planning (see below for information).
- All appropriate paperwork returned (see below for information).

### Meeting with Clergy

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In the time between the engagement and the wedding, every couple will meet with the priest in private meetings to discuss theological topics and the practical aspects of marriage using the FOCUS Inventory as a tool. The final meeting just before the wedding will discuss the practicalities of the wedding ceremony, These meetings take place in the parish office of the priests or deacons.

### A Weekend Retreat

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Every couple will attend a weekend retreat either in Tulsa, Oklahoma City or another nearby diocese. These retreats cover topics such as communication, conflict resolution, decision making, becoming a family, forgiveness, love languages, finances, and stewardship.

#### *The Options*

- Diocese of Tulsa Engaged Encounter- offered several times a year in the Tulsa area, the Engaged Encounter Program is a full weekend covering a wide variety of topics related to marriage. Information can be found at [TulsaCEE.org](http://TulsaCEE.org).
- Similar retreats are also offered in Oklahoma City, Wichita, Dallas, and Little Rock. Information can be obtained through diocesan websites.

## Marital Paperwork

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Every couple will need to work with the priest or deacon to complete required paperwork through the Diocese of Tulsa or the diocese where you live. You will need the following:

- Marriage contract for St. Francis Xavier in order to secure a date.
- A copy of your baptismal certificate. This should come from the church of your baptism and be sent to the attention of the priest or deacon within six months of the wedding. If someone is not baptized, please inform the priest or deacon. Not being baptized will not prevent you from getting married.
- Pre-Nuptial Investigation. This diocesan form consists of questions for each individual on their freedom to marry and their understanding of the nature and obligations of Christian marriage, openness to children, and promise to be faithful.

## Natural Family Planning

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It is required that every couple preparing for marriage at St. Francis Xavier take a course in Natural Family Planning. The marital embrace is central to matrimony and our culture often teaches the opposite of what we need to know. NFP is a safe, inexpensive, and the only moral way to regulate the birth of children within marriage.

We are blessed to have an NFP teaching couple in Stillwater. Matt and Rose Cabeen offer regular classes in Stillwater and NFP teaching couples are also available in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. The parish believes so strongly in NFP that we'll refund payment of the course once a couple completes it.

NFP will make your marriage happier and holier.  
For more information see the [ccli.org](http://ccli.org) webpage on Natural Family Planning.



## Exceptions

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If a couple is unable to complete these requirements due to distance, military service, or some other reason, we offer Pre-Cana online through [www.catholicmarriageprep.com](http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com)- (English and Spanish)

If unable to complete the NFP course in Stillwater, there may be NFP classes available in your area or you can access a self paced NFP course through the Couple to Couple League.

Go to the Find A Class webpage on [ccli.org](http://ccli.org), select the "Self-Paced" course under "Learning Mode".



Scan the code  
and find a class  
near you!

For couples unable to meet the above expectations for clergy meetings and a weekend retreat, completion of the Beloved series on [formed.org](http://formed.org) is a good alternative. It's twelve 45 minutes sessions that will show the beauty of marriage and help couples overcome challenges they currently face or will face in the future. Go to [formed.org](http://formed.org) and create an account. Then go to Saint Francis Xavier Stillwater and you can access all the material there as the parish pays for an account.

We also recommend that every couple read the following books or church documents before they get married:

- ❑ *Humane Vitae: On the Regulation of Birth* by Pope Paul VI
- ❑ *Three to Get Married* by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen
- ❑ *The Seven Levels of Intimacy* by Matthew Kelley
- ❑ *Spousal Prayer: A Way to Mental Happiness* by James Keating
- ❑ *Couples Praying Together* by Charles and Shelia Michie
- ❑ *A Family of Saints: The Martins of Lisieux- Saints Therese, Louis, and Zelie* by Stephanie Joseph Piat

*There it is. This is our path to help you come to know Jesus Christ and His plan for your marriage, a plan that will be for your happiness, your holiness, and ultimately the eternal salvation of you and your children. We pray that you embrace it willingly and joyfully for a happy and holy marriage.*

*In Christ,*



*Very Rev. Brian O'Brien  
Pastor*

