



**BASILICA OF SAINT MARY STAR OF THE SEA**  
1010 Windsor Lane, Key West, FL 33040  
Phone: 305-294-1018

*Welcome!*

**PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY**

## **MARRIAGE FORMATION**

We are honored that you have selected The Basilica of St. Mary Star of the Sea for your wedding. May The Lord bless you along the path to Holy Matrimony.

Keys and Key West couples who desire to be married at The Basilica follow [the Fully Engaged Marriage preparation program](#) as mandated by the Archbishop. Fully Engaged is designed to help you to live the Sacrament of Matrimony and includes Sunday Mass at St. Mary's, a retreat (Transformed by Love) or charitable work experience, Natural Family Planning courses, and regular meetings with the priest/deacon preparing you for marriage and with the mentor couple assigned to accompany you. Fully Engaged is understood to be a nine-month journey. Everything on these pages pertains to you who live within the Basilica boundaries. Marriage Preparation at The Basilica is taken very seriously because your Marriage deserves nothing less than the best.

**Couples from outside the Basilica Boundaries** ("destination weddings") who desire to marry at The Basilica of St. Mary Star of the Sea must meet with their local parish priest who will determine their "freedom to marry", oversee their marriage formation according to the requirements of their own local diocese and forward the marriage file through the Marriage Tribunal to The Basilica at least one month prior to the scheduled wedding date. In order to secure a wedding date, the couples' parish priest or his delegate must send a notification indicating that he will oversee and attend to these requirements. Once that notification is received the couple may set the wedding date here with a \$200 non-refundable deposit. This will go toward the total \$1,000 standard Basilica wedding ceremony donation. The following information will be helpful for you to understand the type of marriage formation that you will experience in your own parish church in anticipation of your wedding here at The Basilica.

A wedding is an hour; a marriage is a lifetime. Please put more energy and time into your marriage preparation than your wedding plans. *A wedding is an hour; a marriage is a lifetime.*

### **1. HOLY MASS**

a. First and foremost, if you are coming to the Church to be married then you should be going to Church. Regular and faithful participation at Holy Mass is a fundamental part of our life with Christ.

b. All those who desire to be married here at The Basilica of St. Mary Star of the Sea, are expected to attend Holy Mass here EVERY Sunday and the 10:30am Mass on the first Sunday of each month followed by a Mentor Couple Gathering. Unless you can demonstrate that you are an active and participating parishioner in another parish of the Archdiocese you will be expected to attend Mass at St. Mary's EVERY Sunday of your marriage preparation.

## **2. REGULAR MEETINGS WITH PRIEST OR DEACON PREPARING YOU FOR MARRIAGE**

a. The priest or deacon preparing you for marriage will schedule at least three meetings with you throughout the preparation period.

## **3. Retreat and/or Charitable Work**

a. If at all possible both parties attend together the two-day *Transformed in Love* retreat experience in Miami (or the Spanish retreat of *Camino del Matrimonio*), regardless of whether one or both are Catholic. An application with pertinent information regarding dates and locations for the appropriate weekend may be obtained online on the Archdiocese of Miami Events page under the "Marriage Preparation" tab. For registration, fees and more information please visit:

[https://www.miamiarch.org/CatholicDiocese.php?op=Events\\_Marriage+Preparation](https://www.miamiarch.org/CatholicDiocese.php?op=Events_Marriage+Preparation)

Please include this in your wedding budget.

b. For those who are not able to participate in this retreat there will be days of recollection, Advent and Lenten Evenings and opportunities for charitable works here in Key West. Both parties must participate in at least one of these devotional opportunities and one charitable work. The priest/deacon will give you this information.

## **4. FULLY ENGAGED**

a. Soon after your initial meeting with the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage you will be contacted by a member (mentor couple) of our Marriage and Family Ministry Team for the Fully Engaged on-line instrument. Please register with the password that you will be given, pay the fee and complete the questionnaire. You will be invited to meet with the mentor couple up to four times throughout the marriage preparation. These meetings will take place in the mentor couples' home and will usually include dinner with them and their family. The hope is that they will accompany you not only through the marriage preparation but will become true friends.

## **5. NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP)**

a. These classes are generally taken over a four-month period. To find out the class schedule (online), please speak with the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage. This is one of the MOST important things that you will do for each other during this preparation period and perhaps the greatest gift you will give to each other in your married life.

## **6. MARRIAGE IS A SACRAMENT**

a. Before you decide to marry in the Catholic Church, be sure that you understand and are committed to live faithfully your Catholic faith as a couple. That means turning your life totally to God through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Maybe you have not done so in the past and are seeking to start now. That is called conversion. Make a good examination of conscience and decide if you are willing to make this type of commitment. It should be your free decision. Take it seriously. If you believe that you do not want it, don't do it. If you do want it, we will help you along the way.

## **7. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE**

The priest or deacon will explain each of these:

1. Both parties must be free to marry. The priest or deacon will explain what this means.
  - a. Mature enough, capable, and willing to make a lifelong commitment to marriage.
  - b. A mutual commitment to fidelity for life
  - c. A mutual commitment to be open to children.
  - d. One man to one woman for the whole of life
  - e. No previous marriages of any kind

## **8. WHAT IF ?**

### **1. Living together before marriage**

a. Living together before marriage is a serious situation and cannot be justified by the fact that so many are doing it or for economic reasons. This situation damages the preparation that God intends for marriage. If you are living together, we exhort you to cease, go to confession, return to the Eucharist, and live in chastity until marriage. The priest or deacon will be glad to help you with any questions. Do not be afraid to ask.

### **2. One (or both of you) has been married before (even if outside of the Church)**

a. You CANNOT marry in the Catholic Church if there was a previous marriage UNLESS the Church's Marriage Tribunal has declared that marriage null and void. This is NOT automatic, and it cannot be assumed. The tribunal only gives a decree of nullity if it finds reasons. The priest or deacon will explain what this means. The full annulment process normally takes at least one full year to resolve. There is a substantial processing fee to the Archdiocese of Miami Marriage Tribunal

b. No marriage dates can be reserved until previous marriages are determined as null and void.

c. This law applies also to civil marriages.

d. If a baptized Catholic was married in anything other than a Catholic ceremony the prior marriage might be declared null and void based on the following documents: a new copy of baptismal certificate of Catholic party, marriage license and divorce decree. These documents must be brought to the initial meeting with the priest or deacon. There is a \$125 processing fee to the Archdiocese of Miami Marriage Tribunal for the Lack of Form Decree. Please include this in your wedding budget.

### **3. One of you isn't Catholic**

a. If you are marrying a person who is not Catholic, part of your marriage preparation should be to learn what you have in common and what you do not. It is recommended that the couple participate together in the RCIA process even if the non-Catholic party does not intend to receive the Sacraments. Both parties are expected to attend Mass every Sunday here at The Basilica. This is called an "inter-faith marriage". You will also be asked to discuss the religious education of your children.

### **4. If you are pregnant**

a. Whether expected or not, the life of each person is sacred from the moment of conception. Love and care for the child is essential. But pregnancy alone is not a reason for marriage. Perhaps it is best to wait until after the baby's birth and then discern if you truly are committed to marriage forever with that person. The priest or deacon is ready to help you.

### **9. NUPTIAL MASS**

a. It is expected that when two Catholics are marrying, they do so within a Nuptial Mass.

b. Mass is permitted (but not required) for a mixed marriage (between a Catholic and baptized Non-Catholic). However, a Nuptial Mass is NOT encouraged when one of the parties and significant numbers of guests are NOT free to receive Holy Communion.

c. Only Catholics may receive Holy Communion.

d. The priest or deacon will help to guide you.

### **10. VISITING PRIEST**

a. One of the priests or deacons of The Basilica will oversee your marriage preparation and preside at your wedding. Priests not assigned to The Basilica are welcome to attend or concelebrate, providing that their necessary documents are in place. The Basilica priest who accompanies you along the path of marriage preparation will "do" your wedding.

### **11. BANNING OF MARRIAGE**

We will announce in our bulletin the fact that you are getting married. That, of course, is not an invitation to the wedding.

### **12. THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY**

a. A member of our Wedding Ministry will guide you through the Wedding Ceremony. You will meet directly with that person for all matters pertaining to the CEREMONY/WEDDING.

b. The Marriages celebrated here at The Basilica will faithfully follow The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without addition or omission.

## **THE MARRIAGE FORMATION PROCESS**

The Marriage Formation process will take you through several steps. During this formation period you will meet several times with the priest or deacon and the mentor couple. Sunday Mass EVERY Sunday here at The Basilica. Marriage Formation in the Archdiocese of Miami is envisioned as a nine-month process intended to help you prepare, not for a wedding, but a healthy, happy and holy married life.

### **THERE ARE SOME FORMS TO BE COMPLETED WITH THE PRIEST/DEACON:**

#### **1. PRENUPTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE (Known as "Form A")**

- a. To be filled out by the priest or deacon for each of you at the initial meeting.
- b. Failure to respond truthfully to the questions may lead to cancellation of the wedding or its invalidity.

#### **2. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WITNESSES OF EACH PARTY (Known as "Form B")**

- a. Two witnesses for him, two for her.
- b. Witnesses (preferably parents or relatives) must know the person well for many years. These are legal documents that must be notarized.

**3. IN A MIXED MARRIAGE**, the Catholic party is required to make a written promise to attend to the Catholic upbringing of all children born of the marriage. The non-Catholic is made aware of the Catholic's responsibility in this matter.

### **COMPLIANCE WITH CIVIL LAW**

1. The couple must secure the FLORIDA MARRIAGE LICENSE within 45 days of the ceremony and present it prior to the wedding rehearsal. The Key West Marriage License Bureau is located at 500 Whitehead Street (305) 294-4641. Note: The Church CANNOT perform the marriage without the license at hand.
2. Marriage at Church is valid for civil law. Therefore, the couple should not have a civil wedding. If you are already civilly married, please inform the priest preparing your marriage and bring a new copy of your marriage license to the initial meeting. Your wedding ceremony is then properly called a convalidation.
3. During the marriage ceremony, the two official witnesses and the priest sign the license. The Basilica will then return it directly to the Court House.
4. The couple may obtain a copy of this license by providing a stamped self-addressed envelope prior to the rehearsal.

## DOCUMENTS FOR INITIAL MEETING:

1. Newly issued copy of Baptismal Certificates
  - a. Please request these from the church of your baptism
2. If you are already civilly married, please bring a new copy your marriage license
3. If you were married to another person previously, please bring a new copy of the marriage license, the divorce decree and or the Decree of Nullity

**God bless you both!**

**\*We will be glad to assist you, but you are responsible for reading and follow these regulations. Failure to do so or giving false information may lead to the cancellation of the wedding.**

*Updated: June 2024*