Your Catholic Wedding

Photo by Kleinpeter Photography
A couple choosing to marry in the Catholic Church should realize that their wedding is more than a public display; it is a sacrament. A well-planned liturgy gives insight into the importance the couple has placed on their wedding. But there are some diocesan policies that pertain to weddings.

In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, weddings are not permitted on Sunday or on holy days of obligation. Nor are weddings, even without the nuptial Mass, permitted after 3 p.m. on Saturday or days preceding the holy days of obligation.

Weddings on other weekdays must be scheduled to begin no later than 8 p.m.

There is no diocesan norm prohibiting marriage during Advent or Lent. But, where weddings are scheduled during these times of the church year, the couple should be advised to take into consideration the special nature of these liturgical seasons. In practice, the décor and liturgical arrangements determined by the parish during these seasons take priority over the environment desired by the couple for the wedding.

In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, weddings are usually to be celebrated in the parish church where either the bride or groom has a domicile, quasi-domicile or month-long residence. With the permission of the pastor of either the bride or groom and the pastor of the place of the proposed wedding, a wedding may take place in some other parish church. With the additional permission of the proper religious superior, a wedding may take place in a chapel attached to a religious house.

Weddings may not be celebrated out-of-doors, in commercial halls, secular facilities or private homes.

In the Catholic Church, a marriage of two Catholics normally takes place within a Mass. For a serious reason, a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic may take place at a nuptial Mass. Permission may also be granted for a Catholic and a non-baptized person to be married at a nuptial Mass for a grave reason.

When either the bride or groom is not Catholic, the couple is encouraged to choose a wedding liturgy that does not include Communion.

The wedding liturgy is complete whether or not there is a Mass.

The bride and groom are the ones receiving the sacrament and they are also the primary ministers of the celebration. There are also many other ministers at the wedding, each having a special role in the service. Care should be given that those persons asked to be ministers during the celebration have a clear understanding about what they are being asked to do and that they are people of faith.

Because the marriage ceremony is a public act of worship as well, it should reflect the communal nature of the sacrament, with the guests serving not merely as spectators, but more as participants in the marriage celebration. They are called upon to pray, to sing and to witness the love of Christ in the church and in society, to be signs of Christian love and support for the couple as they begin their married life.

The couple is encouraged to choose the readings, prepare the general intercessions and select the music for the wedding liturgy.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge recommends that music be chosen that is technically correct and of good quality. That which is cheap or a trite musical cliché should not even be considered.

The music at weddings should serve to emphasize the sacred event, not distract from it. Music at a particular wedding must be judged on how well it will enable this particular group of people present at this wedding to express their faith. Some churches require adherence to parochial guidelines for wedding music in hope that the suggestions contained there will offer even more help in planning the celebration of the wedding.

There are several books available that contain readings from sacred Scripture that would be appropriate in planning for a wedding. These books also contain relevant commentaries on the readings to assist the couple in choosing the readings and the Gospel that would be appropriate for their wedding.
Faith helps keep couple together for 70 years

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Their eyes met, yet no words were required. They knew each other’s thoughts, much in the same way they have for the past 70 years.

Their memories may be fading but what remains clear is the love Paul and Pat Davidson have for each other, their family and their faith, perhaps no surprise since their son, Father Al Davidson, is pastor at St. Joseph Church in Pierre Part and his uncle, Pat’s brother, was Bishop Warren Boudreaux, founding bishop of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux.

“We both have good dispositions, and we enjoy life,” Pat Davidson said as the couple sat in the breakfast room of their Baton Rouge home on a recent summer morning and recalled their early struggles, the challenges of raising eight children and their secrets for a happy marriage.

“Not that we don’t disagree but one of us will eventually give in because it’s not worth it. Life is easy now,” she said, with a loving nod to her husband.

“We’ve always been together,” said Paul Davidson, whose hand seldom left his wife’s.

Introduced at the age of 12, the couple began their married lives seven years later while Paul was still serving in the Navy and Pat was finishing her education at Touro Nursing School. The couple married on Aug. 15, 1945, three days after Japan surrendered, signaling an end to World War II.

But their courtship was far from traditional. Paul was raised in Franklin and Pat in Berwick, presenting a unique set of obstacles. But the challenges would become even greater when Paul was attending LSU and had to hitchhike to see Pat in New Orleans.

Paul Davidson admitted he and Pat did not date or see each other often but the feelings in his heart told him his future had already been decided. While in special training for the Navy in Corpus Christi, Texas, they married.

Even their wedding required some finagling. Paul Davidson had to negotiate four hours off from his commanding officer to celebrate the wedding, time off that the newlyweds had to make up later that night.

The process was even a bit more complicated for Pat since Touro’s policy at the time prohibited students from getting married. But the school’s administration allowed three students to get married, so she was off to Corpus Christi with her mother and one of her sisters.

“When I was getting off the train, I thought what am I getting myself into,” Pat Davidson recalled with a smile. “But I knew that was what I wanted to do. We had been going out for so long we almost knew what the other one was thinking.

“We had a lot in common. We were both Catholic.”

After a short honeymoon in Berwick, Paul Davidson shipped out for six months and Pat returned to school. However their lives would be dramatically altered not long after the wedding when Pat learned she was pregnant.

Paul Davidson returned several months later and the couple moved to Baton Rouge, still without a car. In fact, the Davidsons would not own an automobile until after their fourth child was born.

Paul graduated in 1950 from LSU with a degree in chemical engineering and worked in that field for several years. But with eight children to feed, clothe and pay for college educations, he recognized the need for a more financially lucrative career, so he began what would become a 50-year odyssey in the life insurance business.

His reward is his children have earned a combined 15 degrees, a fact he recounts with a great deal of pride. Father Davidson, a later in life vocation, even celebrated his parents’ recent 70th anniversary Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral.

“After the fourth one was born we were trying to be careful, do the right thing, try to be a good Catholic,” Pat said. “When I got pregnant again (there is a two-and-half-year difference between her fourth and fifth child) I started crying. It all worked out.”

Raising eight children required patience but Pat said keeping a routine was critical. Paul would get up early and feed the oldest four children while baking 36 biscuits so they would be ready for Pat when she was getting the four youngest children ready for school.

Going out to dinner was rare but the family ate dinner together every night. Pat said when the kids saw Paul’s car coming down the street, usually around 5 p.m., they knew it was time to get home for dinner.

SEE COUPLE PAGE 12B
Marriage coordinator key to successful church wedding

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Wedding websites and magazines abound with reminders and lists of things to do before saying “I do.” From selecting the invitations to bridesmaid dresses to choosing the music and the wedding cake, the number of decisions that must be made can, at times, seem exhausting.

But for an engaged couple, getting married in a Catholic church can actually be a blessing, in more ways than one.

In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, as in other dioceses across the country, many churches provide assistance to the engaged couple through a marriage coordinator. While normally not responsible for the couple’s marriage preparation, the marriage coordinator helps the expectant bride and groom as well as their families in making decisions about the wedding ceremony, assistance that may actually make wedding planning easier.

Through the process, the sacrament of marriage is preserved with the understanding that marriage in a Catholic Church reflects the union between Christ and the church.

Cynthia Losavio, wedding coordinator at Christ the King Church in Baton Rouge, explained that some couples want to personalize their church marriage through such items as flowers, dress and music. Although there are some places in the ceremony where this can be done, Losavio emphasized that ultimately the focus must be on the sacrament and on the couple as they exchange their vows.

“Everything we do (in planning for the sacrament of marriage) has reverence for the sanctity of the space and for the sacrament and the presence of Jesus,” she said.

Losavio explained that typically couples want to decorate the church with flowers and other elements, and while these can be beautiful, sometimes they are simply not allowed as they will take away from the celebration of the sacrament. In addition, everything added to the sacred place of the church must be in line with the liturgical season.

“During Ordinary Time, most churches already use greenery (in their décor) so many brides will bring in simple flower arrangements,” noted Losavio, who added that in other seasons, such as Christmas, most churches are already decorated with poinsettias and other holiday arrangements, so there would really be no need to bring in extra flowers.

Losavio said many couples like to honor the role of the Virgin Mary by bringing flowers to an area dedicated to the Blessed Mother. This is not part of the church rite, but many parishes allow it by putting “this in at an appropriate place so it doesn’t interrupt the liturgy.”

At Christ the King, couples are encouraged to choose liturgical music from an approved list. Many secular songs, such as the traditional wedding march, are not played in the church; however, other songs the couple may want to add, if suitable for a liturgical celebration, can still be used for reflection, said Losavio.

In addition to offering suggestions on music and flowers, wedding coordinators can also advise couples on other elements of the celebration, including Scripture selections, the use of a unity candle and the number and age of children in the wedding party. Some pastors may even encourage brides to consider more conservative styles when choosing their bridesmaid and bridal gown dresses.

Since some church parishes can have different regulations, Losavio recommended any couple planning to marry in a Catholic church first contact the pastor of the church where they would like to marry and “ask any questions beforehand.” Ultimately, the pastor, in accordance with the diocese, determines how the marriage liturgy will be celebrated in each parish.
Engaged Encounter offers spiritual approach to marriage

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Love and romance are familiar to engaged couples. A Catholic Engaged Encounter (CEE) retreat allows them to have a newer experience of love, with God, who will cement their relationship as they prepare to partake in an important sacrament of the church, according to Eddie and Linda McClure, local coordinating couple for CEE.

“A wedding is a day, a marriage is a lifetime,” is CEE’s motto, Eddie McClure said.

Many people spend years preparing for a successful career, and are the first in line for job training. Couples spend a lot of money and time preparing for the wedding day. But how much time do they take preparing to make their marriage last?” he asked.

The McClures, who have been married for more than 50 years and involved with CEE for 34, emphasized how different CEE, which is recognized nationally and internationally, is different from typical wedding plans because it focuses on the covenant aspect of the union of the two people. As highlighted during the weekend, these couples are in a period of betrothal, which comes from Scripture.

“Betrothal is a time of spiritual preparation, whereas engagement is devoted to preparing for the wedding, reception, honeymoon ..., ” Eddie McClure said.

A distraction-free atmosphere is created during the weekend to help couples focus exclusively on each other. There are no group therapies or group dynamics. Attendees are asked to put their cell phones away, and the McClures receive many thanks from the couples.

During the weekend, led by a team of married couples and a priest, attendees are encouraged to privately talk and reflect with each other on many aspects of marriage, from the viewpoint of their own relationship. Among the topics they have an opportunity to discuss include: their ambitions, attitudes and expectations about God, sex, money, children, family and their role in the church and community. The couples examine their own individual personalities and combined personalities in what is important to them and how they handle different issues.

Members of a presenting team talk about the sacrament of matrimony and what it means to them individually and how a great marriage can impact the world, the McClures pointed out.

“This is not where we tell them what to do,” said Eddie McClure, who said the married couples offer their testimony and talk about the “lived experiences of marriage” to help CEE couples explore their attitudes and expectations.

Additionally, priests give reflections, celebrate Mass and offer the sacrament of reconciliation during the weekend.

“For some of them, it’s been years since they’ve received the sacrament of reconciliation,” said Linda McClure.

She noted that CEE is blessed to have the support of Bishop Robert W. Muench and the priests of the diocese.

Communication is a key issue addressed during a CEE weekend. The couples receive information about active listening, conflict resolution and sharing feelings.

“They are further urged to address a topic they have not discussed before the weekend or struggle with.

Communication is the gateway to intimacy, according to the McClures. One of the most important intimate relationships a couple can have is with God.

“For the couple in love – who is love? God is love,” said Eddie McClure. “You are getting a couple at a time when they are most open to God rather than just being in love with each other.”

The time spent at CEE is the best gift a couple can give and receive, according to those who attended a weekend.

“While the convenience and lower cost of the Life Choice (one day pre-cana program) was admittedly appealing, Lindsay and I did not want to miss out on the opportunity to fully separate ourselves from the distractions of our busy lives in order to engage with one another as we prepared for our lives together,” said Eric Guerin. “Our open and honest dialogue highlighted the strengths of our relationship and emphasized areas for growth. It was wonderful to share the weekend with other couples of our faith who also wanted to deepen their relationship with one another and with God. It was the best gift we have ever given each other.”

The next CEE weekend is Friday, Nov. 13 – Sunday, Nov. 15 at the Bishop Robert E. Tracey Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy. For information and to register, visit ceeofbr.org or call 225-337-2214.

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Contact your parish priest early in the engagement so that he may assist you in preparing for the sacrament of matrimony and recommend appropriate marriage preparation programs offered through the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Church parishes have all the forms necessary for these programs. It is suggested that a couple participate in one of these programs during the first months of their engagement in order to get the greatest benefit from them.

Engaged Encounter
What is it? A weekend with an atmosphere that allows each couple to concentrate exclusively on one another, free of the tensions and interruptions of the world. It allows for engaged couples to dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives together, including their attitudes about money, sex, children and their role in the church and society.

For whom is program appropriate? Engaged couples marrying in the church

Time: Friday at 7:30 p.m. until Sunday at 4:00 p.m.
Place: Bishop Robert E. Tracy Overnight Retreat Center and various other locations

Cost: $310 per couple
Number of participants: 25-32 couples
Contact: Engaged Encounter at 225-337-2214 or get more information online at www.ceebr.org.

Life Choice
What is it? A one-day workshop similar in content to Engaged Encounter weekend.
The Life Choice (Pre-Cana) experience combines talks and workshops without the overnight stay. Couples have an opportunity to work on their relationship and explore various topics, including communication, finances, natural family planning, sacrament, morality and sexuality.

For whom is program appropriate? Engaged couples marrying for the first time

Time: Saturday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Place: Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge
Cost: $95 per couple
Number of participants: About 35-40 couples (Register early as weekends fill quickly.)
Contact: Shannon Baldridge, Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Department 225-242-0323 or register online at mfldiobr.org/marriagepreparation.

Natural Family Planning
What is it? Natural family planning is a way to postpone or achieve pregnancy by observing the changes in a woman’s body that naturally indicate her time of fertility and using the information accordingly.

For whom is program appropriate? Previously married couples able to be married in the church

Time: Varies
Place: Sponsor couple’s home
Cost: $60 per couple
Number of participants: Varies
Contact: Shannon Baldridge, Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Department 225-242-0323

Remarriage Program
What is it? A program for engaged couples who have been married before and are in a position to marry in the church. Couples meet with a mentor couple to discuss communication, friendship, former spouses, step-families, family background, step-parenting, conflict, money management, sexual love and sacramental marriage.

For whom is program appropriate? Engaged couples marrying before and are in a position to marry in the church

Time: Varies
Place: Sponsor couple’s home
Cost: $60 per couple
Number of participants: Varies
Contact: Shannon Baldridge, Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Department 225-242-0323

Preparation programs offered by the Diocese of Baton Rouge

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Marriage is a sacrament of God’s love

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

A wedding celebration is often a happy and joyous occasion. With family and friends “saving the date,” a full agenda of parties and other planning details in full swing for many months, the ceremony itself can become just another social event.

But for the Catholic Church, getting married is more than just a date on a social calendar. It is a sacrament and a visible sign of God’s love.

Darryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said since the Catholic Church values marriage so highly, it wants to make sure that couples considering a life together are ready, both spiritually and psychologically.

As such, each couple wanting to marry within the sanctions of the Catholic Church must complete certain requirements to receive the sacrament of marriage. This marriage preparation, which should begin at least six months before a planned wedding date, is designed to help a couple in their chosen vocation of marriage.

“The couple first meets with their priest or deacon to see if they are free to marry,” explained Ducote, who added that some couples may be blocked from a Catholic wedding if certain impediments, such as being closely related or having a previous marriage are noted.

Couples who were married in a civil ceremony but who would still like a sacramental marriage should also contact their priest or deacon as soon as possible as they must be married at least six months before planning a church wedding.

Once it is determined that a couple is free to marry, they can reserve a church.

Catholics wanting to receive the sacrament must be married in a church. While some may desire wedding ceremonies conducted on the beach or in a garden, the sacrament dictates otherwise.

“(Marriage) is an act of worship and needs to be done in a sacred place,” explained Ducote. He said any Catholic wanting to marry someone outside of the faith must receive a dispensation to marry in a non-Catholic worship space and have a clergy member present as a witness.

In addition, before a marriage takes place between a Catholic and non-Catholic, Ducote noted that the “Catholic party makes a promise (with the acknowledgment of the partner) that they will do everything in their power to share their faith (with children).”

Within a certain time period after meeting with their priest or deacon, an engaged couple must complete a pre-marital survey as well as a pre-marriage program, such as Engaged Encounter or “A Redeeming State,” for those entering a second marriage.

The survey and programs are designed to offer talking points and possibly formation in handling difficult situations that will, in the long run, help the couple develop a lasting marriage.

Ducote added that one of the last requirements in marriage preparation is to meet with the priest or deacon to plan the celebration of the liturgy.

In the past, Ducote said, marriage preparation within the Diocese of Baton Rouge often varied, albeit slightly, across church parishes. However, at the request of clergy, a committee has been established to develop a diocesan model that is more consistent in purpose, content and process.

While still in its infancy, the committee has already established a concise purpose for marriage preparation that includes not only providing basic relationship skills, as proven by scientific research, needed for a successful marriage, but also instruction in the unity of marriage and its role in the church.

Another purpose for marriage preparation developed in this committee involves bringing the basic message of God’s love back to couples, something Ducote noted is needed.

“A lot of couples come in and don’t have a good faith anymore, but they still want to get married in the church,” he said.

For some it may be that they just want a beautiful church setting for their wedding while others may realize from their childhood instruction that this is something that they just need to do.

Marriage preparation, however, provides the perfect opportunity to “rekindle their faith,” Ducote noted, and encourage them to get involved in the community of the Catholic Church once again.

Church ceremony blesses couples married in civil services

By Michelle Martin
Catholic News Service

CHICAGO – Couples who were married in civil ceremonies or had been living together for years are taking part in marriage preparation sessions and retreats before participating in Catholic Church convalidation ceremonies to bless their marriages.

In October 2013, a group of 10 couples who chose to participate in the sacrament of matrimony at St. Bede the Venerable Church in Chicago were told they were a living witness to the power of love.

Father Esequiel Sanchez, pastor of St. Bede, said: “I believe in you. I believe you will teach the world what love truly looks like.”

The Wedding of Cana program in the Chicago Archdiocese aims to help couples understand the power of love – the love God has for them and that they have for each other.

Other dioceses have held similar ceremonies. There have been several in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, according to Monica Valencia, the archdiocese’s director of media relations. In the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, one marriage convalidation ceremony included 63 couples, according to Deacon Arturo Monterrubio, director of the Family Life Ministry Office there. Another had 34 couples, although most group convalidation ceremonies include between two and 10 couples.

During the convalidation Mass in Chicago, the priest reminded the couples that marriage is a lifelong commitment to offer sacrificial love.

Before the ceremony, the couples gathered in the church basement to line up for the procession and to greet one another.

Angela and Rodolfo Garcia said they wanted to set a good example for their young daughters, ages 5 and 1, and to get closer to God.

“I’m really happy we did it,” said Angela Garcia, who has been married civilly to Rodolfo for 11 years. “It’s just an experience that’s beyond words.”

Part of that, she said, was getting to know the other couples who were part of the ceremony. “It’s like a family,” she said.

Helen and David Curtis were married in a civil ceremony 12 years ago. They decided to go through with the sacrament of matrimony to have a deeper connection with the Catholic Church – Catholics who live together without a sacramental marriage can not take Communion – and to set an example for their two daughters, ages 17 and 20, who were raised Catholic and received all of their sacraments of initiation.

“We were missing something,” David Curtis said. “We were missing God in our lives.”

They didn’t get married in the church years ago because they didn’t think they could afford a church wedding with all the trimmings, Helen Curtis said.

“It was like, you have to have $30,000 to have a wedding,” she said.

While none of the couples in the 2013 ceremony had to break the bank for the wedding, most of the women appeared in white bridal gowns, carrying flowers, with the men in suits or tuxedos. The church was decorated with flowers, and the music was provided by the church. Several couples said they had small receptions or family dinners planned for after the ceremony.

Father Sanchez said that it was right to celebrate.

“We are filled with great joy because we have 10 new families who are in full communion with the church,” he said.

If experience serves as a guide, he said, those families will be active parish-
WASHINGTON (CNS) — The slogan “you must be present to win” certainly does not apply to today’s weddings.

That’s because modern technology can enable guests to virtually attend weddings they cannot go to in person. These guests don’t have to choose whether to sit on the bride’s or groom’s side or even dress up, for that matter. They also don’t have to travel across country, to another country or even stay a few days in a far-away locale.

These “guests” also can see the wedding right as it is happening, not days or weeks later, as was the case with videotaped weddings from days gone by.

The modern bride and groom have plenty of tools at their disposal for sharing their big day with far-flung friends and family. An actual wedding guest can set up a video call through Skype or FaceTime or film the wedding on a webcam or video camera and broadcast the footage though online sites such as Google Hangout or YouTube.

Couples can also use professional services such as Idostream.com or mystreamingwedding.com that offer the necessary equipment including a camera, tripod and even a laptop with built-in broadband wireless in case the wedding site doesn’t have an Internet connection. They also offer professional videographers.

As part of the fee involved, these services also provide technical support to those recording the event and viewer support for those watching the ceremony.

The sites enable guests to log on to a site and watch as the wedding takes place.

Other couples use Ustream and Livestream to broadcast their wedding. With this service, the footage is sent to a password-protected channel that invited guests can access.

Although live-streaming weddings is the latest trend in the digital age where people are eager to share all of their big and even small moments with close friends and those only close through Facebook connections, the tool shouldn’t take away from the ceremony itself.

Catholic weddings have specific guidelines about wedding photography and videography and individual parishes will no doubt indicate these policies to the bride- and groom-to-be.

The website catholicweddinghelp.com, sponsored by the Catholic newsweekly Our Sunday Visitor, notes that a general stipulation for wedding photographers and videographers to remember is that a Catholic wedding is “first and foremost a liturgy that is, the public prayer of the whole church, not just a private ceremony for those present. People videotaping or photographing the wedding should strive to respect the sacred nature of the liturgy.

It also notes that cameras should not be positioned where they might interfere with or distract from the liturgy. For example, the area around the altar is off-limits and use of the center aisle is most likely discouraged.

Most Catholic churches don’t allow the use of flash or artificial lighting during the wedding ceremony and ask that furniture, flowers, plants and candles remain in place.

St. Mary’s Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan even encourages photographers and videographers to be familiar with the Catholic rite of marriage as part of their preparation.

It notes in its wedding guidelines that the “use of the church for pictures is a privilege, not a right of either the couple or the photographer. All photography or video before, during or after the liturgy must respect the sacredness of the sacrament and the church.”
MILWAUKEE (CNS) — Deacon Dale Paczkowski proudly walked his daughter Lisa down the aisle for her wedding. Dressed in a tuxedo, he was on one side of Lisa while his wife, Lucy, was on the other. After presenting Lisa to Patrick Defors, her husband-to-be, he walked into the sanctuary and into the sacristy where he performed an almost superhero feat in record time.

“I had the best man help me change from my tux into my vestments,” said Deacon Paczkowski, ordained a permanent deacon in the Milwaukee Archdiocese just two months before his daughter’s November 2012 wedding. “I came out after that, and a few of my relatives didn’t know who I was, and were wondering why the presider was late. It was exciting, but a little difficult to pull off.”

While he was hoping Lisa would ask him to preside at the wedding at Three Holy Women Church in Milwaukee, he was ill prepared for the overwhelming swath of emotions the family felt.

He said his daughter cried because she was happy and excited, and he was amazed that he somehow managed to get through the ceremony without crying.

As a deacon at Holy Family Church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, Deacon Paczkowski understands his primary role as a deacon is to serve the poor, the sick, the imprisoned and the lonely.

But in a church faced with a critical shortage of priests, he and other deacons preach, baptize, conduct funerals and communion services and witness weddings. With the majority deacons, married with families, juggling life at home, jobs and church can be creative.

Much of the time, Lucy sits alone in the pew while her husband preaches. She sat alone the day he presided at their daughter’s wedding.

Stating that she is not a jealous bride, Lucy explained that she made the journey through the diaconate with her husband and the relationship between the two of them and God continues to grow.

“His role as a deacon is an extension of our lives together,” she said. “It is the three of us working together.”

Dale Nees, deacon at St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Racine, Wisconsin, recently presided over his son Peter’s marriage to Errin. Since his daughter-in-law is Lutheran, the wedding wasn’t during a Mass, but he witnessed the wedding ceremony.

“It is so hard to put into words how I felt. It was very emotional. The whole preparation and getting ready for it was very special to all of us. I did have the overwhelming sense of how God had been working in both their lives to bring them to that time and place to affirm their love in God’s name. It was our love as parents that led us to baptize them and nurture their faith life.”

He said the dual role of father and the person officiating at the ceremony requires balance to keep everything together.

“And for me, it is a joy to be able to serve in those different capacities. I am always a deacon, no matter what situation I am in,” he said. “I think that really is why it is more about who you are than what you do.”

The formation director for permanent deacons in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Deacon John Ebel has a son, Christopher, who likely will be getting married soon. While he is open to presiding at the wedding, he said he is just fine being the dad.

“I don’t mind being the dad at the wedding,” he said. “That is OK, too, and it is a big role, too. After all, I was dad before I was deacon.”

Deacon dads have special roles at children’s weddings

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WASHINGTON (CNS) — When couples get married, they find they suddenly share almost everything, but at the top of that list should be faith, say marriage advisers.

Expressing faith together as a married couple improves trust, communication and each spouse’s relationship with God, said Lauri Przybysz, coordinator of marriage and family life for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

“It is never too soon to practice a deeper spirituality in one’s marriage,” she said. “At any time in a person’s married life, you can take your relationship to a new level.”

She urges couples to learn about one another’s prayer devotions and to be open to differences in spirituality.

The challenge comes from the various ways individuals practice spirituality, she noted. While one spouse may have grown up praying the rosary for instance, another may not have a strong tradition with that prayer.

Przybysz said when her husband asked her to pray the rosary before a long road trip it took her a while to get used to that request. Now, if he forgets to start the prayer, she will often ask, “Aren’t we going to pray the rosary?”

Since prayer “is such an intimate thing,” Przybysz said, couples may be shy or need some guidance to practice praying together. She suggested going on a retreat together or attending a talk at a parish or campus ministry.

“The couple could practice looking into each other’s eyes and saying out loud something they would normally say to God,” she said.

In an online article on the U.S. bishops’ website, foryourmarriage.org, Przybysz stressed that many couples even when they are brought up in the same faith still have different approaches to spirituality. She also noted that these practices equip them to overcome challenges and include God during tough times.

In the book, “How to Pray with Your Spouse: Four Simple Steps,” author Chris Stravitsch compares a couple’s spirituality to the celebration of Mass and says couples should follow the four steps of the liturgy with one another.

He suggests that they set aside time to focus on each other and God while seeking forgiveness for hurting one another during the past week. They should learn about God together by reading Scripture or talking about pressing issues.

“Step three is to share your love,” Stravitsch advised. “After discovering God together, you deepen your prayer and intimacy by sharing your love with each other,” he wrote. He noted a simple kiss, resting in one another’s arms or caring for a sick spouse are some ways of sharing love.

Finally spouses should serve one another in the mundane tasks of daily life. Couples ought to remember that intimacy continues in cooking, cleaning, household chores, listening and working.

Joann Heaney-Hunter an associate professor of theology at St. John’s University in New York agreed. “In marriage, the couple’s life, love and witness can make Christ visible to others,” she wrote in the essay, “Marital Spirituality” on the bishops’ marriage website.

She wrote that married couples have the opportunity to demonstrate total commitment to another person. She said couples create sacramental communities when they build a life of sharing with each other, with their families, with local communities, with the church.

A strong prayer life can nourish a couple’s commitment to one another. The marriage website also offers many suggestions for improving the married relationship by taking turns choosing favorite Scripture passages to reflect upon each week, choosing a service project to do together or reading at least one book about healthy relationships.

For Przybysz, the most important aspect for couples sharing their faith is to find a way to appreciate the other’s spirituality. It often takes courage, humility and kindness to invite one’s spouse to a deeper relationship with God, she said.

“Married people need to go gently forward especially with a reluctant spouse,” she said. The invitation to grow in faith must not be a demand, but instead a charitable invitation, she added.

Then, the spouse who sees God in the other will see the true beauty that comes from a relationship with God.
WASHINGTON (CNS) — Somewhere along the line weddings became expensive celebrations.

Some people have long dreamed about the exotic weddings they want or else they feel pressured to go this route by friends and family.

But such plans ring up a huge tab that might need some reconsideration.

Although the U.S. Catholic bishops have not spoken directly about wedding spending, their website, foryourmarriage.org, asks couples to think twice about the bottom line in this celebration.

Although costs vary by region, the average modern wedding costs between $20,000 and $25,000.

Hold on a minute, the bishops’ website essentially says, asking couples in the section “Budgeting for Your Wedding” to consider what they want their wedding to say about them and their values.

The article asks some pointed questions such as:

Are you willing to go into debt, or put family members in debt, because of this wedding?

Are you willing to focus time and energy on the details of a lavish wedding? Will this reduce the attention you can pay to preparing for the marriage itself?

Do you feel comfortable with the amount you plan to spend?

Have you considered this in relation to the needs of people in your community?

The online article suggests that, as with many things, moderation is key: “If you have a feeling that wedding expenses are getting out of hand, they probably are.”

The site suggests that couples ask for donations to a local food bank or food pantry or that the couple make a donation from their wedding gifts to the parish’s social outreach committee.

It also urges couples to seek practical ways to trim costs on the wedding ceremony and reception.

Advice on trimming wedding budgets is as plentiful as the styles of flower arrangements couples can choose from for their big day. Bridal magazines and blogs are full of do-it-yourself wedding ideas and how to get married on a budget.

Some couples are going green by using second-hand wedding dresses or reception decorations. Others are assembling their own wedding invitations, making their own centerpieces and flower arrangements.

The Knot, a website with wedding ideas and resources for engaged couples, says its top piece of advice in trimming wedding costs is to cut the guest list which would reduce catering costs and save on invitations and the number of centerpieces.

It also advised having the wedding during an off-peak season and not marrying on the most expensive slot of the week, Saturday night.

The site also notes that there are plenty of ways to cut costs on reception food and drink. It urges couples to skip the main course and just supply appetizers and drinks or offer beer, wine and a signature cocktail instead of a full bar. It also suggested ordering a small one- or two-tiered cake for show that could be supplemented with a larger sheet cake for guests to eat.

As for printing costs, the site suggests ordering single-page invitations and emailing “save the date” notices.

These budget trims do not need to take anything away from the special day itself.
The Catholic Commentator

ATHOLIC WEDDINGS

September 18, 2015

CIVIL ▼

From page 7B

ioners and faithful participants
at Masses.

Many of them have felt the
lack of connection with the
church, whether by not taking
Communion at Mass or by be-
ing ineligible to serve as a god-
parent or confirmation sponsor.
Bringing them back to full com-
munion is a joy for the church
as well as for the couples, who
might have a greater under-
standing of what they are doing
than other couples, who never
had the experience of discon-
nection.

It’s not a decision that is for
everybody. Eighteen couples

started the Chicago archdioces-

ian program in 2013 and eight
couples decided not to finish.
Some, Father Sanchez said,
were dealing with problems in
their marriages already. Oth-
ers simply did not feel ready
to make a permanent commit-
tment to their spouses.

The important thing is not
to judge the couples — whether
they go through with the sacra-
ment of matrimony or not.

“There is no judgment, no
stigma,” the priest said. “Quite
the opposite. There is a lot of
support and a lot of prayer for
them. Our focus is not so much
to marry people as to educate
them about what marriage is.
It’s life-changing for them.”

The Davidson’s eight children asked those attending their parents’ recent 70th wedding anniversary to share a few of their special memories. Also pictured are the newlyweds 70 years ago when Paul Davidson
was still in the Navy. Photo provided by Judy Owens

The Davidsoms also have sage advice for young
couples to consider even before getting married.

“You didn’t get it if you didn’t,” Paul quickly in-
serted.

Mass was also a challenge, because of having
such a large family. So similar to the breakfast
routine, Paul would take four children to one Mass
and Pat take the other four at a different time.

“I can’t stand to sit behind someone with a baby
in church and crying,” Pat said “And I was not go-
ing to put somebody through that. Until they were
old enough to really behave we were not going to
take them to church.”

But they made time for the family to pray to-
together, usually before the children went to bed at
night.

“We would not have made it without (faith),”
Paul said. “One thing we always said we never
had enough money but the Lord provided us with
enough that we needed.”

COURT ▼

From page 38

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“In the first place, before you marry somebody,
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what they don’t like,” Pat said. “And whether you
can get along with what you do and what you don’t
want to do.

“A lot of these young people, I don’t think they
have any idea about who they marry.”

Once married, the couple advised a husband
and wife must be prepared to compromise and
never go to bed mad.

“She’ll even wake me up to kiss me good night,”
Paul said. And he joked that the secret to a success-
ful marriage is to keep separate checking accounts.

“I take of mine; you take care of yours,” Pat Da-
vignon agreed.

Financially, they may live out of separate ac-
counts but when it comes to love for another, and
for their family, the Davidsoms live from one heart.

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COUPLE ▼

From page 38

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