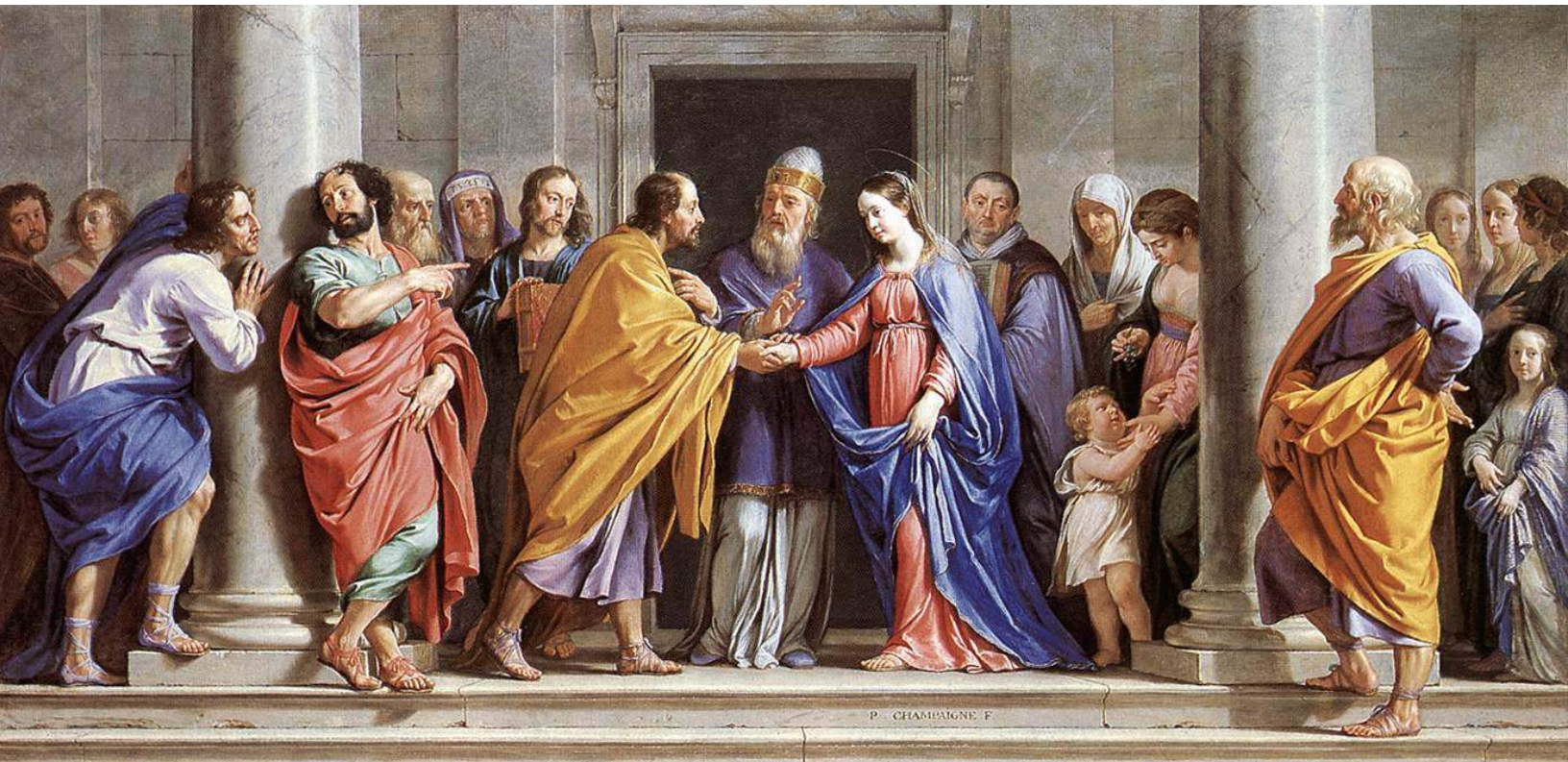


Church of the Holy Angels

Parish Guide to

Marriage Preparation

Process and Requirements



Cover image, Philippe de Champaigne. *The Marriage of the Virgin*. circa 1644. Oil on panel. Wallace Collection, London.

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Introduction

Congratulations on your engagement! Our parish family of Holy Angels shares your joy and excitement as you anticipate your married life together.

Your marriage and the celebration of your wedding day have incredible significance for you, your family, and your parish. Your vocation of marriage will be an expression of your love and commitment to one another as well as a sign of the love of God for His people, and your wedding will be a unique moment of receiving the grace of God to live the life you have been called to. Because of this, it is important that you give time and energy to prepare for the sacrament of marriage. We are pleased to share in this responsibility with you and to assist you in the months to come.

The following guidelines are meant to provide you with important information about our marriage preparation process. Please take time to read these guidelines carefully.

1 Preparation Process

You will be guided through the preparation process by one of the priests or another staff member. Preparation must begin at least six months prior to the wedding, so please contact the parish between six and twelve months before your intended wedding date. Our parish staff can tell you the availability of a date, but they cannot reserve one until the preparing minister gives permission.

Please note that if either party has been previously married obtaining an annulment may be necessary; your preparing minister will guide you through this additional process, but be aware that depending upon the specifics of your situation, receiving a judgment may take as little as a month or more than a year. We strongly encourage you to contact the parish as soon as possible, even prior to your engagement, if this is your situation.

To begin marriage preparation, call the parish office at 440-708-0000, Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

1.1 Initial Meetings

In the initial meetings, the preparing minister will gather basic details such as contact information, what faith each party practices, and the history of the relationship. There will also be an assessment in which the minister determines your freedom to marry within the Church. The rest of the preparation process will also be explained to you in greater detail. You do not need to prepare anything for these meetings or bring anything with you, apart from knowing your **church of baptism** and a deposit for the **church fee**.

During these meetings you can request a day and time for your wedding and for your wedding rehearsal. On Saturdays we have weddings at 11:00am and 2:00pm and on Fridays we have weddings anytime in the afternoon or later; it is also possible to be married during a normal Sunday mass. Availability is subject to other activities for which the church has been reserved as well as liturgical restrictions for certain holy days. While the minister might reserve a requested day and time immediately, an official wedding date cannot be given until the minister obtains all necessary **dispensations and permissions**.

If you intend for the place of your marriage celebration to be someplace other than Holy Angels, please inform the preparing minister in the first meeting. If both parties are baptized Christians, a wedding anywhere other than a Catholic church requires permission from the bishop; if one party is unbaptized, then the wedding may be at any suitable place, as determined by the priest or deacon presiding at the wedding.

1.2 PREPARE/ENRICH

Each couple will be asked to complete an online couple assessment tool called [PREPARE/ENRICH \(prepare-enrich.com\)](https://prepare-enrich.com). This tool was developed by sociologists and psychologists and is used to identify relationship dynamics and the strengths and growth areas of couples. Both the preparing minister and the Couple-to-Couple team will use the feedback from this assessment to shape your preparation. This is not a test that can be passed or failed, merely an assessment that helps both you and us to understand different areas of your relationship.

Your preparing minister will register you for the assessment, at which point you will receive an email with your login credentials. While you are encouraged to discuss the results with one another once you have both completed the assessment, we ask that you please do not skew the results by taking it together. You will be provided with a summary of your results when you meet with your Couple-to-Couple team.

1.3 Couple-to-Couple Meetings

Holy Angels is fortunate to have a number of couples trained by the diocese to provide marriage preparation sessions in the comfort of a home environment. You will be paired with a Couple-to-Couple team and meet with them for three or more sessions, during which a variety of pertinent topics are discussed. In particular, you will receive your PEPEARE/ENRICH results and the Couple-to-Couple team will use the report to help you build on your strengths and foster your areas of growth. These couples, both from their training and their own experience of married life, are well suited to guide and teach you in your preparation for marriage.

1.4 Optional Events and Resources

Throughout the year there are optional events offered for our engaged couples such as prayer services and blessings or educational talks on Theology of the Body and Natural Family Planning. You will be notified of these events as they are planned, and we strongly encourage you to consider attending.

In addition to the required Couple-to-Couple Ministry, an engaged couple may choose to participate in additional pre-marital programs. [The Diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Ministry \(ccdocle.org/marriage-and-family-ministry/\)](https://ccdocle.org/marriage-and-family-ministry/) offers several specialized programs, including [weekend retreats](#), [communication skills programs](#), and [workshops for re-marrying couples](#). If interested feel free to discuss these programs with your preparing minister or contact the Office of Marriage and Family Ministry directly.

1.5 Liturgy Planning

In the month prior to your wedding, you will meet with the presider to plan the wedding liturgy and with the music director to select music. Prior to those meetings we will provide you with additional resources to help you plan the liturgy.

2 Assessment of Readiness

Part of the preparing minister's responsibility in working with you is to ensure that you are capable, as a couple, of entering into the sacrament of marriage. For very serious reasons, the minister may decide to indefinitely delay the wedding until certain concerns have been addressed; these situations are rare, and normally apparent early in the initial meetings. For other reasons a wedding may be impossible, such as if a previous marriage is not granted an annulment.

In all cases the preparing minister will make you aware of any concerns as soon as possible.

3 Documents and Fees

3.1 Baptismal Certificate

For Catholics, a baptismal certificate is needed from the church of your baptism. Because this record needs to be issued within the past six months, your original certificate or a copy thereof is not sufficient; however, if your church of baptism is outside of the diocese or especially if outside the country, providing us a copy of the original will help us to locate those records. At minimum, we will need to know what church you were baptized at and your best knowledge of the date of baptism.

For baptized non-Catholics, we require some proof of baptism such as an original certificate or something recently issued from the church of baptism. These documents will be returned to you after copies are made. If you have no documentation and have no way of obtaining a new record, the wedding will still be able to proceed after we obtain a simple permission from the diocese.

For non-baptized individuals, no proof is needed concerning their religious background.

3.2 Dispensations and Permissions

For many couples, we are required to obtain either dispensations or permissions for various reasons. For example, if both individuals are not practicing Roman Catholics a dispensation is required from the diocese, or if neither couple is living in the territory of our parish a permission is needed from the pastor where one of the couple lives. These are given in almost all cases with little difficulty. However, we will not be able to officially give you a wedding date until all needed dispensations and permissions have been obtained.

3.3 Marriage License

A civil marriage license must be obtained no more than sixty days prior to the wedding, from the Ohio county of residence of either party. If neither party is a resident of Ohio, then the license must be obtained from Geauga County, which is the county of the parish. Most counties charge a fee for obtaining the license and some counties require proof of residence, such as a driver's license. If either party has been previously married, most counties expect a certified copy of the divorce decree or a death certificate.

3.4 Church Fee

A \$100 deposit is due during the initial meetings for weddings taking place at Holy Angels. The remainder of the church fee (an additional \$650 for non-parishioners, or \$400 for parishioners) is due by the wedding rehearsal. This fee is comprehensive, and covers the cost of reserving and using the church as well as stipends for the presider, wedding coordinator, servers, and musician. Any other costs, such as outside musicians, flowers, or programs, are the responsibility of the couple.