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On behalf of Guardian Angels Parish, the Pastoral staff and the *Covenant Couples* Sponsors we wish to extend to you our warmest congratulations on your engagement. It is our hope that we will be able to help you in any way we can as you prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage.

This booklet is meant to inform you about the preparation process that you are about to begin. We ask that both of you take time to read this booklet before calling to set a meeting date with your priest/deacon Presider. If you have any questions concerning the material contained in this booklet, do not hesitate to call the parish office at 248-588-1222. We will be glad to answer any questions or clarify any concerns that you may have.

Be assured of our prayers and best wishes as you begin this most exciting and important time of preparation for marriage.

MARRIAGE: CALLED BY GOD

Usually when people hear about a “calling,” the idea of priesthood or religious life is the first thing that comes to mind. A **CALLING** or **VOCATION** is a particular type of lifestyle to which God has called each one of us. Every Christian is gifted with a particular vocation. Vocations within the Church can take a variety of forms. Some are called to a celibate life, a single life or that of marriage. You believe God has called you to the married lifestyle. With each call, comes responsibility. God, who has called you to this union, has called you to a life of service and witness. This goes with each vocation. The type of lifestyle makes no difference. We are all called to serve one another and to be examples of faith in the world.

With every vocation, there also exists a period of preparation time. This period, called **FORMATION**, allows individuals time to discern, grow and listen to God and each other. This is why the time of marriage preparation is so important. It offers you the time, individually and as a couple, to focus attention on your relationship and your decision to marry in the Church. Formation also allows you to recognize God’s place in your life and your future. Since this calling is a life-long commitment based on belief, love, trust and faithfulness, the time of formation is irreplaceable and requires an honest effort on your part. Lifetime promises are not made easily. Such promises require maturity, responsibility and openness to this process of formation.

Marriage: Sacrament of God

You have considered how marriage is one of a variety of vocations within the Church. Marriage is not only a vocation, but is also one of the seven sacraments. What do we mean by marriage as a sacrament? A **SACRAMENT** is a visible sign through which we experience the invisible presence of God. Basically, it means that God is involved and experienced in a special way. You have decided to marry one another, but God brought you to this point. God, by calling you to this relationship, is asking both of you to be an example for other believers. Your marriage will be a model for the rest of the Church.

Christians have come to view the true essence of marriage as a revelation of the love of God. The love of a man and woman as husband and wife is a powerful sign of God's love for the whole world. Those who are called to marriage will experience the love of God through their love for each other. God will love each of you in a very powerful way through your spouse. The love of husband and wife is one of the deepest of love experiences, and all true love is a sharing in the love of God.

Marriage: The Church At Home

Since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's, marriage and family have been seen in a new light. The Christian family has come to be called a **DOMESTIC CHURCH**. It is a place where faith and the love of God are learned and celebrated. Married love is based upon a self-sacrificing love. Consequently, couples develop into more loving individuals. Married couples must learn to share their faith deeply if the goal of a domestic church is to be achieved. Many couples realize that sharing prayer together is a powerful way to strengthen and deepen their love and faith. By sharing your personal relationship with God, a real sense of openness may develop. Prayer will allow you to draw upon the power of God in your married life. It will help you unite yourselves to the Lord and to one another. Couples have found this to be a strong tool in maintaining their relationship during the trying times. Prayer may be as simple as thanking God before dinner and joining the community for Sunday liturgy, or as involved as reading the Scriptures together. In other words, if you pray and worship together, you have a better chance of staying together.

It is the expectation of the Church that you are an active member and that you are attending Sunday Eucharist regularly. If you have become lax in your Sunday Mass attendance, your marriage engagement can be a wonderful invitation to renew your commitment to the Church in which you wish to celebrate your wedding. In the Sacrament of Marriage the Church is making a commitment to you in faith and love and celebrates your reciprocal commitment to support her mission of bringing God's saving love to the world. Sunday Mass participation is very important in your life and in the life of the Church.

You now can see that the vocation you are beginning to prepare for is not something that can be taken lightly. You will become an example for the entire Church community. Sound difficult? It certainly is. On your wedding day, the two of you will be leaving your families to begin a new life together. Together you have begun to develop hopes and dreams for your new life. The future is always uncertain. However, God and the Church will always be ready to support you in difficulty and rejoice with you in success because of the example that you present to all of us.

STEPS TO MARRIAGE FORMATION

Pastoral Associate Interview(s)

It is your responsibility to contact the pastoral associate to arrange an initial meeting after you have completed reading this booklet and decided upon a tentative date for your celebration. This should be done no less than six months before you would like to be married. At the meeting, your marriage date will be scheduled in the parish calendar. During the initial interview, the pastoral associate will explain the parish policies concerning the formation time, begin to fill out the required paperwork for your marriage, prepare any special marriage paperwork (if applicable), answer any questions you might have and begin to get to know you as a couple. When you first contact the pastoral associate, please be sure to let him know right away if either of you has ever been married before.

***Prepare* Sessions with Priest/Pastoral Associate**

To better prepare you for a life-long commitment, Guardian Angels utilizes a compatibility tool known as ***Prepare***. After the initial interview with the pastoral associate, all couples must take the *Prepare* tool. *Prepare* is a tool designed to help you learn more about yourself, your partner and your relationship. *Prepare* identifies the strengths in your relationship and any problematic issues that may need to be discussed. One cannot underestimate the value of open and honest communication and preparation.

The priest/pastoral associate will make individual appointments (usually 2-3, but whatever is needed for you) with you at the time the *Prepare* tool is administered, to go over the results and to help you focus on relevant issues in your relationship. These sessions and appointments will be held at Guardian Angels. The dates and times of the *Prepare* sessions are scheduled directly with the priest/pastoral associate.

The cost for the *Prepare* tool and feedback forms is \$35 (payable to Guardian Angel) and is due at the time of the *Prepare* session. These monies go directly to offset the cost of these services, not to the parish. This service, along with the *Covenant Couples* Program will better serve you for a life-long commitment as husband and wife.

Marriage Preparation: *Covenant Couples* Program

As part of your formation for the sacrament, the two of you must attend Guardian Angels, *Covenant Couples* Program. This six-week program is offered twice a year, in the fall and winter. These dates will be given to you when you meet with the Pastoral Associate at your initial interview. You will be required to attend one of the six-week programs. You will join other couples on six consecutive Sunday (1:00pm to 4:00pm) evenings for this enriching time of formation as you prepare for the sacrament of marriage. This program will help you to understand more clearly the many and varied aspects of married life and how the sacrament of marriage enriches the Church and the world for the rest of your lives together. The following topics are covered: Finance/Budgeting; Communications; Spirituality/Sacrament of Marriage; Family; Wedding Liturgy; and Sexuality/Intimacy. Sponsor couples from the parish will guide you in this preparation process. The cost of this program is \$150.00 (covers a portion of the cost of materials, books and food).

Every effort should be made on your part to participate in the *Covenant Couples* Program. Brochures about the program are mailed to each couple. If there is a difficulty in taking part in this program at Guardian Angels then other arrangements must be made with the priest/deacon presider. If you have any questions, please give us a call.

Baptismal Certificate

During your formation time, your priest/deacon will ask you to provide a current baptismal certificate (dated within six months of your marriage). If you were baptized at Guardian Angels, a certificate will not be necessary. You will only need to provide a certificate if you were baptized at a parish other than Guardian Angels. You can obtain your certificate simply by calling the parish where you were baptized and have them send you a copy. If you were baptized in another Christian denomination, we would appreciate a photocopy of your baptismal certificate.

PLANNING THE WEDDING LITURGY

Days Available for Weddings

After the steps of the formation process have been adequately fulfilled, the celebration of marriage may take place any day of the week except those days that are specifically prohibited by the Church or Guardian Angels Parish. These include all Sundays during the Church Year, all Solemnities (Christmas, etc.), Holy Days, and all days of Holy Week and the Triduum. Weddings are **not** celebrated during the six-week Lenten Season before Easter. Since the celebration of Easter changes each year, please be sure to check a calendar before choosing a date for your wedding. Friday evening weddings are celebrated at 5:00 pm and Saturday weddings at 2:00 pm. It will not be possible to vary from these times.

Location of the Celebration

The marriage of baptized Catholics and Christians will take place in the parish church of either the bride or groom to emphasize the spiritual and sacramental nature of the event. If the celebration of marriage is to take place outside the parish church or chapel, proper permission or approval must be obtained.

Clergy

In order to be validly married within the Catholic Church, a baptized Catholic must proclaim his/her vows before a priest or deacon and two witnesses. In the case of an interfaith marriage (between a Catholic and another baptized Christian), the minister of the non-Catholic party is welcome to participate in the wedding liturgy. The details should be discussed with your priest/deacon.

If the marriage is between two baptized Catholics and the Eucharist is to be celebrated, the priest will be the celebrant of the wedding (see forms below). For weddings ceremonies where the Eucharist is not celebrated, the deacon will be the celebrant of the wedding (see forms below). Please contact the appropriate minister (priest or deacon) for the initial interview. A guest priest or deacon (family members or friends) are welcome to celebrate your wedding but must have the permission of the pastor.

Forms of Liturgy

The Rite of Marriage provides three forms for celebrating marriage in the Catholic Church:

- I. **The Rite for Celebrating Marriage During the Eucharist** is used when two practicing Catholics marry.

II. **The Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside the Eucharist** is used when a practicing Catholic marries a baptized person from another Christian church.

III. **The Rite for Celebrating Marriage Between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person** is used when a practicing Catholic marries someone who is not a Christian.

The first form has the wedding ceremony within the context of the Eucharistic liturgy. In the two remaining forms, Eucharist is not celebrated. Each of the forms is equally valid in the eyes of the Church. The only difference is that Eucharist is not celebrated in Forms II & III.

Liturgy Details

Guardian Angels Parish has the resources to assist in the important task of planning the details of the liturgical celebration. During the *Covenant Couples* Program, your sponsor couple will give you a booklet, entitled **Together for Life**, to help you plan your wedding celebration. It will contain a variety of Scripture readings, responses, prayers and blessings for you to choose for your celebration along with other information you may find helpful. If you have any questions concerning the liturgy, your priest/deacon or sponsor couple will be able to answer them.

The Rite of Marriage in the Catholic Church reflects the distinctive quality of Christian faith, with special attention given to the main elements of the marriage celebration: the exchange of vows by the couple promising to live together in loving trust and fidelity, and the nuptial blessing over them. Because the couple is the celebrant of the Sacrament of Marriage (not the priest/deacon) they are to be given a place of honor in a visible, prominent location.

Participants

Besides selecting your witnesses and attendants, care should be taken to choose others who will exercise the liturgical ministries in the marriage celebration. These include competent cantors, musicians, readers and Eucharistic ministers.

Procession

A procession is a liturgical action. The Rite of Marriage recommends an order of procession, which includes the principal participants, including readers, cross bearer, attendants and clergy. This includes the bride and groom, the main ministers of the sacrament, who should enter the gathering from the same door, avoiding the suggestion that one is more important than the other.

The more customary procession of the bride walking down the aisle with her father (mother) is an acceptable option, as is the option of the groom being escorted by his parents. Keep in mind that the procession should not present one family or one person more important than the other.

Members of the wedding party walk together in procession from the back of church as couples. The actual order of the procession may be planned with the presiding clergy or sponsor couple.

Music

Since your family and friends have come to witness and celebrate your commitment to each other, to pray with you and for you and to offer love and support, their involvement in the liturgy is essential. Couples often plan their wedding with the assumption that all the singing will be done by a soloist. However, while a soloist may perform a worthwhile role, the singing of hymns, songs and acclamations by all those who have gathered reinforces the communal dimension of the sacrament.

The use of processional and recessional marches does not exclude the use of communal singing at the beginning and end of the wedding liturgy. It is possible, and often quite effective, to sing a gathering song immediately following the processional or a closing song immediately preceding the recessional.

The appropriateness of music selected for a wedding liturgy also needs to be considered. Commitment and faithfulness supported by the love of Christ for the Church characterize the Christian concept of “love”. Contemporary love songs often stress the couple only and exclude God and the Church. While they may say good things, they often fail to say enough about the origin of love and God’s role in a Christian marriage. Music, which is suitable for Church weddings, should speak clearly of the Christian and religious dimension of love, express praise and thanksgiving to God and be liturgically appropriate (a Eucharistic song at communion). Unsuitable music that would clearly or vaguely deny the Christian dimension of love (music that implies “my life has no meaning without you”) fails to mention God or suggests that marriage is a relationship that isolates the couple from others. These principles would therefore exclude many popular love songs. Even though you may have heard them in another church, music of this nature is more appropriately performed at the reception and not during the liturgy.

The Director of Music will be more than happy to meet with you to help you in the selection of music appropriate for your wedding ceremony. In this meeting, the Director will play and advise you about the various selections that are appropriate for a wedding liturgy. You will need to contact the Director of Music at least six weeks prior to your wedding date with your final choices. The parish Director of Music is the usual musician for weddings at Guardian Angels.

The use of other musicians, singers and **all selections of music** must be approved by the Director. You must contract with the Director of Music for service at your wedding.

There is a stipend fee of \$150.00 for the Director's services, payable at your initial meeting with the Director of Music. This fee is paid directly to the Director of Music.

Vows or The Declaration of Consent

The central symbol of the marriage celebration and the ministers of the sacrament are the bride and groom. The marriage is made a reality as the vows are solemnly proclaimed and the rings are given. The vows you will declare are stating that you accept one another as husband and wife based on mutual love, faithfulness and the permanence of marriage. A form of the approved vows contained in the Rite of Marriage must be used. Personally composed vows are not acceptable according to the Church law. Other expressions or elaborations on the consent given may be added only in conjunction with one of the approved forms.

The vows should be proclaimed in a posture and place where the gathered family and friends can see and hear. Because of the importance of the vows, we do not encourage you to memorize the lines; the priest/deacon will cue you to repeat the words of the vows after he speaks them.

Decorations

In planning decorations, care should be taken to respect the existing church environment and the particular season of the Liturgical Year with its specific colors and arrangements. **Liturgical decorations already present may not, and will not, be removed or changed to fit the color of the bridal flowers or the attendants' dresses or tuxedos.**

Floral decorations should be genuine, simple and discreet. Flowers, plants or trees should never impede the approach to the altar or interfere with other liturgical action. The use of arbors or arches is forbidden. Flowers may be placed near or in front of the altar, but **never** upon it. Floral arrangements that were a part of a wedding celebration usually remain in the sanctuary for parish use. Flowers or bows are permitted to be placed on the ends of the pews, but must be attached so as not to harm the pew (i.e., attached with rubber bands). You must arrange with your florist or a family member to place the flowers in the sanctuary. The church staff is not responsible for this prior to the wedding. Please be sure your florist contacts the church to establish a time to be sure the church is open for the delivery and placement of the flowers.

The worship area has candles already present as part of the liturgy. The use of candelabras is not allowed.

An aisle runner will **not be permitted** because of safety precautions. Many people have tripped and fallen which makes the runner an unnecessary hazard.

Appropriate Dress

The celebration of any liturgical function in a house of worship calls for appropriate dress. Those acting in a ministerial capacity during the liturgy (readers, soloists, cross bearer, eucharistic ministers) and those in the wedding party should dress with dignity. Men should be in suit and ties, wearing socks and dress shoes. Women should not be wearing short skirts or low cut dresses. The bride, and members of the bridal party, should take care in selecting gowns dignified for the House of God.

Rehearsal

Your sponsor couple will handle your rehearsal. The rehearsal should take no longer than 45 minutes. You must call your sponsor couple to schedule a rehearsal date and time. They will in turn secure the church for this use. We are aware that all of you will be in a highly celebrative mood. We ask, however, that you come prepared to rehearse. A good rehearsal will help things run a little smoother on the day of your celebration

Wedding Liturgy Options

The **UNITY CANDLE**, while a tradition in other Christian denominations, has no official standing in the Roman Catholic wedding liturgy. If you wish to use a Unity Candle at your wedding, it should be displayed on a separate table or stand; it is not permitted to be placed upon the altar.

The **PRESENTATION OF A BOUQUET** to the Blessed Mother shrine is an expression of the personal piety of the bride and groom. If you wish to honor the Blessed Mother, you might do so in a special way, following the post communion prayer. This is traditionally done by placing flowers at the statue and spending a moment in prayer, asking the divine assistance of the Mother of God on your marriage. This is not a photo-op moment but a moment of prayer and praise.

Couples are encouraged to prepare a **BASKET OF FOOD FOR THE POOR**. This basket of non-perishables should be enough to feed a family of four for one meal. This special offering is an extension of the banquet you invite your guests to. This offering will be brought forward with the gifts at the celebration of the Eucharist or offered before the liturgy begins when Eucharist is not being celebrated. The St. Vincent de Paul Society of the parish will see that it gets to a family in need.

Family Customs

If you would like to use a particular family or ethnic custom within your celebration, please discuss this with your presider.

Liturgical Aide

It is strongly recommended that you prepare a wedding booklet to be distributed to guests gathered for the wedding. The booklet's primary purpose is to assist the congregation in their participation in the prayers and music of the Wedding Liturgy. The Liturgical Aide can vary in detail, but contains, in the very least, the order of the service, the liturgical ministers, and names of the wedding party. The booklets should also include the assembly's responses to various parts of the liturgy as well as the music that the congregation would use to participate. It is recommended that scripture texts not be printed in their entirety, but merely cited. A personal message from you to your guests might also be included. We do ask that you designate someone to pick up any remaining booklets left in the church immediately following the ceremony.

The Director of Music and Liturgy can assist you in planning, designing and implementing the printing of your Marriage Liturgical Aide.

Photography and Videotaping

Videotaping of the wedding liturgy allows for a beautiful remembrance of this important moment in your lives. However, it should never be a distraction to the participants or interfere with the celebration of the sacrament. The video camera must be on a stationary tripod.

Pictures, too, are important remembrances of the celebration and may be taken immediately before, during and after the liturgy as long as it is done in good taste and does not interfere with other community celebrations (weekend liturgies, other weddings or confessions). Photographers are prohibited in the sanctuary during the wedding liturgy. The use of flash photography anywhere in the church is likewise discouraged during the liturgy.

There should be a limited number of formal portraits after the liturgy. Because the church is not a wedding studio, but a sacred place of worship where a sacred action has just occurred, the arrangement of the sanctuary should be left undisturbed.

The time allotted after the ceremony for pictures will be approximately 30 minutes. This should be enough time to complete your pictures if the photographer is organized. Church staff remains present to secure the church upon completion of pictures. Out of common courtesy, please complete your pictures within the thirty minutes.

Please have your photographer or videographer consult with the presiding clergy before the celebration begins so questions or expectations may be expressed. You are responsible for informing your photographer or videographer of these policies.

Receiving Line

A receiving line is most appropriate at your banquet hall and thus, **will not** be permitted at the Church. This only takes away from the allotted time for pictures and may interfere with other parish celebrations.

Throwing Rice, Seed, Etc.

To avoid any hazard to safety, to protect the environment and to minimize custodial work, **the throwing of rice, confetti, rose petals, birdseed or ANYTHING is prohibited at Guardian Angels Parish.** You are responsible for informing your families regarding this parish policy. If anything is scattered or thrown by your guests, you will be assessed a clean-up fee and held liable for any personal injury accident.

Miscellaneous

Please do not place or set anything on the baptismal font of the church. The font is a sacred object, the place where we began our Christian faith journey. You might consider having someone in your procession carry a bowl of water from the font that can be used at the beginning of the Liturgy to help us remember our Baptism.

Food and/or beverages are not to be brought into the church, the bridal room, the gathering space or restrooms for either the rehearsal or the wedding.

The wedding party and immediate family members of the bride and groom should refrain from chewing gum during the ceremony. This really has no place in church and it detracts from the beauty and sacredness of the marriage ceremony. Gum is not allowed in the Church.

OTHER ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE

Use of Alcohol or Drugs

If the bride, groom, witnesses (Maid of Honor and Best Man) or wedding party, are found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs prior to the start of the wedding, the **celebration will be postponed** until a later time.

The wedding will take place **only** after the priest/deacon is sure that the affected individual(s) is (are) sober. Limousine Drivers or family members are not permitted to have alcohol on the premises before, during or after the wedding. Champagne toasts are not permitted on Church grounds. Offenders will be asked to leave.

Guests

If you are expecting guests who are not familiar with Guardian Angels Church, we would suggest that you give them directions with your invitation.

Make sure people are greeted warmly as they arrive at the Church. Preferably they can and should be greeted by the bride and groom and the parents. This is a very important opportunity for people to feel welcome and for you to thank them for joining in the celebration.

Seating Guests

Seat people close together and near the front of the Church. There is no need to have a bride or groom side. The day is a celebration of the joining of two families, so this artificial separation is discouraged. Furthermore, it is recommended that the whole row be used and not just seats along the aisle. Your wedding is a liturgical celebration, not a parade.

Clean Up

Someone should be assigned to pick up things remaining in the church following the celebration. Please be sure that the bathrooms are checked for personal items and cleared of all materials brought in by the wedding party.

Stipends/Donations

Registered, active and contributing members of Guardian Angels Parish support the ongoing work of the parish through their prayer, participation, weekly contributions and generous offering of their time, talent and treasure. We do not require any additional support at the time of the sacramental celebration of marriage. However, any offering would be gratefully received and would be applied to the ongoing works of the Church.

If you are not an active and contributing member of the parish, we want you to consider the cost of the staff time and of the facilities of the parish when you decide on your marriage stipend. The expected minimum is \$250.00.

Couples often ask how to determine a fair donation amount to the church and to other charities. The Sacred Scriptures encourage us to tithe in determining our gift to the work of the Lord. This means that we give 10%. A very large amount of money is spent on weddings. Some of the money is spent on extras. Christians need to be confronted by the Word of the Lord and by the desperate poverty of over two-thirds of the world population when spending money for weddings. Perhaps some of the extras of the wedding day could be cut back by 10% and the savings donated to works of charity and to the Church

The stipend for your marriage could be offered during your last appointment with your priest/deacon, when you drop off your marriage license, or through your sponsor couple at the time of the rehearsal.

An offering to the priest/deacon at the time of the wedding is a gesture of gratitude and appreciation. If you wish to make such a gesture to him please feel free to do so. This is a personal matter and can be done in whatever way you wish.

Outline of fees

Although the fees have been discussed above, we list them here for your attention and planning.

\$35.00 *Prepare Compatibility Tool.* Payable to Guardian Angels and due at *Prepare Session.*

\$150.00 *Covenant Couples Program.* Payable to Guardian Angels and due at time of registration to program.

\$150.00 Music Director/Organist fee. Payable to Director of Music. Due at the music planning session.

We thank you for taking the time to read this booklet. You are now ready to call the parish and set an appointment with your priest and schedule a tentative wedding date. The time of formation that you are about to begin is a time of excitement, anticipation and discovery. You can be assured of our prayers and support during this time. May you continue to grow in love for one another, for God and for the Church.

CHECKLIST FOR ARRANGING A WEDDING AT GUARDIAN ANGELS

- ___ Obtain a copy of Parish Marriage Guidelines and read thoroughly.
- ___ Call the parish office and make an appointment with the priest/deacon. You will need to call him regularly to schedule follow up appointments.
- ___ Schedule an appointment for the *Prepare* compatibility.
- ___ Schedule appointment with priest/staff member to go over results.
- ___ Attend the *Covenant Couples* Program for Marriage Preparation.
- ___ Prayerfully reflect on **Together for Life** booklet and select readings and prayers.
- ___ Obtain a recent copy (dated within six months of your marriage date) of your baptismal certificate from parish of Baptism if other than Guardian Angels.
- ___ Contact Director of Music at least six weeks prior to your wedding date to select music. Music director's stipend fee is due at music planning session.
- ___ Arrange rehearsal date with sponsor couple (and parish office).
- ___ Call your priest or deacon celebrant 3 or 4 weeks before your wedding to schedule a liturgy preparation session.
- ___ Apply for marriage license at the county building of either bride or groom's county of residence (license is good for 30 days). If both parties live outside of Michigan, then application for license must be in Oakland County.
- ___ Bring marriage license to parish office at least one week prior to the day of your wedding.
- ___ Consider donation to Guardian Angels.
- ___ Consider donation to priest/deacon.

Retain this page in marriage file

We testify that we have thoroughly read, fully understand, and agree to the expectations specified in the Marriage Guidelines of Guardian Angels Catholic Community in Clawson, MI.

Signature of Bride

Date

Signature of Groom

Date

Priest/Deacon/Pastoral Associate

Date