

Roman Catholic
Marriage Rites
Guidelines
And
Customs

St. Cecilia Catholic Church
2159 Highway 195
Jasper, AL 35503

Revised 6-1-2021

MARRIAGE

The intimate partnership of life and the love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws

Christ our Lord has abundantly blessed this love, which is rich in its various features, coming as it does from the spring of divine love and modeled on Christ's own union with the Church....

Spouses, therefore, are fortified and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament.

Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, n. 48

This booklet has been prepared by parishioners of St. Cecilia Catholic Church to help our parish community review the Church's vision, understanding, teaching, and discipline of the Sacrament of Marriage and the local Customs for celebrating the Sacrament at St. Cecilia Catholic Church.

Optional non-parish fees if services used:

- ◆ Music Coordinator — \$50
- ◆ Organist — \$150
- ◆ Altar Servers — \$25 each

Possible additional Tribunal processing fees payable directly to the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama:

- ◆ Lack of Form — \$50
- ◆ Formal Cases — \$400
- ◆ Ligamen — \$100
- ◆ Pauline Privilege — \$50

Rental Fees:

- ◆ Hall (0-8 hours) — \$500
- ◆ Hall (over 8 hours) — \$900
- ◆ Kitchen — \$500
- ◆ Event insurance — \$200
- ◆ Damage deposit — \$200

Mass Stipend — suggested \$10 offering

Priest Stipend — No set fee, but a stipend for the priest is customary. The suggested range is \$200-\$500.

The priest and staff make no assumptions regarding invitations

Should any parishioner experience a financial hardship, please meet with the pastor to make other arrangements.

If one or both of the spouses is/are under the age of 18, but at least 16 years of age, and have not been previously married, an Affidavit of Consent by a parent/guardian is required for the marriage of a minor. In that case, both the Marriage Certificate form and the Affidavit of Consent form should be delivered to the probate court for recording.

GUIDELINES FOR STIPENDS AND FEES

All parish fees are waived for registered and active parishioners and family members who maintain a permanent address with the family but may temporarily reside elsewhere for part of the year, e.g., military service or schooling.

Initial fee of \$250: includes forms, copying, cost of materials, initial meeting with pastoral ministry team, permanent document jacket, *Application for Marriage* form, *Planner and Guidelines for Weddings*, *Diocesan Marriage Policy*, *Pre-nuptial Questionnaires*, *Freedom to Marry* forms, *Together for Life* Booklet and Worksheet, Engaged Encounter information, Review of all preparations, paperwork, and final approval by pastor, etc. Includes use of church or chapel for service

Facilitator Preparation fee of \$250: Includes *FOCCUS* materials, administering, scoring, and review session of *FOCUSS* results. (Additional marriage preparation sessions @ \$75/hour if required.)

Order of Christian Marriage

INTRODUCTION

The Second Vatican Council teaches us that marriage is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent. It is a reflection of the living covenant uniting Christ and Church. In the communion of life and love that defines marriage, a couple may give themselves to each other in a unique manner that preserves their individuality, while becoming one in heart and mind as well as "one flesh."

The *Code of Canon Law* presents a legal description of marriage in canon 1055: The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring. This covenant between baptized people has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

The couple themselves creates the marriage bond which is brought about through the legitimate manifestation of consent to each other. The marriage covenant is ordered toward both the good of the spouses and also the procreation and education of children. Both spouses have equal rights in a marriage.

THE RIGHT TO MARRY

In the Catholic Church all people who are not prohibited by law can contract marriage. Marriages in which one person at least is Catholic are regulated by Church law.

The following marriages are recognized by the Catholic Church:

A. Any marriage between two Catholics, both of whom are free of impediments, who give their consent for marriage before a duly authorized priest or deacon and two witnesses.

B. Any marriage between two non-Catholics, both of whom are free of impediments (including the bond of prior marriage), who give their consent for marriage before a non-Catholic minister, civil magistrate or official, or, in those states where common-law marriage is recognized, by cohabitation with marital intent.

C. Any marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, both of whom are free of impediments, who give their consent, with the required dispensation (mixed marriage or disparity of cult), before a priest or deacon and two witnesses, or before a non-Catholic minister or civil magistrate with a dispensation from canonical form. This marriage would either be sacramental or natural, depending on the baptism or non-baptism of the other party.

family and guests. Please consult the *St. Cecilia Catholic Church Wedding Planning Workbook* for more detailed information.

E. The couple is responsible for flowers, if desired. Flowers may be taken to the reception after the wedding and/or donated to the parish for the altar. Please consult the *St. Cecilia Catholic Church Wedding Planner Workbook* for more detailed information.

F. No rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. may be used at any time in the church, chapel, hall, or anywhere on the property. *Please consult the Cecilia Catholic Church Wedding Planner Workbook* for more detailed information.

G. The couple is responsible for restoring the church to its original order after the wedding. The church is to be left as it was found by 3:45 PM.

THE STATE OF ALABAMA REQUIREMENTS

All civil requirements must be completed before the wedding rehearsal.

Effective August 29, 2019, the process for entering into a legal marriage in Alabama changed pursuant to Alabama Act 2019-34-0. An Alabama Marriage Certificate form should be completed by the persons entering into marriage and delivered to the probate court for recording. Once properly completed and recorded by the probate court, the civil marriage is legal.

C. Guest musicians and vocalists are welcome to participate as long as their music is appropriate and approved in advance by the music coordinator.

THE CEREMONY

A. Weddings are normally held on Saturday ending by 3:00 PM. Other days and times may be arranged at the discretion of the wedding ministry team and after consulting with the parish office. The church must be vacated and cleaned before 3:45 PM on Saturdays to allow time for the 4:00 PM reconciliation service and evening liturgies.

B. Candles, pew decorations, runners, trellises, and other paraphernalia are generally not permitted as they tend to clutter the church, obstruct the view, or impede traffic. Anything complicated or unusual should be discussed with the wedding ministry team well in advance of placing orders with suppliers. Please consult the *St. Cecilia Catholic Church Wedding Planner Workbook* for more detailed information.

C. The parish hall and kitchen are available for receptions. Please contact the parish office for reservations, fees, and available dates and times. The use of the parish hall is governed by the regulations of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

D. Photographers and videographers are permitted to move about as needed as long as they do not interrupt the ceremony or obstruct the view of

MARRIAGE PREPARATION OF COUPLES

The preparation for the celebration of marriage is a special time for all concerned and presents a unique opportunity of evangelization for couples. Pastoral concern is focused on helping the couple to grow in the awareness of who they are and what they are being called to when they enter a marriage covenant.

The actual process of preparation for marriage should contain the following components:

A. The foundation of the pre-marriage process is in a dedicated, faith-filled, and well informed pastoral ministry team; e.g., priest, deacon, religious and/or lay pastoral ministers.

B. The pre-marriage preparation should be experienced by both parties, preferably together. In the event that one cannot be present due to great distance, each person should, in their own locale, experience a pre-marriage program.

C. A minimum of six months preparation period is normally required to provide adequate preparation, allowing time for self-reflection as a couple, reflecting on the covenant and Sacrament of Marriage, and the option of changing their minds. Pastoral discretion should be applied judiciously in waiving or reducing the requirement, e.g. for elderly couples.

D. All marriage preparation should be completed 60 to 90 days before the scheduled wedding date to provide time for an assessment of the couple's readiness to assume the responsibilities of marriage.

E. Formal preparation for marriage consists of:

a. A pre-marriage assessment questionnaire , e.g., Premarital Inventory (PMI), FOCCUS, etc.

b. A pre-marriage program in the parish or vicariate, e.g., Pre-Cana Sponsor Couple or Host Couple, Evenings for the Engaged, Engaged Encounter, etc.

The pre-marriage programs should consist of the following categories which are considered essential for a couple's preparation for their vocation of marriage:

a. Religious Formation: the couple's prayer and spirituality and understanding of Church teachings

b. Covenant and sacrament of marriage: the covenant of each person with the other and with God, theology of grace, and vocation of marriage

c. Lifestyles: attitudes, values, and expectations

d. Marital readiness: personal adjustment, maturity, and a sense of responsibility

e. Communication skills: attitudes and values, including individual psychological needs

f. Sex and sexuality: biological aspects, cultural attitudes, values, and expectations

B. The diocesan *Prenuptial Questionnaire Form* (a personal history) completed by both the bride and the groom separately. The wedding ministry team will discuss the responses with the couple.

C. Two diocesan *Freedom to Marry Forms* (affidavits establishing freedom to marry) for both bride and groom. The four forms are returned to the wedding ministry team preparing the couple. It is preferable that the parents of the bride and groom each complete the affidavits. In the absence of parents, those who have known the bride and the groom well since childhood may complete the forms.

D. *FOCCUS* marriage preparation questionnaire, discussion notes, and graphic analysis.

E. Any affidavits, civil court documents, tribunal permissions, dispositions, declarations, or petitions, etc. that may have been executed.

F. Other support materials such as sponsor couple's evaluation, engaged couples encounter evaluation, etc.

MUSIC

A. Music must be arranged through the St. Cecilia Catholic Church music coordinator.

B. Guest organists, pianists, and instrumentalists may use the parish equipment at the discretion of the music coordinator.

B. Confirmation that the pastor or his delegate will prepare the couple for the marriage, will complete all required forms, and will forward them to St. Cecilia Catholic Church at least two weeks before the date of the wedding ceremony

C. Confirmation that the pastor or his delegate will perform the wedding ceremony at St. Cecilia Catholic Church and provide a *Letter of Good Standing* from his bishop or religious provincial superior.

The wedding date will be confirmed when St. Cecilia Catholic Church receives this information from the officiating pastor or his delegate and the stipend and fees, as outlined below, are paid.

If the pastor of jurisdiction gives permission for the wedding to take place at St. Cecilia Catholic Church, but is not able to prepare and/or perform the wedding, another minister must be delegated. Fees as outlined below are charged if the preparation is done by St. Cecilia Catholic Church staff.

Every Sacrament of Marriage that is celebrated at St. Cecilia Catholic Church is officially recorded in the permanent parish records and all documents pertaining to the sacrament are retained on file. These documents include:

A. Recently issued (within the last six months) baptismal certificates from the church in which the baptisms were celebrated.

g. Natural family planning: assist couples to integrate the physical, spiritual, and relational aspects of family planning

h. Parenting: parent/child attitudes and relationship

i. Finances: budget skills and money management

j. Wedding liturgy: accepted forms of the celebration

F. In these times many baptized Catholics, because of marriage break-up and/or the laxity of parental guidance in faith, are found to be inexperienced in faith or have not completed the sacraments of initiation. The preparation of marriage is a time when many people are receptive to instruction in the faith.

Parishes should take this opportunity to provide at least basic instruction in the sacraments when it is lacking.

Individuals who have been baptized Catholic but have never made their First Communion should be provided the proper preparation at which the other party should be present, so that they may both share the experience of a growth in faith awareness. Additionally, those baptized Catholics who have not been confirmed should be encouraged to enter an adult confirmation program at a convenient time.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

At times unusual circumstances need special care when couples are being prepared for marriage. This may sometimes mean that no wedding date can be set until the circumstances are resolved. In such situations, pastoral compassion and care should be taken by the pastoral ministry team when dealing with the couple.

COHABITING COUPLES

In the case of a couple already living together, even more care must be taken than already prescribed. It must be discerned that the couple is truly ready for the deeper and life-long commitment of marriage and that a sense of covenant community to one another and the larger communities is present in both people. Each case must be carefully examined and considered on its own merits (or limitations), with great care taken by the pastoral ministry team.

CONVALIDATION

When a Catholic has been married outside the proper form and then decides to validate that same marriage in the Catholic Church, the couple should meet with the pastoral ministry team. Each couple needs to be considered on an individual basis since there may be outside pressures or other dubious motives bearing upon the couple's decision to

Customs for Catholic Marriage At St. Cecilia Catholic Church

Registered and active St. Cecilia Catholic Church parishioners must arrange for the Sacrament of Matrimony with the parish at least six months before a wedding date can be reserved. Newly registered parishioners ordinarily must be active for at least three months prior to the initial meeting.

The couple themselves should call the parish and start the process with the parish. The parish cannot start the process through third parties. Individuals who reside within the parish boundaries and individuals who are registered in the parish have the right to marry in the parish church or chapel. At the first meeting a tentative wedding date may be reserved. The date can be confirmed only when it is established that there are no impediments to the marriage.

If the couple wishes to be married at St. Cecilia Catholic Church, but neither party is registered in the parish nor living within the boundaries of the parish, they must consult with the pastor of the parish of one of the parties. After they receive their pastor's permission, that pastor of jurisdiction must forward to the St. Cecilia Catholic Church office the following:

A. The pastor's permission for the wedding to take place at St. Cecilia Catholic Church

convalidate. Special care is needed when the civil marriage has not lasted long enough to appear healthy and stable.

For couples seeking a convalidation, especially of a recent union, a marriage encounter, marriage enrichment weekend program, or a suitable pre-marital program followed by discernment by the pastoral ministry team is strongly recommended.

PREVIOUS MARRIAGE

In the case of a Catholic married in the Catholic Church, a decree of nullity must be obtained and placed in the pre-nuptial file. If the person has not received a declaration of nullity, then the nullity processes should be initiated. No wedding date may be set until a decree of nullity has been obtained.

In the case of a Catholic or a non-Catholic whose spouse has died, a death certificate must be provided and must be included in the pre-nuptial file.

In the case of a Catholic previously married by a judge or by a non-Catholic minister in another church without prior Catholic dispensation, a decree of lack of form must be obtained from the tribunal.

In the case of a non-Catholic previously married to a non-Catholic, a formal decree of

nullity must be obtained in the Catholic Church and no wedding date may be set until an affirmative decision of nullity has been obtained.

In the case of a non-Catholic married to a Catholic before a judge or minister in another church without prior dispensation, a declaration of lack of form must be sought from the tribunal office if they now wishes to marry a Catholic in the Catholic Church.

In the case of a person with multiple prior marriages, these cases should be directed to the judicial vicar of the diocese if they are canonically complicated.

If a declaration of nullity has been obtained for previous marriages, any restrictions, prohibitions, warnings, or other requirements should be fulfilled before the marriage.

TEENAGE MARRIAGES

Cases in which either person is younger than 18 years of age require a dispensation. Although a couple may prepare for marriage six months prior to becoming 18, no marriage may be celebrated if one or both of the people is not yet 18 years of age.

Cases in which either person is younger than 21 years of age should receive a full and careful evaluation.

other as Christ loves the Church. Christ's love for the Church is faithful and forever.

Living together without the benefit of marriage contradicts these fundamental Church teachings. It becomes particularly problematic when one considers the permanent dimension of marriage. By its very nature cohabitation does not infer permanency.

Nevertheless, cohabitation is not an impediment to marriage. The celebration of marriage, even for a cohabiting couple, is an act of the Church's public worship. The same liturgical principles and norms apply for a cohabiting couple as for any other couple.

While the Church sees it as desirable for cohabitating couples to separate prior to marriage in the Church, this may not be possible in most cases.

All Catholics preparing for marriage need to be given the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation at an appropriate time. Thus the Church takes on the role of the loving parent welcoming home and celebrating with the son or daughter who once was lost but now is found.

on assurance from the former that the proper enquiries and preparations have been made, unless they have explicitly accepted such responsibility. It is they, however, who must see to proper recording of the marriage after it has taken place.

DOCUMENTATION

The sacrament is to be recorded in the permanent parish records. Notification of the reception of this sacrament must be made to the parishes of baptism.

COHABITATION GUIDELINES

Marriage is an intimate, permanent, and exclusive partnership of the whole of life, a partnership which comes into existence at the moment a man and a woman declare publicly their marital commitment to one another. For Catholics the exchange of marital consent takes place in the presence of a duly authorized church minister and two witnesses. When consent is exchanged between two baptized persons, the marriage becomes a sacrament. The Church teaches that it is only in the context of marriage that the total giving and receiving of persons, as symbolically manifested in sexual relations, is truly right and just. To underline the exclusive and permanent dimensions of marriage the Church turns to the Epistle to the Ephesians in which St. Paul encourages spouses to love each

PREGNANCY

Pregnancy alone is not reason enough to enter into marriage. Special care must be taken that both people discern their personal histories, the history of their relationship, and what drew them together, as well as the length of time in which they have had a chance to truly know themselves and each other.

Research shows that if marriage is forced because of pregnancy, the chance of a stable and long-lasting relationship is small. When a long engagement or previous plans to marry had already been considered, there is less likelihood that the marriage is being entered for the wrong reasons or to save public image.

OTHER MARRIAGE PROCEDURES

A. Sanatio in Radice

Radical sanation is a form of convalidation wherein the initial exchange of marital consent was invalid. In spite of this a human commitment of the spouses to one another still exists whereby they do not consider themselves to be simply living together. Although this union is canonically invalid, it is usually recognized in civil law. Radical sanation occurs when one or both parties to the invalid marriage are opposed to having their marriage validated by the renewal of consent. It does not involve an exchange of consent. It is an action taken by the bishop. This action is usually

delegated by the bishop to the tribunal. The act of sanation makes the original consent valid. Thus, the marriage itself is considered valid from the moment of initial consent. When a radical sanation is granted, the marriage covenant is considered in canon law to have existed from the very beginning, and the effects of marriage are retroactive to the moment of initial consent.

Requirements for *Sanatio in Radice*:

- a. A letter from petitioner to the bishop or tribunal.
- b. A recommendation from the pastoral ministry team arranging *sanatio*.
- c. The *Prenuptial Questionnaire* for Catholic party and *Freedom to Marry* form for both.
- d. Reasonable belief that the marriage is stable and will last.
- e. Radical sanation cannot be granted if a previous bond or continuing diriment impediment of divine law continue to exist. Other diriment impediments of ecclesiastical law are dispensed with the sanation.

B. Brother-Sister Relationship

A brother-sister relationship refers to a couple who have entered into an invalid marriage which cannot be validated. The couple is of such an age or condition that they are able to totally abstain from sexual intercourse. They may be allowed to receive the

member of another parish, that person may have lost claim on the prior parish.

If a couple wishes to be married elsewhere, e.g., where the bride's family live, c. 1115 does require the consent of the pastor of one of the couple and of the pastor of the place of the wedding.

THE OFFICIATING MINISTER

Authority to officiate validly is territorial, belonging to the bishop of the diocese and the pastor of the parish within whose boundaries the ceremony takes place or to a minister delegated by one of them. (c. 1109) A pastor or his delegate needs no delegation to officiate in his own church, even if both spouses are from elsewhere, but in that case he ought, for liceity, to have consent of the pastor of one of the couple as noted above. An exception occurs if one of the spouses belongs to a non-territorial jurisdiction such as the military. In this case the cleric of that jurisdiction would also be competent. (c. 1110)

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PASTORAL CARE

Responsibility for the pre-nuptial inquiry and the preparation of the couple is the responsibility of their own pastor, not the officiating cleric or the pastor where the wedding is celebrated. These latter should receive and rely

and music coordinator in sufficient time for adjustments to be made if necessary.

Often photographers and videographers create a disturbance which diminishes the solemnity of the celebration. For these reasons, it is best to discuss a plan in which photographs and videos may be taken without causing such a distraction. Qualified photographers and videographers are permitted during the ceremony provided they are not a distraction or cause interruptions.

The situation of the marriage should dictate the manner in which it is celebrated.

THE PROPER PLACE FOR WEDDINGS

Canon 1115 says that marriages should be in the parish where one or both spouses reside. Any Catholic who resides within the parish boundaries must be regarded as a parishioner. A pastor may not refuse the sacraments to anyone who is properly disposed simply because that person is not registered. If they are to be married at all, it is their right that it be in the parish to which one of them belongs.

However, non-registration may raise a doubt that one is a practicing Catholic and justify a more careful enquiry about readiness for marriage. Also if one is actually registered as a

sacraments on the basis that they both agree to live chaste lives. Usually an attempt must be made to obtain a decree of nullity and the brother-sister relationship should be used only as a last resort.

This is handled in the internal forum unless there is danger of scandal. This relationship is available for the elderly and sick in large parishes or in hospital situations.

However, in the case of small parishes where everyone is known and an invalid marriages are easily recognized, there may be danger of scandal. Thus, a letter giving permission to reveal their brother-sister relationship if it proves necessary because of scandal may be required.

C. Internal Forum Solution

This is a conscious decision whereby the couple themselves recognize their previous marriage to be valid even though it cannot be proven in the external forum. They believe that they are now truly married to each other and so seek to receive the sacraments. Their situation cannot be publicly known nor can it be a cause of scandal in the community.

The internal forum solution is to be used when the tribunal has advised that there is no possibility of proving nullity in the external forum. With the advance in jurisprudence this is less frequently used.

PROCEDURES AND DOCUMENTS

- a. *Prenuptial Questionnaire* and *Freedom to Marry* forms are to be completed before the pastoral ministry team. Parents are best witnesses for *Freedom to Marry* forms and should be sought, especially where there might be parental opposition; otherwise, the witnesses should have known the party from an early age. Ordinarily, there should be two *Freedom to Marry* forms for each party entering a marriage.
- b. Banns of Marriage should be announced in the parish of both bride and groom.
- c. If both parties are Catholic but are living in different parishes, the marriage may take place in the parish of the bride or the groom without preference. It is a matter of professional courtesy to inform the other pastor that a marriage is going to take place. If banns are published in both parishes, this is sufficient notification.
- d. If the marriage of two Catholics is going to take place outside of the parishes of bride or groom, permission from the pastor of either the bride or groom needs to be obtained.
- e. The certificate of participation in an approved marriage preparation program should be obtained.
- f. For baptized persons, a recent copy of their baptismal certificate is required. Catholics

Because marriage remains a community event and not simply one for the spouses and their families, the parish church remains the place for marriage. Weddings are not private or family affairs only, but celebrations of the whole community. Nuptial Masses are not to be celebrated on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Marriages during the Lenten season should be discouraged as much as possible.

Simplicity of symbol and regard for cultural symbols should be carefully discerned by the wedding ministry team. Decorations in the church should reflect the dignity of the ceremony. Flowers, candles, banners, and other decorations should not hinder movement in the sanctuary nor obstruct the view of the wedding ceremony, the preaching of the Word of God, or the altar. For example, a floral arch over the bride and groom should be discouraged.

Wedding music, carefully selected and in good taste, must be consistent with the meaning of the sacrament. Popular tunes describing a narrow view of married love and saying little or nothing about Christ's love for his people are not to be used. Popular tunes in good taste, unless they describe or advocate positions contrary to Christian belief or practice, may be used before the wedding liturgy begins. Music and musicians must be approved by the wedding ministry team

Common-law marriage is no longer recognized in law by the State of Alabama since 2017.

Since a civil law marriage that took place outside the United States but that is now convalidated in the United States may also be recognized in the United States (as in the case of Mexico) the convalidation in the United States may create difficulties later as when the application for social security is made. Therefore it is recommended that couples record their foreign marriages at the local county court house and keep a copy of their civil foreign marriage license in the pre-nuptial files in the parish so that recourse may be made to either of these places at a later date if necessary.

THE WEDDING LITURGY

By its very nature, the Eucharistic Liturgy is the best setting for the Sacrament of Matrimony. This is especially true when both people are Catholic and the majority of their friends are able to share in the prayer of the Church and the Lord's Supper.

But when one person is not Catholic and is uncomfortable or unfamiliar with Catholic prayer, or when families may be ill-at-ease celebrating the mass, or when few friends or relatives would understand the mass, the Wedding may be celebrated outside the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Whatever the couple decides, it should always be a ceremony which reflects in a special way the couple's own relationship and their hopes for their marriage.

are to present a copy of their baptismal certificate prepared within six months and which lists all notations of sacraments received.

Baptismal certificates and other official documents from foreign countries may be difficult to obtain. Pastoral understanding requires that the marriage is not unnecessarily delayed because of this. Testimony in the form of affidavits from witnesses may have to suffice if such documents cannot be obtained.

g. The promise of the Catholic party is required in a mixed marriage. It is the pastoral ministry team's responsibility to instruct the Catholic of their responsibilities with regard to the Catholic baptism and education of children and to acquaint the other party of the promise of the Catholic.

Only the Catholic party need make an explicit declaration either orally or in writing regarding the baptism and education of the children in the Catholic faith. This declaration is to be made in the presence of the pastoral ministry team using the formula that is found on the form requesting dispensation from bans, mixed religion, and/or disparity of cult.

Although no formal statement of the non-Catholic is required, the priest is to certify over his own signature that the declaration has been made by the Catholic and the non-Catholic is aware of it.

The promise of the Catholic is presumed to be made sincerely. If the Catholic party absolutely refuses to cooperate in the matter, no dispensation can be granted.

h. The pastoral ministry team may wish to include in the file a confidential personal letter concerning its opinions, reservations, and beliefs about the marriage to take place.

i. If the marriage is a second marriage for either or both people, the death certificate of the first spouse or the documents which re-establish the right to marry (*Decree of Nullity*, or *Lack of Forum*) are to be included in the pre-marital file of the couple.

j. If the couple was civilly married, a copy of the civil record of marriage should be included for the convalidation.

k. If a prior marriage received a dissolution or *Declaration of Nullity*, the proper information should be inserted in the pre-nuptial file.

l. Delegation must be given for a visiting priest or deacon to witness a marriage, even if he already has faculties in the diocese.

DISPENSATION

The wedding ministry team is to seek a dispensation from the tribunal office in the specific cases found in canons 1083-1094 and 1124-1127. Any dispensations should be sought at the beginning

of the marriage preparations rather than at the last minute.

If the marriage involves at least one Catholic and is taking place in a non-Catholic Church with both the Catholic priest/deacon and a non-Catholic minister participating but the Catholic priest officiating for the marriage vows, an ecumenical permission should be obtained.

CIVIL LAW REQUIREMENTS IN THE STATE OF ALABAMA

Marriages which take place in the Catholic Church in the state of Alabama must fulfill the requirements of the civil laws of the State of Alabama.

Effective August 29, 2019, the process for entering into a legal civil marriage in Alabama changed pursuant to Alabama Act 2019-34 O. An Alabama Marriage Certificate form should be completed by the persons entering into marriage and delivered to the probate court for recording. Once properly completed and recorded by the probate court, the civil marriage is legal.

If one or both of the spouses is/are under the age of 18, but at least 16 years of age, and have not been previously married, an Affidavit of Consent by a parent/guardian is required for the marriage of a minor. In that case, both the Marriage Certificate form and the Affidavit of Consent form should be delivered to the probate court for recording.