

# Preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony

## Saint Cornelius Church



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## **The Sacrament of Matrimony**

You probably know that marriage is considered a sacrament in the Catholic Church, but have you ever thought about what this really means?

Put simply, marriage is a sacrament because it is an expression of God's love and grace. In marriage, when you pledge yourselves to one another and live through that commitment, the very nature of that relationship makes your marriage in the Church special and holy. Such a marriage is a constant reminder to the couple and all who know them of the reality of God's love. God's love is forever, God's love is faithful, and God's love is creative. Married love symbolizes and reveals the love and union between Christ and His Church. "Follow the way of love even as Christ loved you. He gave Himself for us." (Eph. 5:2)

Every marriage involves commitment. You are promising to give yourselves to each other in a relationship that is faithful and permanent. Your commitment in marriage also extends to the community.

The promises made on your wedding day are supported by the large community, the Church. Saint John Paul II in his letter on family life states: "Marriage just never is, it becomes. It is the contribution of each person and the depth of their commitment that creates it."

When you make this commitment, you make it for the rest of your lives. Naming matrimony as a sacrament is a way of confirming what it already is – an event so important in magnitude and scope that God's involvement in your pledge shines forth through your love, courage, and faith.

## **General Information**

### *Setting a Date for your Wedding*

Weddings at St. Cornelius are celebrated on Saturdays and some Friday evenings. Saturday weddings are scheduled between 10 AM and 2 PM. As you're well aware, it is very important that the wedding begin promptly to allow sufficient time to celebrate the service that you will have carefully planned. In addition, there will be time after the wedding for pictures in the church. Weddings celebrated at 2 PM are asked to leave the church by 4 PM before confession. Reception lines are permitted after the wedding.

### *The Church Building*

Weddings can be celebrated either in the main church or the Daily Mass Chapel. The main church can accommodate large congregations, while the daily Mass chapel can accommodate smaller weddings up to 50 people. The church is fully air-conditioned. The Bethany Room is available for the bride and her attendants. Restrooms are located in the narthex (lobby) of the church.

### *Parking*

Your guests are welcome to use our church parking lots while attending the wedding. The front of the church is reserved for handicapped parking and the wedding party's transportation.

### *Guest Priests, Deacons, or Ministers*

Priests and deacons who are in good standing in the Archdiocese are welcome to participate in the wedding ceremony. A guest priest or deacon from outside the Archdiocese of Philadelphia must submit a letter of suitability from their bishop, which is standard practice in the United States. Clergy from other denominations who have a relationship to the bride and groom are most welcome. Please inform the parish if the priest, deacon, or minister will take part in the liturgy.

## *Liturgy*

The celebration of the sacrament of matrimony has a form of liturgy very similar to Sunday Mass. Ordinarily, when two Catholics marry, it is within the context of Mass. However, if one person in the couple is a Christian of another denomination, we recommend you celebrate your wedding by highlighting that which you have in common, God's powerful word, in a Liturgy of the Word without Mass. There may be other reasons for a bride and groom, even if both are Catholic, to choose a wedding ceremony in a Liturgy of the Word rather than a Mass, e.g. time restraints. The choice is yours. However, if one of the parties is not baptized, the marriage will be celebrated in a Liturgy of the Word. Either service will be conducted with beauty and devotion. More detailed liturgical information and guidelines will be provided in a separate booklet.

## *Music*

Mrs. Margie Melchiore is the Director of Music at Saint Cornelius and the principal musician for all weddings. You're asked to make an appointment with her and she will help you choose the music for the wedding liturgy. At that time, she will give you a form with pertinent information which will assist our wedding ministry team in helping with your rehearsal and wedding celebration. Mrs. Melchiore can be reached on her cell phone: (610) 420-8214.

## *Rehearsal*

The rehearsal date and time will be decided with the pastor. Ordinarily rehearsals take place on Thursday evening; however, a different time can be decided upon. Your rehearsal will be conducted by your presiding priest. The presiding priest and the wedding rehearsal coordinator will give a brief overview of the liturgy to help all involved understand the prayerful nature of the celebration. We ask that all members with a public role try to attend the rehearsal. This includes readers, gift bearers, greeters, and parents. In preparing for your wedding liturgy, you will, at some point, be given a book called *Together for Life*. This book will help you select the readings and

prayers for your ceremony, and the book contains a selection form on which to indicate these choices. This selection form should be completed and given to your priest no later than two weeks prior to the date of the rehearsal. The rehearsal itself is not the time for discussion and decision-making. For planning purposes such as dinner or other activities, rehearsals are usually an hour.

### *Photography and Videotaping*

Since the wedding is a sacred service, all photographers, amateur and professional, are asked to show reverence for the ceremony and the building in which it takes place. Our church is bathed in light, so flash photography is unnecessary. We ask that photographers and videographers meet with the pastor 15 minutes before Mass so they can be made aware of the way in which the ceremony will take place. Following the ceremony, the wedding party may return for pictures, but please be aware that confession begins at 4 PM. Occasionally couples prefer to have the majority of their pictures taken prior to the ceremony rather than after. We are happy to accommodate such requests.

### *Flowers and Decorations*

One of the wonderful things about our church is that it is always beautifully decorated with flowers, so there is no need to supply flowers. Depending on the time of year, seasonal decorations will be in place and may not be removed. For safety reasons, candles may not be placed by your florist. Our pews do not have ends, so bows and arrangements are not possible. **For safety reasons, runners are not permitted in the church.**

### *Presentation of the gifts at Nuptial Masses*

The bride and groom may choose who they wish to present the gifts of Bread and Wine at the presentation of the gifts. Gifts to the church or the poor may also be presented. Ordinarily, only those who may receive Holy Communion can present the gifts.

### *Safety Concerns*

It is not permissible to throw rice or flower petals in or around the church due to safety hazards they may cause. Additionally, rice can be harmful if eaten by animals, especially birds. Balloons are also not permitted. If you wish to include this tradition as part of the festivities, we suggest the use of bubbles or bells outside the church following the ceremony.

### *Wedding Fees*

Mrs. Melchiore, the Music Director, will discuss with you fees for the musicians who act as outside contractors. No set fee to St. Cornelius for your wedding is required. However, if you wish to make a donation to the parish at the time of your wedding, it will be accepted graciously. You may also wish to give the presiding minister of your wedding ceremony a gift.

## **Church Requirements**

### *Time Frame*

Philadelphia Archdiocese policy requires that there be at least six months between setting the date of the wedding and the marriage ceremony itself.

### *Formal Interview*

Please contact the rectory six months prior to your wedding to set up an interview with your priest. At this time, you formally announce to the Church your intention to marry. The priest will take the opportunity to ask questions about your background, freedom to marry, and intentions regarding marriage.

## *Documentation*

The following forms of documentation are required:

- I. The **prenuptial questionnaire** for the bride and groom will be completed at one of the meetings with the parish priest.
- II. A **baptismal certificate** less than six months old is required for each Catholic. A newly reissued baptismal record must be obtained from the parish of baptism. Non-Catholics who have been baptized are requested to provide a reissued baptismal record or letter from the church of their baptism. Notification of your marriage will be sent to this church after your wedding.
- III. The **confirmation date** is required of Catholics. Usually this will appear on the baptismal certificate, even if you were confirmed in a different church. Receiving a reissued baptismal certificate is the easiest way to fulfill this requirement. Baptism and confirmation records may be obtained by writing the church(es) where these sacraments were administered.
- IV. **Affidavits** are asked of the bride and/or groom. The pastor of the parish in which you are registered gives this certification of your freedom to marry. For those who are not Catholic, we ask that the pastor of your church, parents or close family members write a letter indicating that you have not been previously married. These affidavits are testimonials regarding freedom to marry.
- V. When a marriage takes place between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, a **dispensation** or permission is required. We have the necessary request form. If the wedding is to take place in the tradition of the non-Catholic spouse, a dispensation from canonical form is necessary. We have this form as well, and will take care of obtaining the dispensation from the bishop.

## *Wedding Ceremony*

Two witnesses are required. In putting together your wedding liturgy, you will be given many options in the readings, prayers, and blessings. These are contained in the book *Together for Life* by Joseph Champlin, which you will receive during one of your meetings with your parish priest. In the back

of the book, there is a form on which you will indicate your choices of readings, prayers, and blessings for the wedding liturgy. This form should be completed and left with your priest during one of your meetings prior to the wedding.

## **Marriage Preparation Program**

In addition to assisting you with the wedding day, the Church wishes to assist you in building a successful marriage. In order to do this, the Archdiocese requires that all couples complete a premarital program. These programs are designed to deepen your awareness of the challenges of living together in Christian marriage. Through discussions, exercises and presentations, you will have the opportunity to concentrate more intensely on the many facets of married life. Some of the topics presented include: the changing nature of marriage, personal growth and couple adjustment, mutual decision-making, the elements of effective communication, conflict management, intimacy and sexual expression, financial planning, marriage as a sacrament, the extended family, and interfaith marriage. The marriage preparation program should be completed well in advance of the date of the wedding. A number of options for satisfying this requirement are available:

- I. **Weekend Retreat Program** – the Family Life Bureau coordinates Weekend Retreat Programs in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The Weekend Retreat Program offers engaged couples a special opportunity to be together, and to encounter Christ through prayer and reflection. The goal of the weekend is to establish more firmly your relationship “in the Lord.” Contact the Family Life Office at (215)–587–3600 or online at <http://phillycatholiclife.org/marriage-and-family/preparing-for-marriage/options-for-marriage-preparation/>
  
- II. **Preparing for the Vocation of Marriage** – This is a large group program held on four separate evenings. Because the emphasis is on the couple themselves and their discernment regarding the sacrament of Matrimony, it still provides a personal and prayerful experience of marriage preparation. For more information visit the

Family Life Office on the web at  
<http://phillycatholiclife.org/marriage-and-family/preparing-for-marriage/options-for-marriage-preparation/>

## **Civil Requirements**

### *Marriage License*

A marriage license is required and can be obtained from any county courthouse in Pennsylvania. The marriage license is effective one day after you obtain it and is valid for 60 days thereafter. You will need proper identification and cash to obtain the license. Neither bride and groom nor witnesses sign the license. The only signature required is that of the officiating priest or deacon, who then returns the license to the County Clerk. Should you wish a copy of your license, you may obtain it from the Bureau of Vital Statistics. Please bring the license to the Parish Life Center at least 2 – 3 weeks prior to your wedding date.

## **The Wedding Liturgy**

In consultation with the priest who will preside at the wedding, the couple will determine if the marriage is to be celebrated at Mass or in a Liturgy of the Word. The determining criteria will center on the religious background of the bride and groom, and what form of liturgy will best enable a particular wedding assembly to celebrate with them.

The couple will be provided with the book *Together for Life* by Joseph Champlin, which, along with various prayers and blessings, contains those scripture readings most appropriate for use at weddings. In consultation with the priest who will preside at the wedding, the engaged couple will select two or three passages from scripture. Non-scriptural passages may not be used in place of the scriptures.

Weddings held at Saint Cornelius are celebrated according to the worship books of the Roman Catholic Church: the Roman Missal, the lectionary, and the *Rite of Matrimony*. In the case of weddings where ministers of other

Christian denominations or other faiths are taking part, the appropriate adaptations will be made after consultation with that minister and the engaged couple.

### *The Rite of Matrimony*

During the Rite of Matrimony, everyone stands with the couple during the actual Rite. The Rite gives no preference for the arrangement of the Church's minister, the couple, and the witnesses during the Rite of Matrimony. However, an arrangement should be used that best expresses both the couple as ministers of the sacrament and the priest or deacon as the Church's witness, without obscuring the view of the congregation.

The exchange of consent between the spouses is the indispensable element of the rite that makes the marriage. The priest or deacon receives the consent of the couple in the name of Church and gives the blessing of the Church. The presence of the Church's minister, the witness, and the congregation give visible expression to the Sacrament of Matrimony as a celebration of the Church.

## **Introductory Rites for a Nuptial Mass or Ceremony**

The Rite of Marriage describes the entrance of the bride and groom for the celebration of the sacrament. The ministers of the sacrament of Matrimony are the future spouses; therefore, according to the Rite of Matrimony, they are to enter among the congregation together, thus avoiding any visual suggestion that one is more important than the other. This entrance of the bride and groom can take place in one of two ways: the couple can be received at the door of the church or at a place within the church.

### *Option One: Reception at the door of the church*

At the appointed time, the priest goes with the liturgical ministers to the door of the church. At the door the priest receives the couple and expresses the joy of all in the celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony. The procession to the altar follows with the liturgical ministers going first, followed by the priest and finally the couple, the ministers of the sacrament

of Matrimony. The couple may be preceded by at least their parents and witnesses. Special friends of the bride and groom (attendants) may also be part of the procession, but should always walk together. Children may also be a part of the procession; however, if they are too young they should walk with adults. Any separation of the men and women in the procession is discouraged because it is an artificial separation of the people who have been chosen to be partners for the day; it unnecessarily lengthens the procession and makes it something of a fashion show. The Entrance Hymn is sung by all during this procession.

This is the general arrangement of the procession to the altar:

Priest or Deacon Celebrant

Witnesses

Parents

Bride and Groom

### *Option Two: Reception at a place within the church*

At the appointed time the priest goes with the liturgical ministers to the place prepared for the couple. When the couple arrives at the place set for them, the priest expresses the joy of all in the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The Entrance Hymn is then sung by all. This second form of entrance of the couple presumes the bride and groom process to the altar together. The music that accompanies this procession should not separate the entrance of the couple and the Entrance Hymn. An instrumental arrangement of the Entrance Hymn could accompany the procession of the couple and then lead into the hymn after the couple is greeted by the priest. Also, the Entrance Hymn itself could accompany the procession of the people. This form of Entrance is most commonly used in parishes. However, it is important to stress that the singing of the Entrance Hymn is not optional.

The bride and groom are provided a place in the sanctuary where they are both visible to the congregation and can easily participate in the whole of the liturgy with its Rite of Matrimony. Also, the placement of the couple in the sanctuary should not obscure the ceremony at the altar. The witnesses and the whole wedding party are provided places with the members of the

congregation. After the sign of the cross and greeting, the penitential rite is recited and the Gloria is sung. After the vows have been accepted, an acclamation is sung. The bride and groom, the witnesses, and the whole wedding party assume the posture of the congregation throughout the celebration of the liturgy. They stand, sit and kneel as members of the entire congregation.

## **Wedding Programs**

If you prefer to have a printed program for your wedding, the guides on the following two pages will be of great assistance to you. Listed on the left-hand margin in each example are those parts of the liturgy that should be printed in the program. Items printed in italics indicate variables that you should list in the finished product. Optional items are given in brackets. The Director of Music will provide you with all of the musical variables (titles and composers) once your musical selections have been finalized.

## *Program for Mass*

(Note: Items printed in italics indicate variables that you should list in the finished product. Optional items are listed in brackets)

Prelude [seating of the mothers]	<i>music title</i>	<i>composer</i>
<u>Introductory Rite</u>		
Processional	<i>music title</i>	<i>composer</i>
Opening Hymn (sung all) <i>Text and music of hymn</i>	<i>hymn title</i>	
Gloria		
Opening Prayer		
<u>Liturgy of the Word</u>		
First reading		<i>scripture reference</i>
Psalm Response <i>(Cantor first, then all)</i>	<i>psalm number</i>	<i>composer</i>
Second reading		<i>scripture reference</i>
Gospel Acclamation <i>(Cantor first, then all)</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>	<i>composer</i>
Homily		
<u>Rite of Matrimony</u>		
Exchange of vows		
Acclamation		
Blessing and exchange of rings		
Acclamation		
General intercessions		
<u>Liturgy of the Eucharist</u>		
Preparation of the Eucharistic Gifts		
Eucharistic Prayer		
Acclamations (sung by all)	<i>title of mass setting</i>	<i>composer</i>
Lord's Prayer		
Nuptial Blessing		
Lamb of God	<i>title of mass setting</i>	<i>composer</i>
Communion	<i>title of mass setting</i>	<i>composer</i>
Prayer after Communion		
<u>Concluding Rite</u>		
Final Blessing		
[dedication to the Virgin Mary]	<i>music title</i>	<i>composer</i>
Recessional	<i>music title</i>	<i>composer</i>

## *Program for Liturgy of the Word*

Prelude [seating of the mothers]	<i>music title</i>	<i>composer</i>
<u>Introductory Rite</u>		
Processional	<i>music title</i>	<i>composer</i>
Opening Hymn (sung all) <i>Text and music of hymn</i>	<i>hymn title</i>	
Gloria		
Opening Prayer		
<u>Liturgy of the Word</u>		
First reading		<i>scripture reference</i>
Psalm Response <i>(Cantor first, then all)</i>	<i>psalm number</i>	<i>composer</i>
Second reading		<i>scripture reference</i>
Gospel Acclamation <i>(Cantor first, then all)</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>	<i>composer</i>
Homily		
<u>Rite of Matrimony</u>		
Exchange of vows		
Acclamation		
Blessing and exchange of rings		
Acclamation		
General intercessions		
<u>Concluding Rite</u>		
Final Blessing		
[dedication to the Virgin Mary]	<i>music title</i>	<i>composer</i>
Recessional	<i>music title</i>	<i>composer</i>

## Music for the Wedding

### *Music Director/Organist*

The Director of Music at Saint Cornelius Church, Mrs. Margie Melchiore, will serve as the principal musician at all weddings. She is also the principal musician in charge for weddings making use of instruments or ensembles. She will help coordinate with you the use of instruments and ensembles. Ordinarily, our choir director will be the leader of song at your wedding. Family members who are musicians may participate under Mrs. Melchiore's coordination. As principal musician for the wedding, the Director of Music is entrusted with the task of judging the suitability of musical selections within the context of the Catholic wedding liturgy, and must approve all music and musicians chosen for the ceremony.

### *Cantor/Vocalist*

Within the liturgy there are moments for sung prayer. These include the Responsorial Psalm Response and Alleluia, the responses during the Eucharistic Prayer, and several moments where hymns or vocal solos are possible. At Saint Cornelius we maintain an excellent staff of professional singers who are available for your wedding. These individuals are highly trained not only in the techniques of singing, but also in the art of leading congregational song. Additionally, they are versed in the standard musical repertoire for Saint Cornelius weddings, are comfortable with the particular acoustic properties of the church building, and are familiar with the liturgical norms of the parish.

### *Instrumentalists*

Instrumentalists (trumpet, violin, harp, quartet, etc.) may be used upon approval of and in arrangement with the Director of Music. The Saint Cornelius Music Ministry maintains professional relationships with many fine musicians in the area, and it is from this pool that wedding instrumentalists are selected. If individual instrumentalists are desired, the Director of Music will secure their services.

## *Music Fees*

You will find a list below of fees for all musicians. Please make checks payable to the individual musicians and send all checks for music to  
Attn: Mrs. Margie Melchiore  
Liturgical Music Director  
St. Cornelius Parish  
160 Ridge Road  
Chadds Ford, PA 19317

Checks must be received no later than two weeks prior to your wedding date.

<b>Fees for Music</b>	
Director/Organist	\$250
Cantor/Vocalist	\$175 – \$225
Individual Instrumentalist	\$175 – 350
String Quartet	\$750
Choral Ensemble	\$500
Harpist	\$200

## *Planning*

Music for the wedding should be planned jointly by the couple in consultation with the Director of Music. The emphasis must be on liturgical music – music that derives its context from scriptural sources and, by its very nature, enhances the sacramental union of the couple in Christ.

The singing of hymns and responses by the congregation is an excellent way of inviting those gathered to share in thanksgiving for the occasion, as well as to invoke God's blessing on the bride and groom. Vocalists have a genuine liturgical ministry, but they should never totally replace active musical participation of the congregation. In fact, the vocalist's first role will

be to function as cantor in leading the congregation so that the assembly will feel comfortable and secure in their participation. Utilized to support congregational singing and also to render solo repertoire at selected moments in the service, the cantor should be integrated into the wedding liturgy in such a way that any semblance of dominating the ceremony as a stage for musical performance is avoided.

## **Conclusion**

The Church bears the responsibility of regulating what takes place in its house of worship. Accordingly, we encourage your openness to the guidance and advice of our priests and the parish Music Director in planning the music for your wedding. Though your personal tastes and legitimate preferences will be taken seriously, please keep in mind that parish clergy and musicians have the difficult responsibility of subjecting your expressed wishes to the scrutiny of liturgical, musical, and pastoral principles long established not only by Saint Cornelius Church but also by the Catholic Church Universal. To some, our wedding policies may seem more disciplined than those found in some other parishes. Please be aware that this is because we take great care here in the celebration of the Church's liturgies; their proper and joyous celebration is of such importance to us that we quite willingly shoulder the responsibility of maintaining the dignity and depth of that long tradition. Our guidelines are presented not as impositions or regulations, but more as expectations and norms, intended to help all who gather – your families and friends – to celebrate well the liturgical dimension of your marriage. The pastoral staff and community of Saint Cornelius wish for your wedding ceremony to be a truly beautiful experience, one that you will treasure for the rest of your lives. It is hoped that these guidelines will help toward achieving that goal.

## **Congratulations on your engagement!**

In order to prepare for the reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Catholic Church requires all couples to attend Marriage Preparation Programs. You may select one of two different approaches; namely, the Large Group Regional Series or a Weekend Retreat Program.

The Family Life office assists engaged couples in their journey of faith through Marriage Preparation Programs, Natural Family Planning Classes, the FOCCUS Pre-marital inventory, and other resources that support your journey together to the vocation of Christian Marriage.

For more information, please contact the Archdiocesan Family Life Office online at: <http://phillycatholiclife.org/marriage-and-family/preparing-for-marriage/>

## **Pope Francis Answers Questions of Engaged Couples Preparing For Marriage**

**Saint Peter's Square**

**Friday, 14 February 2014**

### **“The Fear of ‘Forever’”**

**Question:** Nicolas and Marie Alexia, a young engaged couple from Gibraltar, asked: ‘Your Holiness, many today think that life-long fidelity is too challenging; many feel that the struggle to live together may be beautiful, enchanting, but it is difficult, even impossible. We ask you for a word to enlighten us on this’.

**Answer:** I thank you for your witness and for the question. Let me explain to you: they sent me these questions ahead of time... you know... and so I was able to reflect and think of an answer that is a little more solid.

It's important to ask yourself if it is possible to love each other “forever”. This is a question that must be asked: is it possible to love “forever”? Today so many people are afraid of making definitive decisions. One boy said to his bishop: “I want to become a priest, but only for ten years.” He was afraid of a definitive choice. But that is a general fear that comes from our culture. To make life decisions seems impossible. Today everything changes so quickly, nothing lasts long. And this mentality leads many who are preparing for marriage to say: “We are together as long as the love lasts,” and then? All the best and see you later... and so ends the marriage. But what do we mean by “love”? Is it only a feeling, a psychophysical state? Certainly, if that is it, then we cannot build on anything solid. But if, instead, love is a relationship, then it is a reality that grows, and we can also say by way of example that it is built up like a home. And a home is built together, not alone! To build something here means to foster and aid growth. Dear engaged couples, you are preparing to grow together, to build this home, to live together forever. You do not want to found it on the sand of sentiments, which come and go, but on the rock of true love, the love that

comes from God. The family is born from this plan of love, it wants to grow just as a home is built, as a place of affection, of help, of hope, of support. As the love of God is stable and forever, so too should we want the love on which a family is based to be stable and forever. Please, we mustn't let ourselves be overcome by the "culture of the provisory"! Today this culture invades us all, this culture of the temporary. This is not right!

How, then, does one cure this fear of the "forever"? One cures it day by day, by entrusting oneself to the Lord Jesus in a life that becomes a daily spiritual journey, made in steps — little steps, steps of shared growth — it is accomplished through a commitment to becoming men and women who are mature in faith. For, dear engaged couples, "forever" is not only a question of duration! A marriage is not successful just because it endures; quality is important. To stay together and to know how to love one another forever is the challenge for Christian couples. What comes to mind is the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves: for you too, the Lord can multiply your love and give it to you fresh and good each day. He has an infinite reserve! He gives you the love that stands at the foundation of your union and each day he renews and strengthens it. And he makes it ever greater when the family grows with children. On this journey prayer is important, it is necessary, always: he for her, she for him and both together. Ask Jesus to multiply your love. In the prayer of the Our Father we say: "Give us this day our daily bread." Spouses can also learn to pray like this: "Lord, give us this day our daily love," for the daily love of spouses is bread, the true bread of the soul, what sustains them in going forward. And the prayer: can we practice to see if we know how to say it? "Lord give us this day our daily love." All together! [couples: "Lord give us this day our daily love"] One more time! [couples: "Lord give us this day our daily love"]. This is the prayer for engaged couples and spouses. Teach us to love one another, to will good to the other! The more you trust in Him, the more your love will be "forever", able to be renewed, and it will conquer every difficulty. This was what I thought I would like to say to you, responding to your question. Thank you!

### **"Living together: The 'style' of married life"**

**Question:** Stefano and Valentina, two young people from Ciociaria ask: "Your Holiness, every day life together is beautiful. It gives joy, and support. But it is a challenge to face. We believe that we need to learn how to love

one another. There is a “style” of life as a couple, a spirituality of daily life that we want to take on. Can you help us in this, Holy Father?”

**Answer:** Living together is an art, a patient, beautiful, fascinating journey. It does not end once you have won each other’s love... Rather, it is precisely there where it begins! This journey of every day has a few rules that can be summed up in three phrases which you already said, phrases which I have already repeated many times to families, and which you have already learned to use among yourselves: May I — that is, “can I”, you said — thank you, and I’m sorry.

“Can I, may I?” This is the polite request to enter the life of another with respect and care. One should learn how to ask: may I do this? Would you like for us to do this? Should we take up this initiative, to educate our children in this way? Do you want to go out tonight? ... In short, to ask permission means to know how to enter with courtesy into the lives of others. Pay attention to this: to know how to enter with courtesy into the lives of others. It’s not easy, not easy at all. Sometimes, however, manners are used in a heavy way, like hiking boots! True love does not impose itself harshly and aggressively. In the Fioretti of St. Francis we find this expression: “For know, dear brother, that courtesy is one of the attributes of God, for courtesy is the sister of charity, it extinguishes hatred and kindleth love” (Ch. 37). Yes, courtesy kindles love. And today in our families, in our world, which is frequently violent and arrogant, there is so much need for courtesy. And this can begin at home.

“Thank you”. It seems so easy to say these words, but we know that it is not. But it is important! We teach it to children, but then we ourselves forget it! Gratitude is an important sentiment! Do you remember the Gospel of Luke? An old woman once said to me in Buenos Aires: “Gratitude is a flower that grows on a noble ground.” Nobility of soul is necessary so that this flower might grow. Do you remember the Gospel of Luke? Jesus heals ten lepers and then only one returns to say thank you to Jesus. The Lord says: and the other nine, where are they? This also holds true for us: do we know how to give thanks? In your relationship, and tomorrow in married life, it is important to keep alive the awareness that the other person is a gift from God — and for the gifts of God we say thank you! — we must always give thanks for them. And in this interior attitude one says

thank you to the other for everything. It is not a kind word to use with strangers, to show you are polite. You need to know how to say thank you in order to go forward in a good way together in married life.

The third: "I'm sorry." In life we err frequently, we make many mistakes. We all do. Wait, maybe someone here has never made a mistake? Raise your hand if you are that someone, there: a person who has never made a mistake? We all do it! All of us! Perhaps not a day goes by without making some mistake. The Bible says that the just man sins seven times a day. And, thus, we make mistakes... Hence the need to use these simple words: "I'm sorry." In general each of us is ready to accuse the other and to justify ourselves. This began with our father Adam, when God asks him: "Adam, have you eaten of the fruit?" "Me? No! It was her, she gave it to me!" Accusing the other to avoid saying "I'm sorry," "forgive me." It's an old story! It is an instinct that stands at the origin of so many disasters. Let us learn to acknowledge our mistakes and to ask for forgiveness. "Forgive me if today I raised my voice," "I'm sorry if I passed without greeting you," "excuse me if I was late," "if this week I was very silent," "if I spoke too much without ever listening," "excuse me if I forgot," "I'm sorry I was angry and I took it out on you" ... We can say many "I'm sorrys" every day. In this way, too, a Christian family grows. We all know that the perfect family does not exist, nor a perfect husband or wife... we won't even speak about a perfect mother-in-law. We sinners exist. Jesus, who knows us well, teaches us a secret: don't let a day end without asking forgiveness, without peace returning to our home, to our family. It is normal for husband and wife to quarrel, but there is always something, we had quarreled... Perhaps you were mad, perhaps plates flew, but please remember this: never let the sun go down without making peace! Never, never, never! This is a secret, a secret for maintaining love and making peace. Pretty words are not necessary... Sometimes just a simple gesture and... peace is made. Never let a day end... for if you let the day end without making peace, the next day what is inside of you is cold and hardened and it is even more difficult to make peace. Remember: never let the sun go down without making peace! If we learn to say sorry and ask one another for forgiveness, the marriage will last and move forward. When elderly couples, celebrating 50 years together, come to audiences or Mass here at Santa Marta I ask them: "Who supported whom?" This is beautiful! Everyone looks at each other,

they look at me and say: “Both!” And this is beautiful! This is a beautiful witness!

### **“The style of celebrating marriage”**

**Question:** Miriam and Marco, a young engaged couple from Massa Carrara, asked: “Your Holiness, in these months we are preparing for our wedding. Can you give us some advice on how to celebrate our marriage well?”

**Answer:** Make it a real celebration — because marriage is a celebration — a Christian celebration, not a worldly feast! The Gospel of John points to the most profound reason for joy on that day: do you remember the miracle at the wedding in Cana? At a certain point there was no more wine and the celebration seemed to be ruined. Imagine drinking tea at the end of a celebration! No, it’s not good! There is no party without wine! At Mary’s suggestion, in that moment Jesus reveals himself for the first time and gives a sign: he transforms water into wine, thus saving the wedding feast. What happened in Cana 2,000 years ago, happens today at every wedding celebration: that which makes your wedding full and profoundly true will be the presence of the Lord who reveals Himself and gives His grace. It is His presence that offers the “good wine,” He is the secret to full joy, that which truly warms the heart. It is the presence of Jesus at the celebration. May it be a beautiful celebration, but with Jesus! Not with a worldly spirit, no! You can feel it when the Lord is there.

At the same time, however, it is good that your wedding be simple and make what is truly important stand out. Some are more concerned with the exterior details, with the banquet, the photographs, the clothes, the flowers... These are important for a celebration, but only if they point to the real reason for your joy: the Lord’s blessing on your love. Make it so that, like the wine in Cana, the exterior signs of your celebration reveal the Lord’s presence and remind you and everyone present of the origin and the reason for your joy.

But there is something that you said that I would like to address immediately because I do not want to let it slip away. Marriage is also an everyday task, I could say a craftsman’s task, a goldsmith’s work, because

the husband has the duty of making the wife more of a woman and the wife has the duty of making the husband more of a man. Growing also in humanity, as man and woman. And this you do together. This is called growing together. This does not come out of thin air! The Lord blesses it but it comes from your hands, from your attitudes, from your way of loving each other. To make us grow! Always act so that the other may grow. Work at this. And thus, I don't know, I am thinking of you that one day you will walk along the streets of your town and the people will say: "Look at that beautiful woman, so strong!...". "With the husband that she has, it's understandable!". And to you too: "Look at him and how he is!...". "With the wife he has, I can understand why!" It's this, reaching this point: making one another grow together, one another. And the children will have the inheritance of having a father and a mother who grew together, making each other — one another — more of a man and more of a woman!