

Careful Preparations Make Sound Basis

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The day of Marriage should be one of life's landmark days. Recognition of a few points of preparation and etiquette during the weeks of preparation for the Marriage will go a long way toward insuring the happiness of the wedding day.

Before you arrange honeymoon time, rent a hall or do much else about the wedding, contact your pastor. If possible, get in touch with him three to six months before the desired wedding date.

The Priest to call on is the pastor of the bride; or should the bride be non-Catholic, that of the groom. If you wish to be married elsewhere, first seek the proper pastor's permission to have the ceremony in a church other than his. Once you and your pastor have agreed on a definite date, you can proceed with printing the invitations.

Visit the Pastor

Contacting your pastor early has another advantage. It enables you and him to line up mutually agreeable dates for further meetings. These future conferences will give him an opportunity to talk with you about the Christian approach to Marriage. Your pastor might ask you to attend a series of Pre-Cana Conferences.

Should your future mate be non-Catholic, your priest will want to see

him to explain Catholic belief. The objective is not to convert, but to help him appreciate Catholicism's view of God and His dealings with men.

In planning the ceremony with your pastor, request a nuptial Mass. The Marriage Mass will enrich your wedding day both materially and spiritually.

Be prompt in getting any documents, such as baptismal records, that your pastor might require of you. Talk over parish regulations regarding such things as flowers, music, and photographers.

Rules affecting these matters vary from parish to parish, so do not make definite plans in these areas until you know what is acceptable.

Many expenses are involved in getting married. Be realistic from the outset. Ordinarily the bride's parents bear the major expense of the wedding, but often today's brides, with well-paid positions, share the cost with their parents.

Set up an overall budget that will keep expenses within reasonable limits. The wedding is bound to be less joyous if the bride and her family have had to go into debt for it.

Major items to be listed in the budget are wedding gown and veil, accessories and trousseau; invitations, printing and mailing; flowers; organist's and/or soloist's fees; cake, food and drink for the reception; bridesmaids'

gifts; gift and wedding ring (if desired) for the groom.

The groom's major expenses come after the wedding when he starts to support his new wife. Still he has some expenses in conjunction with the wedding. These include engagement and wedding rings; wedding gift for the bride — usually jewelry; gifts to your best man and ushers; the bride's bouquet and your ushers' boutonnieres; the Priest's stipend and honorarium to the altar boys; the wedding trip; and, of course, the marriage license fee.

In planning the bridal outfit keep in mind the rules of good taste and modesty. Consult with your bridesmaids so that you can take into consideration their pocketbooks and tastes.

The bride-to-be should be careful not to neglect her mother. Let her have a major share in her daughter's marriage preparations. Her years of experience make the mother a valuable advisor in such matters as etiquette and shopping.

As plans for the Marriage become more involved, the necessity of clarifying many points of procedure will arise. Having at hand a complete, up-to-date book of etiquette is essential. In preparing for a Catholic wedding Kay Toy Fenner's *American Catholic Etiquette* should be very helpful.

The Blood Test

Several weeks before the marriage

make arrangements with your physician for the pre-marital blood test required before you can be issued a marriage license. This visit to your physician is an excellent time to have a complete physical check. Take the completed blood test statement with you when you apply for your marriage license. Remember that both parties must appear in person when making application for the license. This blood test is valid for thirty days.

With a reasonable amount of forethought you can prevent the week before the wedding from becoming one filled with frenzied preparations. Much will have to be done in the days immediately before the ceremony, but it should not be so much that you both become exhausted and irritable. There should be periods of calm and quiet during that last week so you can gather your thoughts and reflect on the important step you are about to take.

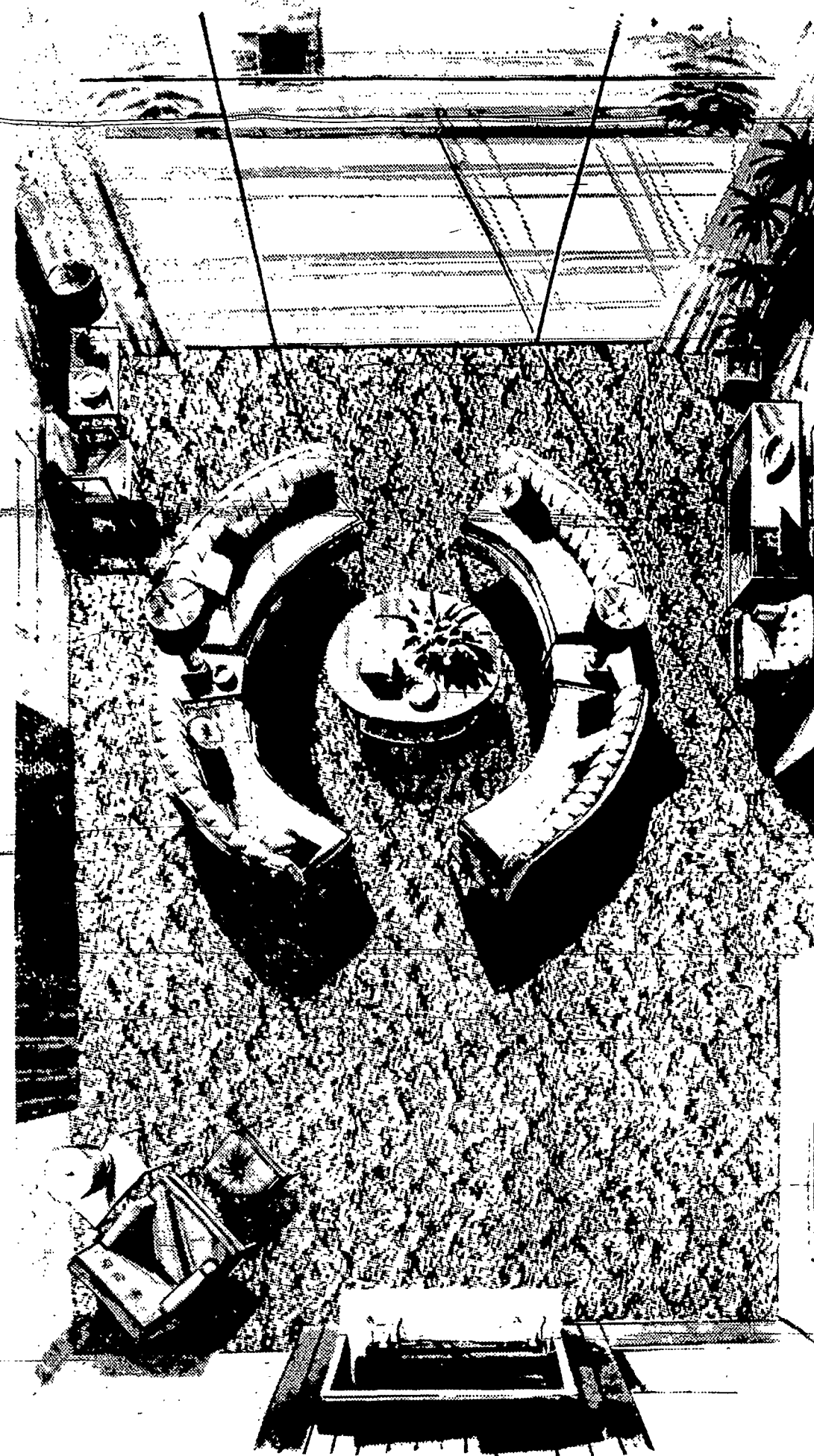
Usually a rehearsal is scheduled for the bridal party on the evening before the wedding. Be on time for the rehearsal, since its purpose is to help you. When each member of the bridal party knows in advance his exact role in the ceremony, there is less chance of tension and nervousness building up to extreme levels.

The Priest conducting the rehearsal will be willing to provide the Sacrament of Penance for any or all the

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