

Regulations -- They're for Your Benefit

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So important will be the family you establish on your wedding day, that it will affect many people besides yourselves. These people in your community, your state, your church, your country have a vital interest in your dreams and plans; and their happiness on this earth will depend in no small part on your own.

Because of this, in addition to the laws that God has provided to assist you in a successful life together, societies of men have enacted similar guides.

All these laws seem, at first glance, to be so much red tape complicating a very simple situation, yet your happiness and the good of society, both civil and ecclesiastical, is the purpose.

There are different kinds of laws — some are more important than others. Some can be modified for an important reason; others cannot. Some are based on human convenience, some on good order, some on the very nature of man, and some come directly from God Himself. Church laws encompass all these types.

Church Regulations

Let us now take a look at some of these regulations, big and small, that will affect your forthcoming Marriage.

To begin with, your wedding should be celebrated in the parish of the bride.

A phone call to her pastor, to arrange for the setting of a wedding date, should be the first step. Once you are assured of the day and time you wish for the ceremony, you can then meet with the pastor to discuss matters in detail.

Try to set the date as much in advance as possible — six months or more is somewhat ideal. This will allow the priest ample time to assist you with the necessary paperwork and instructions.

If for some important reason you would prefer your wedding to be in the groom's parish church, or in some other, permission from the bride's pastor must be obtained. (If your fiancée is not Catholic, the wedding should be in your parish church.)

One of the first things you'll need is a copy of your Baptismal record, made out not more than six months before the wedding. A letter or phone call to the church of your baptism is the way to obtain this.

Undoubtedly, when you meet with the priest, he will hand you a copy of the Rochester Diocesan Pre-Cana Conference schedule, and ask that you both attend these four pre-marriage instructions. From these sessions you will derive, together with all the engaged couples who attend with you, a deeper and richer understanding of the beautiful vocation that is soon to

be yours — an important step in your preparation for a successful marriage.

Sometime between your initial meeting with the priest and your wedding day, some necessary paperwork will be in order. A set of questions, called the "Marriage Investigation" will be asked of each of you individually and under oath. All this is to determine whether you are entering the Marriage because you really want to, and to make sure that there is no situation present that would impede your marrying.

The Dispensation

Should your fiancée not be Catholic, a Mixed Marriage Dispensation will have to be requested from the Bishop. The priest working with you will assist you on this. In such a case, the Bishop wishes to be sure that your living your faith will not be hampered by your planned Marriage, and that you intend to pass this same faith on to any children God may send to you.

If your fiancée is not a Catholic, he/she will be asked to attend what we call "Instructions about the Catholic Church". The instructions are by no means geared to bring your fiancée into the Church, but merely to offer information about things Catholic. They are sort of a very brief "bird's-eye view" of the Church, and explain simply what Catholics do, and why. As a result, for example, she'll understand, when you go off to confession some Saturday, just what confession

is, why you want to go, what will happen in the confessional — and even about how long you will be gone!

A word about offerings. According to the Statutes of the Diocese of Rochester, the following is the schedule of customary offerings made to the pastor on the occasion of a Wedding:

Low Nuptial Mass	\$15.00
Sung Nuptial Mass	20.00
Solemn Nuptial Mass	25.00
Wedding without Mass	15.00

Each parish has its own customs and regulations, and those of one parish might be very different from the parish in the next neighborhood. Therefore to determine what these are in the parish where your wedding will be, the Pastor himself should be approached on such things as flowers, music, confetti, and photographers.

Impediments to Marriage

Now, a few words about something we spoke of earlier — marriage impediments — those situations which stand in the way of Marriage. A wedding may not be celebrated whenever any impediment is present. A dispensation from the impeding law, granted by the Bishop, must be obtained first, if possible, before the ceremony, in such a case, may be held.

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