

White Robed Monks of St. Benedict



Frequently Asked Questions

Why the White Robed Monks of St. Benedict?

From its earliest days the church has looked at marriage as a sacrament, a visible sign of God's invisible presence. While your marriage day represents a public proclamation, it is really something which began early in your relationship and, with God's grace, will continue to mature. Like many couples, you may want to have a Catholic wedding and for various reasons choose other than the Roman Catholic Church or any other institutional church. You still want a "Catholic" wedding or a spiritual wedding with a Catholic presence and don't know where to turn.

The White Robed Monks of St. Benedict (WRMOSB), an independent Catholic jurisdiction not affiliated with the Roman Catholic community, offer you an alternative. Contemporary Catholics are not necessarily interested in finding Catholicism in a place as much as in people. They only search for a non-judgmental, sacramental experience different from that offered by the traditional, institutional church.

The WRMOSB were instituted as an independent Catholic jurisdiction in response to those with specific needs not being met within an institutional church. Specifically, the WRMOSB came into being to serve those entering into second marriages, those experiencing religious and/or spiritual dissonance with an institutional church and those whose spiritual needs an institutional church could not meet. The priests and deacons of the WRMOSB are here to celebrate the sacraments in compassion and love in a non-judgmental way.

Are there any restrictions as to where the ceremony can take place?

The choice of location for your wedding is yours. Just remember that where your marriage takes place can also affect your family, friends and guests so choose carefully. Depending on weather and other factors ceremonies may be held out-of-doors, God's own creation. While the WRMOSB do not maintain any church buildings, working solely within families, you may be able to utilize those of, among others, Unitarian or

Congregational churches. As the biblical tradition has Jesus teaching: Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of you. (Matthew 18:20) Hotels, banquet halls, private homes, museums and other locales may also be used.

Can we personalize the ceremony in any way?

Often couples wish to personalize their wedding ceremony and there are many ways in which this may be accomplished. There are numerous options for readings both from the scriptures and other sources which speak to marriage. You may compose your own vows or you may choose from traditional options. Ceremonies which speak to various ethnic groups such as the coin, rope and veil; hand fasting; or "jumping the broom" ceremonies can also be accommodated. You may also elect to integrate into your ceremony a unity candles, roses to parents and other more traditional activities. Discussing these matters with your priest/deacon is the best way to assure that your day is special. We are also experienced in officiating at mixed ceedal ceremonies, non-denominational, and generic non-religious ceremonies as well. We are here to assist you.

Can we have a generic, non-denominational, or spiritual wedding that is not necessarily "Catholic"?

Yes, we would be honored to officiate at your wedding if you elected a generic, non-denominational, or spiritual wedding that is not necessarily "Catholic" Please refer to

May we interview various officiants and select the one we want?

The selection of a wedding officiant is an element of marriage preparation and is different than selecting a venue. The couple does select the officiant. What is the basis of selection in terms of the White Robed Monks of St. Benedict? Given the uniqueness of our service to couples seeking a Catholic (and/or Spiritual) Presence in their ceremony, the basis becomes simply an ordained cleric in the Catholic tradition.

As did the historical Christ and not an institutional church, our intention is to serve all who come to us without question. Please appreciate that it is not our policy to be placed in an "interview" situation, a somewhat compromising situation that some have termed "officiant shopping." We are not accustomed to be placed in the interview spotlight and to somehow meet the interviewers' unspecified aspirations. We do not know how to behave in such instances as an interview situation is beyond the pale of our experience, given the service we provide. We are human beings and not a venue, or the like. Our aim is simply to provide religious/spiritual presence in the person of an ordained (Catholic) cleric with, given the Spirit of Compassion, with personality, etc. issues aside.

Our clerics are open to accommodate the expressed wants or needs of a couple. We provide a Catholic/Spiritual presence when otherwise not possible, given an institutional church's self-created requirements. With this said, a couple may wish a more clerical

presence, a more informal presence, a more off-the-cuff presence, or a more serious presence, and so forth. In a spirit of openness and personal responsibility for one's own integrity, we ask that a couple be free to discuss, if need be, their desires and to express themselves without suspecting that they might offend or otherwise embarrass the cleric. Our intention is to serve each couple to be best of our ability in any given moment in the Spirit of Respect, Honesty, and Integrity.

In the Spirit of Compassion, once we receive a completed Marriage Petition, we understand that the couple has agreed to work with us as we agree, as is our intention, to serve and support the couple in creating and generating the ceremony and ambiance the couple desires, each party respecting one another's humanity. Peace.

What takes place at the pre-nuptial conference?

When a couple and cleric hold their pre-nuptial conference, the purpose of the meeting is three fold.

1. The cleric shares with the couple some information on marriage and a wedding within the context of our Wedding Packet that the cleric will give the couple.
2. The couple and cleric design a ceremony (based upon a Ceremony Form the couple may have provided beforehand as per a Confirmation Letter).
3. The couple and cleric get to know one another in order to move forward, in compassion, with human respect, integrity and responsibility as each is wont.

May we invite another cleric (imam, minister, priest, rabbi) to co-officiate?

Yes, by all means. We most highly recommend that the couple decide before which officiant will sign the marriage license. The officiant who is to sign the marriage license is the lead officiant and is in charge the wedding ceremony and other matters pertaining thereto. This procedure insures that there is no confusion and misplaced communications.

If we are not the lead officiant, please understand that we will take a back seat in the wedding ceremony preparations and logistics. We will abide by what the lead officiant and the couple has mandated for the wedding ceremony. We will offer input only when specifically asked. It is not necessary for us to meet with the couple when we are not the lead officiant. Input and the like may be offered through the web, e-mail, fax, or phone. If the couple wishes a meeting, then we will be most happy to accommodate that request as schedules permit.

On the other hand, if we are the lead officiant, then we will work with the couple directly in designing the wedding ceremony. Our policy is that once the couple and WRMOSB cleric have completed the first draft, the couple then shares this first draft with the co-officiant and garners his or her input and recommendations. The co-

officiant's input plus first draft renders the second draft, which the couple publishes in e-mail form and sends to WRMOSB cleric. The couple and WRMOSB cleric may render a third draft. This third draft may be tweaked until four weeks before the wedding, at which time it becomes finalized.

*We are considering the possibility of having a (family) friend officiate.
What should we consider?*

Before filing a Marriage Petition with the WRMOSB, please resolve the possibility of having a (family) friend officiate at your wedding. This will save you and the WRMOSB time, effort, and energy unnecessarily spent, if you should file a petition and later come to have a (family) friend officiate and thereby cancel your petition with the WRMOSB. We ask you to decide before filing a petition, out of the Spirit of Compassion and human respect for one and all, whom you wish as an officiant: a (family) friend or a WRMOSB cleric.

If you are considering a (family) friend as an officiant, please be sure that the person knows how to conduct a ceremony and what to do in the event of an emergency during a ceremony -- essentially how to conduct oneself in face of the unexpected in the presence of your guests. Venue coordinators often remark that (family) friend officiants, for the most part, although well intentioned, just don't know what they are doing. An officiant ought to possess, among other traits, high degrees of Presence and Affability, Poise and Composure, and Lightheartedness with a touch of Solemnity. In short, the person should possess a high degree of professional decorum that honors you, your guests, and, most especially, the preciousness of the moment: the loving exchange of your vows to one another.

*What is the difference in having a Nuptial Mass and
a Marriage Rite outside of Mass?*

Your wedding ceremony will be almost identical to that celebrated in the Roman jurisdiction since we share the same liturgical forms in the Western Rite. Some couples may elect The Nuptial Mass as the preferred way of celebrating the sacrament since Catholics generally envision the unity of the sacraments unfolded within the Eucharist. Because the WRMOSB are ecumenical, we invite all people participating in the ceremony to the altar for communion demonstrating their unity with the couple as sisters and brothers in God.

On a practical side there is often little time length difference between the ceremonies since the Eucharistic prayer and distribution of communion are the only major additions. (A Nuptial Mass lasts around 45-55 minutes, the Marriage Rite outside of Mass, 25-35 minutes). And the choice is the couple's.

*Must a Nuptial Mass and a Marriage Rite outside of Mass
take place inside of a church building?*

Christ's message: When ever two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of you. (Matthew 18: 19-20) suggests that your marriage ceremony, whether a Nuptial Mass or Marriage Write without a Mass, can be celebrated in any venue and not necessarily inside a church building. Your wedding will take place in the historical sense of "church": ekklesia, the gathering together of The People.

My fiancé/fiancée is divorced, is that a problem?

The WRMOSB hold to the sanctity of marriage; we also realize that we are only too human. When a marriage ends through divorce it is often prima facie evidence that the essential element of marriage did not exist to maintain the bond. In the tradition of the Eastern church remarriage is tolerated in order to avoid further human tragedy. From this perspective the WRMOSB solemnizes remarriages with joy and the peace of Christ. For a more information, please refer to *On the Sacrament of Marriage*. If there are children from a previous relationship, you may want to include within your ceremony a Family Blessing and may want to read *On Kids: Divorced Parents and Remarriage*.

Roman Catholics, specifically, might find interesting information contained within Internal Forum and The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (ARCC).

*My fiancé/fiancée is not Catholic, do we have to
promise anything about raising the children?*

The White Robed Monks of St. Benedict and the Benedictine Network, an ecumenical community, are inclusive, catholic. We encourage you to consider how different religious values and belief systems (or their absence) might impact your relationship and any children who might issue. This discussion of religious beliefs and value systems is one such discussion easily overlooked. We ask that you raise any children with whom you are blessed in a loving and compassionate household and teach them to love God and one another as He loves us, wholly and completely. (For a discussion of Catholic/Protestant contrasting value/belief systems, please refer to *Christianity: One Reality, Two Perspectives*)

What kind of marriage preparation classes will we need to attend?

There are no classes per se that you need attend. Your marriage represents a change in how you envision and experience yourself and your relationship with others. It is both exciting and frightening. You control how you experience that you do based upon the belief systems you choose to maintain.. Your family and friends are here to support you and so is the community as a whole. Marriage (Pre-Cana) preparation courses and individual counseling can help. We encourage you to take time to prepare yourselves as you deem apt.. We do most strongly encourage each of you take a moment or two for conscious, dedicated preparation for your marriage - if for no one else than the children who may issue from your marriage. We strongly encourage you:

- * To read and discuss together *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*, Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. ISBN 0-06-097292-0;
- * To read and discuss together *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps*, Barbara and Allan Pease. ISBN 07679-0763-0;
- * To read and discuss together *How You Can Help Prevent Family Stress and Divorces* by Peter K. Gerlach, MSW;
- * To make use of our Marriage Packet, a copy of which you will receive from priest/deacon at pre-nuptial conference;
- * Marriage Counseling/Parental Blackmailing, as may be appropriate given your family gestalts;
- * To discuss together:
 - Preparing for Marriage,
 - On Money: Marriage and Economic Friction
 - Recovery Issues: Growing A Healthy Capacity to Relate
- * To book mark and refer to often Smart Marriages sponsored by the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education.

It goes without saying that your marriage will work only if both of you both are committed to having or letting it work. Ideally, the priest/deacon would like to meet with you at least once before the ceremony.

What legal issues will we need to address?

In the USA, to be legally married you will need to purchase a license from the county clerk or the state department of registration for the county or place in which the ceremony will occur. Sometimes there is a waiting period, a definite expiration date and sometimes other requirements. After the ceremony the priest/deacon will make sure that your license is signed and sent to the appropriate agency. The officiant will also provide you with a marriage certificate for your more immediate use. You may also need to have this certificate or a document (a certified copy of your license) issued by the county clerk to change driver's licenses, bank accounts, insurance plans and other legal documents after the wedding. You may wish to speak with an attorney regarding some of these matters.

Will my marriage be recognized by the Roman Catholic church?

The White Robed Monks of St. Benedict, as a distinct Catholic jurisdiction, are not affiliated with the Roman Catholic or any other jurisdiction. We cannot speak, therefore, for any other jurisdiction just as any other jurisdiction cannot speak for us. Through Apostolic Succession with other jurisdictions in the Old Catholic tradition, we

celebrate the same seven sacraments as those in the Roman, Orthodox and any other Catholic jurisdiction. Your marriage will be legal with the state and, given God's Love and Grace, a sacrament in the eyes of God.

What is the fee or charge for the WRB sacramental services?

We do not, on principle, maintain fees for our sacramental services (Baptism, Marriage, etc.). Financial donations may be offered to assist in sustaining and furthering our ministry. Money is never an issue as we do not deny the sacraments to anyone. Whatever donation is offered will be gratefully accepted. Please remember that a cleric will spend on the average 10 hours in preparation, including driving time, for your wedding. If a priest/deacon is required to travel great distances to celebrate the sacrament with you, we would appreciate having those traveling costs covered. (If reimbursing officiant for car rental costs, please note there may be \$20.00 to \$50.00 additional fees not mentioned in advertised or stated quote. Please ask car rental agent what additional fees there may be: tax, drop-off fees, etc. If securing a hotel room for officiant, please pre-pay room cost.)

If a donation check is made payable to the The White Robed Monks of St. Benedict (or WRB) it may be considered tax deductible as the IRS recognizes the WRMOSB as a publicly supported (religious) organization. Any goods or services you may receive in connection with your donation are solely intangible religious or spiritual benefits. Donations permit the WRMOSB to carry out sacramental, charitable and educational missions and activities.

As is our standard practice, your priest or deacon will not discuss a specific dollar (in cash or by check) amount with you nor will s/he advise you as to whom (either the WRMOSB or the officiant) you may make a donation check payable unless you initiate a conversation re same with officiant. The matter of the donation is totally in your hands. If you have any immediate question or concern or if a conflict should arise regarding our donation policy, please contact Father Abbot. Thank you.

Can you recommend any florists, musicians, photographers and the like?

Yes. Please visit our [Recommended Vendors Page - San Francisco Bay Area or Chicago Metropolitan Area](#).

What is the procedure of requesting a priest or deacon to officiate at our wedding?

Please complete a [Marriage Petition Form](#). Upon receipt, we will do our best to accommodate your request. We will contact you shortly (usually within 72 hours) after our receipt of your Marriage Petition Form.