

## Ready for your First Appointment?

Once you have read this packet and have collected ALL the required documents, you are ready to make your first appointment with a priest or deacon of the Church of Saint Peter. Please bring this packet and all required documents with you to that first meeting. We look forward to helping you organize this most special event in your lives since it is the beginning of the rest of your lives together in Christ Jesus. God bless you both.

# Saint Peter Roman Catholic Church

### Check list of things needed for first meeting:

- Yes  No Proposed Date of Rehearsal and Wedding?
- Yes  No Recently acquired certificate of his Baptism with notations?
- Yes  No Recently acquired certificate of her Baptism with notations?
- Yes  No If not parishioners, \$550 for use of the church building?
- Yes  No If not parishioners, permission from the pastor of the Church you attend?
  
- Yes  No Co-habiting—living together as more than just friends?
- Yes  No If this is your first marriage and you are not co-habiting, will there be a Mass?
- Yes  No Previously married?
- Yes  No Convalidation of a civil marriage?

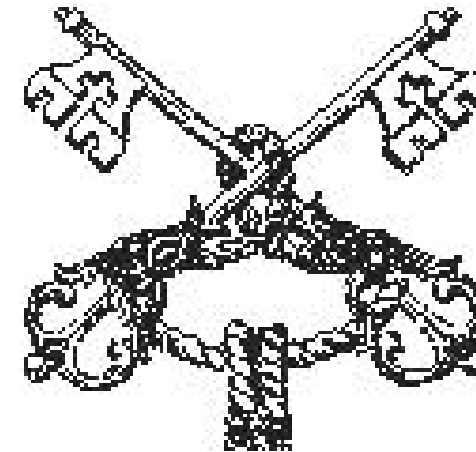
You will need the following documents only as they pertain to your particular situation.

- Yes  No Authentic copy of Marriage License?
- Yes  No Authentic copy of Decree of Divorce?
- Yes  No If it was a sacramental marriage, authentic copy of Decree of Annulment?
  
- Yes  No Will you be asking another priest or deacon other than one from this parish to officiate?  
Name of that priest or deacon \_\_\_\_\_

Address of that priest or deacon \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Guidelines For The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony



P.O. Box 40 Carencro, LA 70520  
(337) 896-9408

## The Duties of the Engaged Couple

*“Have you never read how He who created them, when they first came to be, created them male and female; and how he said, ‘A man, therefore, will leave his father and mother and will cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’ (Mt. 19:4-6) Marriage, then, is not a human invention but a divine institution.*

*Many couples think that marriage is solely in their hands for the purpose of satisfying either their physical sexual needs or emotional needs of being loved and of loving. A man and a woman share in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony for no other purpose than one’s immortal soul encountering God.*

*Consider the seriousness of the path you are about to embark upon. If you believe that your sacramental union to your fiancé is a true calling from God Himself, then take seriously the guidelines presented here for the proper and holy preparation of not only your Wedding Day but also for the rest of your Marriage and the life of the Church.*

### Freedom to Marry According to Catholic Church Guidelines

*According to Church Law:*

**Canon 1066**, *“Before a marriage is celebrated, it must be evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.”*

**Canon 1069**, *“All the faithful are obliged to reveal any impediments they know about to the pastor or local ordinary [head bishop] before the celebration of the marriage.”*

**Canon 1095**, *“The following are incapable of contracting marriage:*

- 1° those who lack the sufficient use of reason;*
- 2° those who suffer from a grave defect of discretion of judgment concerning the essential matrimonial rights and duties mutually to be handed over and accepted; and*
- 3° those who are not able to assume the essential obligations of marriage for the causes of a [mental] nature.”*

**Canon 1096**, *“For matrimonial consent to exist, the contracting parties must be at least not ignorant that marriage is a permanent partnership between a man and a woman ordered to the procreation of [children] by means of some sexual cooperation.”*

*To marry:*

- 1) One must be at least 18 years of age, or, if a minor, must have parental consent,*
- 2) One must not be related to the other by blood (i.e., not a sibling or first cousin),*
- 3) One must not be bound by a previous bond of marriage, whether it is a civil marriage or a sacramental marriage (see Previously Married?).*

*do not offer the option of a Wedding Mass to the engaged couple. So as not to cause greater scandal to the Faithful of the Church and to society at large, the Church offers a Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass—Service*

*of the Word with the Exchange of Consent before the priest or deacon and at least two witnesses. Some ceremony is permitted though restricted.*

## Mixed Marriage?

*That is a marriage between a baptized Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic. Canon 1124 states, “Without express permission of the competent authority, a marriage is prohibited between two baptized persons of whom one is baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it by a formal act and the other of whom is enrolled in a Church . . . not in full communion with the Catholic Church.” The law continues, “The local ordinary [the head bishop] can grant a permission of this kind if there is a just and reasonable cause. He is not to grant it unless the following conditions have been fulfilled:*

- 1° the Catholic party is to declare that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of defecting from the faith and is to make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power so that all [children] are baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church;*
- 2° the other party is to be informed at an appropriate time about the promises which the Catholic party is to make, in such a way that it is certain that he or she is truly aware of the promise and obligation of the Catholic party;*
- 3° both parties are to be instructed about the purposes and essential properties of marriage which neither of the contracting parties is to exclude” (Canon 1125).*

*This declaration of the Catholic party is done by means of signing a statement of promise in the presence of the priest or deacon and the baptized non-Catholic fiancé.*

## Civilly Married and wish to have Marriage Blessed?

*If you are a baptized Catholic married before a judge and you wish to have your civil marriage blessed by the Catholic Church, we must investigate your present situation and any prior engagements in order to determine whether or not there are any impediments to your present marriage being convalidated. You will need to bring to your first meeting with the priest or deacon paperwork of any and all previous engagements, divorce papers, annulments papers, and an authentic Certificate of Baptism with notations recently acquired from your Church of Baptism and an authorized copy of the marriage license of your present civil marriage. Restricted ceremony is permitted though convalidation usually takes place privately.*

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*your Sacrament of Holy Matrimony a truly holy event for all involved.*

## Previously Married?

Whether civilly (before a judge) or sacramentally (blessed by a Catholic priest or deacon) or even witnessed by a protestant minister, there are certain criteria that must be met before being able to marry again in the Catholic Church.

If you are Catholic and were civilly married prior to your current engagement, a Declaration of Nullity in a Lack of Form Case must be received in order for your current engagement to proceed. Catholics are bound by Church Law to marry before an ordained man and two witnesses. This situation not having been met, your previous marriage can be declared null—never having existed from the moment of consent. If this describes your situation, you must bring with you to the first meeting with the priest or deacon an authentic Certificate of Baptism with notations recently acquired from the Church of your Baptism, an authorized copy of the marriage license, and an authorized copy of the decree of divorce.

If you are a baptized Catholic and were sacramentally married before a Catholic priest or deacon or baptized non-Catholic married to a baptized non-Catholic before a protestant minister prior to your current engagement, a Declaration of Nullity in a Formal Case must be received in order for your current engagement to proceed. According to Sacred Scripture and Church Law a sacramental marriage is permanent. Though it happens that one or both spouses did not enter into the sacramental marriage having first met the requirements of Christ and His Church. Such a marriage is said to never have existed. If this describes your situation, you must first arrange an appointment with the priest or deacon to begin what is called a Formal Case for an annulment before any marriage preparation can take place. An annulment is a declaration that the said marriage never existed from moment of the exchange of consent. This has no legal or ecclesial ramifications on any children that may have come from the marriage. They are still children of God and are respected as such. An annulment is not a Catholic divorce! **NOTE:** This is a more lengthy process than a Declaration of Nullity in a Lack of Form Case and the engaged couple is to postpone any Wedding plans such as invitations, dates, rentals, etc., until judgment is granted.

## Living Together Before a Sacramental Marriage has Taken Place?

Because the Gospel of Christ and the Church do not permit the co-habitation of an unmarried adult man and woman—living together in an intimate union of more than just friendship—, we

### **Freedom to Marry According to Moral Guidelines**

- 1) Both parties understand and accept the Sacredness of Marriage and that it is a Sacramental union if both parties are baptized Christians.
- 2) Both parties understand that Marriage binds the couple in a permanent union that endures to

death.

- 3) In the case of a Sacramental Marriage, for it to be received fruitfully by the spouses, neither party should be in a state of serious or mortal sin.
- 4) If this is a mixed marriage—between a baptized Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic—the Catholic party is encouraged by the Church to have received the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion, as well as already practicing the Faith, especially through a life of prayer and by a faithful attendance at Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.
- 5) It is strongly recommended for those Catholics preparing for Marriage to receive the Sacrament of Confession, especially if and when they find themselves in the state of serious and mortal sin.
- 6) The Catholic party is strongly encouraged to practice the Faith fully and with conviction. Because Marriage is such a serious commitment in this Covenant of Love, the parties to Marriage should take advantage of all the graces offered to them by God through private prayer and the worthy reception of the Sacraments. If either of the parties has difficulties with any aspect of the Faith, he/she should confide in the priest or deacon during the appointments so that he can help develop the spiritual gifts necessary for a strong and happy Marriage.
- 7) The engagement period, in addition to being a time of growth in knowing and understanding each other, is to be a time of spiritual preparation for the life-long commitment of Marriage. Included in this time is the call for the couple to practice chastity, both in mind and body. The couple should understand that the giving to each other sexually is reserved for those bonded in Marriage. Failure to respect this proper and sacred practice of sexual intercourse renders the persons in the state of the mortal sin of fornication. If you are unable to be faithful and respectful now as an engaged couple then you will not be able to be faithful and respectful to each other during marriage. **Count on it!** This is a leading cause of divorce.

As Catholics we have certain structures and rituals that are to be respected. These guidelines are meant to inform and aid you in planning a Nuptial Ceremony that is in accord with these respective structures. Please pay particular attention to the guidelines for music, bridal/maid gowns, and church décor. For the sake of consistency, please do not ask for exceptions to these guidelines. If you agree to fully cooperate with the requests below, you may call the Parish Office to set up an appointment to begin the marriage preparation process, which must begin at least six months prior to proposed date of marriage.

### **The Marriage Course—Remember, Marriage is a lifetime, not a one-time ceremony!**

Adhering to the norms of the Diocese of Lafayette regarding marriage preparation courses, and as participants in a diocesan sponsored program to teach Natural Family Planning to engaged couples, the Church of Saint Peter offers three options for marriage courses.

#### **Option A**

- 1) Initial contact with the Priest or Deacon of the Church of Saint Peter:
  - a) confirmation of wedding date

- b) recording of sacramental records
  - c) payment of church fees (if you are not a registered parishioner)
  - d) set up dates for classes
- 2) Participation in a diocesan sponsored Catholic Engaged Encounter—a weekend where an atmosphere is created in which each couple can concentrate exclusively on their relationship, free of tensions and pressures of the world. The cost of the weekend is \$120 (subject to change without notice).
  - 3) Attendance at four mandatory Couple to Couple League sponsored Natural Family Planning Classes—contact Mr. and Mrs. Frank Connolly (896-8848) to make arrangements.
  - 4) Arranging for the FOCCUS assessment—this is not a test of compatibility but is an aid in assessing areas in which the couple might need to focus in preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony and life together as husband and wife and as parents.
  - 5) Arranging for a meeting with the Priest or Deacon to discuss the results of the FOCCUS.
  - 6) Arranging for private interviews with the Priest or Deacon.
  - 7) Arranging with the Priest or Deacon the Wedding Ceremony preparation meeting—we will discuss the various aspects of the rehearsal and the Wedding Ceremony.

**Option B**—this option is made available to those whose working schedule prevents participation in the weekend Engaged Encounter.

- 1) Initial contact with the Priest or Deacon of the Church of Saint Peter.
- 2) Attendance at a diocesan sponsored Engaged Couples Conference—a one-day experience which is presented by trained married couples and a priest. The cost of the conference is \$40 non-refundable.
- 3) Attendance at four mandatory Couple to Couple League sponsored Natural Family Planning Classes.
- 4) Arranging for the FOCCUS assessment.
- 5) Arranging for a meeting with the Priest or Deacon to discuss the results of the FOCCUS.
- 6) Arranging for private interviews with the Priest or Deacon.
- 7) Arranging with the Priest or Deacon the Wedding Ceremony preparation

to be quiet, discreet, and respectful of the Sacred Nature of the Marriage Ceremony. No one will be allowed to interrupt the service or enter the Sanctuary so as to allow the sacredness of the Sacrament of Matrimony to be protected from distractions. If you choose for video recording, you may use more than one camera, only one videographer will be allowed on the ground floor. A second videographer must record from the choir balcony. Also, microphones are not allowed to be placed on the Bride nor the Groom.

**Fee for the Wedding** As stated above, if you are a registered parishioner of the Church of Saint Peter,

there is no fee. If you are not a registered parishioner of the Church of Saint Peter, the fee is \$350—this money is put into our maintenance account. If you would like to make a further donation to the Church and/or to the officiating priest/deacon, you may do so. The amount is of your choosing.

**Weddings During the Liturgical Seasons** In accord with the ancient tradition of the Church, and in order for us to live out the themes of the Church's Liturgical year, NO Nuptial Masses are allowed during the Penitential Season of Lent and on other solemn days of the Church's calendar—these will be made known to you when you meet with the deacon or priest to schedule the Wedding. Nuptial Masses are discouraged during the Season of Advent, since this season has a penitential tone of preparation for the Season of Christmas. We will always try to accommodate your wishes if there is a legitimate reason for your desire to have a Wedding during Advent. But, again, no Wedding will be allowed during the Season of Lent; do not ask for exceptions!

**Wedding Times** Friday evening Wedding Ceremonies are best scheduled at 7:00 since the parish daily Mass is scheduled at 5:30pm and ends at 6:00. You will need to allow the parishioners time and space to leave the church parking lot and time for your guests to arrive without any conflict. Saturday morning Wedding Ceremonies are best scheduled at 10:00. Saturday afternoon Wedding Ceremonies cannot be scheduled past 1:30 at the Church of Saint Peter. This is because of the necessity to prepare for the evening Masses and Confession, which begins at 3:30. If you desire a Saturday evening Wedding Ceremony, you may have a Service of the Word only—no Mass.

**Marriage License** In Lafayette Parish, marriage licenses are issued by the Clerk of Court's Office in the Lafayette Court House. The couple must bring a birth certificate, social security numbers, birthplace, and knowledge of parents' birthplace. Bring your checkbook and be prepared to pay the State fee for the license. Licenses must be issued AT LEAST 72 hours before the Wedding Ceremony itself.

**Sacrament of Reconciliation** To allow for the proper disposition of the Sacred Wedding Vows, the couple is to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) at least a few days before the ceremony—usually this is done as close as possible to the Wedding day. If any member of your wedding party needs to go to Confession, bring him/her along with you. Make the preparation for the style of suit (i.e., no cowboy boots, etc.). Hats are not permitted; true gentlemen never wear hats indoors. Gloves may seem appropriate.

The Church does not have a dressing room, so all preparations should be made before arriving for the Wedding Ceremony.

**Florists and Church Decorations** The florist you choose will be responsible for placing AND removing any and all decorations placed for your Wedding Ceremony. Because of the numerous Masses offered at this church, neither the florist nor the family will be allowed to place decorations before another Mass or activity that might precede your Wedding Ceremony. Your florist should be prepared to decorate the church in a short period of time. The Parish Office will set this time for you or the florist! No candelabra or pew-end torches are allowed in the

Sanctuary or the church; only the candles present on the altar will be used for the Wedding Ceremony. No floral arrangements are allowed on the reredos or anywhere in the Sanctuary except for one (1) arrangement on the floor immediately in front of the main altar. This floral arrangement in front of the main altar must be made of true flowers (no silk/no plastic), cannot be more than 36" (3') in height, and must be placed on a plastic water basin. Floral arrangements may be placed at the Altar of St. Joseph and the Altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary. No flowers or decorations are allowed on, near, or attached to the Communion Railing.

Church décor should never distract from the primary action at the altar. For this reason Arches, Arbors, and Canopies are NOT ALLOWED for Wedding Ceremonies in this church as it takes away from the altar and hinders the view of the Sanctuary. These types of things are best set up at receptions. White runners are NOT allowed nor are they necessary since the aisle is carpeted. If our policy is not followed, the Wedding Ceremony will be delayed until these items are removed from the church! The "flower girl" is allowed to CARRY flowers NOT THROW them on the floor. Because of the delicate wooden pew-ornamentation of this church, any décor—floral or fabric—must be attached to the pew using ribbon and/or rubber bands—no tape, tacks, hard wire, etc., is permitted. NO ONE is allowed to move, rearrange, or remove any church appointments or furnishings at any time for any reason, NO EXCEPTIONS!

The so-called Unity Candle is not permitted in this church since it is not of Catholic origin and serves no truly theological or sacramental purpose. Within the Rite of Marriage it is the verbal Exchange of Consent that is the beginning of the union between the spouses. Sexual consummation of the union is the subsequent sacramental reality of the marriage.

**Photographers/Videographers** While it is most important that you have a photographic record of your Wedding, those persons you choose to photograph or video your Wedding should be chosen with great care. Those photographing or video-recording the ceremony are expected meeting.

**Option C**—this option is made available to those who are entering another marriage.

- 1) Initial contact with the Priest or Deacon of the Church of Saint Peter.
- 2) Participation in the diocesan sponsored Re-marriage in Christ—a specifically designed program which gives the engaged couple entering re-marriage, the opportunity to address their needs, which are unique, because one or both were previously married, and that former relationship ended with death or divorce, and children are involved. The cost of this program is \$40 non-refundable.
- 3) Attendance at four mandatory Couple to Couple League sponsored Natural Family Planning Classes.
- 4) Arranging for the FOCCUS assessment.
- 5) Arranging for a meeting with the Priest or Deacon to discuss the results of the FOCCUS.

6) Arranging for private interviews with the Priest or Deacon.

7) Arranging with the Priest or Deacon the Wedding Ceremony preparation meeting.

**IMPORTANT:** When attending your first session with the priest or deacon, you are to bring your sacramental records: an authentic Certificate of Baptism with notations (to be obtained at the Church of your Baptism), and recent copies of paperwork in reference to any previous marriage, divorce, and annulment. If you were previously married, civilly or sacramentally, and you have never received from the Catholic Church a declaration of nullity of that marriage(s), you will first need to arrange for that with the priest or deacon before any marriage preparation can begin. Also, if you are not a registered parishioner of the Church of Saint Peter, plan to bring \$350 for the use of the church—registered parishioners are regular contributors to the collection of the Church and are not required to pay for the use of the church. Also, non-registered parishioners will need to bring a letter from the pastor of the church you attend granting you permission to marry outside of that church.

**Visiting Priests/Deacons** We warmly welcome any visiting priests or deacons whom you may desire to officiate at your nuptial ceremony. To avoid schedule conflicts with our church, your first contact must be with a priest or deacon of the Church of Saint Peter. This will also allow us to properly enroll you in the marriage course of your choice. The priest or deacon whom you choose to officiate at your nuptial ceremony is responsible for completing the preparation requirements with you; no further meetings are required with a priest or deacon of the Church of Saint Peter.

While priests and deacons vary with ceremonial and rehearsal procedures, guidelines for music, church décor, and bridal gowns are to be adhered to in all Wedding Ceremonies at the Church of Saint Peter. We ask that you do not embarrass a visiting priest or deacon by asking him to make exceptions in these areas.

**Mistress of Ceremonies** Although it is not absolute necessity to have a Mistress of Ceremonies, our experience shows us that it would save you much trouble and helps in the smoothness of the ceremony. A family member or a friend who is NOT part of the Ceremony itself is the perfect candidate to choose and can help you with the "little things" that take up so much time. It is important to note that the Mistress of Ceremonies does not run the Wedding or the rehearsal; the priest/deacon is responsible for adhering to the regulations of the Roman Ritual's Rite of Marriage.

**Wedding Rehearsal** When you come in for your first meeting with the priest or deacon you will set a date for your Wedding Ceremony and the date for the Wedding Rehearsal. This date is only negotiable with the priest or deacon officiating your Wedding Ceremony since the Church or the priest or deacon may not be available at the time you want. In order to ensure that the rehearsal duration is 30 minutes, please have your wedding party assigned to partners and lined accordingly at the front door of the church. And remember, the members of your Wedding Party and family should know that any "celebration" with alcohol should NEVER begin before the rehearsal, not to mention the wedding itself. Those who do so will be asked to leave the premises and may be dismissed from the Wedding altogether. Because of the necessity of consciousness during the exchange of verbal consent, if either or both of the spouses has alcohol on the breath, the rehearsal and Wedding will be postponed!

**Altar Servers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** *Those who are trained as altar servers from the Church of Saint Peter will serve at all Wedding Ceremonies. If you have a family member that is an altar server at another parish, that person will be assisted by one of our servers. If any Extraordinary Ministers are needed, those duly commissioned for this Parish will be asked to serve by the priest or deacon. Any changes must be made in direct consultation with the priest or deacon of this Church Parish.*

**Readers** *The Readings that you and the priest or deacon will choose from Sacred Scripture are essential to the Wedding Ceremony. Church law does not permit a non-Catholic to participate in the Liturgy as a Reader, A separated brother is not to act as a scripture reader. . . . (Ad Totam Ecclesiam). The person(s) you select to read should be one who is familiar with reading at Mass. This person(s) must be in good standing with the Catholic Church and able to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and must dress appropriately for the Ceremony—suit and tie for men and modest dress for women.*

**Sacred Music and Musicians** *Only Sacred Music is proper and acceptable for a Wedding held in a Catholic church and you should take great care in selecting music for the Ceremony from the prepared list of music the Church provides—at your first meeting with a priest or deacon. There are many popular, secular songs that may sound beautiful, but the lyrics are not compatible with the Gospel of Christ. For a Wedding Mass, the musicians and vocalists must be familiar with the Parts of the Mass which are to be sung. All music to be played at a Wedding Ceremony must be approved by Mr. Michael Totaro (896-9632), the director of liturgy and music at the Church of Saint Peter.*

*To the list of music for Wedding Ceremonies is attached a list of musicians approved and available to play for Weddings here at the Church of Saint Peter. If any other musicians are selected to play at your Wedding, they must be approved by Mr. Michael Totaro!*

*The use of tapes and CDs is not permitted in church. The use of the church's microphone system is sufficient for musicians, therefore, no extra or outside microphones are to be used in this church.*

**Offertory Gift Bearers** *If you desire family members or friends to bring up the offertory gifts—only the bread and wine and water to be offered in the Holy Mass—please inform the priest at the final meeting. These family members or friends should be modestly dressed as is fitting sacred worship. Also, since they are presenting to the priest gifts to be consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ, these family members and/or friends ought to be practicing Catholics—not all Christians believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.*

**Bridesmaids and Groomsmen/Flower Girl and Ring Bearer** *The men and women you choose to serve in your Wedding Ceremony are honored to be chosen by you and they should be reminded of*

*the sacredness of the ceremony. Your attendants must number no more than FIVE Bridesmaids and no more than FIVE Groomsmen, including your Maid/Matron of Honor and your Best Man. Because of State regulations, the Maid/Matron of Honor and Best Man must be at least 18 years of age. The Flower Girl and Ring Bearer must be AT LEAST FIVE YEARS OLD! If the children you choose are shy and embarrassed to walk in front of people DO NOT ASK them to be your Flower Girl and Ring Bearer. Remember, they are not essential participants of a Catholic Wedding Ceremony. If their presence hinders the ceremony, you will be asked to remove them from the entrance procession!*

**!!!Dresses and Tuxedos!!!** *Remember that noble simplicity adds to the beauty of the Marriage Ceremony and restraint should be exercised when planning for dresses and tuxedos. We ask that you practice Christian modesty—any thing else is inappropriate for sacred worship—especially when it is in regard to the Bridal Gown and the Bridesmaids' dresses. All dresses must be below the knee, no revealing splits, no low front, no low back, no off-the-shoulder, no sleeveless, no halter tops, NO EXCEPTIONS!*

*Tuxedos ought to be of presentable style. Color and fabric selection is very key here—no bright yellows, reds, oranges, purples, etc., and no leather nor studs and chains. Modest colors of black, charcoal, blue, gray, and white are fitting for sacred worship. Footwear ought to be in keeping with*