

## **MARRIAGE PREPARATION GUIDELINES – ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA CHURCH**

### **OUTLINE OF GUIDELINE**

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- Theology of Marriage.
- Purpose of Marriage preparation period.
- Obtaining a date and time for the ceremony.
- The Preparation Process.
- Music for the church ceremony.
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- Flowers and decorations.
- Wedding day procedures.
- Unity candle.
- Marian Floral presentation

## **CHURCH FEES**

To qualify for Wedding Parishioner Rate, the bride/groom must be a member-in-good standing for one year prior to the first meeting with the priest who will preside at the Marriage ceremony. The offering for registered parishioners of St. Anthony of Padua is \$500.00. If you are a non-active parishioner, the fee is \$1,000.00. The fact that one's parents or relatives are registered does not mean that the bride or groom is also registered. An adult child should have their own parishioner account. Non-parishioners' church fee is \$1,500.00. We require a non-refundable deposit of \$500.00 towards the fee to hold the date you request. Final payment must be paid by the rehearsal date. You can also make payments periodically.

The fee is for the use of the Church facility and all that is included. The above-mentioned fees for the musicians, cantors, coordinators are not included in the facilities offering. Our Music Coordinator will provide the cost for music, and the church wedding coordinator cost is provided below. A donation to the priest/deacon is appropriate and approximately \$250.00. We do not have altar servers.

## **THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE**

The Catholic Church believes and teaches that marriage is a sacrament, commonly referred to as Matrimony. As such, marriage is a life-long covenant between a man and a woman which constitutes a faithful, exclusive relationship that is ratified in the free consent that is given to each other by the bride and groom on their wedding day and which continues and grows

throughout the years of marriage. Matrimony is described by the Church as:

- a community of love,
- an intimate partnership of life and love,
- a mutual gift of two people to each other,
- an active sign of the undying love of Christ,
- a life-giving (procreative) relationship,
- A vocation to create and nurture family life.

The wedding ceremony is the beginning of the marriage pledge; the Sacrament of Matrimony is the on-going grace to remain faithful to the sacred bond that the vows ratify. The new relationship that begins on the wedding day is meant to flourish as it manifests the life-giving love of Jesus Christ between the husband and the wife, for their future children, their neighbors and friends and society at large. Marriage is forever, until death do, they (husband and wife) part.

## **PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION PERIOD**

Before the reception of the Sacraments, the Church prescribes a period of preparation. This is the case for Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Penance and Holy Orders. It applies to Matrimony as well. The Church wants to support and help couples in living happy, healthy and holy married and family lives. The aim of the nuptial preparation period is to assist couples in developing rich lives of love where children will be born and raised in familial relations. The couple will be encouraged to discover areas of their lives where they are strong

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and strengthen areas which may require growth. These will include learning communication and intimacy skills, exploring influences of families of origin, economics of married and family life, responsible parenting, enriching their relationship with God and strengthening their ties with the Church, and refining their understanding of Marriage as sacred and sacramental.

In other words, like a successful wedding, a successful marriage takes preparation. The Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, in conjunction with the priests from St. Anthony of Padua, has designed a process to assist couples in their preparation for both the wedding ceremony and the life of marriage.

If you plan to celebrate your wedding ceremony here at St. Anthony, active participation in the diocesan and parish preparation period is encouraged.

## **OBTAINING DATE & TIME FOR THE WEDDING CEREMONY**

A couple planning to marry should contact the parish as soon as possible prior to the anticipated wedding date. An appointment to meet the priest you have chosen to officiate the wedding should be arranged. An orientation to the diocesan and parish marriage preparation process will be shared with the couple and the necessary documents for the marriage will be discussed.

On Saturdays, the weddings in the Church can only be scheduled between 12:30 and 2:00, i.e. all weddings must be over by 3:30. We offer 4:00 confessions on Saturdays. Friday evening weddings are possible but may be difficult to schedule because of rehearsals for Saturday weddings. Saturday morning

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and Sunday afternoon weddings are possible provided the priest presiding at the wedding is available. A couple may have a priest/deacon from outside of the parish preside at the ceremony if he agrees to guide the couple through the preparation process, including the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington paperwork and can also receive a letter of suitability from his diocese. This is not required for a priest within our diocese. When the date and time for the wedding is scheduled, the couple should decide if they want a Nuptial Mass or a Nuptial Ceremony. A Mass is appropriate when two Catholics are marrying because both can pronounce their vows in conjunction with the celebration of the Eucharist. A Nuptial Ceremony is recommended for the marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic because the non-Catholic and his/her guests cannot participate in the reception of Holy Communion.

At the first meeting, the priest will explain the Diocesan Pre-Cana program to the couple. They are required to attend the program and obtain verification of its completion. All information about the Diocesan requirement for Pre-Cana and other Marriage information can be found at <https://cdow.org/ministries/office-for-marriage-and-family-life/pre-cana-program-and-classes>.

As soon as possible after the initial meeting with the priest, the bride and groom must obtain a recently dated copy of their Baptismal certificates including notations with dates of previously received sacraments, i.e., the Eucharist, Confirmation, and Marriages.

## **THE PREPARATION PROCESS**

Meetings with the priest will be scheduled to accomplish the following steps toward the wedding:

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- Baptismal certificates are presented. These certificates should be dated within the year of the wedding, not an original baptism certificate. The Pre-Cana certificate of attendance is also presented.
- The diocese of Wilmington Premarital Inquiry M-1 forms which the priest provides is completed by the groom and the bride individually and signed by the priest.
- Review the plans for the wedding ceremony.

A book entitled *Together for Life* will be given to the couple. From it, they will plan the wedding ceremony. It contains prayers, scripture readings and vow formulas that can be used for the ceremony. Planning for the ceremony will also include:

- Selection of one person to read the Old Testament selection.
- Selection of one person to read the New Testament selection.
- Selection of one person to lead the assembly in the petitions of the Universal Prayer.
- Selection of one person to present the wine and one person to present the bread during the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy, if a Nuptial Mass has been chosen for the wedding. Only the Eucharistic bread and the Eucharistic wine are presented, unless the bride and groom wish to contribute food for the poor. If so, the food should be non-perishable and placed in a wicker basket with an easy-to-carry handle. One person should be able to carry

and present the food basket, which should be brought to the rehearsal.

- The Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel Acclamation are always sung and are chosen in consultation with the parish Coordinator of Music or the musicians chosen by the couple.

## **MUSIC FOR THE LITURGY/CEREMONY**

Except for the Nuptial Procession and Recession, the couple to be married should select music that will enable the entire assembly to participate in the Mass/Ceremony. The music is meant to prayerfully inspire the people and to unite them in communion with each other and to Christ during the celebration of the Liturgy. Essentially, the music selected must reflect the religious nature of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Couples should contact our Coordinator of Music Contact, Stephen W. Adams, ([sadams@sapde.org](mailto:sadams@sapde.org)) who will schedule a music consultation meeting to assist the couple with appropriate music selections. This meeting is usually six weeks prior to the wedding. Stephen will make the arrangements for parish musicians and cantors who will provide for and lead the music at the wedding ceremony. It is preferred that the parish musicians be retained for the wedding. Their expertise and familiarity with parish wedding customs help to enhance the ceremony. Stephen will also provide the fees for musicians and cantors. If visiting musicians/vocalists do provide the music, their names and contact information must be made known to Stephen as soon as possible so that he is able to arrange for any necessary meetings/rehearsals.

## **WEDDING REHEARSAL**

The plans for the Marriage Liturgy/Ceremony must be submitted to the priest before the rehearsal. Everyone who is participating in the Liturgy/Ceremony, including the lectors, readers, and Eucharistic gift presenters, should be present at the rehearsal. The rehearsal usually takes place on the evening before the wedding day and may take up to an hour. The timing of the rehearsal depends upon the on-time arrival and attention given by the participants. **Important for the bride and the groom to present the signed civil marriage license to the Wedding Coordinator at the rehearsal.** It will be signed by the two witnesses to the Marriage, i.e., Best Man and Brides-Maid of Honor. Any items, i.e., programs or pictures, should be brought to the rehearsal, avoiding any unnecessary concern the day of the wedding.

## **POSSIBLE DISPENSATIONS (completed in meetings with priest)**

There may be paperwork related to a required dispensation or permission to marry in the Catholic Church. This would be the case for a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, a person who has been married before, or some other circumstance, not as common as the aforementioned. The dispensation/permission will be applied for and must be granted before the Marriage takes place. Please note that a Canonical (Church law) Permission to marry is required for a Catholic to wed a baptized non-Catholic, Christian. The non-Catholic must present his/her baptismal certificate to the priest. Along with the Canonical Permission an “affirmation statement” must be signed



by the Catholic which indicates that he/she will promise to have children baptized in the Catholic Church and raised in the Catholic Faith.

Annulments are required for people who have been previously married (known as prior bond), if the former spouse is still alive. Even if a person is not Catholic, his/her previous marriage must be annulled before the proposed marriage can take place. A formal Decree of Annulment must be presented to the priest. If the former spouse is deceased, the Death Certificate must be presented.

## **CHURCH WEDDING COORDINATOR**

St. Anthony's Church has available a Wedding Coordinator. The church coordinator is required for all weddings. It is the coordinator's responsibility to ensure that the Church is open for rehearsal and the wedding. She is familiar with the lighting as well as other details needed for the ceremony. This service is especially convenient for a visiting priest/deacon, as well as for the bride and groom, because the coordinator is skilled in all the customs and traditions of the parish. The fee for the Church Wedding Coordinator is \$125.00. Call Chris Hostler on 302-421-3700 (ext. 100) for this service or email at [chostler@stanthonynet.org](mailto:chostler@stanthonynet.org)

## **PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER**

At all times, the photographer/videographer must be discreet and avoid distracting the attention of those in the sanctuary or in the congregation from the sacred action in which they are participating. They are required to follow these standards:

- Church furniture cannot be moved.

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- Photographers cannot be stationed in the sanctuary (the altar area).
- Cannot halt the procession into or out of the Church.
- They may use the balconies in the front of the Church, the side aisles and the two sacristies off the main altar.

Guests of the bride and groom should not take pictures during the Mass or ceremony because the movement required for such is disruptive. Photography after the Mass/Ceremony cannot interfere with Parish Confessions which start at 4:00.

## **FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS**

The Church environment is set for the various seasons of the Church year. During Advent and Lent, the colors of purple, violet and blue dominate the décor. Flowers may never be placed on the altar but can be placed on the floor in front of the altar. Christmas settings remain in the Church until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. During Easter Time, the Paschal Candle, the Easter Font and other sacred symbols may not be removed. The flowers from previous funerals or weddings can be rearranged to make proper space for the wedding to be celebrated. Potted flower arrangements are left in the Church for the weekend Masses.

## **THE WEDDING DAY**

Florists should place flowers and decorations for the Ceremony in the Church at least one hour before the Wedding. They should use the church side door (rectory side) to gain entrance into the Church. Flowers for the Bridal entourage will be placed

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in the back of the Church. On Saturdays, there may be an earlier funeral mass to work around.

It is very important that the Wedding begin on time. Reverence for the Church is to be observed. The groom, the best man and the groomsmen will be in the Church forty-five minutes before the ceremony. The groom and best man will wait in the sanctuary with the priest. The bridal entourage will arrive no later than ten minutes before the Ceremony is to begin. The wedding coordinator will attend the wedding party in the vestibule of the church getting them lined up and down the aisle with the music chosen. If photographs are to be taken after the Mass/Ceremony, the Bridal Party will exit the Church from the main doors and re-enter the Church from the side door on the rectory side of the building, weather permitting.

An aisle runner is not permitted. The polished brick floor renders a dangerous runner. Use of rice, birdseed, confetti or balloons is not permitted during or after the Wedding. Also, flowers cannot be dropped by Flower Girls in the procession. We do not have a service to clean up the church after the wedding.

## **THE UNITY CANDLE**

The so-called “unity candle” is a commercial product of which no mention is made in the Rite of Marriage, or any other Liturgical books of the Church. It has no Christian history or theology to support its use. The real symbols of a Christian wedding and marriage are the exchange of vows and rings. For this reason, the use of a “unity candle” is not a part of the ceremony. It is more appropriate for use at the reception during the toast or before prayer before the banquet.

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## **MARIAN FLOWER PRESENTATION**

This custom is not a Liturgical action. If the bride chooses to place a simple flower at the base of the Marian statue, she can do so after the Prayer after Communion and before the final blessing and dismissal.

## **CHILDREN IN THE WEDDING PARTY**

Children who are included in the Wedding Party must have an adult guide. They can become unexpectedly shy on the spur of the moment, suddenly anxious with stage fright, or overly spontaneous in deportment. They may require high maintenance and careful direction at a time when everyone's attention should be focused on the sacredness of the moment.