

Wedding Handbook



St. Cecilia

— Catholic Church —

ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

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713-465-3414
www.saintcecilia.org*

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Introduction

Dear Couple:

Congratulations on your engagement! Your decision to enter into the relationship of married life is a serious one, and it serves as a wonderful sign of hope and strength to the faith community of Saint Cecilia.

Your decision has been reached after much discussion and prayerful thought, but it is just the first step in the process of building a successful marriage. The love you have privately shared is now being made public. Your family, friends and parish now prepare to support and encourage you in the celebration of your wedding, as well as in your life-long commitment to each other.

This period of engagement is an important time to deepen your love and prepare for the rest of your life together. In this time your commitment to one another will grow by working together in preparation for the celebration of your wedding and looking closely at the realities of marriage. It is a time for richer dialogue, greater trust and fuller sharing of your deepest and more personal hopes, dreams and values.

To assist you during this exciting time, we present the following guidelines intended to insure a joyful, reverent and prayerful celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony within the context of the Church's prayer. These materials are meant to help you prepare not only for the wedding day, but for *marriage*, a lifetime experience of hope and joy, a faithful promise you have both chosen to offer and receive "in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health," to love and honor each other all the days of your lives!

As your parish family, we will be with you as you embark on this great journey. We look forward to working with you as you prepare to celebrate your wedding day and beyond.

With warm regards,

CLERGY:

Rev. Francis Macatangay (Pastor)
Rev. Michael Barrosa (Parochial Vicar)
Deacon Greg Evans
Deacon Sam Mancuso
Deacon Terry Martin
Deacon Leo Mejia
Deacon José Romay



PARISH STAFF:

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Marriage Guidelines

ASPECTS OF A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Catholics believe that Christian marriage is a union of life and love between a man and a woman in the community of the people of God, the Church, and is an indissoluble covenant that they enter into in faith before God and his people. In this Sacrament, they become a sacred and living sign to the whole Church of the presence of God's love among us and how He loves us as His own family. As they work their way through the struggles of life, they witness to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit at work in all our lives. Their love is a sacred symbol of the love and union of Christ and the Church, His people, and is a fountain of love to the whole community.



SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/marriage-as-sacrament/>

When the Catholic Church teaches that marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament, it is saying that the couple's relationship expresses in a unique way the unbreakable bond of love between Christ and his people. Like the other six sacraments of the Church, marriage is a sign or symbol which reveals the Lord Jesus and through which his divine life and love are communicated. All seven sacraments were instituted by Christ and were entrusted to the Church to be celebrated in faith within and for the community of believers. The rituals and prayers by which a sacrament is celebrated serve to express visibly what God is doing invisibly.

In a sacramental marriage, God's love becomes present to the spouses in their total union and also flows through them to their family and community. By their permanent, faithful and exclusive giving to each other, symbolized in sexual intercourse, the couple reveals something of God's unconditional love. The sacrament of Christian marriage involves their entire life as they journey together through the ups and downs of marriage and become more able to give to and receive from each other. Their life becomes sacramental to the extent that the couple cooperates with God's action in their life and sees themselves as living "in Christ" and Christ living and acting in their relationship, attitudes and actions.

Catholic teaching holds that sacraments bring grace to those who receive them with the proper disposition. Grace is a way of describing how God shares the divine life with us and gives us the help we need to live as followers of Christ. In marriage, the grace of this sacrament brings to the spouses the particular help they need to be faithful and to be good parents. It also helps a couple to serve others beyond their immediate family and to show the community that a loving and lasting marriage is both desirable and possible.

Pope Paul VI wrote: "By it [the Sacrament of Matrimony] husband and wife are strengthened and...consecrated for the faithful accomplishment of their proper duties, for the carrying out of their proper vocation even to perfection, and the Christian witness which is proper to them before the whole world" (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 25).

REQUIREMENTS FOR A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

The covenant of marriage requires the most serious considerations and fore-thought of the couple. It must be accompanied by the couple's complete freedom to enter into it, sufficient understanding and maturity to make such a commitment in faith, and the acceptance of the responsibilities that such a covenant carries. This includes the intention to be husband and wife for life, caring for new lives through procreation, and the example and source of love they are to be to the whole Church.

At least one member of the couple must be a member of the Catholic Church in good standing. Both members should have no situations in their lives which could constitute an impediment to marriage according to the laws of the Church. The Priest or Deacon preparing the

couple for marriage will explain what this means, and help resolve, if possible, any difficulties or impediments that may be present.

A Catholic may marry someone who is not a member of the Catholic Church. This requires the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese. This permission requires two promises from the Catholic party:

1. That he/she intends to continue to live his/her faith as a Catholic.
2. That he/she will do everything in his/her power to see to it that all children born of the marriage are baptized and reared in the Catholic Faith.

These two promises are asked in a concern for the gift of faith that God has given the Catholic party, and a concern that the opportunity for faith in Christ and His salvation not be withheld from his or her children. This is a very important issue and one that the couple should discuss seriously with each other. The Priest or Deacon preparing the couple will be glad to help in this matter should they so wish.

The couple must have the freedom to marry. This means that if either one has some impediment (obstacle) to that freedom, a resolution to that impediment must be found before the Church may witness the intended marriage. Such impediments include lack of Faith (not practicing the faith or having left the Church by a deliberate act); lack of sufficient maturity; lack of due discretion (rushing into marriage); mental or physical impairments; lack of intent of permanence; lack of intent of fidelity; having a scandalous public notoriety; or having been married previously. The most frequently encountered impediments usually concern maturity, due discretion, or a previous marriage.

Marriage guidelines for the Church AND for the State of Texas discourage marriage for persons under the age of 18. Couples must be at least 18 years of age and six months out of high school before marriage preparation can be sought. The seriousness of such a commitment and the maturity required take time to develop. The final steps into adulthood that occur at graduation time and coming of legal age, including the responsibility for self and one's own life, are not things that can be rushed and are things that are critically necessary in light of the adjustments that must be made upon entering into marriage. Young couples between 18 and 21, or sometimes even later, may be asked to participate in special counseling to help them make wise and well-informed decisions and commitments. Growth toward establishing a permanent union of life and love takes time and requires a person to be free to make decisions and develop values that will help him or her know what it takes to truly make such a commitment. Lack of such maturity can constitute an impediment or obstacle to the marriage covenant.

A person must be free to marry. This means that they must not be operating under the imposing influence of another, or out of force, fear or coercion. Marriages brought about by family pressures or the pressure of an unexpected pregnancy, or marriages of convenience or economic gain are not acceptable by the Church. Also, marriages in which one or both parties have a diminished mental capacity, either from mental illnesses or the influence of alcohol or drugs, are not acceptable. None of these constitute a valid reason for marriage in the Church because in these situations, the purpose and intent of the covenant is not fulfilled or the freedom of one or both of the parties is seriously diminished.

For those previously married. Freedom to marry also means that neither party has previously entered into marriage. The Catholic Church regards all marriages as permanent. For its own members, the Catholic Church recognizes as valid those marriages which have been entered into before a duly appointed representative of the Catholic Church and two witnesses, according to the rites and laws of the Church. **Thus, if either of the parties in a couple seeking marriage has ever made such a bond of marriage previously, it is necessary for him or her to consult a Priest or Deacon. They can assist in seeing if there was some impediment present that would render that bond invalid according to the requirements and definition of marriage as recognized by the Church.**



The Marriage Process

The focus of marriage preparation is not centered on planning the wedding ceremony. This may be the main preoccupation of the bride, groom and their families, but the ceremony is only for a day, whereas the marriage is for life! The focus is preparation to live out a life-long covenant of love in Christ. Thus, couples should plan to begin marriage preparation **nine to twelve months** prior to the proposed date of the wedding. The further ahead the better, as this allows time for thought, reflection, and discernment prior to all the hustle and bustle that arises in the last month or two ahead of the wedding.

No wedding date will be set until Phase I, as detailed below, has been completed and the Notification Form submitted by Priest or Deacon preparing the couple.

The marriage preparation process is divided into three phases:

PHASE I - ASSESSMENT

The couple should meet with the Priest or Deacon for an initial interview to become acquainted and go over the details of the process. At the second meeting, the Priest or Deacon will discuss the results of the Prepare/Enrich Inventory with the couple. This assessment is a written set of statements which each reads separately and responds to by agreeing or disagreeing with the statements contained in it. The results will give an outline of the areas of strength in the couple's relationship, and the areas which might need attention. If at this time it becomes apparent that the couple has some particularly pressing needs, a plan of action can be determined to help the couple grow to the point of being able to make the necessary lifelong commitment.

You can contact one of the following Priests or Deacons:

Fr. Francis Macatangay, Pastor ----- 713-465-3414: frfrancis@saintcecilia.org
Fr. Michael Barrosa, Associate Pastor -- 713-465-3414: frmike@saintcecilia.org
Deacon Greg Evans ----- 713-703-9802: dcngreg@saintcecilia.org
Deacon Sam Mancuso ----- 713-907-2197: dcnsam@saintcecilia.org
Deacon Terry Martin ----- 281-660-8989: dcnterry@saintcecilia.org
Deacon Leo Mejia ----- 662-418-8550: dcnleo@saintcecilia.org
Deacon José Romay ----- 713-589-3351: dcnjose@saintcecilia.org

PHASE II - PREPARATION

RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT (PREPARE/ENRICH)

Prepare/Enrich is a pre-marriage inventory which is designed to give you an opportunity to reflect on the strengths and challenges you may face as a couple. By asking key questions in the beginning of the assessment, PREPARE/ENRICH addresses each couple's relationship stage, situation, challenges, philosophical/spiritual orientation, and personalities and tailors the inventory to assess the couple's strengths and areas where growth will bring about the greatest benefits. Each partner in the couple completes the inventory independently by answering approximately two hundred questions.



The assessment is not a pass/fail exam. It is highly regarded by experts across the country and is a catalyst to make sure that the important issues in a marriage have been addressed. The Priest or Deacon will receive a report after it has been completed and will follow-up with three to five mentoring sessions.

The **PREPARE/ENRICH** Inventory is offered only on-line. The assessment is not taken as a couple, but individually. During the assessment, couples are asked not to communicate with one other or share their responses until they finish and submit their assessment. The cost to take the assessment is \$35.00 per couple.

Marriage



Preparation

DISCERNMENT OF PREPARATION PROCESS FOR EACH COUPLE

The preparation process will be determined with input from the Priest or Deacon preparing the couple, considering the couple's individual needs and determining which options will be required.

ST. CECILIA MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Whether or not the couple's wedding takes place at this parish, couples preparing at St. Cecilia will attend a series of Four Sessions held once a month on Saturday mornings. A couple can begin at any given session as long as the four are completed. These sessions consist of activities and exercises to explore the many aspects and needs of the lifelong marital commitment.

- **Theology of the Sacrament of Matrimony and Marriage Orientation**
- **Marriage and The Domestic Church**
- **Key Components of a Successful Marriage**
- **Intimacy, Theology of the Body and Introduction to NFP** (*Natural Family Planning*)

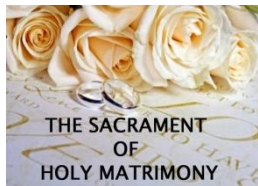
SPONSOR COUPLE PROGRAM

Couples will be assigned with a trained sponsor couple for a series of 4-6 meetings. These meetings are set up between the sponsor couple and the engaged couple at their mutual convenience and held in the home of the sponsor couple. The Resource Workbooks for couples preparing for Christian Marriage, "For Better & For Ever" by Father Roberto Ruhnke, C.S.S.R., consists of a series of exercises in which the engaged couple shares their answers and views with each other and the married couple on many issues involved in living out the commitment of marriage.



ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKEND

Covers most of the same topics but conducted in a retreat setting over a weekend, where the couples, together with about 25 other couples, share in a series of talks, activities and exercises with trained married couples and a Priest to explore the many aspects and needs of the marital commitment. Where extenuating circumstances exist that prevent the couple from attending the St. Cecilia Marriage Preparation Sessions and Sponsor Couple, special preparation agendas may be set up to meet those circumstances. The couple should contact the Priest or Deacon even further in advance for time to accommodate those special needs.



PHASE III - PLANNING

The wedding ceremony is a public celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony in which the Church witnesses the couple's commitment to each other and their giving of the sacramental covenant to each other. It also presents this union to the entire Church as a sign of the covenant of Christ with all His people, the Church. The union of the two individuals *in one flesh* is a symbol of the unity of the whole church as one in the body of Christ. The ceremony follows the ritual of the Church for the celebration of this Sacrament. The Priest or Deacon will assist the couple in making appropriate selections for scripture readings, prayers, etc. which are part of the ceremony, and explain elements of the ceremony and assist in planning the events of it. The Director of Liturgy & Music, Andrew Meinen, will be available to help the couple in selecting appropriate music for the occasion and assist them in finding needed musicians and/or singers. It must be remembered that the wedding is not only the celebration of the couple but also of the whole Church and is a celebration of the ritual of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Couples must keep this in mind when making plans. Adding events, activities, and music that is inappropriate to such a Sacred Rite and which may detract from or confuse its meaning must be avoided. In essence there are THREE participants in the wedding...the Bride; the Groom; and Christ with His people, the Church. All three must be considered in planning the ceremony. A Liturgical Wedding Coordinator will be available to assist the couple and the Priest or Deacon in any way that is needed.

Required Documentation

You have chosen to witness your mutual promises of love and fidelity in the Catholic Church, and your faith is an important determining factor in how you will enter into this intimate relationship of marriage. The Church is responsible for discerning your intentions and capacities for making this promise and is required to assemble various documents.

About nine to twelve months before the wedding, the couple will meet with a Priest or Deacon to assemble your file (the “wedding paperwork”), complete the Prenuptial Questionnaire, and be interviewed to determine your freedom and intention to marry.

You will be required to submit the following for your file:



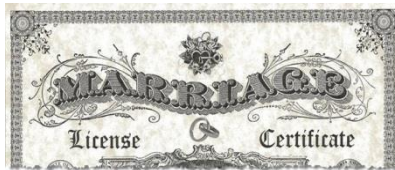
BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES

Newly issued and dated within six months of the date you are to be married.

- Catholics should contact their church of baptism and inform them of your date of marriage, and the address of Saint Cecilia Church where they are to send the certificate.

**Saint Cecilia Catholic Church
Attn: Sacramental Records
11720 Joan of Arc
Houston, TX 77024**

- Photocopies of originals cannot be accepted for Catholics.
- Non-Catholic Christians need to supply a record of baptism.



CIVIL MARRIAGE LICENSE

Marriage License is required for your marriage to take place at St. Cecilia. It is effective 72 hours after you obtain it and for 90 days thereafter. Bring the license on the day of the wedding rehearsal and deliver it to the Wedding Coordinator, presiding Priest or Deacon.

Please take care you acquire your license within the proper timeframe for it to be valid on the day of your Wedding. You may contact the Harris County Courthouse for an explanation of the current legal requirements for marriage by visiting <https://www.cclerk.hctx.net/PersonalRecords.aspx#Mal> or by calling 713-755-6404.

You may reduce the wait time and cost of your marriage license through the Twogether in Texas program. A Certificate of Completion will be given at least two months before wedding day.

The following are a few locations where you may purchase your marriage license:

- ❖ **Harris County Courthouse;** 201 Caroline, 3rd Floor, Admin. Building; 713-755-6411
- ❖ **North Shepherd:** 7300 N. Shepherd, Houston; 713-697-5193
- ❖ **Chimney Rock:** 6000 Chimney Rock, Houston; 713-660-7902
- ❖ **Baytown:** 701 West Baker Rd., Baytown; 281-422-0253
- ❖ **Pasadena:** 107 East Shaw, Pasadena; 713-473-9048

After your wedding, the Church will record your information in the Sacramental register of the parish and mail the license to the Harris County Clerk's office for you. The clerk will record the information in the public records of the county and return a certified copy to you, usually about 6 weeks after your wedding.



Wedding Fees

For couples who will marry at St. Cecilia, the following fee helps to cover the cost of the church facilities (including the air conditioning and heating, as needed), altar servers, Liturgical Wedding Coordinator and marriage preparation:

- **\$650.00 for active, contributing parishioners**
- **\$950.00 for non-parishioners**

This fee does not include the musicians. Information about music at weddings can be found on our website:

- <https://www.saintcecilia.org/wedding-music-guidelines>
 - To listen to music samples, click [Wedding Music Samples](#)
 - For guidelines, click [Wedding Music Guidelines](#)
 - Submit [Wedding Music Selection Form](#) at least 6 weeks before wedding
- For couples who will celebrate their wedding at St. Cecilia, a deposit of \$350.00 is payable as soon as the marriage preparation is initiated. The balance of \$300.00 for parishioners or \$600 for non-parishioners is to be paid one month prior to wedding day.
- Couples who are preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony at St. Cecilia, but will marry at any other location, are asked to pay a fee of \$350.00.
- The honorarium for your presider is included in your wedding fees. If you would like to give an additional gift, please give it directly to the clergy after the ceremony. Any additional gift is completely at your discretion and not required.

Scheduling the Wedding

At the very minimum, a couple must contact the Pastoral Office nine to twelve months prior to the desired wedding date and schedule a meeting with the Priest or Deacon to begin the preparation process.

A couple should never announce a date or begin planning, especially those which will require monetary outlays (such as hall reservations, caterers, invitations), before having gone through the initial Assessment Phase of the preparation process. No firm date may be set with the Church until this phase is completed. Further, the couple should realize that in a large suburban parish there are many celebrations that people seek to schedule which might conflict with the date they have in mind, and therefore the couple should be prepared to be flexible.

TIMES FOR WEDDINGS

Weddings may be scheduled in the Church on Saturdays at **2:00 PM and 7:00 PM**. On Saturday afternoons, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated in the Church from 3:30 PM till 4:30 PM, and the Saturday Vigil Mass for Sunday begins at 5:00 PM. Thus, the Church is unavailable for weddings during those times.

A wedding may also be scheduled on a Friday at 7:00 PM.

Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays for several reasons: the usual schedule of Sunday Masses and the activities that are involved with them take up much of the day; and the solemnity of Sunday takes precedence over all other celebrations.

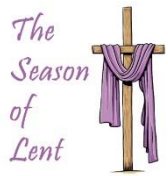
There are certain times of the year that weddings are not to be scheduled, and others wherein are discouraged. Other than weddings not scheduled on Sundays, NO wedding masses may be scheduled on the following Solemnities (high feasts of the Church):

- ❖ Mother, Mary of God (January 1)
- ❖ Holy Week and Easter Vigil (Changes each year)
 - ❖ **If celebrated during the Octave of Easter** (the eight days that follow Easter Sunday, including the Saturday after Easter), weddings during Mass are not to be celebrated unless it is the Mass of the Day (the readings and prayers of the day must be used, not those for weddings.)
- ❖ The Assumption of the Virgin Mary (August 15th) and The Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8)
- ❖ All Saints Day and the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day) (November 1st and November 2nd)

Since too many other activities could conflict, Weddings will not be scheduled on the following days:

- ❖ National holidays such as New Years, 4th of July, Thanksgiving Day/Weekend, Christmas Day and Week
- ❖ Parish Fundraiser "Fall Fest" celebrated the 1st Weekend of October

Weddings outside Mass may be celebrated.



Weddings are strongly discouraged during the Lenten Season (the time from Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday). Lent is a somber time of penance and preparation for Easter, and during such a penitential season, having festive celebrations is inappropriate and violates the spirit of the season. For very good pastoral reasons a wedding *may* be scheduled during Lent, but the celebration will be kept subdued with a minimum of festivity and very few, if any, decorations in the

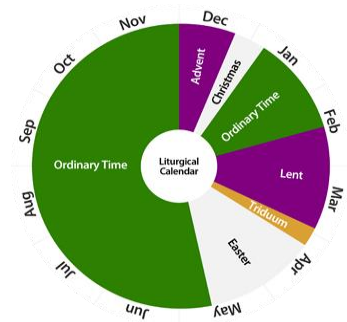
Church. *(Flowers are not allowed anywhere in the Church during Lent, even for weddings. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule.)*

Weddings may be scheduled *ONLY* in the Church. The Church building represents the temple of God, His house among His people wherein sacrifice is offered, and to which the people are called to assemble and give Him praise. It is a Sacred place and as such is the proper place for the communal celebrations of all the Sacraments. The seriousness of the regard for the House of God as the assembly place for God's people and its role in the lives of the members of the community is greatly stressed by the Catholic Church.

Thus, garden weddings, weddings in parks and gazebos, and other such places, are not allowed. To have such as wedding, very serious and extenuating circumstances must prevail and permission directly from the Bishop must be obtained by the couple in the form of a written request from them which delineates those reasons. The Bishop will then consider the request, and may or may not grant such permission.

Also, keep in mind that different colors are used in the church during the varying liturgical seasons throughout the year. This is a general calendar:

- ✎ Advent — dark violet
- ✎ Christmas Season — white
- ✎ Winter Ordinary Time — green
- ✎ Lent — violet or purple
- ✎ Easter Season — white
- ✎ Pentecost Weekend — red
- ✎ Summer Ordinary Time — green



Expect to find some of these colors and symbols present in the church or in the sanctuary. These items may not be removed or altered. Questions regarding any seasonal colors being used on your wedding day may be directed to the Liturgical Wedding Coordinator.

TIMES FOR REHEARSALS

Wedding rehearsals are usually held on the Friday afternoon or evening before the wedding, and is scheduled on the parish calendar when receiving the Notification Form by the Priest or Deacon preparing the couple. Our St. Cecilia Liturgical Wedding Coordinator will facilitate the rehearsal and will contact the couple about one week before the wedding date. Rehearsals are scheduled at 4:00 or 5:30 PM on Fridays or 5:00 PM on Thursday, which must conclude before the 7:00 PM Mass. Rehearsals usually last 60 to 90 minutes. All the wedding party and other participants need to plan to be present.

Parish Wedding Policies



I. INTRODUCTION

“The Liturgy is the source and summit of the Christian life, and from it flows the Church’s power and strength because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross”.

(Sacrosanctum Concilium, Vatican Council II).

The Wedding liturgy is a sacred rite invoking God’s witness and blessings upon the words and commitment made by the bride and groom. In the midst of all the obvious joy and excitement, your wedding remains a moment of utmost, profound worship celebrated by you and your families and friends. It is an expression of your personal faith within the context of your faith community.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Because the sacredness of the wedding ritual, and out of respect for God and the house of worship which is the church building, a few things need to be explicitly understood and accepted without exception. **You are agreeing to all parish wedding policies as presented in this booklet and on our website by choosing to be married at Saint Cecilia Church.**

- ✧ Saint Cecilia Church is not a ‘venue’ as are reception halls or restaurants, it is not rented: it is a house of worship and a community of faith to which you belong, and which you are specifically asking to witness your promises. As a result, there are specific policies and requirements that ensure the appropriate conduct of weddings within our parish.
- ✧ Respect, decorum and dignified behavior will be maintained and observed at all times by you, your wedding party and all your guests in regards to the church property and building, the sanctuary and the entire staff.
- ✧ Punctuality for your rehearsal and ceremony is of the utmost importance.
- ✧ No food is permitted in the church building at any time before or during the wedding or at the rehearsal. Chewing gum is also most inappropriate in the church and should be disposed of in the receptacles under the ashtrays at the entrances of the church upon entering.
- ✧ **ALCOHOL** consumption during the rehearsal or prior to the ceremony on your wedding day potentially jeopardizes the validity of the marriage, and *will not be tolerated under any circumstances*. Because this is a religious ceremony and house of worship, failure to comply with this policy by you, your guests or visitors could result in the forfeiture of your privilege to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony at Saint Cecilia Church at any point during the rehearsal or ceremony.
- ✧ RICE, BIRDSEED, CONFETTI, FLOWER PETALS, SPARKLERS, BALLOONS, BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES, BUBBLES, ANIMALS, Etc., are not permitted inside or around the church and plaza due to safety, maintenance, and time concerns.
- ✧ Because there are often other events that follow weddings, all wedding decorations, flower boxes, clothes and hangars, and other items should be removed as quickly as possible after the wedding. *The couple and their wedding party are responsible for making sure that all personal belongings are removed immediately after the ceremony.*

St. Cecilia Catholic Community assumes no responsibility for personal items or valuables left unattended or left behind.

III. FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS



For the church, the flowers and decorations should be discreet and complementary to the building's splendid architecture and simplicity. At Saint Cecilia, "less is more" in this regard. In the pocket of this booklet please find **Guidelines for Wedding Florists and Decorators** — please give a copy of these pages to your florist.

GENERAL GUIDELINES for you and your florist include:

- ✧ The use of flowers and other decorations greatly enhance a wedding by adding beauty to the event and inspiring those present. The environment of the Church must be treated with the reverence and respect due such a sacred place. Parish regulations for decorations are designed to preserve the integrity and character of the Church as a Sacred Place, and to protect the facilities themselves. The Liturgical Wedding Coordinators are available to couples who have questions concerning the selection of decorations, flowers, etc. that would be deemed appropriate or inappropriate.
- ✧ No decoration should be used that would obstruct a clear view of the Altar, the Ambo (pulpit), the Chair, and worship symbols used in the Sanctuary. Also, the ornaments and appointments of the sanctuary, including Seasonal hangings, banners, and decorations, are part of the liturgical seasonal environment of the church and may not be moved or altered.
- ✧ Prohibited is any activity that would damage the building or its furnishings such as tacks or nails driven into pews, tape and adhesives that would remove paint, varnish or finishes or leave a sticky residue, and clamps that are not properly padded and would scar finishes.
- ✧ Also prohibited is the use of carpets or runners, including down the aisle. Use of such articles presents hazards of tripping or slipping on the slate floor. Additionally, a couple may not use candles or lights of any sort to line the aisle. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule.
- ✧ Artificial flowers or plants are not permitted when adorning the Church. The environment of the church should reflect the authenticity of ourselves and the God we worship, and should never be "fake."
- ✧ The amount of time the florist will have to decorate will be dictated by the schedule of the church on the wedding day. The florist or bride should consult the Liturgical Wedding Coordinator to inquire about the amount of time that can be allowed. Any decorations they erected should be removed immediately after the wedding due to the use of the Church for other celebrations. All flowers and arrangements should be removed, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Liturgical Wedding Coordinators.
- ✧ Florists should be made aware that they are guests of the parish and function under the direction of the Liturgical Wedding Coordinator, the Director of Liturgy and Music, and the Priest or Deacon.
- ✧ If you wish to use the parish's brass candelabra, please contact your Wedding Coordinator at least one month prior to the wedding. A donation of \$80.00 is requested for the candles.



IV. PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS

Since a wedding is such a special and once-in-a-lifetime event, the couple and their family and friends may wish to have it recorded in photographs or on tape. Taking pictures and videotaping during the ceremony is not forbidden. However, the Wedding Ceremony is a solemn religious Celebration of the Sacrament and should not be disturbed, interrupted or detracted from by obtrusive equipment and personnel.

Photographers and Videographers should be made aware that they are guests of the parish and function under the direction of the Liturgical Wedding Coordinator, the Director of Liturgy and Music, and the Priest or Deacon. A copy of the **Guidelines for Photographers & Videographers** is provided at Session #1 of the St. Cecilia Marriage Prep or on the Saint Cecilia website — please make and give a copy to your photographers.

The Wedding Liturgy



I. LITURGICAL CELEBRATION OF YOUR MARRIAGE

The celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony, which is rooted in the Church's regular worship life, is not a private family function, nor is it merely a social affair or a personal expression of your love for one another. Rather, it is an action of the entire church in whose presence you commit yourselves to one another. Because the Sacrament of Matrimony is worship, it is principally congregational. And because it is congregational, every effort should be made to enable the assembly to participate in a full and active manner. The liturgy is neither a show nor a performance and it is not enhanced by any design that creates passive observers. Everyone present should be encouraged to participate by being able to hear, see, speak, sing and pray.

II. MASS WITH COMMUNION OR MARRIAGE CEREMONY

After meeting and consulting with the Priest or Deacon who will preside at the wedding, the couple will determine if the marriage will be celebrated in the context of a Nuptial Mass (with Communion) or a Rite of Marriage (without Communion). The determining criteria will center on the religious background of the bride and groom, and which form of liturgy best accommodates the assembled guests to celebrate their unity.

St. Cecilia Church is fully committed to making all our guests feel welcome as brothers and sisters in God, joining in the prayer of this joyous occasion. At the same time, it would be a disservice to pretend as though differences and divisions within our Christian faith family and with other traditions do not exist. Specific concerns you must ask yourself:

- ✎ Are those attending coming from the Catholic tradition, or will there be many other Christian or non-Christian traditions represented?
- ✎ Will the celebration of Mass with communion make a significant number of your family and guests feel excluded from feeling fully welcome and participating?

While we do all we can to overcome differences and divisions, we choose instead to focus on what unites us at this moment of joy, welcoming all to your celebration of unity. With this in mind, we recommend the following formats for your liturgical service:

• MASS WITH COMMUNION

- ✎ for a Catholic marrying another Catholic;
- ✎ both families are significantly practicing Catholics.

• RITE OF MARRIAGE WITHOUT COMMUNION

- ✎ for a Catholic marrying a Non-Catholic Christian;
- ✎ for a Catholic marrying a person of another Faith Tradition.

III. READINGS AND LITURGICAL PRAYERS

You will be provided with the book *Together for Life* by Joseph Champlin, which, along with various prayers and blessings, contains those *scripture readings* most appropriate for use at weddings. In consultation with the Priest or Deacon who will preside at the wedding, or the Director of Liturgy and Music, you will select three passages from scripture. **Non-scriptural readings or poems are never permitted in place of the scriptures.**

Weddings held at St. Cecilia are celebrated according to the Ritual Books of the Roman Catholic Church: the *Roman Missal*, the *Lectionary*, and the *Rite of Marriage*. In the case of weddings where ministers of other Christian denominations or other faiths are taking part, appropriate adaptations may be made after consultation with that minister and the engaged couple. Keep in mind that the bride and groom may not read their own vows, privately written. In order for the Sacrament of Marriage to be valid, the vows as prescribed in the *Rite of Marriage* must be used.

IV. WEDDING MUSIC



Music chosen for weddings should reflect the sacred and sacramental quality of the celebration and should therefore be of a sacred nature. There is an ample supply of extremely beautiful and appropriate Church Music for weddings. Romantic music, love songs, and other forms of music are more appropriately reserved to the wedding reception. Couples should also bear in mind that, by its nature, the wedding liturgy invites the active participation of those assembled. Planning of the liturgy and music should enable all present to feel welcome and to participate in the celebration.

The Director of Liturgy and Music will assist you in the selection of appropriate music for the liturgy, and can offer suggestions as to how to enable the assembly to participate in the liturgy as fully as possible.

Pre-recorded music (from CDs or tapes) is NEVER allowed at Liturgical celebrations. Like the environment, the music of the celebration should reflect the authenticity of ourselves and the God we worship. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

It is important to the integrity of the Catholic liturgy that the music be provided by those trained in the proper use of Liturgical Music. Our parish has been blessed with many talented musicians and singers who are available to provide music for the liturgies of the parish. Couples must use the services of musicians and singers from an approved list available from the Office of Liturgy and Music of the parish.

Please check page 9 of this Wedding Handbook for directions to read the online literature on “Wedding Music Guidelines”, “Wedding Music Selection Form” and “Wedding Music Samples”: www.saintcecilia.org.

V. OPTIONS

✠ **FLOWERS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY** have been a custom retained by various Catholic cultures. You may choose to include this ritual in your ceremony if you have a devotion to the Blessed Mother. Please consult with the Priest or Deacon and the Liturgical Wedding Coordinator if this is an option you wish to include in your ceremony.

✠ **CULTURAL WEDDING TRADITIONS** are a great gift of many different cultures. In celebrating our diversity, we recognize their value as an integral part of your heritage. However, in the spirit of good order and noble simplicity which has always characterized the Roman Rite, we ask that the couple carefully consider the number of sponsors invited to participate in the liturgy. In order to fulfill this, only the “Arras” and “Lazo” will be accepted in Spanish speaking weddings. Gifts such as the cushion, bible, rosary, necklace, signs or other items that take away from the liturgy will not be allowed.



VI. OTHER MINISTERS

The couple may wish to invite friends and family members to participate in the wedding liturgy as Lectors (readers), ministers of hospitality (ushers), or Extra-ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Care should be given to the selection of these ministers to ensure that the person being called upon is up to the task being asked of them. Those chosen to proclaim God’s holy Word must be

comfortable reading in front of a large group of people and be willing to put in the time required for effective proclamation through practice and prayer. Ushers and ministers of hospitality should be friendly and outgoing. We recommend one usher for every 50 guests. Special guidelines exist for those who may be chosen to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. The Director of Liturgy, the Priest or Deacon, or the Liturgical Wedding Coordinator can assist you in making sure they meet the requirements, along with other questions you have about obtaining the necessary ministers for the celebration.

VII. PARENTS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHER OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

Planning a wedding can be a very busy and sometimes overwhelming experience. Our staff is here to assist you plan and celebrate a beautiful and meaningful Liturgical celebration. It is likely that many people will want to have input about the decisions regarding the details of your wedding, but the desires and wishes of the couple are our first and only consideration. Therefore, we will work **ONLY** with the bride and groom when planning the ceremony, unless explicit permission is given otherwise. We will also not entertain any direction that does not come specifically from the bride and groom.

The Rehearsal & Wedding Day



WEDDING REHEARSAL

Allows members of the immediate wedding party to become familiar with the environment of our church building and with the public roles they will assume as part of the liturgy. The Liturgical Wedding Coordinator will conduct the rehearsal and will give a brief overview of the liturgy to help all concerned understand the prayerful nature of the celebration. Only those directly involved in the ceremony should be invited to the actual rehearsal in church — others should be directed to meet you at the rehearsal dinner site.

Those who should be present at your rehearsal, we ask that you require all these members of your wedding party to make necessary arrangements to be present for the rehearsal, and kindly remind them they **MUST ARRIVE ON TIME**. We suggest that you ask everyone to arrive 20 minutes before the scheduled time. Remind them of the inevitable Houston traffic congestion when traveling to Saint Cecilia on a Friday evening. Rehearsals that begin late risk losing adequate rehearsal time. The rehearsal itself is not the time for discussion and decision-making.

The following should be present:

- Bride and Groom
- Father/Stepfather and Mother/Stepmother of the Bride and Groom
- Maid/Matron of Honor, Bridesmaids, Jr. Bridesmaids and Flower Girls (at least 3 years old)
- Best Man, Groomsmen, Jr. Groomsmen and Ring Bearers (at least 3 years old)
- Sponsors of “arras”, “lazo” and “padrinos de velación
- Lectors – those who will read the selected Scripture Readings
- Extra-ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
- Gift Bearers

Due to spacing in the sanctuary, we ask that you please limit number of bridesmaids and groomsmen to 6 per group.

At the rehearsal, a responsible adult must accompany any children who are in the wedding party. Please also be aware that musicians are not normally present for the wedding rehearsal. The presence of the organist and/or cantor may require an additional fee, left to the discretion of the individual musician.

Members of the wedding party and guests should also be reminded of the sacredness of the Church building, and the dress and decorum appropriate for use of this space, even during the rehearsal.

WEDDING DAY

Ushers should be at the church at least one hour before the wedding. Parents, family members and other special friends who need special seating should arrive about 45 minutes before the wedding. If there is anyone who needs special care because of physical difficulties, inform your Liturgical Wedding Coordinator ahead of time, so that appropriate arrangements may be made for them. Groomsmen should arrive already dressed for the wedding and meet in the Priest's sacristy where they may get their boutonniere and wait for the photographer. The bride and her attendants should arrive one hour before the wedding with make-up and hair done. Limited time and space prevents fully dressing here in the church. Brides and bridesmaids should not leave valuable personal possessions in the bride's room. Anyone may come in during the activity of the wedding. St. Cecilia Church does not assume responsibility for lost or stolen items. Afterward, all boxes, tissue, hangars, and other items must be removed from the premises.

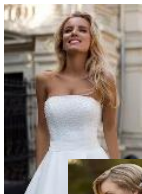
Food, beverages, and smoking are not permitted in any part of the Church any time.

Wedding apparel or other items will not be accepted for delivery to the church office. If a couple wishes deliveries to be made to the church, someone must be there to accept them and be responsible for them prior to the ceremony.

WEDDING PLANNER OR BRIDAL CONSULTANTS

Bridal consultants, who assist couples, are welcome. However, the bridal consultant functions as a guest of the parish and is under the direction of the Priest or Deacon, the Liturgical Wedding Coordinator, and the Director of Liturgy and Music and must work in total cooperation with them.

NO



DRESS CODE

Please keep in mind the virtue of modesty when choosing your dress and the dresses of your attendants, those in the procession, and lectors. You will be worshipping in a sacred place, therefore **strapless, spaghetti straps, low-cut, and bare back** dresses are inappropriate and **NOT ALLOWED** for this occasion. If you come dressed inappropriately, you will be required to wear a shawl from the church. You may come with your own beautiful shawl or bolero jacket; these may be lace or sheer. Dresses must also be at least knee length & without any loose glitter.

YES



DRESSING ROOM FACILITIES

The church provides a bridal room for the convenience of the bride and her attendants. We do not have dressing facilities for men. The men are encouraged to come dressed for the ceremony. Reminder: please no food, drink, tobacco or gum in the church, bridal room, cry room/chapel or the restrooms. Please designate responsible people to put things in order immediately after the Liturgy. For example: tidy the bridal room, narthex and church; gather the flower boxes, hangers, wrappings, etc. Thank you very much for your collaboration!

Wedding Liturgy Planning Worksheet

Please complete this worksheet and give it to your Liturgical Wedding Coordinator at or before the rehearsal.

Bride's Name: _____ Groom's Name: _____

Date of Wedding: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM Est. No. of Guests: _____

Within Mass / Outside Mass (Circle one) Language or Bilingual: _____

Celebrant: _____ Place: Church / Chapel

Con-celebrating Priest or visiting minister: _____

Relationship: _____

Organist: _____ Cantor: _____

Soloist: _____ Relationship: _____

Rehearsal Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM

WEDDING PARTY

Groom's Grandparents:

1. _____ Escort: _____

2. _____ Escort: _____

1. _____ Escort: _____

2. _____ Escort: _____

Bride's Grandparents:

1. _____ Escort: _____

2. _____ Escort: _____

1. _____ Escort: _____

2. _____ Escort: _____

Groom’s Parents:

Mother: _____ Escort: _____

Father: _____

Stepmother: _____ Escort: _____

Stepfather: _____

Bride’s Parents:

Mother: _____ Escort: _____

Father: _____

Stepmother: _____ Escort: _____

Stepfather: _____

ATTENDANTS

Bride:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Groom:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Maid of Honor: _____ Matron of Honor: _____

Best Man: _____

Flower Girl(s): _____ Age: _____ Age: _____

Ring Bearer: _____ Age: _____ (Must be at least 3 years old)

Bride’s Escort: _____ Groom’s Escort: _____

Ushers: _____

Special Seating Considerations: (wheelchairs, crutches, etc.) _____

CEREMONY NOTES

I. **Pre-seating (5 to 10 minutes before the start of the ceremony) will include:**

II. **Procession**

Procession Cross carried by: _____

Processional Music: _____

Additional Notes: _____

III. **Liturgy of the Word**

Lectors:

First Reading: _____

Responsorial Psalm: _____

Second Reading: _____

Gospel Reading: _____

IV. **Sacrament of Marriage**

Symbolic Gifts:

Lasso: _____

Arras: _____

Rosary: _____

Bible: _____

Other: _____

Special requests/instruction: _____

Intercessions read by: _____

V. **Liturgy of the Eucharist (if celebrated within Mass)**

How many of the guests will be Catholic? _____

Number of extra-ordinary ministers needed: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Wedding Preparation Time-Line

9 TO 24 MONTHS AHEAD

Visit the church and consult the Priest or Deacon.

- After confirming wedding celebration date, book wedding reception venue.
- Determine your budget and what kind of wedding (formal, informal, etc.)
- Choose your attendants.
- Draw up your invitation list.
- Shop for dresses, tuxedos, accessories, etc.
- Interview photographers, florists, caterers, videographers, etc.
- Determine your guest list.

4 TO 9 MONTHS AHEAD

After wedding date has been set

- Order invitations, personal stationary and note paper.

After the wedding date has been set

- Plan your reception.
- Plan your honeymoon.
- Make sure you are keeping up the required Marriage Preparation.
Consult your Priest or Deacon to ensure you are up to date.

2 TO 4 MONTHS AHEAD

- Plan accommodations for out-of-town guests.
- Plan how to handle traffic, parking, etc.
- Finalize your guest list and mail your invitations.
- **Schedule meeting with Music Director to plan music for the wedding.**

1 TO 2 MONTHS AHEAD

- Plan your rehearsal dinner.

2 TO 4 WEEKS AHEAD

- **GET YOUR MARRIAGE LICENSE.**

(In the state of Texas, the license is valid 72 hours after the date of issuance and for 90 days thereafter. You must marry within this time frame or the license is not valid.)

- Send your wedding announcement to the newspaper.
- Plan seating for reception.
- Contact the necessary offices for the bride to change name on Social Security Card, Driver's License, bank accounts, credit cards and obtain the necessary forms.
- Bring the payment for the musicians to the Parish Office.
- Take care of any last-minute items.

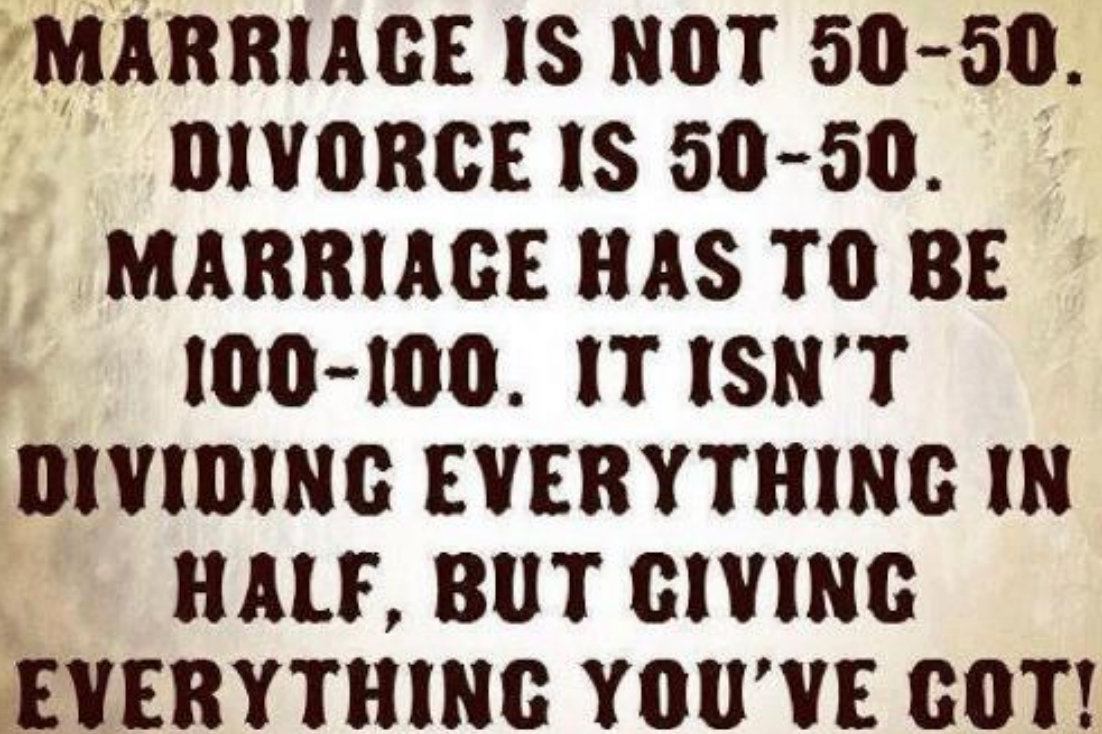
1 WEEK AHEAD

- Have final consultation with wedding personnel, confirm number of guests with caterer, etc.
- **Confirm rehearsal plans with clergy and attendants.**

LOVE

Love is *patient*,
love is *kind*.
It does not *envy*,
it does not *boast*,
it is not *proud*.

1 Corinthians 13:4



**MARRIAGE IS NOT 50-50.
DIVORCE IS 50-50.
MARRIAGE HAS TO BE
100-100. IT ISN'T
DIVIDING EVERYTHING IN
HALF, BUT GIVING
EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT!**

Couples' Checklist for Marriage Preparation at St. Cecilia

INITIAL MEETING WITH PRIEST OR DEACON

- Meet with your parish Priest/Deacon at least one year in advance of the desired date, prior to making any other wedding arrangements.
- Set date & time for Rehearsal and Wedding with the Deacon or Priest
- Obtain permission of the pastor if:
 - you wish a Priest/Deacon outside the parish to officiate or
 - you request the presence of any non-Catholic clergy.

PREPARE/ENRICH ASSESSMENT

This tool is used to identify areas of strength or concern and helps the Priest/Deacon better direct your preparation sessions. Once Notification Form is presented to Flavie Laporte, she will register the couple and email tips and directions to take the assessment.

MEETING WITH PRIEST/DEACON TO DISCUSS PREPARE/ENRICH RESULTS

MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAM *(Those assigned by your Priest or Deacon)*

ST. CECILIA SATURDAY PREPARATIONS

Session #1 – Theology of Marriage and Marriage Orientation

(All couples must attend Marriage Orientation)

Session #2 – Marriage and The Domestic Church

Session #3 – Key Components of a Successful Marriage

Session #4 – Theology of the Body and Introduction to NFP

SPONSOR COUPLE (5-6 IN PERSON SESSIONS, FOR THOSE MARRYING AT ST. CECILIA)

ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKEND (FOR THOSE MARRYING OUTSIDE OF ST. CECILIA AND THOSE THEIR PREPARING CLERGY MAY DEEM NECESSARY TO ATTEND)

FOLLOW UP MEETINGS WITH PRIEST OR DEACON

CONTACT ANDREW MEINEN (ENGLISH) OR PABLO OCANAS (SPANISH)

- To discuss planning your Wedding Music and Liturgy
- At least 6 weeks prior to the Wedding, you must finalize your music choices and submit them on the website.

MAKE CONTACT WITH YOUR ST. CECILIA WEDDING COORDINATOR

MARRIAGE LICENSE (Read details on page 8)

CONFIRM WITH EVERYONE REQUIRED TO BE AT THE REHEARSAL per page 15

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

All are encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the rehearsal.