



ST. MATTHIAS
CATHOLIC CHURCH

WEDDING GUIDELINES

*updated according to December 2016 “Order of Celebrating Matrimony”

This handbook will continue to be updated as needed to reflect changes in
Parish policies and wedding stipend fees. March 2022



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WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

We as Catholics believe that Christian Marriage is the union of a baptized man and woman who freely enter into a covenant of love with each other in Christ. Married persons live their sacraments by the way they care for one another, love one another, and are enthusiastic for one another as husband and wife. In their daily love for each other, their children, and members of the community, the couple becomes a living sign (a sacrament) for how much Jesus loves us and wishes to embrace us as His brothers and sisters. As they work their way through family crises and struggles, a couple witnesses to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in all our lives.

The requirements for entering into Christian marriage are twofold: in order to strive to live out the ideal of Christian marriage, a married couple must have the ability to give and receive love and to sustain an intimate relationship. To do this they must each have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church.

YOUR WEDDING AT ST. MATTHIAS THE APOSTLE PARISH

We hope to assist you in preparing not only for your wedding day, but as the beginning of this beautiful Sacrament which represents God's love for his people and Christ's love for his bride, the Church.

Times

- Weddings are typically celebrated on Saturdays at 12pm, 2pm and 7pm. Thursday and Friday dates are also possible; please discuss with the Pastor.

Celebrant

- Our priest and deacons are pleased to preside at your wedding!
- A visiting priest or deacon must receive delegation from the Pastor of St. Matthias; Clergy from outside of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston must have a testimonial of suitability for ministry from his own religious superior or Bishop.

WEDDING PREPARATION PROCESS

Preliminary Planning

- At least 6-9 months prior to anticipated wedding date, the couple should contact the St. Matthias parish office at 281-356-2000 to arrange an initial meeting with the priest.
- The couple should **not** make wedding arrangements before attending the meeting. The priest and the couple **together** have the responsibility to determine the couple's readiness to receive the sacrament of matrimony.

Documents Needed

Parish Registration

- If you are not a registered member of St. Matthias, we will need a letter from the pastor of the church you belong to stating that 1) you are a registered parishioner at the parish and that 2) the pastor of the church gives you permission to be married at St. Matthias.

Baptismal Certificates

- An updated baptismal certificate issued within six months before the wedding date is required (not a copy of the original Baptismal Certificate). Call the church of your baptism and request a certified copy of the certificate be sent to you.
- If either party is non Catholic, a copy of his/her baptismal certificate or a letter on official church letterhead, verifying baptism at a non-Catholic church, is acceptable. If your denomination does not record baptisms, a parent or another person who was present at the baptism can issue a letter testifying that you were baptized.

Affidavits of Freedom to Marry

You will each be asked to name two people who know you well and are willing to testify that you have not had a previous marriage; parents or siblings are the preferred persons to sign the affidavit. The form will be provided by the priest/deacon who is preparing you for marriage.

Marriage License

- A legal marriage license issued by the State of Texas must be purchased and brought to the priest at least two weeks prior to the wedding date.
- The marriage license can be obtained from any county courthouse in the state of Texas.
- A Texas marriage license is not valid after purchase for 72 hours from the time of issuance and becomes invalid if the marriage does not occur within 90 days of purchase.

- After the wedding, the cleric will sign the license. The parish will record the information, and the couple will mail the completed license to the County Clerk's Office. Once the wedding has been recorded by the state, the original license will be mailed to the couple.
- For additional information, contact www.cclerk.hctx.net.

Other documents

- In particular cases, the Priest or Deacon will ask for additional documents.

Preparation

The Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston requires all engaged couples to participate in a process of pre-marital instruction and formation.

Meetings with Priest OR Sponsor Couple

- At least five meetings with the priest are required.
- You have the option for a couple-to-couple approach rather than meeting with the priest. The engaged couple meets with the sponsor couple for a series of 5 sessions.

Engaged Encounter

- This is a weekend experience for couples planning marriage, designed to give couples the opportunity to dialogue about their future together.
- You will be given a schedule of where/when this program is offered. It is your responsibility to make the reservation to attend and secure the signature of the priest/deacon on your registration form.

Natural Family Planning

- Part of a well-rounded understanding of Christian marriage includes instruction in a method of NFP. You will be required to attend natural family planning classes; options for completing this requirement will be discussed at a preparation meeting.

WEDDING PLANNING INFORMATION SHEET

The Wedding Planning Information Sheet has been designed to be completed by the couple as you plan your wedding (i.e. participants, readings, music etc.) This form is available on our parish website and in your packet.

FACILITIES

- The church capacity is 900 people.
- The chapel capacity is 120 people.
- Weddings must begin at the scheduled time.
- You will have access to the church / chapel 2 hours before and 1 hour after ceremony.
- A Bride's room will be available 2 hours before the scheduled ceremony.
- For safety and security reasons, please designate a family member or friend to care for your personal belongings. All personal belongings must be removed from the Bride's room prior to the wedding. We are not responsible for valuables left in this room.
- No food or drink, except bottled water, is allowed on the church premises. *NO GUM*

Facility Use

Remember: you are in the House of God & proper respect must be shown at all times

- No alcohol or illegal drugs are allowed on the parish grounds. A separate policy addresses alcohol consumption when the wedding reception is held in the parish hall.
- Smoking is not permitted anywhere in parish buildings.
- Please no chewing gum.
- Please turn off all electronic devices inside the sanctuary.
- The bride & attendants are asked to be mindful of modesty of dress for the reverent respect of the church and the liturgy. Short dresses, low-cut or revealing gowns are not appropriate during the ceremony. All body adornment (tattoos, body piercings, nose jewelry) must be covered or removed as they will detract from the sacramental sanctity.
- Bridal attendants and groomsman should be kept within a reasonable number.
- Flower girls and ring bearers should be of an appropriate age and maturity.
- Please leave all the facilities (church, Bride's room) as you found them. All trash must be taken to the dumpster in the back parking lot.
- Clean up must be concluded by 30 minutes after the ceremony.
- If the parish hall is to be used for a reception, the event needs to be catered and your own servers provided. Clean up after the reception is the responsibility of renter, not church staff. All trash must be taken to the dumpster in the back parking lot.

FEES

Wedding Donations, Gifts and Fees

	<u>Registered Parishioners</u>	<u>Non- Parishioners</u>	
CHURCH RENTAL (900 person capacity)	\$1000	\$1500	Wedding
	\$800	\$1200	Quinceañera
	\$250	\$300	Security deposit
	\$250	\$300	Down payment
CHAPEL RENTAL (120 person capacity)	\$800	\$1000	Wedding
	\$600	\$800	Quinceañera
	\$250	\$300	Security deposit
	\$250	\$300	Down payment
MUSICIAN FEES	\$200	\$200	For Pianist / Organist
	\$150	\$150	For Cantor
HALL RENTAL (230 person capacity)	\$400	\$600	Per event
	\$100	\$100	Security deposit
	\$200	\$300	Down payment
PAVILION RENTAL	\$200	\$400	Per event
	\$100	\$100	Security deposit
	\$100	\$100	Down payment

- The Down Payment and Security Deposit are due at the time the wedding is booked and the balance of the Rental fee is due 4 weeks prior to the ceremony.
- There is no set fee for the altar server(s) assisting at your wedding. A gift to the server(s) may be given directly to him/her. (Suggested amount \$20 each server)
- Wedding music planning is done jointly by the couple and the Music Director, and the fees are paid directly to the Music Director.
- When a priest or deacon presides at your wedding, it is customary to offer a gift of at least \$100-\$150. Please submit this payment to the Parish Office in an envelope.

CHURCH ENVIRONMENT

The use of flowers and other spiritually appropriate decorations are allowed. The church is available for floral set up **two hours** prior to the wedding. It is your responsibility to make your florist aware of all the parish policies and regulations.

Flowers

- Flowers must be fresh, not artificial.
- Floral arrangements must not block any area of the altar where the priest or altar servers stand or walk.
- Flowers and other objects may not be placed on the altar itself.
- If you need assistance with obtaining a florist, the Parish office can make suggestions.
- No furnishings, pedestals or plants belonging to the church may be removed from the church building.
- If any church flowers or plants were removed to make room for your floral arrangements, please replace to their original location.
- If you would like to leave floral arrangements for the weekend Masses in honor of your wedding, please indicate on the Wedding Planning Information Sheet. This is a lovely gesture and much appreciated!
- When the church is decorated for a liturgical season, these decorations may not be removed, moved or changed.
- All refuse including flower boxes, wrappings, flowers, arrangements etc. should be removed from the church; dumpster is in back parking lot.

Decorations

- NO TAPE, STAPLES OR TICKY-TACK are to be used; ribbons and ties may be used.
- Bows or flowers used as pew decorations cannot block access to the center aisle.
- Due to safety concerns, aisle runner or aisle candles (with flames) may not be used.
- All decorations must be removed from the church immediately after the ceremony.

Rice, Birdseed, Flower Petals & Bubbles

- Due to safety hazards, these items are NOT allowed inside or outside the church.

Guest Book

- A space in the Narthex can be set up for a guest registry to be signed prior to the wedding; signing of the book must not delay start of ceremony (tip: take it to the reception for those who miss it at the wedding).

Worship Aid

- A worship aid will be provided for guests to follow along with the Order of the Mass or your wedding ceremony without mass. It will include the liturgy (scripture readings/ gospel) and musical selections you have chosen as well persons involved as readers, gift bearers etc. The worship aid will reflect the information that you provide on the Wedding Planning Information Sheet.
- If you prefer, you may provide your own worship aid. In this case, it must be similar in content to the St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church worship aid (a sample will be given to you). Please provide a proof of the worship aid to be approved before printing.

Updated Rituals

- The Unity Candle, Sand Ceremony and Unity Cross are not part of the celebration of marriage. These can be done at other times such as rehearsal or reception.
- The Blessing and Giving of the Arras (coins) and the Blessing and Placing of the Lazo (cord, garland) or the Veil are permitted during the celebration of marriage.
- Flowers for the Blessed Virgin Mary may be presented at the end of the ceremony, just before the final blessing.
- Entry procession options:
 - Groomsmen and Bridesmaids enter as couples
 - Groom enters with his parents followed by Bride entering with her parents OR
 - Bride and Groom process in together OR
 - Groom enters and Bride is escorted by her father

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY

The Rite of Marriage is a religious service and should not be interrupted or disturbed by noise or movement from the photographers/ videographers; they are guests in the church and are to conduct themselves in a reverent manner. Observance of the following policies is expected.

Policies for Wedding Photographs

- No flash photography is allowed during the ceremony.
- You are welcome to the church property for pictures inside and outside the church itself **one hour before** the ceremony. Photos of the ushers/groomsmen must not interfere with their duties of ushering guests to their seats.
- Photographers are not allowed in the altar area during any part of the ceremony.
- Immediately after the ceremony, pictures/videos may be taken in the church using flash and lighting. All photography must be concluded **45 minutes after** the ceremony. Please be mindful that if your wedding is in the afternoon, the church will be used for hearing confessions from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Silence at these times should be maintained.

Policies for Wedding Videographers

- Bright lights on video cameras are not allowed during the ceremony.
- Video equipment may be set up in the Church no earlier than **one hour before** the ceremony. Video equipment is to remain stationary.
- No video personnel are allowed in the altar area during ceremony.
- Videographers using cordless microphones must check with the Parish Music Director to insure there are no conflicts with the parish cordless microphones.
- Video must be concluded and equipment removed **45 minutes after** the ceremony.

THE MARRIAGE LITURGY

Your wedding will take place within the context of the Catholic liturgy. The liturgy may be either a Mass (similar to that of the typical parish Mass) or a wedding ceremony (a liturgy without communion). Either service will be conducted with beauty and devotion. During your marriage preparation time with the priest, these options will be discussed, and scripture readings will be selected. Please enter your choices on the Wedding Planning Information Sheet

See the chart on the following page.

Three Forms of Celebrating Matrimony

1. Within Mass	2. Without Mass	3. Between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian
<i>Introductory Rites</i>	<i>Introductory Rites</i>	<i>Rite of Reception</i>
Welcome	Welcome	Welcome
Procession	Procession	Procession
Gloria	Collect	
Collect		
<i>Liturgy of the Word</i>	<i>Liturgy of the Word</i>	<i>Liturgy of the Word</i>
Old Testament	Old Testament	One or two readings *at least one must explicitly speak of marriage
Responsorial Psalm	Responsorial Psalm	
New Testament	New Testament	Homily
Gospel	Gospel	
Homily	Homily	
<i>Celebration of Matrimony</i>	<i>Celebration of Matrimony</i>	<i>Celebration of Matrimony</i>
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
Questions before Consent	Questions before Consent	Questions before Consent
Consent	Consent	Consent
Reception of Consent	Reception of Consent	Reception of Consent
Blessing and Giving of Rings (and Arras)	Blessing and Giving of Rings (and Arras)	Blessing and Giving of Rings (and Arras)
Universal Prayer/Prayer of the Faithful	Universal Prayer/Prayer of the Faithful [Lord's Prayer]	Universal Prayer/ Prayer of the Faithful
	[Blessing and Placing of the Lazo or Veil]	[Blessing and Placing of the Lazo or Veil]
	Nuptial Blessing	Nuptial Blessing
<i>Liturgy of the Eucharist</i>		
Preparation of the Altar	[Holy Communion]	
Eucharistic Prayer	Lord's Prayer	
Lord's Prayer	Sign of Peace	
[Blessing and Placing of the Lazo or Veil]	Communion	
Nuptial Blessing		
Sign of Peace		
Communion		
Prayer after Communion		
<i>Conclusion of the Celebration</i>	<i>Conclusion of the Celebration</i>	<i>Conclusion of the Celebration</i>
Solemn Blessing	Blessing	Blessing
Recessional	Recessional	Recessional

WEDDING MUSIC

Holy Matrimony is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. Although it is an individual couple who is entering into marriage, the sacrament is entrusted to the Church to be celebrated with reverence & dignity. Sacred music is an essential component of this Rite.

Who to Contact

- Couples will plan music for their ceremony with our St. Matthias Music Director, Brandon Ramos (281-356-2000). The Director will guide you through your selections, offer suggestions and answer your questions. The director will also make sure that the music selections are approved by the priest before the wedding. Once your selections are made, please enter your choices on your Wedding Planning Information Sheet.

General Considerations

- All music played or sung must be sacred or traditional. Sung music must be liturgically appropriate and reflect sacred text. Secular music (e.g. pop, country) is not appropriate for your wedding in the Church.
- It is important that the entire assembly worship at the wedding ceremony. Music (particularly hymns, responses, and acclamations) should be sung by all present.
- Prelude music begins 15 minutes prior to the wedding.
- Solos can be sung during the ceremony when congregational singing is not expected.

Musicians

- A wedding is first and foremost a sacred celebration; St. Matthias musicians ensure that the integrity and dignity of the Roman Catholic liturgy is respected and maintained.
- St. Matthias has available a pianist, organist, violinist and cantor; a cantor is required at any wedding with sung music.

Fees

- Fees are discussed with the music director.
- Fees are to be paid directly to each wedding musician or cantor and brought to the rehearsal.

WEDDING REHEARSAL

When you arrange your wedding date, please be sure to **reserve a time for the rehearsal**. The rehearsal is typically scheduled the Friday evening prior at 5 or 6pm.

- A St. Matthias' wedding coordinator will be on site for the rehearsal and on the wedding day (two hours before the ceremony and one hour afterwards) to ensure the celebration proceeds smoothly, promptly and according to guidelines.
- The rehearsal itself is not the time for deciding how people will line up, who will do readings etc. These items need to be fully agreed upon before the rehearsal.
- **The rehearsal will begin promptly at the time scheduled.**
- Allow plenty of time for traffic, especially during the Texas Renaissance Season Oct. – Dec.
- All members of the wedding party must attend the rehearsal – bride, groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls, ring bearers, parents of the couple (and step parents if in the procession), grandparents, ushers, readers, and gift bearers.
- If a member of the wedding party cannot attend the rehearsal, delegate a stand-in.
- The rehearsal should last no more than 45 minutes.
- Please encourage your party to pay attention and take the rehearsal seriously so that it will begin and end on time.

YOUR WEDDING DAY

This is it! The day has finally arrived and it's going to be a beautiful experience.

- The wedding party should arrive at the church at least one hour before the wedding.
- The bride and attendants will have use of a wedding preparation room. They should arrive with make-up and hair completely ready for the ceremony.
- The gentlemen usually arrive in full dress for the wedding. They may then wait in the church narthex or the Chapel area where they will receive their boutonnieres.
- Please do not leave valuables in automobiles or the wedding preparation room. The parish cannot be held responsible for lost or stolen items.
- Please leave the room clean and in good order; take all trash to the dumpster in the rear parking lot. It is best to designate a friend or family member to oversee this item.

The celebration of your marriage as a sacrament is one of the most important things you will ever do. The rest of your life will be affected by what you do on that day. Please pray together for the wisdom and grace you need to prepare properly. Come to the altar prepared in spirit to be blessed by your love for each other. If any of us at St. Matthias can be of help to you before or after your marriage, please contact us.

Elizabeth Nickles
281-384-1070
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Chasity Nigliazzo
979-739-4974
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we have read, understood, and will comply with all Marriage Preparation Guidelines, rules and regulations of St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church.

Signed:

Date:

Witness:

PRAYER FOR ENGAGED COUPLES

*Lord God, Heavenly Father, The source of all love,
the wise plan of your providence has brought this couple together.
As they prepare themselves for the sacrament of marriage
and pray for your grace,
grant that, strengthened by Your blessing,
they may grow in their respect for one another
and cherish each other with a sincere love.*

*Bless and guide this couple as they prepare to
celebrate this beautiful sacrament.
Give them patience during times of stress.
Give them reassurance in times of doubt.
Strengthen their love for one another,
for their family and friends, and for You.*

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord.

Amen.