

## **CONGRATULATIONS**

We offer our best wishes to you regarding your engagement and forthcoming wedding at St. Francis by the Sea Church. Your wedding is a sacred ritual which consecrates your love and commitment before the community of the church and your family. Our staff is here to assist you so that this most special sacrament will be a memorable and holy one.

## **YOUR WEDDING IN THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH**

In choosing to be married in the Church, you are making a statement of faith and commitment not only to each other, but to God. The Sacrament of Marriage is a sacred union of two people who wish to have God's help and blessing not only on their most special day but every day of their married life. Your wedding is an act of worship of God and a celebration of the love you have found with each other. It will be taking place in a sacred environment before the community of the church. Therefore your wedding liturgy should function as a call to all present (not just the wedding couple) for a deeper encounter with God.

Catholic marriage should be celebrated in one's own parish church as this is the center of family worship. Your pastor also has jurisdiction over the Sacrament of Matrimony. Weddings are allowed to be celebrated at St. Francis if you are a registered, active, contributing parishioner.

St. Francis by the Sea is not a destination marriage site. Marriages for those who are not parishioners and have not had a prior relationship to our parish or a good reason for not celebrating the marriage at one of their home parishes should meet with their pastor to discuss the upcoming marriage. If you feel you meet these conditions, you may contact our wedding coordinator to discuss your situation.

## **FIRST STEPS**

In order that all run smoothly, please read the following information carefully. Those wishing to enter marriage must contact the church office at least six months before the desired wedding date. This is Diocesan Policy. It is the duty and responsibility of those being married to contact their parish priest, take the necessary marriage instructions and have all the necessary papers completed by their pastor or his delegate.

**Cohabitation:** While cohabitation is accepted in our society, we know it is an evil which contradicts the interior truth of marriage. A wedding date will not be set until the couple seeks counsel from their Pastor. Non-registered parishioners and those outside of the parish must furnish a letter from their Pastor indicating this counsel has been given and that the couple is ready for the worthy reception of the Sacrament. All other marriage papers must be submitted also.

If there has been a previous marriage you must inform the Pastor. It will be necessary that the freedom to marry be ascertained according to Church law. This may mean that one or both parties may have to obtain an annulment prior to a wedding being scheduled here. No date for a wedding can be made until the freedom to marry has been determined. If you have been granted an annulment proper documentation must be presented to the Pastor to determine if any other actions need to take place prior to the wedding. The issue of a previous marriage and the decree of nullity apply to Catholics and non Catholics alike.

Once the freedom to marry has been determined a date and time will be set. Most weddings are celebrated on Saturdays. Because of our regular weekend liturgical schedule, they are celebrated at 2:00 PM.

Arrangements for weddings must be made directly with the Pastor or his delegate. The Bride or Groom or both must make the arrangements. Arrangements will not be made through parents, friends or wedding coordinators.

### **STIPENDS**

(These are due a week prior to your wedding)

The usual stipends for a wedding are:

Organist:	\$300.00
Cantor	\$150.00
Altar Servers	\$20.00
Instrumentalists	will vary

There is no stipend for the use of the church nor the services of the Priest/Deacon who is the officiant for your wedding

Of course, any donation to St. Francis by the Sea is always appreciated.

### **THE CHURCH BUILDING**

St. Francis is a beautiful building and we work hard to maintain its beauty as a place of worship and prayer. The following rules apply to the use of our building for a wedding.

- Nothing may be removed in the building without first consulting with the Pastor.
- No additional candles can be placed in the sanctuary. The exception being a memorial candle on one of the side altars. This must be approved by the pastor. Pew torches may be used. They must be rented from the florist since the church does not have them.
- No runners are permitted in the church.

- No rice or birdseed may be thrown outside the church. Bubbles are allowed.
- Flower girls may scatter silk flower petals in the processional. These must be picked up immediately after the wedding is finished.
- Bows may be attached to the pews using only elastic bands, string or ribbon (tacks, nails, tape and metal devices are not permitted).
- There is a room for the bride and her attendants to dress in or stay in until it is time for the wedding. This room must be kept clean. St. Francis is not responsible for any items left in this room after the wedding party has left for the reception. Make sure that you check to see that everything has been removed before you leave.
- No alcoholic beverages are permitted at any time on the property. Consumption of alcohol by the bride or groom or wedding party will postpone the wedding.

## **FLOWERS, PICTURES, VIDEOS**

There are a number of good florists here on the Island who have all done weddings at St. Francis. They know what we expect and what is allowed for a wedding. If there is any question contact the Pastor or his delegate in advance of the wedding. Unusual arrangements that have not been approved may not be permitted in the church. We ask that two altar bouquets be left in the church as a thanksgiving offering.

As with the Florists there are a number of photographers and videographers who work on the Island. Most of them have done weddings here at St. Francis. They are aware of our guidelines concerning pictures and videos. If you bring your own photographers they must contact the Pastor or his delegate prior to the wedding to discuss the guidelines. This may not be done the day of the wedding.

During the wedding guests are to refrain from taking pictures. It is very distracting and lessens the dignity of the Liturgy. Please inform your guests of this request prior to the wedding. If someone wishes to videotape, the camera must be mounted on a tripod and left alone during the ceremony. It must also be placed in an unobtrusive place in the back of the church.

Chewing gum is not permitted in the church and guests will be asked to dispose of any prior to the wedding. Guests will also be asked to turn off beepers and cell phones.

*These housekeeping notes will be reviewed before each  
Wedding - no exceptions.*

## **WHO'S WHO IN YOUR WEDDING**

### **OFFICIANTS AT WEDDINGS**

The Pastor, the Parochial Vicar (assistant pastor), and our Deacons are available to celebrate your wedding here at St. Francis. If the wedding is a nuptial Mass, the Pastor or Parochial Vicar will offer the Mass. One of the Deacons may assist. The normal fees apply.

If the wedding is a ceremony outside of the Mass either the Pastor, Parochial Vicar or one of the Deacons may preside at the wedding. Priests and Deacons who are relatives or friends of the family may celebrate the wedding. The customs and the way we celebrate the liturgy at St. Francis is to be observed in all cases.

Clergy from other denominations or faiths who have a connection to the bride or groom may assist at the wedding by taking the appropriate parts assigned to them.

### **WITNESSES AND ATTENDANTS**

Law and Custom require that there be two witnesses at every wedding. These are usually the Best Man and the Maid or Matron of Honor. They attest to the fact that the wedding took place. In the state of South Carolina they do not sign the marriage license. This is done by the Bride and Groom immediately following the wedding.

Ushers, Bridesmaids, Junior Brides Maids, Flower Girls, and Ring Bearers are all permitted. They must be present at the rehearsal to be familiar with the procedure to be followed for the wedding.

No Flower Girls or Ring Bearers under the age of four are permitted. It is difficult for younger children to be attentive to what is going on and what is expected of them.

### **READERS**

The proclamation of Scripture is central to all worship. Please select readers who are comfortable reading before a congregation and who can read articulately and slowly. Readings are to be chosen from the book TOGETHER FOR LIFE which will be provided. You are asked to choose a reading from the Old Testament, a Second reading and a Gospel. The Responsorial Psalm between the first and second reading is always sung and will be led by the parish cantor. Copies of the readings chosen for the wedding will be provided at the rehearsal and formal copies will be on the ambo (pulpit) for the actual liturgy. The readers must be present at the rehearsal.

## **SERVERS AND GIFT BEARERS**

The parish will provide a server for the wedding. If there is a member of your family who you would like to serve, please inform the Pastor and have that person here at the rehearsal. They will be fitted with cassocks and chasubles used at St. Francis and will be instructed in our procedure.

During the celebration of the Nuptial Mass the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward and presented at the Altar. Please have all of these roles chosen before the rehearsal so they will be able to practice.

## **MUSIC AT THE WEDDING**

Music is integral to the wedding celebration. Only Sacred music that is appropriate for a church wedding will be permitted. There are no exceptions. Good classical music is permitted for instrumental selections. The Director of Music has the final word on all selections. Cantors from St. Francis are used at all of the weddings to chant the Psalms and lead the singing. If you desire any other instrumentalists, the arrangements must be made through the Director of Music who has many contacts in the area who are quality musicians. Any friends whom you wish to use as singers or instrumentalists must also be approved by the Director of Music.

The cantor is still required to chant the liturgical music. Please contact The Office of Music Ministries at least three months before the wedding for all information concerning music at your wedding: 1-843-540-1292. You will be supplied with a music packet when you receive this information to assist you in the musical aspects of your wedding.

## DOCUMENTATION

There are certain documents that are required as part of the wedding preparation process. These documents must be filed with the church prior to the wedding rehearsal. The following documents are required:

- **Letter of Acknowledgment:** If your marriage preparation is done at a place other than St. Francis, a letter from your Pastor is required prior to setting a date for your wedding. This letter must acknowledge that he will take responsibility for collecting all required paperwork and submitting it through appropriate channels at least 6 weeks before your wedding.
- **Baptismal Certificates:** A copy of your baptismal certificate or a letter from the church where you were baptized must be obtained for the wedding file. Catholics will need to contact the church where they were baptized to obtain a freshly issued copy of their baptismal certificate. Non-Catholics are asked to contact the church of their baptism for a letter or certification as to their baptism in that particular denomination.
- **Pre-nuptial Questionnaire:** Required for all weddings. This is done with the person preparing you for marriage.
- If required, **Affidavits concerning the freedom of the Bride and Groom to marry:** This will be done with the person preparing you for marriage.
- If there was a previous marriage a copy of the **Annulment Decree** must be presented to the Pastor before the wedding is scheduled. A copy of this must be placed in the wedding file.
- If required, a **Dispensation:** This applies to a wedding between a Catholic and a non-Catholic. This will be done by the person preparing you for marriage. This needs to be processed through the diocese where you reside and where you are doing your wedding preparation.
- **Letter of Delegation** from the Pastor of your home parish granting permission for you to be married here at St. Francis.
- **Certificate of Marriage Preparation:** The person preparing you for marriage will recommend a program for you to attend. At the end of the program you will be given a completion certificate. A copy of this must be placed in the wedding file.

All documentation must be here at St. Francis six weeks prior to the wedding. All forms must be original; no faxed copies are acceptable. If the papers are not completed the wedding will be canceled by St. Francis. We assume no responsibility for incomplete papers and we reserve the right to cancel any wedding when the necessary papers, dispensations, and regulations are not completed in time.

**Marriage License:** You are responsible for obtaining the marriage license which may be obtained at the Beaufort County Courthouse. You cannot be married without this license. Please bring the marriage license (3 copies) with you to the rehearsal. Do not sign or fill in the license. This will be done in the presence of the Priest or Deacon.

The **Rehearsal:** Please inform all who will participate in the rehearsal that the Church is a sacred place and that everyone should behave accordingly. Refreshments are not allowed in the church and small children not allowed to run around or play in the sanctuary. The wedding rehearsal will be led by our wedding coordinating team. *There are to be no outside wedding coordinators present at the rehearsal.* All special requests and non-musical questions must be dealt with through the Pastor/Associate Pastor or Wedding Team at least two weeks prior to the rehearsal.

**After the Wedding:** receiving lines after the liturgy are not held at the church but are a function of the wedding reception. To insure that nothing is left in the church, please assign someone the responsibility to collect all your belongings afterward.

**Confessions:** Catholics are to be in the state of grace when receiving the Sacrament of Matrimony. Confession times are posted in your church. If you wish confession at the rehearsal, please notify the priest.

### **Finally**

At the end of these guidelines is an agreement and photography guidelines which states that you have read these guidelines and agree to abide by them. This must be signed and returned to the Wedding coordinator. Please use the months ahead to prepare spiritually for receiving the Sacrament of Matrimony. It takes three to get married: bride, groom, and God! Pray together daily, be reconciled to God and as Catholics attend Mass and receive Holy Communion frequently. May God bless you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Michael J. Oenbrink