



ST. THERESA OF AVILA CATHOLIC CHURCH

WEDDING GUIDELINES

As one of the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church, the Rite of Marriage is a sacred ceremony, expressing and celebrating the faith of the couple being married. The pastor and staff of the St. Theresa of Avila Catholic Church (STA) will assist you in every way possible to plan your liturgy for this special day and guide you in making certain that your wedding is a proper and worthy celebration of our Church.

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Couples must begin preparing for their marriage at least six months in advance of the anticipated wedding date. This is a policy of the Diocese of Baton Rouge and all parishes contained therein. The first step is to call the pastoral center, 225-647-6588, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday to schedule your appointment with a member of the STA clergy for the preliminary interview and to review these guidelines in person. You will also be required to make a 50% **non-refundable** deposit at the time of the meeting and sign your wedding contract. That page will become a part of your permanent wedding file at the church. Once the document is signed and your deposit is paid, your date will be reserved on the parish calendar. The remainder of your wedding fee, also non-refundable, must be paid at least ten days before the wedding.

The regular donation to the parish for the use of the church is \$450 for a registered parishioner and \$650 for a non-parishioner. The balance is due 10 days before the wedding.

**Please note that weddings scheduled during the seasons of Advent or Lent will be at the discretion of the ministering priest. Many couples schedule their date with the church a year in advance. However, final approval for celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church can only come after completion of the preparation program.*

- A. In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, weddings may not be celebrated on Sundays or holy days of obligation.
- B. In St. Theresa of Avila Catholic Church, the latest a wedding ceremony can start on Friday evening is 7:00pm. The latest a wedding ceremony can start on Saturday is 11:30am prior to the Vigil Mass or 6:30 p.m. following the Vigil Mass.
- C. In St. Theresa of Avila Catholic Church, weddings are not encouraged during the Season of Lent, but may be scheduled at the discretion of the pastor.
- D. In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, no wedding ceremony may take place outside of a church building.
- E. No wedding date and time is final until the priest/deacon himself has confirmed this with the couple.

Due to the many activities of our Parish, there can be no more than two weddings per weekend.

If you wish to have a priest or deacon from another parish officiate at your wedding, it is necessary to contact the priest within STA to confirm who will be responsible for the preparation process. This wedding policy applies to all visitors and guest clergy. If a visiting priest or deacon will officiate at the ceremony, he must also be responsible for the wedding rehearsal. However, rehearsals must be scheduled through the wedding rehearsal coordinator. (For contact information see "Rehearsals" on page 2.)

Attendance is required at one of the diocesan marriage preparation programs. In your preliminary meeting with the STA clergy, you will be assisted in selecting the program that best suits your needs. The following are the diocesan marriage preparation programs:

- a) The Engaged Encounter Retreat is a diocesan program which begins on Friday evening and concludes with a Mass on Sunday afternoon. Modeled on the highly successful Marriage Encounter Weekend for married couples, this program is recommended for more mature couples who are interested in finding ways to deepen the relationship they have already built. There is a fee.
- b) Witness to Love is a virtual diocesan program which begins on Saturday morning at 9 a.m. and ends at 4:30 p.m. and Sunday morning 9a.m to 11:30a.m followed by a pre-recorded Mass. This program is designed to give couples an opportunity to dialogue honestly and openly about their prospective life together. There is a fee.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are required for our parish records:

A newly issued baptismal certificate: Contact the church of your baptism and have them send you or STA (1022 North Burnside Ave., Gonzales, LA. 70737) a current copy of your baptismal certificate. This document is required only of Catholics. Proof of baptism **NOT** is required for non-Catholics.

The date and place of Confirmation. This information will be listed on a recently-issued baptismal certificate. If you are not confirmed, you are highly encouraged to consider entering our adult confirmation program. Please speak to the pastor about this.

REHEARSALS

Rehearsals can be held the weekend prior to the wedding date or during the week prior to the wedding. It is your responsibility to contact a wedding rehearsal coordinator as soon as possible to schedule your rehearsal. Rehearsals are to begin promptly and be conducted in a timely manner. The maximum time allowed for rehearsals is one hour. Please contact the pastoral center to schedule your rehearsal with one of the wedding rehearsal coordinators.

THE WEDDING LITURGY

The liturgy must be that of the Roman Catholic Church's Rite of Marriage and in accord with the Guidelines for Weddings of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Music for the wedding liturgy, including any music done prior to the start of the actual ceremony, must be in keeping with the sacred liturgy of the Church and liturgical guidelines for music. ALL music selected for the wedding is to be recognized liturgical music.

Some classical music is also acceptable. If using singers and musicians not affiliated with STA, they must be approved by the pastor or designee at least three months prior to the wedding. Please provide the church with a list of the music you intend to use at least a month prior to the wedding.

One kneeler is provided in the sanctuary for both the bride and the groom. The additional members of the wedding party will be seated in the front pew of the church.

CIVIL LICENSE

A Marriage License from the State of Louisiana must be obtained by the couple following the laws of the State of Louisiana within 30 days of the wedding date but at least 72 hours (3 days) prior to the time of the wedding. It is your responsibility to bring this license to your wedding rehearsal and give it to the rehearsal coordinator. It is to be mailed by your officiant to the proper Clerk of Court within ten days following your wedding, otherwise your wedding is not civilly legal. **A wedding cannot be performed without this license.**

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

A wedding is first and foremost a religious ceremony. Excessive movement of photographers and videographers during the ceremony detract from the sacredness of the place and the event. Hence these guidelines must be strictly adhered to.

Group pictures are allowed in church up to 90 minutes before the wedding. Group pictures may be taken in the church for up to 30 minutes after the end of the ceremony.

The photographer or videographer must not be conspicuous nor obstruct the proceedings of the liturgy in any way. This includes taking pictures of the groom and groomsmen before the procession. This impedes the seating of the guests. The photographer or videographer will only be allowed in the archway to the sanctuary. None of the photographers or videographers should be placed closer than the columns around the sanctuary. The main aisles and passageways of the church are not to be obstructed for any reason. Equipment may not be placed on the baptismal font, the altar or any church furniture other than the pews.

Flash photography is not permitted in church during the ceremony. Flash photography is permitted during the procession and recession and flowers to the Blessed Mother.

The photographers and videographers need to be considerate of each other when placing themselves for a photo.

It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to be sure that their photographer and/or videographer is provided with this information.

Please provide the church with the name, address and phone number of your photographer and/or videographer. If these guidelines are ignored by the photographer and/or videographer they will no longer be approved to photograph or video at STA.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

The wedding rehearsal coordinator is an appointed volunteer. This volunteer will be assigned to you at your first meeting. The wedding rehearsal coordinator will arrange for the opening and closing of the church for rehearsal and conduct a rehearsal lasting no longer than one hour.

The wedding coordinator will assist with the wedding rehearsal and will be available the day of the wedding for other preparations.

The wedding rehearsal should be scheduled when the wedding itself is scheduled. Wedding rehearsals may not be scheduled to begin any later than 6:30pm.

The St. Theresa wedding coordinator is the only coordinator allowed to assist with the preparation of the wedding ceremony, to conduct the rehearsal and assist with the ceremony itself.

The wedding coordinator serves as the liaison to the couple and the church office for questions regarding the rehearsal and ceremony.

FLOWERS AND DECOR

Decorations may be brought in before 3:00 p.m. for a Friday wedding and after 9:00 a.m. and before 3:00 p.m. for a Saturday wedding.

Please note well these restrictions:

- no kind of adhesive, tape, glue, tacks, nails, staples, etc. are to be used on the pews or any church furnishings. --any candles used for the ceremony must have protective glass around them. There should be no drapes or anything else hanging from the candleabra.
- no pews or aisles are to be blocked or cordoned off in any way at any time.
- no aisle runner, carpet, or rugs may be used other than the rug provided by the church at the main entrance to the church.
- rice, flowers, confetti, bird seed, bubbles, fireworks, etc. are prohibited for maintenance, safety, and insurance liability reasons both inside and outside the church.
- church furniture, candles, etc. must remain in place and should not be moved under any circumstances.
- any seasonal decor already in the church must be left in place. These cannot be altered or moved in any way.

No decorations or flowers are allowed on or in front of the altar. Do not use the altar as your worktable. Nothing is to be placed on the altar at any time.

The removal of all wedding decorations from the church interior and exterior is the responsibility of the person signing this agreement. All decorations used for the wedding must be removed immediately after the wedding and before the church is locked for the night. It is possible that there may be a funeral or another wedding the next morning or a Mass that afternoon. If you have contracted this service with your florist be sure that they understand that items used to decorate the church must be removed immediately after the wedding. If these are left for church volunteers to remove, they will be disposed of.

It is not necessary to leave flowers in the church, but if you wish to do so, your offering is greatly appreciated. Floral donations for the tabernacle and/or the ambo can be made in honor of the bride and groom or in memory of an individual or a group (such as deceased grandparents). If you wish to leave flowers in the church as a donation, please call the pastoral center so they are aware.

BRIDAL PARTY

The bridal party is allowed a maximum of 16 persons: the bride and groom, eight bridesmaids and groomsmen, including the best man and maid and/or matron of honor. Additionally, children are allowed in the wedding party. However, we asked that they be at least three years old at the time of the wedding able to walk down the aisle unattended.

Up to four ushers are allowed per wedding. These must be “working” ushers. Their duty is to seat your guests as they arrive and to prevent the gathering of guests and family at the back door as others are trying to enter the church.

By your second meeting with the pastor, you should inform him of the number of people in your wedding party.

There should be no drinking prior to the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony. No drinking will be allowed in the Church building or property prior to the start of the rehearsal or wedding. Doing so will subject members of the wedding party to being dismissed from the church. Failure to leave upon request will delay or cancel the wedding. If there is reason to believe that the bride and/or groom has been drinking prior to the wedding the ceremony will be canceled.

There should be no gum chewing during the ceremony. Please dispose of your gum before entering the church.

DAY OF INSTRUCTIONS

At no time are food or beverages to be brought into any part of the Church or anywhere on the church premises. Smoking in any of the buildings is not allowed at any time.

No drinks or food is allowed prior to the wedding as you observe the one-hour fast before receiving Holy Communion.

Ushers are asked to arrive 45 minutes before the scheduled time of the wedding.

The bride and bridesmaids, the groom and groomsmen, and all in the wedding party are due at the church no later than 15 minutes prior to the wedding.

Parents who would like to greet their guests should do so outside the front of the building so as to keep the main entryway and aisle free of congestion.

Limousines or other special transportation vehicles may not block any parking places or the main highway in front of the church.

Punctuality is a “must” for both rehearsals and weddings. Should the wedding party arrive 15 minutes late, there will be no Mass, only a Communion service. Should the wedding party arrive 1/2 hour late, there will be only the liturgy of the Word and exchange of vows.

These guidelines, along with those of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, are intended to serve as a means to allow us to work closely with you in a cooperative way to assure that your wedding day is the day you desire, while respecting the liturgy of the Church. We pledge to do all we can to assist you in planning for and celebrating this special event. We will keep you in our prayers as you approach your wedding day, that God will bless you with peace and fill your lives with abundant joy!

GUEST CELEBRANTS:

A priest or deacon not currently assigned to St. Theresa of Avila may preside at your wedding. In order to do so, the following are required:

Priests and Deacons currently serving in the Diocese of Baton Rouge are welcome to preside at weddings in St. Theresa of Avila Parish. They are asked to contact the pastor of St. Theresa of Avila in writing to request delegation. Delegation is a requirement and must be requested at the beginning of the marriage preparation process.

Priests and Deacons of a Diocese other than Baton Rouge or a religious order must contact the pastor of St. Theresa of Avila in writing, to request delegation. Delegation is a requirement and must be requested at the beginning of the marriage preparation process.

Also, priests and deacons of a Diocese other than Baton Rouge or a religious order must contact the Chancery Office at the Diocese of Baton Rouge to request permission for ministry in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. This is mandatory and must take place at the beginning of the marriage preparation process.

Note: Any priest or deacon who is scheduled to preside at a wedding at St. Theresa of Avila Church must himself conduct the entire process of marriage preparation with the couple. He is also responsible for sending the completed pre-marriage preparation file to the church office no later than 2 weeks prior to the wedding date.

CONTRACT AGREEMENT FOR USE OF THE CHURCH FOR A WEDDING

We have received and read the Wedding Guidelines for the St. Theresa of Avila Catholic Church and we agree to abide by them.

We also understand that it is our responsibility to inform photographers, videographers, florists, musicians, and all others bound by what is contained in this policy.

We also understand that the final decision granting us permission to marry in the church rests with the pastor/deacon who is preparing us. If for any reason during our marriage preparation our priest/deacon finds that he cannot, in good conscience, witness our marriage, we will accept that decision.

Date of Wedding: _____ Location: _____

Bride's Printed Name: _____

Bride's Cell Phone: _____ Bride's Email: _____

Groom's Printed Name: _____

Groom's Cell Phone: _____ Groom's Email: _____

Bride's
Signature: _____

Groom's
Signature: _____

Other Signature: _____ Relationship to Either Party: _____

For Office Use Only: Church Fee: _____ Amount Paid: _____ Balance Due: _____ Due Date: _____	Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____
---	--

