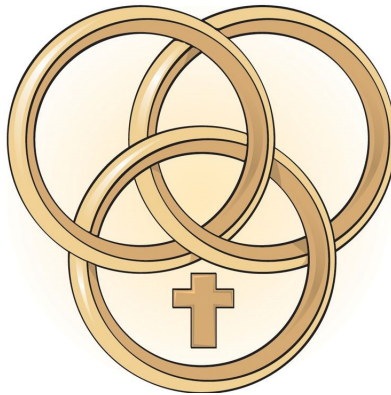


St. Andrew Catholic Church
Cape Coral, Florida



Marriage Preparation
and
Wedding Guidelines

Contact Information

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Congratulations on your engagement! The Church rejoices with you and eagerly awaits the day you become husband and wife, a new family in the Sacrament of Marriage.

As Catholics, we believe that marriage comes as a gift from God. The Catholic vision of marriage is rooted in Sacred Scripture and is expressed in the teachings and practices of the Church. Marriage unites a couple in faithful and mutual love and opens them to giving life. It is a way to respond to God's call to holiness and invites the couple to be a sign of Christ's love in the world.

The Catholic Church has a long history of helping couples prepare for marriage. It has learned a great deal that can benefit any couple, regardless of their religion. We are dedicated to helping you prepare for your wedding so that you may truly open your hearts to receive God's grace, and to love one another as you have never loved before.

The following guidelines are designed to assist you in preparing for this special day. The Priests and staff of St. Andrew are delighted to be able to help you with the planning of your wedding, and we look forward to your cooperation with the following:

I. Canonical Marriage Preparation

A. Parish Participation

A requirement to be met of a 6 month period of active registration in our parish is important. A couple must be registered with our parish and attend weekly Mass prior to their first meeting with a Priest.

B. Initial Steps

Because the Catholic Church wants you to form a strong and lasting marriage, you will be asked to complete the marriage preparation process. It will take at least six months to intensively prepare for your marriage. The preparation goes beyond choosing a date or reserving a place for the reception. *It means using this time to explore more deeply into your relationship and approach this important day with prayer and reflection.*

C. Interview with a Priest

Please bring the acknowledgement page of these guidelines with you when you meet with the Parish Priest. During this interview, he will explain the marriage preparation process and inform you of other necessary steps you may need to take.

D. Required Participation

1. Premarital Inventory

After meeting with the Priest, both bride and groom will be required to complete a premarital inventory called FOCCUS. This questionnaire is not a “test” to determine whether you can get married in the Church, rather, it is a tool to assess your readiness to commit to marriage. The Priest will review the results with you.

2. Marriage Preparation Programs

At the initial meeting with the Priest, he will discuss different marriage preparation programs available to you. Upon completion of an online course, a certificate will be issued. It will be your responsibility to submit it to the Priest to place in your marriage preparation folder. You will be required to complete one of the following programs.

a). Witness to Love

Witness to Love is a virtue-based, Catechumenate model of marriage renewal and preparation that integrates modern principles of psychology, and the virtues to help you facilitate an authentic dialogue about your relationship. What makes Witness to Love unique is that you will be able to choose your own mentor couple who you admire and see as a source of faith formation. The mentors must meet some basic requirements and they will be trained to work with you.

b). Theology of the Body Marriage Prep (online)

This marriage preparation course is a one-on-one experience with a certified instructor couple, at your own pace. It can be completed within three weeks and is available in English, Spanish and French. To help you offset the registration fee, you may apply for a scholarship or military discount available through the program. Register at <http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com/course-info/online-pre-cana/>. For additional information about the program, please contact Marriage Prep directly.

c). Private Instruction with the Priest

When you meet with the Priest to discuss the results of your Premarital Inventory, or (Foccus), instead of you taking an online course, he may also schedule another session to offer you private instructions on the Sacramentality and Indissolubility of marriage.

d). Setting the Date

If the interview with the Priest discovers an impediment, the date of the wedding cannot be scheduled. For instance, if a needed annulment is not final, a date cannot be set until the impediment is removed.. Please understand that even if the date is set, the wedding cannot take place unless all the requirements are met.

E. Required Documents

Each engaged couple is required to submit a variety of documents and paperwork to the Parish in order to get married. This is part of the process of determining your freedom to marry in the Catholic Church and of registering your marriage with the Catholic party's Church of Baptism. To celebrate your marriage, the following documents will be needed:

1. Baptismal Records

If you are Catholic, please bring for the initial interview with the Priest, a recently issued baptismal certificate with notations dated within six months of the wedding. If you are a non-Catholic Christian, an original baptismal certificate or affidavit from the baptizing minister will be accepted.

2. Canonical Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire

This form will be completed at the first meeting with the parish Priest and signed by both of you.

3. Affidavits Concerning the Freedom to Marry

The parish Priest will give you forms to be filled out by your parents, siblings or close relatives, who can attest to your freedom to marry. Two forms are needed for each the bride and groom.

4. Certificates for Workshops

Upon the completion of the marriage preparation workshops, certificates will be issued. You must submit them to the Priest preparing you for the marriage.

5. Marriage License

The final required document is the state issued marriage license. The parish Priest will give you a certificate which will show that you have completed a marriage preparation program. This certificate might give you a discount on the purchase of the license. The Marriage License can be purchased 60 days prior to your wedding date at the Lee County Marriage License Bureau. *(After 60 days the license is invalid and the marriage will not take place until a new license is purchased)*. **Please call the bureau at 239-533-5007 and listen to the phone message prior to going to apply for your license.**

F. Special Circumstances

1. Previous Marriages

If you have been previously married and you want to get married in the Catholic Church, you must provide a copy of the Civil Divorce Decree, the Decree of Nullity issued by the Catholic Church, or if your previous spouse is deceased you must provide a copy of his or her Death Certificate.

2. Convalidation

When a civilly married couple seeks to validate their union within the Church, a Convalidation can be performed.

3. Inter-Faith Marriages

In cases of inter-faith marriages, a Mixed Religious Dispensation or Disparity of Cult Dispensation from the local Bishop is needed. This is arranged by the Priest.

4. Marriage Preparation outside of St. Andrew Church

If you are being prepared for your marriage outside of St. Andrew, the complete marriage preparation file must be submitted to the local Diocese where the preparation took place. That Diocese then sends the documentation to the Diocese of Venice from where it is forwarded to St. Andrew Parish.

5. Marriage Preparation Only

If you are being prepared at St. Andrew for a wedding at another parish, the Priest will submit the complete marriage preparation file to the Diocese of Venice. The Chancery Office at the Diocese of Venice will review and forward it to the Chancery office of the Diocese where your wedding will take place. The Chancery office of that Diocese will then forward the file to the appropriate Parish.

II. Overview of the Wedding Ceremony

A. Three forms of the Rite of Marriage

The Catholic Church provides three different forms of celebrating the Rite of Marriage.

1. When two Catholics are marrying, the celebration will normally take place with a Mass.
2. Second form does not include the Mass, but is used when a Catholic enters into a marriage with another validly baptized person in another faith.
3. The third form does not include a Mass for when a Catholic is marrying someone who is a non-Christian. The parish Priest will help you make this choice.

B. The Ritual

A very good way to know what the Catholic Church believes is to participate in her public worship. This is especially true in the case of marriage. The Catholic wedding rite, whether it is celebrated within a Mass or not, is a powerful teaching tool. This is experienced in many ways, for example:

- In the active role taken by the couple who, in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, are the “ministers” of the sacrament:
- In the fact that the wedding takes place in a Church signifies a sacred action
- In the readings which speak of God’s plan for marriage and his presence to the couple.
- In the music which lifts our thoughts and feelings in a prayerful, joyful way.
- In the homily given by the Priest addressing the couple and their guests about the meaning of marriage as well as its joys and challenges.
- In the vows and exchange of rings in which the couple express their freely-given promise to create a loving and lifelong union of permanence, fidelity, and openness to children;
- In the various prayers and blessing through which the Church solemnizes and supports the journey on which the couple is embarking.

Thoughtful prayer and planning of your Wedding Ceremony will bring many blessings to your married life long after you have forgotten your decisions about the flowers, photos, and favors on the tables.

III Preparation for Your Wedding Ceremony

A. Hospitality to Your Guests

Consider various ways to extend hospitality to those who will gather to celebrate your wedding. Assign members of your wedding party to help people find seats toward the front of the Church and introduce them to the other people with whom they will be seated.

B. Rehearsal

A day or two before the Wedding you will have the opportunity for a Rehearsal, and it is your responsibility to ensure that all the wedding party is present and on time. We do not permit a privately hired wedding coordinator to direct the rehearsal or Wedding Ceremony. Rehearsals are normally scheduled the Thursday or Friday prior to your Wedding day either at 5:30pm or 6:00pm.

C. Liturgy of the Word

1. Readings

The readings at a Catholic Wedding Liturgy are a proclamation of God's Word and of the Church's belief about marriage. For this reason, they are limited to readings from the Scriptures. The Priest will give you the booklet "*United with Christ*" where you can choose your Readings and Prayers that you would like to use at your wedding. It is recommended that you read the readings together and pick what best suits you as a couple. The back of this booklet allows you to fill out a form with the list of your readings. When completed, please give to the Priest at least one week prior to the wedding date.

2. Prayer of the Faithful

The Prayer of the Faithful at a Wedding Liturgy includes prayer petitions for the couple, their families, the Church, the world and the local community. The Priest can help you to select these petitions, and you can tell him of people and concerns that you would like to have included, for example, the names of deceased or sick family members.

3. Readers

You are invited to select people to proclaim the first reading, second reading and the Prayer of the Faithful. Think about family members or friends who have been readers (or lectors) at their Church, or who are used to speaking in public. Give them a copy of the reading or intercessions so they may rehearse prior to the Wedding day.

D. Music

For those couples requesting music, they should contact our Music Director at least 8 weeks prior to the Wedding. He will guide you through the music selection process. Any questions regarding the suitability of wedding music selections are decided by him.

1. Cantor/Soloist

The cantor sings the Responsorial Psalm and aids the congregation in singing. Our Music Director will secure the services of the Cantor for your wedding. The cantor will sing the solos that have been selected for your wedding.

2. Additional Instrumentalists

Additional instrumentalists may be used as part of the wedding with permission of our Music Director

3. Non-Parish Musician

Due to the high level of skill required, familiarity with wedding liturgies, and experience in performing in the Church space, the use of non-church musicians for wedding is discouraged. In the event, that you wish to request someone, our Music Director will determine the musician's ability to fulfill their musical role in the liturgy, in order to insure the quality for the liturgical prayer at your wedding. If approved, he or she will be allowed to perform.

E. Optional Traditions

1. Marian Devotion

The beautiful Catholic tradition of the bride's offering of prayers and flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary after communion is welcome. Your florist can furnish a single flower or a small bouquet for the ceremony.

2. Unity Candle

While not a part of the official Roman Rite, couples may choose to light a Unity Candle at the wedding. If a Unity Candle is to be used, the parent candles and the stand must be provided by the couple. The couple should take it with them as a memento after the ceremony. Unity Candles are available at religious goods stores, florist shops and greeting card shops.

F. Flowers

You are responsible to make arrangements for flowers with a florist of your choice. Flowers may not be placed in the aisles, pews, doors, or altar. Flower arrangements and candle stands may not obstruct the liturgical movements of the ceremony. Aisle runners and flower petals are not allowed.

All flowers and decorations must be removed from the Church immediately after the ceremony. Guidelines for Florists are outlined in Appendix I. Please review these regulations and make sure that the florist understands and abides by them.

G. Photography and Videography

You will make arrangements for photographs and videos with a photographer and videographer of your choice. However, the Church is a sacred space and should be treated and respected as such. Video cameras (no lights) and flash photography are permitted, but all equipment will be restricted to the main floor of the church. At no time may the photographer or videographer or guest enter the raised sanctuary area. Group pictures other than the Wedding Party must be taken at the reception. Because of the Church's schedule you will have 30 minutes after the ceremony for pictures. All other pictures must be taken at the reception.

H. Receiving Lines

Receiving lines are not allowed inside or outside of the Church. Please have your receiving lines at the Reception.

I. Non-Liturgical Signs of Celebration

The use of bubbles, confetti, rice, birdseed, rose petals and other objects may never be thrown inside or outside of the Church, nor can doves, balloons, or butterflies be released.

J. Electronic Devices

Cellular phones and other electronic devices must be turned off, or put on silent mode when inside the Church.

IV. Times and Fees

A. Times

1. **Weddings:** Saturdays: 12:00pm, 1:30pm, or 6:00pm

Any other requests regarding day or time, other than above must be approved by the Pastor/ Administrator. No Weddings are celebrated on Sundays, Holy Week, or the Saturday prior to Christmas.

2. Rehearsals

Are held on the Thursday or Friday the week of the Wedding at 5:30pm or 6pm. Rehearsals last 30-45 minutes.

3. Promptness

It is essential that the rehearsal and the wedding begin and end on time. Please be mindful that our parish has other events which occur in the Church that the Priests and musicians have to be in attendance to. Tardiness may put the celebration of your wedding at risk.

B. Offering and Fees

All fees are non-refundable after payment has been made. Please know when you hold a date for your celebration and then cancel, that may have taken a spot from someone else who may have wished for that date and time.

Church - \$350

Organist - \$150

Cantor - \$150

Spanish only Wedding Music

Cantor - \$150

Guitar - \$150

Altar Servers - \$10 Donation for each Server (there are two)

Wedding Coordinator - \$50 she will be there

Priest - at the discretion of the couple

Fees for Destination Weddings: Church - \$550

For a couple not residing in St. Andrew Parish. A parent or parents of the bride or groom must be registered members of our Church for at least 6 months prior to the Wedding Day.

Venue Deposit - \$100 for all Weddings

The venue deposit is not returned to the couple if the following occurs:

- The Wedding Party, family, or guests do not abide by rules stated in this booklet.
- The Wedding Party, family, or guests are late causing the Ceremony to be late.
- The Church is not left in an orderly condition upon leave of the ceremony.

The above mentioned fees include the consultation, preparation, and performance of the Wedding Liturgy. Checks should be made payable to St. Andrew Catholic Church. Visa and Mastercard are accepted at the Parish Office. At the time of setting the Wedding date, half the amount of the payment is due. The remaining payment is due one month prior to the wedding date.

Marriage Preparation only \$100

This is when the couple prepares with one of our Priests and has their wedding out of town.

***Criteria for determining active parish membership** for 6 months before the scheduling of an appointment with a Priest.

- Use of parish envelopes to determine attendance at Mass
- Regular involvement in sharing of time and talents with our parish ministries
- Children or Parents of Active Parishioners qualify for the same status

**If you cannot afford the full amount of the suggested offering for the use of the Church, please submit a letter of hardship. Please indicate the amount you can afford for the Church offering.

APPENDIX I: GUIDELINES FOR FLORISTS

1. No floral arrangements, candles, hurricane lamps, trellises, canopies, ribbons, aisle runners or other decorations are allowed in the aisle or on the pews.
2. Flower arrangements and candle stands in the sanctuary should not obstruct the liturgical movements of the ceremony.
3. Flowers are not to be placed on the altar
4. Flowers may be placed in front of the altar, in front of the ambo, and also in the vestibule of the Church
5. Aisle runners are never allowed
6. Floral petals are not allowed inside or outside of the Church.
7. Any existing Church decorations are not to be moved
8. All flowers and decorations must be removed after the pictures
9. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off
10. Fitting reverence is expected at all times
11. The Church building will be open one hour prior to the wedding for deliveries

APPENDIX II:
GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS

1. Photographers may take pictures in the narthex before the procession begins in the Church during the entrance procession.
2. Photographers/Videographers are not to interfere with the movement of the procession or recession by having the couples stop in the aisle. Photographers should not walk in front of the couple during the procession. They must never enter the sanctuary area delineated by the steps around the altar.
3. No equipment should be brought into the Church or set up while any other liturgical celebration is in progress, (Mass, Funeral, or Weddings)
4. Any chairs or other furnishings moved by the videographer must be returned to their original location immediately following the ceremony.
5. No group photographs of the wedding party and/or the families will be allowed around the altar before the ceremony.
6. Flash photography should be kept at minimum during the ceremony itself, especially during the exchange of vows.
7. Only hand-held camera or video cameras on a stand are permitted.
8. There should be a minimum of walking around the Church to get the “perfect” shot.
9. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off.
10. Fitting reverence is expected at all times.
11. The Church will be available for 30 minutes after the end of your wedding to have formal pictures taken.

Please give one copy to your Photographer and one copy to your Videographer



Acknowledgement Page

We have received a copy of the Marriage Preparation and Wedding Guidelines, have read them and agree to follow them.

Signature of Bride: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

Signature of Groom: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

Witnessed by: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

