

# Sacred Heart

Catholic Church

*Unite in love, then serve.*

## Marriage Guidelines

Dear Couples seeking Marriage in the Catholic Church,

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding the Sacrament of Matrimony and for contacting Sacred Heart Parish regarding your wedding plans. Marriage is one of the most important events that will happen to you during the course of your life. The Sacrament of Marriage is part of the faith life of the individual. It is also an extension of the life of faith of the community. As part of the journey toward marriage, we ask that couples register in our parish and **share our Sunday worship for at least two months prior to the beginning of the marriage preparation process.**

Marriage is a Sacrament that is administered by the couple to each other. Since the 1960's, the Catholic Church has required couples to undergo a marriage preparation process (sometimes referred to as Pre Cana) of 4 to 6 months in duration. This process enables couples to have a stronger marriage and a greater chance of true success. The marriage preparation process includes several meetings with a priest or deacon. During one of the meetings, the couple will take a pre-marital inventory. The results form the basis of further meetings with the priest or deacon. Part of the process also includes a series of classes, an Engaged Encounter weekend retreat or being assigned a Sponsor Couple. At your first appointment the priest or deacon will provide you with all the details.

A particular area of concern in marriage preparation is the issue of co-habitation of couples. In recent times, many couples have made a choice to live together prior to their marriage. Although this may seem like a socially acceptable action, clergy, as well as psychologists have found that there is no other single factor that can have more damaging effects for a lifelong commitment. In Pope Benedict XVI's homily to the Croatia Catholic families in 2011, he states, "...be courageous! Do not give in to that secularized mentality which proposes living together as a preparation, or even a substitute for marriage!" The changing spiritual and personal dynamics of a couple moving from cohabitation to a marital commitment has in some instances caused up to a 50% greater chance of divorce in the life of the future marriage. We ask that you seriously consider the implications of this before beginning the marriage preparation process. This may be a factor in the type of wedding ceremony that will be celebrated.

When the couple meets with the priest or deacon for the first time, specific details, such as the date and time of the marriage will be arranged. Marriages are scheduled throughout the year, but with a few exceptions. If your wedding is scheduled during Lent, keep in mind that music and décor must be subdued due to the liturgical nature of that season in the church.

Thank you again for considering the importance of your marriage, not so much as a social act, but an act of two people of faith. We look forward to working with you.

- In the Catholic Church, Marriage is a Sacrament—a holy moment. All Sacraments are a reflection of our deepening faith commitment. Marriage is celebrated with those couples who both practice their faith and see their faith in God as an integral part of their relationship with each other.
- The Sacrament is celebrated with registered members of the parish following a preparation period as required by the Archdiocese. Couples should contact the office at least 9-12 months prior to the wedding. Arrangements must be made with the celebrant before the date is scheduled.
- Marriages are scheduled for those couples who do not have a prior marriage bond. If either party, regard-less of religion, has been married previously, the prior marriage must be resolved before a marriage date is decided. The process for a formal annulment may take up to sixteen months or more in some cases. This is not so with other types of annulments. During marriage preparation the course of action will be discussed for any prior marriage. Steps to consider for this process can be at the link below.

<https://www.archgh.org/offices-ministries/pastoral-educational-ministries/family-life-ministry/marriage-preparation/steps-to-getting-married-in-the-catholic-churchmarriage-preparation-process/>

First Step: Contact Sacred Heart Parish Office in person or by phone 281-342-3609. The bride and groom will be asked to fill out a registration form and submit. A telephone call from one of the deacons will set up your first appointment. Please allow two or three weeks for the phone call.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church has established certain policies to help preserve the integrity of the wedding liturgy on your wedding day.

In these Marriage Guidelines many of your questions will be answered. But if not, please don't hesitate to call. Please refer to them often and share with the people who will help you plan your wedding day.

## **You will be held accountable to follow these Guidelines.**

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# Fees

## Church and Chapel Usage Fees

A contributing parishioner is defined by Time, Talent and Treasure. Time and Talent is your participation at Sunday masses; involvement in ministries, organization, or adult education; time given to parish events; etc. Treasure is a year's history of giving by using your parish contribution envelopes (or online giving).

The Church or Chapel fees are due one month prior to the marriage. Make check payable to Sacred Heart Church.

<b>Church Fee</b>	Contributing Parishioner	\$500.00
	Non-contributing parishioner	\$750.00
<b>Chapel Fee</b>	Contributing Parishioner	\$300.00
	Non-contributing parishioner	\$500.00
<b>Deposit for all weddings in the church or chapel</b>		\$100.00
Deposit is due when your wedding date is scheduled on Sacred Heart's calendar. This is refundable after the wedding provided that nothing is damaged, guidelines were followed, and all fees paid.		
<b>Audio Technician Fee</b>		\$75.00
This fee applies if an outside musician is hired. This extra fee is charged in order to compensate the tech who will be present to setup and adjust the sound system		

## Clergy Fee

A free-will offering is customary to offer to the priest or deacon who prepares you for Marriage and who officiates at the Marriage Rite.

## Music Fees

The musician fee is negotiated with the musician (s) you have chosen.

Couples should hire their musicians shortly after their date is reserved on the calendar.

Please contact Joseph Holik, Director of Music at 281-342-8371. He will approve the music that is selected for your Wedding Day. He will also be helpful in choosing your musician(s).

Sacred Heart Church does not compensate the musicians hired to play for your wedding. You are responsible for hiring and paying the musician(s) who will provide services for your wedding. We will be happy to provide a list of musicians who are familiar with our instruments and sound system, therefore to avoid the cost of the extra Audio Technician Fee.

## SETTING THE DATE AND TIME

Marriages are scheduled throughout the year, but not during the weekends of Palm Sunday or Easter, during the Triduum, or on the weekend of our parish bazaar which is the second Sunday in October. If your wedding is scheduled during Lent, keep in mind that music and décor must be subdued due to the liturgical nature of that season in the Church.

### **Saturday morning and afternoon weddings:**

**Church:** The Church will be reserved for you on your wedding day. The latest possible hour to schedule a Saturday afternoon wedding is 2:00 pm. **The church must be vacated by 3:30 P.M.** to allow time for cleaning the church and to prepare for the Saturday Vigil Mass before confessions begin at 4 pm. Please make sure your photographer and wedding party are aware of this timeline restriction.

**Chapel:** The Chapel will be reserved for you for a total of 3½ hours on your wedding day. There will be 2 hours reserved before the wedding for pre-wedding activities, photo opportunities & greeting your guests; and 1½ hours for the ceremony and any final pictures afterwards. Chapel Weddings are planned for 2:00pm or earlier. A 2:30pm Wedding is only acceptable if the couple choose not to include Mass in their Marriage Rite.

**The chapel must be vacated by 4:00 P.M.** Please make sure your photographer and wedding party are aware of this timeline restriction.

### **Information to help in choosing Church or Chapel:**

The Church has 17 center aisle pews. The seating capacity of the Church is approximately 650.  
The Chapel has 14 center aisle pews. The seating capacity of the Chapel is approximately 150.

### **Saturday evening weddings:**

The Church and Chapel are available for Saturday evening weddings. However, the Church and Chapel will not be available until after Saturday evening Mass. The earliest available time to enter the church is 6:45pm or whenever the vigil Mass is over. Saturday evening weddings begin at 7:30 pm.

### **Other Considerations**

Saturday weddings are most common, but Friday weddings are growing in popularity. Weddings can be scheduled for any other day of the week depending on the availability of the church and the clergy. Every wedding event is carefully scheduled on the calendar to ensure you have the entire 3½ hours (2¼ hours if Saturday evening). Please call the parish office for details.

### **Rehearsal**

When reserving the date and time for your wedding, your rehearsal can be planned also. It is usually planned for the day before the wedding.

## ON YOUR WEDDING DAY

Sacred Heart Church will provide a WEDDING COORDINATOR for the rehearsal and wedding. She will assist in the wedding procession, as well as help with other details on that day. A hired Wedding Coordinator and/or consultant are not necessary. If you hire such a person, he or she will not conduct the wedding re-hearsal or ceremony. **Though that person is welcome to be present, he/she will have NO function with the wedding ceremony.**

The **REHEARSAL** date must be arranged with the priest or deacon and is usually scheduled the evening before the wedding. Everyone who has a part in the ceremony should attend (bridesmaids, groomsmen, ushers, readers, parents, etc.). The wedding party must be punctual for rehearsal. Please advise all those who will attend. Rehearsals are one hour.

### **PUNCTUALITY**

Out of respect for your ministers and guests, the wedding party should arrive at least one hour, but as early as two hours, before the start time of the wedding. This includes the bride and groom and their parents, and their attendants.

### **LIMOUSINE**

The closed street is an emergency area (located in the front of the church). It can be accessed with explicit permission from your minister. If you are planning to use a limousine, prior arrangements must be made to enter the blocked area.

**MICROPHONES** are not available for the bride and groom.

### **THROWING RICE AND FLOWER PETALS**

No rice, flower petals (real or artificial), confetti, bird seed, or any other type of material may be thrown in the church or anywhere on church property. Please be mindful of dresses and/or decorations that use glitter. Many times additional effort is needed when cleaning and if so, additional fee may be added.

### **BRIDE'S ROOM**

Church: The cry room will be turned into the bride's room. Drapery closes the room from view. There is a long mirror in the room and the restrooms are across the hall.

Chapel: The upper room will be used by the bride. It is upstairs. A long mirror is available. Restrooms are located on ground level in the back of the chapel on the right hand side.

### **WAGONS OR TRICYCLES**

Wagons and tricycles are not permitted to be used in the wedding under any circumstance.

## **WEDDING ATTIRE**

### **WEDDING PARTY**

Be aware of modesty that is appropriate for Church. The emphasis on proper attire is a reverence toward God, priest, deacon and worship in the sacred place. The appropriateness for the sacred place is not the same as for the reception.

The groom, and all groomsmen and bridal attendees, should dress prior to their arrival at the Church. The bride may arrive in street clothes, and ready to slip into her bridal gown after arriving. Her makeup and hair should be done prior to arrival.

### **Bride, Bridesmaids, Mothers**

Strapless, sleeveless, and low cut gowns/dresses can be worn as long as they are worn with a shawl, removable jacket, or wrap around the shoulders.

For the wedding ceremony in the Church, shoulders must be covered. The length of the skirt should be no shorter than knee length, but not so long that it is a tripping hazard while walking down the aisle. Choose shoes with heels that can be walked in gracefully. No stiletto heels.

Groom, Groomsmen, Ushers, Fathers

Men are to wear a coat and tie. Blue jeans are not appropriate. No hats are allowed to be worn in Church.

## **REHEARSAL ATTIRE**

For all attending: Blue jeans/slacks are allowed for the rehearsal. Skirts no shorter than knee length. Shoulders covered. No shorts, tank tops, halter tops, or flip flops.

## **WEDDING PARTY**

Since the Groom & Bride are the focus, the number of bridesmaids and groomsmen are limited to 5 couples. Couples should strive for simplicity.

Children are always welcome in Church, but often times they find it difficult to stay still for long periods of time, or with following directions. Thus, the limit is two flower girls and one ring bearers; and the minimum age is a mature 5 years of age.

At least two gentlemen should be chosen for Ushers. Their primary duties are to welcome and seat the guests and family members. After the service, ushers are to ensure that the Church and Bride's Room are clean and clear, by picking up any left-over worship aids, waste, or other items left by the wedding party and/or guests. Sacred Heart Church is not responsible for any remaining, missing or lost items from the rehearsal or wedding.

# MARRIAGE RITE

## “Marriage Rite Within Mass” and “Marriage Rite Outside of Mass”

- For the marriage of two Catholics, it is customary to celebrate “Marriage Rite Within Mass”.
- When a Catholic marries a baptized non-Catholic, usually a “Marriage Rite Outside of Mass” (Liturgy of the Word with no Communion) is celebrated.
- “Marriage Rite Outside of Mass” is the standard ritual when a Catholic marries a non-baptized person.

**Who officiates at Marriages?** A deacon or priest can witness the marriage vows of the couple outside of mass, however, only a priest can celebrate Mass.

## WORSHIP AIDS

The Worship Aid must be submitted to the deacon or priest no later than three weeks prior to Marriage for review and approval. Any questions regarding the design of the worship aid should be directed to the Priest or Deacon who is preparing you for Marriage. Do not print until he has read through your worship aid. Allow several weeks before the date of your marriage. Without the priest’s or deacon’s approval, the program cannot be used.

## PROCESSIONAL

The Marriage Rite is Liturgy and Liturgy begins with the Processional. The entire wedding party takes part in the processional. Both men and women will be instructed how to take part in the processional at the rehearsal.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

All Scripture selections are chosen with the help of the priest or deacon and used with their approval.

## MUSIC

All Music must be liturgical. See the music section for more details on choosing music.

# MUSIC

Music in Catholic liturgies serves to invite prayerful participation in the special liturgical ceremony. Although it is not required, it is highly recommended that you hire musicians from Sacred Heart Church. Our sound system has been intricately preset and is very sensitive, and our musicians are familiar with this equipment. If you chose to hire musicians who are not familiar with our system, an audio technician will be present at both your rehearsal and your ceremony to assist your musician with the setup of microphones, cables, stands, and any necessary adjustments. Visiting musicians do not have access to adjust the Church’s sound equipment. A \$75 fee is charged to cover this service.

Music chosen must be Liturgical. Secular music should be reserved for the reception, where the environment is much more relaxed.

Contact Sacred Heart's Director of Music, Joseph Holik (281-342-8371), as soon as possible for planning music for your marriage ceremony. He will help you select liturgical music, and will lend assistance in hiring musicians or arranging for a tech to be present on the day of your wedding.



## FLOWERS

Sacred Heart's Art & Environment Committee take care of the Church's Liturgical Decorations. The colors and decorations in the Church and Chapel change with the liturgical year.

Flowers arrive for the weekend Masses each Saturday morning, with the exception of Lent.

Parishioners donate throughout the year, therefore there will be flowers in Church on Saturday. It is perfectly acceptable, but not required, to use the weekend flowers for your wedding, although you will not have control over the color of the flowers. In some cases the Church's Liturgical Seasons dictate the color of the flowers on the altar.

Advent—Purple and Pinks; Christmas—Red; Pentecost—Red; Lent—no flowers. There are other Feasts & Seasons. Ask about your specific date if interested.

**Church's Flowers:** If you want to leave your wedding flowers and become one of the families who donate flowers for that weekend, call the Parish Office at 281-342-3609. Your name will be added to the Flower Calendar on the weekend of your Wedding and the intention will be in honor of your Wedding Day. Your name will appear in the bulletin as one of the flower donors. You will be given further instructions on how to contact the Florist and ask them to incorporate your chosen wedding colors into the weekend flowers. But, there are certain times of the Liturgical Year when we are unable to change the colors of the flowers. When you add your name to the Flower Calendar, this will be the time to discuss flower colors.

**Taking the Flowers to the Wedding Reception:** You may also purchase flowers specifically for your wedding day. If this is the case, it is not necessary for your flowers to be left at the church. You meet with your florist, purchase and arrange delivery of the flowers directly with your florist. Your flowers will be placed in the appropriate places during the ceremony. Once the wedding is over, assign someone to carry your purchased flowers to your reception.

*To avoid confusion on your wedding day, please give us prior knowledge if you will leave the flowers or take the flowers with you to the reception.*

## PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER

The Prayer Garden is available for photos. Check with the office on the availability of the Prayer Garden if you want to take to pictures on a day other than your wedding day.

**All photos should be respectful of the sacredness of the church (no silly or inappropriate photos).**

The Church is a sacred place. Appropriate and respectful behavior is expected at all times while on the church premises. Photographers/Videographers are not allowed in the sanctuary area (raised area with altar). Photos may be taken as the wedding party enters or leaves, but photographer may not stop either procession. No flash photography or artificial lighting is permitted during ceremony (from processional to recessional).

The videographer must remain stationary throughout the ceremony to avoid distraction. All photos should be respectful of the sacredness of the church (no silly or inappropriate photos).

A copy of these guidelines must be given to your photographer. They must check in with the priest or deacon before the ceremony.

## **DECORATIONS**

The Church needs little decorating for your Marriage. Flowers for the altar and pew bows are most appropriate. Please check with the parish office at 281-342-3609 if you must bring in your wedding decorations the day before. It is our preference that your decorating be done two or three hours before the wedding.

### **FLOWERS**

The florist can deliver the flowers early on the day of your wedding. If your florist is unfamiliar with Sacred Heart parish, ask them to call the parish office and ask about delivery times.

### **PEW DECORATIONS**

Plastic pew clips, ribbons, or soft material must be used to attach bows or flowers to the pews. **NO TAPE, NO METAL, NO CLAMPS, NO STAPLES.** Pews must not be marred in any way.

**NO PEW CANDLES**

**NO LANTERNS** on pews or in the aisle.

### **THROWING RICE AND FLOWER PETALS**

No rice, flower petals (real or artificial), confetti, bird seed, or any other type of material may be thrown in the church or anywhere on church property. Please be mindful of dresses and/or decorations that use glitter. Many times additional effort is needed when cleaning and if so, an additional fee may be added.

### **AISLE RUNNERS**

Aisle runners are not permitted.

## **APPROPRIATE CHURCH BEHAVIOR**

Just as we attend ball games, movies, theatres, or any other venue, there is a standard of behavior expected. So even more true is it for worship in a sacred place or gathering. Care and respect of the Church as a sacred place for prayer and worship is to be given at all times. A prayerful reverence should be reflected in speech and in actions before, during, and after the wedding rehearsal and the wedding liturgy. To ensure there are no misunderstandings, the couple must inform/educate their guests and the wedding party of the expected behavior in the Church and Church property.

Proper attire. See Wedding Attire section.

No loud or excessive talking by anyone; no running or playing around by children in the Church. Children must be supervised at all times.

Cell phones, and other electronic devices are to be turned OFF or placed on mute when inside the Church. Taking calls and texting during the liturgy is entirely inappropriate and not permitted. Cell phone usage is limited to outside of the Church.

Chewing gum is not permitted in the Church.

Eating and Drinking is not permitted in the Church. The Bride may have bottled water in the Bride's Room, however this must be kept to only the absolute minimum.

There is to be NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES OR ILLEGAL NARCOTICS anywhere on Church property, including the parking lot. Anyone found with such substances will be asked to leave the property.

No rice, flower petals (real or artificial), confetti, bird seed, bubbles or any other type of material may be thrown in the Church or on Church property. Releasing doves or any animals are not permitted.

# CHECK LIST

For information or answers, call the parish office 281-342-3609.

## **At the beginning of marriage preparation,**

- Read this Marriage packet and ask questions if you do not understand.
- Reserve the date and time for your Marriage.
- Reserve the date and time for your Rehearsal.
- For the Catholic: Furnish the name and address of your Church of Baptism or Profession of Faith to the deacon or priest who will be doing your Marriage Preparation.
- Consult with the Director of Music, Joseph Holik, at 281-342-8371. It is best to select your music early. This will allow time for practice of new music or make selection changes if the music chosen is inappropriate for liturgy.

## **Remember:**

- Reserve the unity candle if it will be used on your wedding day. Ask your minister about the use of it during your ceremony. Call the parish office at 281-342-3609 to reserve.
- Free-will offering to the priest or deacon preparing and officiating - traditionally gifted to him at rehearsal or on the day of the wedding.
- Decide if you will purchase wedding flowers. Schedule the Florist if you are ordering flowers. See page 8. Give the parish office prior notice of your decision.
- Choose your Photographer. Give them a copy of Sacred Heart guidelines for Photography.
- The rehearsal and wedding will begin on time. It is inappropriate to keep the clergy, the musicians, wedding coordinator, the photographer, as well as your guests, waiting.
- Choose your Organist/Cantor/Musicians in advance. See page 7.

## **One month prior to marriage:**

- Pay the balance of the church/chapel usage fee.

## **Three weeks prior to marriage:**

- If using a worship aid, ask the minister to review before publishing. He knows the order of worship appropriate for your wedding ceremony.

## **NO LATER THAN 5-14 days prior to the marriage:**

- Apply for the Marriage License and deliver the license to the parish office or the celebrant. Texas law states a marriage license will expire 90 days from the date it is issued, and it must be secured 72 hours prior to the wedding. No ceremony can happen without the Marriage License.
- Bring the Marriage License to the parish office where it will be secure and **not forgotten** on the day of the Marriage. It will be locked in a fire-proof cabinet.