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# MARRIAGE GUIDELINES AND PREPARATION HANDBOOK

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St. Theresa Parish

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# St. Theresa Parish

PALATINE, ILLINOIS

## Congratulations on your desire to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The decision to marry is a joyful moment for you, your families and the Church. We are happy to be a part of this holy moment of celebration. The vocation of Christian marriage, the union of one man and one woman with Jesus Christ, demands a serious commitment. Parish membership by one of the parties, or a parent, is a first consideration. Non-members require a personal conversation and permission of the pastor.

The Church desires to do all that it can to assist couples as they prepare to accept the obligations of Christian marriage and to fulfill them faithfully. The Catholic experience of celebrating matrimony vows clearly conveys the Church's beliefs about the sacrament.

In the Catholic Christian faith, marriage is not just a legal contract - marriage is a sacrament, a covenant and sign of God's love for you and with you throughout the entirety of your married lives. As you celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony at St. Theresa Parish, we will assist you in every way possible to be aware of God's presence in your lives, and to make this celebration a faith-filled event for the two of you and for your families and friends.

## Marriage Dates and Times

In accordance with Archdiocese of Chicago policy, the couple planning marriage must contact the parish at least six months prior to the wedding date and arrange an initial meeting with a priest or deacon. Freedom to enter marriage in the Catholic Christian Church is established at this first meeting. No date reservations may be made without first establishing this freedom.

Wedding times:

Friday:	Evenings at a time which fits into the church schedule
Saturday:	11:00 AM to 12:30 PM including time for pictures 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM including time for pictures 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM including time for pictures
Sunday:	3:00 PM - Ceremony only (no Mass) with a deacon as celebrant

## The Church Fee

The Christian soul desires to thank God for the blessing that comes in Christian matrimony. **The church fee is \$400.00.** Checks should be made payable to St. Theresa Parish. The money will go directly to the parish and is not retained by the priest or deacon witnessing your wedding. This fee assists the parish to help defray the cost of heat/air conditioning, lights, cleaning and upkeep of the church. An honorarium for the priest/deacon is appreciated, but optional.

## Specific Protocol

Saint Theresa Parish wishes to remind you that preparing your mind and soul for this important occasion is vitally important and there is a protocol within the Church universal as well as proprietary preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony in the parish.

Our marriage preparation ministers will assist you in fulfilling this protocol. **Please note that all components are an obligation.** Here's a quick reminder of the basics:

- Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire (first paperwork signed by a priest/deacon);
- Participation in the Archdiocese of Chicago 'On-Line' marriage preparation program and 'Couple Check-Up' (You must complete the Couple Check-up with the ensuing follow-up with St. Theresa Marriage Ministry but you may choose the other archdiocesan option of attending an all-day marriage preparation seminar). There are associated fees with each element;
- A personal sit-down with the marriage ministers to review the Couple Check-up (mutually agreed upon time);
- A 'Group Gathering' of all couples celebrating matrimony at St. Theresa Parish in a given year for open dialogue on the beauty and obligations of *sacramental* marriage;
- Submittal of all forms to the marriage ministers including recent baptismal/confirmation certificates (issued within the last six months), witness affidavits, Declaration of Nullity, and marriage license (good for 60 days in Illinois). These forms must be on file *before* the rehearsal;
- On-going prayer and dialogue between the engaged couple.

It is encouraged that the couple stay in contact with the celebrating deacon/priest and be regular attendees at Sunday Eucharist.

## Marriage Preparation

There is a significant difference between your wedding and your marriage. As a faith community, we are interested in assisting you in preparing for your marriage, not just your ceremony. The purpose of marriage preparation is to provide you with additional opportunities to look at issues which couples have found significant in married life. No one will tell you how to live your married lives. Material will be provided to assist you in looking at some of these issues at this time, and may be helpful to you later on in your marriage. The protocol for St. Theresa Parish is utilizing the Archdiocese of Chicago 'On-Line' preparation program and also the archdiocesan 'Couple Check-up.' There are related fees for these programs. All couples must attend an approved preparation program.

Other approved Marriage Preparation options:

- The **Pre-Cana Conference** is facilitated by the Archdiocese of Chicago. The conference time is one Saturday from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM, with an hour for lunch. There are typically 30 engaged couples at this session, with one presentation couple and a priest. Reservations must be made at least three months prior to the conference you plan to attend. To register for one of the Marriage Preparation Programs, on the Internet go to [www.familyministries.org](http://www.familyministries.org), or call 312-534-8201.
- The **Discovery Weekend** is also facilitated by the Archdiocese of Chicago. It is similar to the Pre-Cana Conference in content, but it affords additional time (Friday evening through Sunday) for the couple to engage in the preparation opportunities.

Couples are encouraged to attend one of these preparation opportunities as soon as possible. It is never too early to attend. As you get closer to your wedding, you will not have the quality time to put into your preparation. Decide on your preferred preparation session now, and make your reservation to attend as soon as possible.

## A reminder - You will need to obtain / provide the following documents:

- A **Baptismal certificate** issued within the past six months (no photocopies)
- A **certificate of Confirmation** for all Catholics
- A **Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire** for the bride and the groom *must be completed first* in the presence of a priest or deacon (establishes freedom to marry)
- **Two Witness Affidavits** for both the bride and groom - parents or siblings are ideal witness candidates (this an official church form and does not refer to the people you choose as witnesses at the liturgy)
- A **Marriage License** - obtained from the Cook County Clerk's Office. The closest office is at 2121 Euclid Avenue, Rolling Meadows. The license is valid one day after the date of issue and remains valid for 60 days.

Please note: If you have been married before - in any church or before a judge or any other civil authority, even to each other, you must inform the person taking the initial information when you first call the parish. Also if you have been married before, you must provide:

- a death certificate of your former spouse, or
- the divorce decree, or
- a declaration of nullity or annulment from the Catholic Church. If any of these is needed, we will be happy to assist. **However, no date for the wedding can be reserved until freedom to marry is established by the declaration.**



## Catholic Christian Matrimony occurs in Church

The Rite of Christian Marriage recommends that the exchange of wedding vows between two Catholics generally take place in the context of a Nuptial Mass. This presumes that the couple regularly participates in the Sunday Eucharist and is not a stranger to their own faith tradition. It is recommended that marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic be celebrated as a ceremony only. If one party is not baptized, only a ceremony is allowed.

Because you are asking God's blessing upon your marriage, the wedding must take place in church. No wedding can take place outdoors (Canon Law/Archdiocesan policy).

## Planning Your Wedding Liturgy

St. Theresa Parish Marriage Ministry will work with you in planning your wedding. This may include the selection of prayers, vows, scripture readings, etc. A well-planned wedding is marked by the prayerfulness and sincerity of your faith expression, rather than by the selection of readings, music, or gestures, which might be more appropriate to the reception. You will receive a book entitled "Together for Life" which will assist you with your planning. Only scripture readings may be used for your wedding liturgy.

## Music for your Ceremony

The music selected for your ceremony must be sacred music with texts drawn from scripture and liturgical sources. It is your responsibility to contact our Music Ministry to arrange for musicians, as well as to select prayerful music for your wedding. Please contact the Music Director at 847-358-7760.

**The fee for the organist and the cantor is \$250.00** (this is separate from the church fee). The St. Theresa Parish Music Director must approve all music. The Music Director is ordinarily the person who will perform for the wedding. If you choose to use an outside musician, there is a \$100 bench fee and approval is necessary by the St. Theresa Parish Music Director.

## Visiting Clergy

If you have a special relationship with a priest or deacon not associated with St. Theresa Parish, you may request that he be the celebrant at your wedding. Please notify your consulting priest/deacon and Marriage Ministry at St. Theresa Parish about this arrangement. A Protestant Minister/Rabbi may be present but can only impart a benediction and may not receive the matrimony vows, however.

Visiting priests from outside of the Archdiocese of Chicago must obtain faculties (a letter of permission and good-standing from his Ordinary (Bishop) and confirmation from the Archdiocese of Chicago Chancery) to witness a marriage in the Archdiocese of Chicago (Canon 1111).

## Wedding Rehearsal

Wedding Rehearsal Ministry will contact the bride approximately three to four weeks prior to your wedding. They will assist you with planning your rehearsal, will conduct the rehearsal, and assist at your wedding.

## Altar Servers

Two altar servers will be scheduled to assist at your celebration. It is customary to give the servers a gratuity (\$10 - \$20 donation per server).

## Church Decoration and Environment

The Catholic Church observes the days and months of the year as liturgical seasons. Each season has its distinct color and décor. Seasonal flowers, plants or other items placed by the parish may not be moved for your celebration. Please inform your florist of this rule.

- Flowers: Flower arrangements are not required for your wedding. If you wish to have flowers, your florist is responsible for the placement of these flowers with the assistance of St. Theresa Parish Marriage Ministry. Flowers are never placed on top of the altar table. Note that during the Christmas and Easter seasons, our parish has an abundance of flowers in the church.
- Presentation Flowers: If you wish to present flowers at the greeting of peace and/or to the Blessed Mother, please have your florist supply them.
- Pew Decorations: If you wish to have a pew decoration such as bows or flowers, they may be attached with rubber bands or green wire. No tape is to be used at any time. There are 14 pews down the center aisle in the church.
- White Runner: A runner is not utilized at St. Theresa Parish
- Rice, Confetti, Birdseed, and Balloons: **These are not allowed.** Nothing may be thrown or released into the air. Current recommendation is the use of bells. Bubbles may be used outside of the church. If someone throws flower petals (only fake ones are allowed), the wedding party is responsible for clean up.
- Unity Candle: Unity Candles are not necessary for the ritual but if you wish to have a unity candle at your celebration, please bring it to the rehearsal. Marriage Ministry will provide a suitable place for its storage and visibility at the liturgy.
- Additional candles, hurricanes, candelabra, etc. are not allowed.
- No animals are allowed in the church (other than companion service dogs).
- No “wedding planners” should interfere with the wedding liturgy or St. Theresa Parish Marriage Ministry.

## Additional Information for your wedding

- Observing Time Schedules: Your rehearsal and wedding must begin at the scheduled time. A late start to your wedding means that you will have less time for pictures in the church.
- Smoking and Drinking: Smoking is not permitted in the church or on parish grounds. The consumption of alcohol is not permitted anywhere on church grounds. It is inappropriate to eat, drink, smoke, or to chew gum within the church building or around the entrances of the church. Please act appropriately.
- Using cell phones: Cell phones must be muted/shut off before entering the church. Cell phones may not be used within the church building.
- Photography and Videotaping: The quiet dignity of the Church must be maintained during picture taking by the photographer, relatives, friends, and the bridal party. Photographers, cameras, and video equipment must not be placed on the altar platform/sanctuary. Attention should never be drawn away from the ceremony to the photographer. Moving into the sanctuary to take pictures is not permitted. **Photographers may not lie down for 'up shots.'** No one is permitted to stand on any of the church's furniture. All the equipment for photography and video-taping may be set up before or after the ceremony. Flash may be used on the camera itself, but no "umbrella" lighting or light stands are allowed in the church during the liturgy. Extra lights are not permitted to enhance the photographs during the ceremony.

Video operators are to use battery packs – no electrical cords may be used in the church. All photos and videos must be concluded and everyone out of the church 30 minutes prior to the next event. Specifically, the 1:00 PM wedding must be out of the church by 2:30 PM, and the 3:00 PM wedding must be out of the church by 4:30 PM. Please have the video and photographer personnel speak to St. Theresa Marriage Ministry personnel prior to the start of your wedding. Please remember, the church is available for no more than 1 ½ hours, regardless of the day or time, including time for pictures.

- Disposition to participate within the Catholic Mass: It is the Catholic Tradition that only Catholics without serious sin may receive the Eucharist (Holy Communion). Inter-faith Communion is not a general practice for the Catholic Church.

**MATRIMONY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH EXPRESSES A COMMITMENT TO THE FAITH** and its practice and respect for the tradition. These months of engagement are an ideal time to reflect on your faith. This provides a deepening of your relationship with God, a fresh start, a renewal of commitment. We encourage you to spend time in prayer, especially at Sunday Mass, and to attend the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) prior to entering into the Sacrament of Matrimony.

**MAY GOD BLESS YOU DURING THESE EXCITING DAYS!**