

YOUR WEDDING AT ST. THOMAS MORE

St. Thomas More parish wishes to congratulate you and share with you in this, one of the happiest moments of your life. It is our desire to make your wedding as beautiful and meaningful as possible. We have prepared the following guidelines to help you and to answer the many questions you may have. Of course, you should always feel free to call us for additional information.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

The Church has always seen Christian marriage as a holy covenant, a permanent and faithful partnership of love between people who belong not only to each other but also to God. Marriage is a sacrament in which two baptized persons are the ministers of the sacrament for each other. Before you accept the responsibilities of marriage in the Catholic Church, you need to understand and appreciate the full significance of what you are promising. In a series of interviews and conversations we will discuss together the dignity and responsibilities of married life and also help you reflect on the faith dimension of your lives that prompts you to ask to celebrate your wedding here at St. Thomas More.

WEDDING GUIDELINES

WHO MAY BE MARRIED

Catholic weddings may be celebrated at the parish of either the bride or the groom. In the case of mixed religion, they are held at the church of the Catholic party unless the Archbishop grants permission for them to be held elsewhere. Ordinarily, we do not have weddings where neither party is a member of St. Thomas More.

WHEN CAN YOU BE MARRIED

Weddings are celebrated on a Friday or Saturday evening (except for Holy Saturday, a Saturday that itself is a Holy Day such as Christmas or JulyFest weekend) provided nothing else is scheduled. It is also preferable that weddings not be held in the Penitential Seasons of Advent and Lent. Our Saturday evening Mass is at 4:00 pm. Wedding ceremonies on Saturday may only be scheduled between 10:00 am and 1:00 pm or after 6:00 pm.

SETTING THE DATE

Since marriage is a Sacrament, it is necessary to meet with Deacon Michael Thomas concerning your ability and disposition to receive it, as with any other Sacrament. You can reach Deacon Michael at (513)753-2549 or by email at mthomas@sttm.org to set up an appointment. At the initial meeting with the deacon it will be established if you (or parents, in the case of a student away at school or military personnel away from home) have been registered in the parish at least six months. You will be asked to take home and fill out a Marriage Information Sheet and an M-B form (freedom to marry form). Completing those forms and paying the \$400.00 fee for weddings is necessary to set the date. The date must be set at least six months away from this time to allow adequate time for preparation.

BEFORE THE MARRIAGE

CIVIL REQUIREMENTS

The major civil requirement for a wedding is that a license be obtained from Clermont County, or any other Ohio county. Both parties must appear at the Marriage License Bureau for the granting of the license. Because of the time requirements and office hours, please check into obtaining the license well in advance of the marriage date. Please bring your marriage license to the wedding rehearsal.

ECCLESIASTICAL REQUIREMENTS

Since the Church's minister has a two-fold responsibility: (a) providing the Sacrament to those who reasonably request it and (b) safeguarding the sanctity and indissolubility of the Sacrament, he must take care that the couple understands and appreciates the true significance of marriage. He must also be reasonably certain that the couple is capable of assuming the responsibilities of marriage and of living out this commitment. He will ask that all Catholic parties provide a current Baptismal record, that is, one dated within six months of the marriage date. He will also require that they complete the necessary instructions for the Sacrament.

ON LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE MARRIAGE

Some couples may consider living together before marriage, believing that a "trial marriage" will allow them to work out differences before making a legal commitment, thus leading to a stronger marriage. Well, that's not necessarily so. Studies show that couples who cohabit before marriage are actually more likely to separate and divorce than those who head straight for the altar. Secondly, there are moral reasons concerning commitment. It's easy and non-committal to simply move in together without a public display of commitment. Sure, couples say they are committed – but they are the only ones who know it. To begin a family unit, to live as married but not married, is basically not to honor one another with a public act of committed love that each deserves. Living together gives a poor witness to our youth. It gives a casual message about profound human relationships, a casualness that is already too prevalent. With this in mind we suggest that you at least consider separating before your wedding. We ask you this for two reasons. First as a gesture to the public, to the young, that you have rethought your position and want to enter a mutual life together in God's grace through a real and actual sacramental celebration of marriage. The second reason is most tender and most sincere. We ask you to consider separation as a gift to one another.

THE CEREMONY

WHO MAY PERFORM THE CEREMONY

Any Bishop, priest or deacon in good standing is welcome at St. Thomas More with approval of the pastor. In cases of mixed religion, the minister of the non-Catholic person is welcome to participate.

MASS OR NO MASS

Usually a wedding between two Catholic parties is held during the celebration of the Eucharist. On the other hand, a mixed marriage, that is, between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, is held outside of the Eucharistic celebration. This is to insure that the non-Catholic party may participate fully in the ceremony, as well as all relatives and friends of the non-Catholic party would feel more comfortable and also be able to participate fully. Celebration of the Eucharist can only take place between a Catholic and a non-Catholic with the permission of the Archbishop.

MUSIC

All music for weddings at St. Thomas More will follow the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Any music chosen should be suitable for a sacred and solemn celebration held in church. It is important that you contact the parish Music Director, Doug Stegeman, soon after you set the date for your wedding since he will be involved in guiding you through the music that you use during your wedding. Since there are guidelines for the selection of music for weddings, all music must be approved by the Music Director as he is responsible for liturgical music at all parish functions. This is true whether he is playing or coordinating with an outside musician. You may reach Mr. Stegeman by email at dstegeman@sttm.org or by telephone (513)753-2546.

DECORATIONS

Prior to your wedding celebration all decorations should be discussed with Deacon Michael Thomas (temporary parish director of Arts and Environment). We do not permit theme weddings. Decorations should never detract from the liturgical symbols already present in our church (altar, ambo, tabernacle, etc.). Nothing is ever to be placed on the altar. Usually the Church will be available for decorating and flower delivery one hour before the ceremony. Aisle candles are permitted, but must be covered with glass so as to prevent drippings on the pews. These candles must be removed immediately after the ceremony. Pew decorations are permitted, but must not be held with tape or other materials that deface the pews. **FLOWERS MAY NOT BE PLACED IN THE SANCTUARY PRIOR TO THE SATURDAY MASS.** All flowers brought into the sanctuary for the wedding are considered a floral offering to the parish and should be left in church. We appreciate how your flowers will enhance our sanctuary for the weekend masses. The aisle of our church is 100 ft. long. The church does not provide an aisle runner and it is your responsibility to remove the runner immediately after the ceremony. Rice or flower petals cannot be scattered because of a safety factor and the cleanup difficulty.

PICTURES

Your photographer is to check with the priest or deacon in the sacristy before the beginning of the ceremony. Ordinarily, flash pictures are only taken in the procession in and out of the church. With proper equipment the photographer will be able to take pictures without flash. Pictures may be taken in the church after the ceremony, but please inform your photographer that he is expected to be finished with photos 30 minutes after the conclusion of the ceremony. Photographers are not permitted to move church furnishings from their proper place. We realize that a wedding is an important event to record with pictures; however, it is easy for photography to take over, even to the point of making the pictures more important than the sacrament that has just taken place. This is not to be the case. All aspects of videotaping must be cleared with the priest or deacon before the ceremony.

REHEARSAL

Since it is necessary to reserve the church for rehearsal it should be scheduled at the time you set your date. You should allow approximately one full hour for the rehearsal. This way you can schedule dinners or other events. Photographers and musicians do not attend the rehearsal.

COST

The Church fee of \$400.00 is due when you set your wedding date with Deacon Michael Thomas. This fee covers marriage preparation material, utilities and maintenance for the rehearsal and wedding ceremony as well as the services of the parish Music Director. If servers are used it is customary to give them a tip.

CONCLUSION

Congratulations on your engagement. It is our goal to help you prepare worthily and well for your celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Please contact the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage if you have additional questions about these guidelines. God bless you.