

Guidelines for Weddings & Anniversaries

Why Do We Have Guidelines?

The Catholic wedding is a unique ceremony in which the couple solemnly and publicly exchange their vows in the presence of the Church community, following the form of the Roman Rite.

In order to maintain the sacred character of the wedding rite, to provide for the Christian community in which the wedding is celebrated, and to provide for other ceremonies which might be scheduled on the same day, the following guidelines should be observed at all weddings and anniversaries celebrated at St. Joseph and St. Anthony Parishes.

Place of the Wedding

Church practice recommends that the marriage of a Catholic be celebrated in the parish of the Catholic bride. If the bride is not Catholic, the marriage should take place in the parish of the groom. If the parties desire to be married in a church other than Catholic, permission must be granted by the Bishop of San Angelo.

Preparation Time

Before any wedding ceremony will be scheduled, the couple is to visit with the parish priest at least six months before any contemplated date. We ask that a couple not set a definite date (renting a hall, contracting with a band, printing invitations, etc.) until the marriage preparation is well under way or finished. Once a date is set, it is almost impossible to postpone a wedding.

Marriage Preparation Content

Pre-marriage preparation is required for couples. This preparation should take place as early as possible in the wedding plans. This allows the couple to begin growth and development in the light of Catholic teaching on marriage. Under the direction of the Diocese of San Angelo, Engaged Encounter is presented several times each year. Our parishes also present the Sponsor Couple Program. In addition, we offer the FOCCUS inventory. We encourage our couples to take advantage of as much preparation as possible for marriage. Some form of marriage preparation is necessary for marriage at one of our parishes.

Women's Dresses

Before a wedding date is finalized, a picture or pattern for the women's dresses must be approved by one of the women appointed to approve the dresses. Immodest dresses will not be permitted.

Required Paperwork

During the time of marriage preparation, all questionnaires, affidavits, dispensations must be completed. If an annulment is needed, plans for any wedding must be suspended until the annulment is obtained. Each baptized party is to present a current copy of baptism. This can be obtained from the parish of baptism. The parish office can help in this matter.

Wedding Readings and Music

Each couple is given a list of readings for the wedding liturgy as well as suggested music for weddings. The couple is to choose one reading from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament and one from the Gospels. Music must be consistent with the meaning of the sacrament. It is the responsibility of the couple to contact musicians. If there will be musicians other than those who regularly play at our parish Masses, the couple must have them approved by the priest in charge of the wedding. Solo singing is permitted before the liturgy. But during the liturgy, the musicians are to lead the assembly in singing. Recorded music is not to be used during the liturgy. It may be used before the liturgy begins.

Time of Weddings

The usual time for Saturday weddings is 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. This gives the priest time for other parish functions in the afternoon. The wedding may be celebrated as late as 2:00 p.m. if the priest agrees. There will be no weddings on Sunday. For a marriage convalidation without Mass, this may take place at any time agreeable to the couple and the priest. Weddings with Mass will not be celebrated during Lent.

Second Marriage

If one of the parties has been married previously or if the couple has been living together without marriage, the Diocese of San Angelo calls for a *simple* ceremony.

Rehearsal

A time for rehearsal must be arranged in advance by the couple and the one leading the rehearsal. A week before the rehearsal, the couple is to have a diagram of the seating arrangement to facilitate the rehearsal.

Photographers

A photographer may be in the center aisle during the entrance procession. Once the couple has reached the front, the photographer is to be in the area of the side doors (around the corner from the body of the church) so as not to be a distraction from the liturgy. Under no condition is a photographer allowed into the sanctuary during the liturgy. Portable lights are not permitted. All this applies to the one using a video camera also.

Entrance Procession

Because the wedding is a celebration of unity and equality between woman and man, the entrance procession calls attention to the groom as well as the bride. It is expected that both bride and groom will be escorted to the altar by their parents or representatives of the parents.

Marriage License

The State of Texas requires that the couple obtain a marriage license at least 72-hours prior to the wedding. The license is valid for 30 days. The person officiating must have the license before the wedding.

Candles

A unity candle may be used. If one is used, the couple must provide the stand or table. The candle is placed to the side of the sanctuary. If other candles are used, they are to be placed near the rear wall.

Flowers

Flowers may be placed on stands in the sanctuary area, but not in such a way that they block the vision of anyone. If an arch is used, it is to be at the entrance to the church.

Kneelers and Other Furniture

Our parishes have kneelers for the novios. The furniture in the sanctuary may not be re-arranged nor may existing decorations be changed. When there are liturgical decorations already in place, the decorations for the wedding must fit into the existing decorations. If flower stands are used at the end of the benches, such stands are not to block to view of the people.

If bows are used on the pews, *masking tape* may be used. But it is to be *entirely* removed after the wedding. No *scotch tape* is to be used on the pews.

Flower Petals, Flower Wrappings, Rice and Bird Seed

If flower petals are thrown, they must be picked up after the wedding. All papers, pins, film boxes, etc. must be picked up and thrown into the dumpster. No rice or seed of any kind is to be thrown at our parishes. If this is done, it is to be done somewhere other than the parish.

Parish Hall

If the couple plans to use a parish hall, arrangements are to be made with the Parish Secretary.