



*Wedding Policy  
Of  
St. Henry Catholic Church  
1021 Eighth Avenue  
Lake Charles, Louisiana 70601  
(337) 436-7223*

# What is the Sacrament of Matrimony?

“The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish a life-long partnership between themselves, derives its force and strength from creation, but for the Christian faithful it is also raised up to a higher dignity, since it is numbered among the Sacraments of the new covenant.

A Marriage is established by the conjugal covenant, that is, the irrevocable consent of both spouses, by which they freely give themselves to each other and accept each other. Moreover, this singular union of a man and a woman requires, and the good of the children demands, the complete fidelity of the spouses and the indissoluble unity of the bond.

Furthermore, the institution of Marriage itself and conjugal love are, by their very nature, ordered to the procreation and formation of children and find in them, as it were, their ultimate crown. Children are thus truly the supreme gift of Marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves.

For God, who has called the couple to Marriage, continues to call them to Marriage. Those who marry in Christ are able, with faith in the Word of God, to celebrate fruitfully the mystery of the union of Christ and the Church, to live it rightly, and to bear witness to it publicly before all. A Marriage that is desired, prepared for, celebrated, and lived daily in the light of faith is that which is ‘joined by the Church, strengthened by a sacrificial offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by Angels, and ratified by the Father...How wonderful the bond of the two believers: one in hope, one in vow, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, with no separation of spirit and flesh. Indeed, they are two in one flesh; where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit’” (From the Introduction to the Order of Celebrating Matrimony)

**Because of the sacredness of the Sacrament and the permanent nature of the marriage bond, it is not something to be entered into lightly or hastily. We ask that you take time to carefully read through this policy and prayerfully consider if God is indeed calling the two of you to this great Sacrament.**

# Steps to A Wedding at St. Henry Catholic Church

## 1. Obtain recent official Church documents before your first appointment with the priest or deacon.

Obtain a NEW copy of EACH of your baptismal certificates issued within the last six months from the church parish where you and your fiancée were baptized. Your original certificate is not acceptable. Phone that parish; inform them that you are getting married and you need a recent official copy of your baptismal record with notations on the front and the reverse side of the document.

If you or your future spouse are NOT Roman Catholic, you must obtain a letter from the church of baptism stating that the Baptism has taken place. That letter MUST include you or your future spouse's full name and birth date, parents' full name (including mother's maiden name), and the date of Baptism.

## 2. Make an appointment (at least 6 months before you plan to marry) with the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding

Bring all documents applicable to you and your future spouse with you at this initial visit.

During this first appointment, the priest or deacon will review the church policy for weddings, which includes information about photographers, florist, attendants, liturgical music, etc. He will also instruct you on how to register for the Together for Life Seminar and the Prepare-Enrich online assessment.

Only the priest or deacon may put wedding dates on the church calendar. It is important that you understand these policies before making arrangements for these or any other services connected with your wedding. Again, DO NOT MAKE ANY ARRANGEMENTS UNTIL THE PRIEST OR DEACON HAS GIVEN YOU A DEFINITIVE WEDDING DATE.

(NOTE: If either you or your future spouse is seeking an annulment, the annulment **must** be granted before a wedding date can be set.)

3. Register for the Together for Life Seminar and the Prepare-Enrich assessment.

4. Take the Prepare-Enrich assessment **separately**.

5. Schedule your second visit with the priest or deacon to go over your results. At this meeting, he will conduct an official Prenuptial Inquiry required by Canon Law.

6. St. Henry's will pair you with a Mentor Couple from the Parish who will help guide and advise you on the responsibilities of married life. You will meet with them a total of six times. (The Mentor Couple will be given a copy of your Prepare-Enrich results.)

7. Schedule follow-up visit(s) with the priest or deacon. (Remember to bring your Certificate of Attendance from the Together for Life Seminar.)

8. At least two weeks before your wedding day, bring your Marriage License to the Church office:  
(\*You may obtain the Marriage License on the first floor of the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse, Clerk of Court's Office, 1000 Ryan St., Lake Charles, LA. Office hours are 8:30am – 4:30pm, Monday through Friday (437-3550). \*When applying for your marriage license, you will need a certified copy (bears the State seal) of your birth certificate and both bride and groom must be present.

\*To obtain a certified copy of your birth certificates, contact the Health Unit at 3236 Kirkman St., Lake Charles, LA, for an application. Office hours are 8:00am – 4:30pm, Monday through Friday (478-6020); allow 6 – 8 weeks for receipt of this document.

\*GET YOUR LICENSE AT LEAST 3 DAYS AND NOT MORE THAN 30 DAYS BEFORE YOU ARE TO BE MARRIED. There is a 72-hour waiting period between issuance of the license and actual celebration of the marriage ceremony. And, the marriage license is valid for only 30 days (to the minute) from date of issuance.

#### **9. Take care of all church expenses.**

Many PARISHIONERS continue to ask which church expenses are actually involved in a wedding. Needless to say, our operational expenses continue to rise. Our utilities alone have been estimated at \$50.00 per hour. The air-conditioning or heating units are usually operating an hour before the wedding, during the wedding and, of course, during rehearsal. In answering that request for information, we quickly add that our parishioners' money has never been or ever will be an issue for church services. All in our parish, no doubt, will be most appreciative when a family can assist with these extra expenses. A donation of **\$100.00** would be helpful toward these special expenses. Also, if Altar Servers assist at your wedding, a gift of \$20 each is appreciated for their services. Priests and deacons do not charge fees for such services but if you would like to give a monetary gift to the officiating clergy, that is your option.

## **WEDDING POLICY FOR ST. HENRY CATHOLIC CHURCH PARISH LAKE CHARLES, LA**

Great care is taken to see that the prayer for this special moment is reverent, graceful, beautiful, and open to the movement of God's spirit among us. In this spirit, St. Henry Parish provides the following policy for celebrating weddings in our church. This policy must be followed in order to preserve the dignity and respect of the church, as well as to contribute to the dignity and beauty of your wedding.

1. Respect for the church and its facilities and grounds must be demonstrated at all times.
2. **Smoking is NOT PERMITTED** anywhere in the church, the sacristy, restrooms/bride's dressing room, and surrounding areas.
3. **Drinking is absolutely forbidden** anywhere on the church grounds. NO alcoholic beverages of any kind—wine, beer, etc., may be brought on the church grounds, in the church, restrooms/bride's dressing room, the sacristy, or gathering space for the groomsmen. Any members of the wedding party who violate this policy will be asked to leave the premises.
4. **No food may be brought into the church**, the restrooms/bride's dressing room, the sacristy, or the place of gathering for the groomsmen. Likewise, gum chewing is not permitted in the church.
5. **For safety reasons**, no rice, birdseed, confetti, or other materials may be thrown on the church grounds following the wedding. Likewise, no flower petals (real, silk, or paper) may be thrown in the church or on the church grounds. Our insurance carrier strongly discourages such practices. **NO FLOOR RUNNERS ALLOWED** due to liability of people tripping on flooring device.
6. **St. Henry's Church does not have a bride's dressing room.** Therefore, it is expected that all members of the wedding party (i.e. bride, groom, groomsmen, parents, ushers, etc.) should come to the church already properly attired for the wedding.
7. **All personal belongings** must be removed from the church facilities IMMEDIATELY following the wedding. The parish is not responsible for articles left unattended.
8. **NOTHING** may be moved in the church, sacristy, bride's dressing room, or any other facility of the church without the explicit permission of the pastor or one of his associates. This is to include furnishings, plants, flowers, and liturgical décor. This also applies to photographers and videographers.

## **OUT OF PARISH WEDDINGS**

Couples from other parishes may celebrate their wedding in St. Henry Catholic Church. However, since the parishioners of St. Henry parish provide the financial support, maintain the church, and pay for all the expenses of its operations, including utilities and up-keep, and since weddings of persons from outside the parish incur expenses beyond the normal parish use of the facilities, a fee of **\$250.00** is required of non-parishioners desiring to have their wedding celebrated in St. Henry Church. A Parishioner is defined in Canon Law as one or both persons who reside within the territorial boundaries of St. Henry Church. For the purposes of weddings, persons who do not live within the parish boundaries but who are registered in the parish or whose parents are registered and attend Mass regularly at St. Henry's will be considered "in-parish".

## **THE CELEBRANT OF THE WEDDING**

Ordinarily, one of the priests or deacon of the parish staff will preside at weddings celebrated in the parish. On occasion, a couple may have a priest-friend or priest-relative they wish to invite to preside at the wedding or to assist at the wedding. In this case, the couple should mention this to the parish priest **early** in the process. Visiting priests will be asked to observe Church law and Parish policy and customs regarding the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. The visiting priest or deacon must request and receive delegation from the Pastor of St. Henry Church.

## **SIZE OF THE WEDDING PARTY**

Weddings are a celebration of God's love found in the lives of two people, which are solemnized in liturgical prayer. In order to preserve the reverence and dignity of the celebration, no more than seven (7) couples are allowed in the bridal party. FYI, it is not necessary to have a "bridal party".

Ring bearers and flower girls are not required for the celebration of marriage. Couples will be asked to consider the age of children involved in these roles and whether their presence will add to, or detract from, the joyful solemnity of the celebration. If couples choose to use ring bearers and flower girls, it is the policy of this parish that these youngsters are at least **FOUR (4)** years of age and who have been attending church. This is for reasons that they understand the sacredness of the celebration and where they are.

## **UNITY CANDLE**

The unity candle is a commercial product of which no mention is made in the liturgical documents of the Roman Catholic Church. It has no real history or tradition behind it as a religious symbol. Therefore, it is **not** allowed in the church.

## **REHEARSALS**

Rehearsals must begin on time since there often are other services or wedding rehearsals to take place in a single evening. It must be remembered that rehearsals are conducted in the church; therefore, shorts, cutoffs, etc., are not considered to be appropriate attire for the occasion. Obviously, wedding party members should not come to the rehearsal drinking or chewing gum in the church.

## **CHURCH DÉCOR**

During certain liturgical seasons of the church year, such as Advent, Christmas, and Easter, particular décor is used in the church. There are NO weddings during Lent. The colors used in the church during these seasons should be considered when planning your wedding. These colors and décor CANNOT be removed or changed for any reason.

## **SIGNS**

No banners or signs of any kind may be put up in the church or carried by anyone in the procession.

## **ATTIRE**

The Church is “the house of God and the gate of heaven”. Please remember that you are in the presence of God in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Since this is a “church wedding”, the clothing of the wedding party should be respectful and modest. No bright or distracting colored tuxedos (black, grey, or dark blue are recommended). For brides and bridesmaids, dresses should reach the knees. No low-cut or strapless dresses please. The priest or deacon reserves the right to approve the wardrobe of the wedding party (including the bride’s dress).

## **ENTRANCE PROCESSION OPTIONS**

Processions are not to be confused with parades. They are not theatrical productions. Processions are sacred actions that go back to the time of the Old Testament. In the Catholic tradition, we hold processions because we are a pilgrim people. We are only pilgrims on this earth making our way towards the kingdom of heaven. There is typically some leeway with regard to how the wedding procession goes so please take the time to prayerfully consider the following options for your wedding's entrance procession. **When planning your procession, be careful to consider the message that the order you choose communicates. It is important to recognize that every action in liturgy is symbolic.** Note that if there are altar servers, they will process in first with the processional crucifix leading the way.

### **Option 1: Bride & Groom process in together. (Recommended)**

You are the ministers of this sacrament and the ministers are usually last in a liturgical procession. You are also entering into this sacrament as **equals**. While it has become popular in our society for the bride and groom to not see each other before the wedding, this is a completely secular practice. There is nothing wrong with you seeing each other before the wedding. Christians do not believe in superstition so it is not "bad luck" if the groom sees the bride before the wedding.

### **Option 2: Bride & Groom accompanied by parents.**

Weddings are family affairs and it is understandable to want your parents to be part of your big day. When the bride and groom process in last accompanied by your parents, it symbolizes the family you came from accompanying you as you go to form a family of your own. *"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body"* (Genesis 2:24).

### **Option 3: Bride accompanied by father.**

It has become a popular practice in American culture for the bride to be "given away" by her father. This practice, however, finds its roots in the practice of arranged marriages when the bride was handed over from one family to another. Such practices are of course contrary to the true meaning of marriage as the free and mutual giving of the spouses to each other. In today's culture, this option is often chosen for sentimental reasons instead. In this option, the groom should not be left out of the procession. He would process in behind the servers and the clergy.

## LITURGICAL MUSIC FOR YOUR WEDDING

A Roman Catholic marriage is an act of worship and the music chosen must foster a sense of the sacred and assist those assembled in their prayer. The music along with all the other gestures and rites of the wedding liturgy is to establish a spirit of prayer and celebration and to strengthen the expression of faith. Nothing in the liturgy should detract from the setting of faith or distract people from prayer. The documents of the Second Vatican Council have ordered that musical texts must be either biblical or sacramental in nature, free from association with secular or popular music, before, during, and after the liturgy. Sentimental favorites from movies, Broadway shows, or the radio are best saved for the reception where they can be heard in a better context. The church and its formal setting make classical sacred music the most appropriate and ultimately the most successful choice for music at your wedding.

Before planning any music for your wedding, hiring and contracting a vocalist or instrumentalist, the priest/deacon or the church staff will direct you to one of our music coordinators, who will assist and recommend music and/or musicians for your wedding liturgy. Final approval of all musical selections lies with the priest or deacon officiating.

The Liturgical Music Wedding Policy of St. Henry Catholic Church has been carefully read and understood, and we the undersigned bride and groom, by our signature, agree to follow the policy as stated.

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Date of Wedding

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Time of Wedding

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Bride's Signature

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Date

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Groom's Signature

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Date

- 1) Signatures first.
- 2) Make copy and give to Musician Dept.
- 3) Bride receives a copy.
- 4) Keep original in marriage file.

**RETURN THIS TO THE PARISH OFFICE 10 DAYS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING.**

## FLORISTS AND CHURCH DECORATIONS

1. Flowers, plants, and trees, genuine, of course, are particularly apt for the decoration of liturgical space (the church and sanctuary) since they are of nature, always discreet in their message, never cheap or ill-made. (From the document Environment & Art in Catholic Worship).
2. Floral decorations should never impede the approach to or the encircling of the altar nor obstruct any of the ritual movement and action. Nothing may be placed on the altar table at any time. However, there are places in most liturgical spaces where it is appropriate to place floral decoration.
3. The decorations for your wedding may be affected by the date you select. (i.e., during the Advent season elaborate decorations would be inappropriate.)
4. Wedding and floral decoration for Saturday afternoon weddings must be cleared away following the wedding so that they do not interfere with the Saturday afternoon masses. The FLORIST is responsible for cleaning the church of boxes, candle holders, pew bows, etc. IMMEDIATELY after the wedding. Generally, the FLORIST is permitted into the church to decorate one hour before the wedding. However, weddings and floral decorations for Saturday evening weddings may not be set-up until after the latest Saturday vigil mass and, as is the case, must be removed immediately after the wedding.
5. DO NOT use tape to attach flowers or bows to the ends of the pews. Please tie these decorations to the pews or use some type of holder. Tape removes the varnish from the surface of the pews.
6. Aisle runners are not secure. For safety reasons, they are not to be used.
7. There must be nothing blocking the ends of the pews of the church (such as ribbon streamers, netting that drapes from one pew to the next, etc.).
8. The “Unity Candle” is not a liturgical symbol and thus is not to be a part of weddings celebrated at St. Henry Catholic Church.

This floral and wedding decoration policy must be shown to the florist when making arrangements with them. The florist and bride must abide by all aspects of the policy outlined above. **By Signing this policy statement, the florist and bride agree to the terms of this document. The pastor of St. Henry Church reserves the right to not allow florists who violate this policy for future weddings.**

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Bride's signature

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Florist's Signature

**RETURN THIS TO THE PARISH OFFICE 10 DAYS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING.**

**PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOTAPING**

Photographers are welcome, however, they must keep in mind that a wedding in the Catholic Church is a liturgical worship service and they must be sensitive to the service. Likewise, since most weddings are formal occasions, photographers should dress in a manner befitting the occasion. Open shirt collars and shirt tails hanging out are inappropriate attire for male photographers. The wedding liturgy is a celebration of a sacred moment. While we understand the desire to record this moment, we ask that the following policy be observed so that the sacred joy of this day will not be marred by photographic and video taping equipment and personnel.

1. Photographers and video tapers are **not permitted to roam about the church once the liturgy has begun**. Photographers and video tapers are not permitted on the sanctuary platform at any time. Video taping should be from a stationary tripod.
2. Every effort should be made to let the wedding guests know that picture taking and filming is limited to the professionals hired by the bride and groom.
3. Only the lighting already available in the church may be used. The available lighting actually lights up the sanctuary very well. No additional lighting may be brought into the church. **Because it can become too distracting, flash photography will not be allowed during the actual wedding liturgy** but may be used in the before and after photos.
4. After the wedding celebration, the church will remain open for the taking of pictures. However, since other events may be scheduled immediately following your wedding, you must restrict the taking of pictures to 15 minutes. Please keep in mind that you are still in church and proper respect and consideration must be given to anyone wishing to offer prayers in the church.
5. Photographs may be taken as the bridal party walks down the aisle during the processional and recessional. Pictures may also be taken prior to the wedding but must be completed at least 15 minutes prior to the appointed time of the wedding so that guests may be seated and the wedding can begin on time. Once the wedding liturgy has begun, photography should be discreet and kept to a minimum so as not to distract from the sacredness of the liturgy.
6. Photographers and videographers are not permitted to move anything in the church, sacristy, bridal dressing room, or any other part of the church even if objects may interfere with the taking of pictures.
7. No one is permitted to touch or place anything on the altar table at any time.

This form is to be read carefully by the bride, groom, and the photographer and/or videographer. All members of the wedding party, the photographer, and/or videographer must abide by all aspects of the policy outlined above. By signing this policy statement, the involved persons agree to the terms of this document. Photographers and videographers acknowledge that they might not be invited to St. Henry's for future weddings if this policy is not adhered to.

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Bride's signature

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Photographer's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Groom's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Videographer's signature

**PLEASE RETURN THIS TO THE PARISH OFFICE 10 DAYS PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING.**