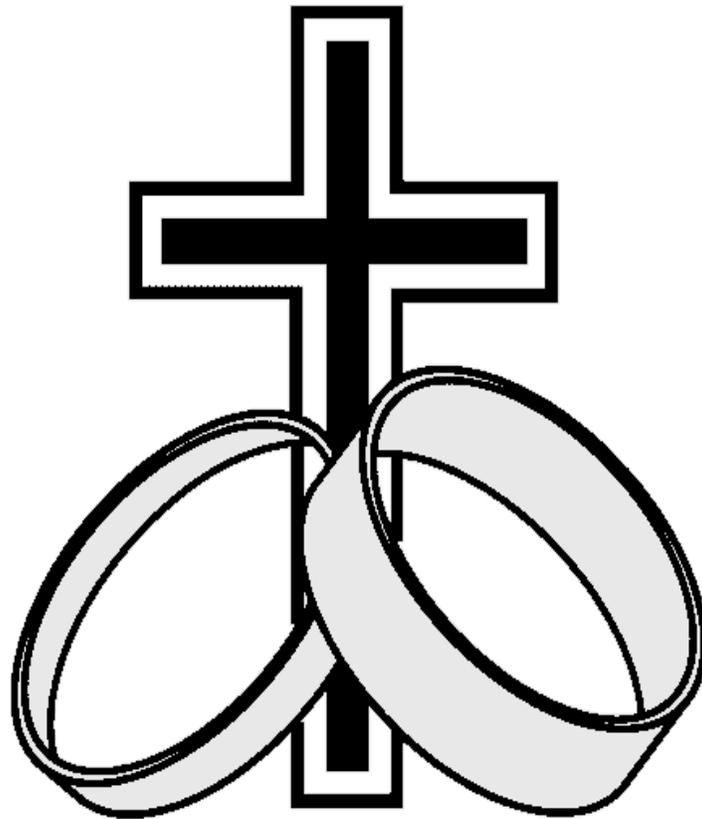


St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church  
302 South Magnolia Blvd,  
Magnolia, TX 77355-8535  
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www.st-matthias.net



# **Marriage Preparation Guidelines**

## **Rules and Regulations**

(updated according to Dec. 2016 “Order of Celebrating Matrimony”)

This handbook will continue to be updated as needed to reflect changes in Parish policies and wedding stipend fees.

April 8, 2017

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\*Acknowledgement of St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church Policy  
Rules and Regulations

\* This checklist is to be reviewed with a Wedding Coordination Ministry representative at St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church and the bride and/or bride and groom. It will need to be initialed and dated.

## WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

The Catholic Community believes that Christian Marriage is the union of a baptized man and woman who freely enter into a covenant of love with each other in Christ. The Christian purposes of marriage are the giving and receiving of love and the procreation and education of children.

Married persons live their sacraments by the way they care for one another, love one another, and are enthusiastic for one another as husband and wife. In their daily love for each other, their children, and members of the community, the couple becomes a living sign (a sacrament) for how much Jesus loves us and wishes to embrace us as His brothers and sisters. As they work their way through marital and family crises and struggles, a couple witnesses to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in all our lives.

The requirements for entering into Christian marriage are twofold. In order to strive to live out the ideal of Christian marriage, a married couple must have the ability to give and receive love and to sustain an intimate relationship. To do this they must each have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church.

## YOUR WEDDING AT ST. MATTHIAS THE APOSTLE PARISH

### Times

- Ordinarily weddings are celebrated on Saturdays at 12 o'clock and 2 o'clock.

### Celebrant

- Our priest and deacons are pleased to preside at your wedding.
- A visiting priest or deacon who officiates at weddings at St. Matthias must receive delegation from the Pastor of St. Matthias. Clergy from outside of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston must have the testimonial of suitability for ministry from his own religious superior or Bishop.

## WEDDING PREPARATION PROCESS

### Preliminary Planning

- At least 6-9 months prior to anticipated wedding date, the couple should contact the St. Matthias parish office at 281.356.2000.
- The couple should **not** make tentative wedding arrangements before attending marriage preparation. The priest and the couple **together** have the responsibility to determine the couple's readiness to receive the sacrament of matrimony.

## Documents Needed

### Parish registration

- If you are not a registered member of St. Matthias, we will need a letter from the pastor of the church you belong to stating that 1) you are a registered parishioner at the parish and that 2) the pastor of the church gives you permission to be married at St. Matthias.

### Baptismal certificates

- An updated baptismal certificate issued within six months before the wedding date is required (not the original Baptismal). Call the church of your baptism and request a certified copy of the certificate be sent to you.
- If either party is non Catholic, a copy of his/her baptismal certificate or a letter on official church letterhead, verifying baptism at a non-Catholic church is acceptable. If your denomination does not record baptisms, a parent or another person who was present at the baptism can issue a letter testifying that you were baptized.

### Affidavits of Freedom to Marry

You will each be asked to name two (2) people each who know you well and would be willing to testify that you have not had a previous marriage. Parents or siblings are the preferred persons to sign the affidavit. The form will be provided by the priest/deacon who is preparing you for marriage.

### Marriage License

- A legal marriage license issued by the State of Texas must be purchased and brought to the priest at least two weeks prior to the wedding date.
- The marriage license can be obtained from any county courthouse in the state of Texas.
- A Texas marriage license is not valid after purchase for 72 hours from the time of issuance and becomes invalid if the marriage does not occur within 90 days of purchase.
- After the wedding, the cleric will sign the license. The parish will record the information, and the couple will mail the completed license to the County Clerk's Office. Once the wedding has been recorded by the state, the original license will be mailed to the couple.
- For additional information, contact [www.cclerk.hctx.net](http://www.cclerk.hctx.net).

### Other documents

- In particular cases, if other documents are needed, the Priest or Deacon will ask for them.

## **Meetings to Attend**

The Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston requires all engaged couples to participate in a process of pre-marital instruction and formation.

### Meetings with priest

- At least five (5) meetings with the priest are required.

### Engaged Encounter

- This is a weekend experience for couples planning marriage, designed to give couples the opportunity to dialogue about their future together.
- You will be given a schedule of where and when this program is offered. It is your responsibility to make the reservation to attend and secure the signature of the priest/deacon on your registration form.

### Natural Family Planning

- Part of a well rounded understanding of Christian marriage includes instruction in a method of Natural Family Planning.
- You will be required to attend natural family planning classes. Options for completing this requirement will be discussed with the couple at one of your preparation meetings with the priest/deacon.

### Sponsor couple

- This is an opportunity to provide a couple-to-couple approach to marriage preparation if the couple prefers this option instead of meeting with the priest. The engaged couple meets with the sponsor couple for a series of 5 sessions.

## **Wedding Planning Information Sheet**

- The Wedding Planning Information Sheet has been designed to be completed by the couple as you plan your wedding (i.e. participants, readings, music etc.) This form is available on our parish website or from the church office.

## FACILITIES

### Facilities

- The capacity of St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church is 280 people.
- Weddings must begin at the scheduled time.
- You will have access to the church one hour before and one hour after the ceremony.
- Air conditioning or heating will be provided for both the rehearsal and the wedding.
- A wedding preparation room will be available one hour before the scheduled ceremony.
- For safety and security reasons, please designate a family member or friend to care for your personal belongings. Wedding parties must remove all personal belongings from the wedding preparation room prior to the wedding. We are not responsible for the safety of valuables left in this room.
- No food or drink, except bottled water, is allowed on the church premises.
- The parish hall (if used for a reception after the ceremony) holds 230 people.

### Rules and Regulations for Facility Use

**Always remember that you are in the House of God and proper respect must be shown at all times.**

- No alcohol or illegal drugs are allowed on the parish grounds. A separate policy addresses alcohol consumption when the wedding reception is held in the parish hall.
- Smoking is not permitted anywhere in parish buildings.
- Please refrain from chewing gum.
- Please turn off all electronic devices inside the sanctuary.
- The bride and bridal attendants are asked to please be mindful of the necessary modesty of dress that is appropriate for the reverent respect for the church and the liturgy. Short dresses above the knee, low-cut or strapless gowns are not appropriate during the ceremony. All body adornment (tattoos, body piercings, nose jewelry) must be covered or removed since they will detract from the sanctity of the sacrament.
- Bridal attendants and groomsman should be kept within a reasonable number (5-6)
- Flower girls and ring bearers should be of an appropriate age of maturity, at least 5 years old.
- Please leave all the facilities (church, wedding preparation room) as you found them. All trash must be taken to the dumpster in the back parking lot.
- Clean up must be concluded by one hour after the ceremony

- If the parish hall is to be used for a reception, the reception needs to be catered and your own servers provided. Clean up after the reception is the responsibility of those designated, not the church staff. All trash must be taken to the dumpster in the back parking lot.

## FEES

### Wedding Donations, Gifts and Fees

- The fee for a wedding ceremony at St. Matthias is \$500.00 for parishioners and \$600 for non parishioners to cover the church, utilities and maintenance staff. A fee of \$250.00 is due at the time the wedding is booked and the balance is due 3 months prior to the ceremony.
- There is no set fee for the Priest/Deacon who has prepared you and witnessed your marriage. This is considered part of the privilege of caring for the faithful of the parish. A gift to the Priest/Deacon may be given directly to him, if you so desire. (Suggested amount is \$100-\$200)
- There is no set fee for the altar server(s) assisting in your marriage. A gift to the server(s) may be given directly to him/her. (Suggested amount \$20 each server)
- Wedding music planning is done jointly by the couple and the Music Director, and the fee is paid directly to the Music Director.
- The cost for the rental of the parish hall for a reception for registered members is handled with a separate contract through the parish office. A separate information sheet with parish hall rental information will be provided. If you decide to use the parish hall for your reception, there is an official contract which must be signed.

## CHURCH ENVIRONMENT

The use of flowers and other spiritually appropriate decorations are allowed. The church is available for floral set up **ONE (1) HOUR** prior to the wedding. It is your responsibility to make your florist aware of all the parish policies and regulations.

### Flowers

- Flowers must be living; not artificial.
- If you need assistance with obtaining a florist, the Parish office can make suggestions.
- Floral arrangements must not block any area of the altar where the priest or altar servers stand or walk.
- Flowers and other objects may not be placed on the altar itself.
- No furnishings, pedestals or plants belonging to the church may be removed from the church building.
- If any church flowers or plants were removed to make room for your floral arrangements, these should be replaced to their original location.

- If you would like to leave floral arrangements for the weekend Masses in honor of your wedding, please indicate on the Wedding Planning Information Sheet.
- When the church is decorated for a liturgical season-the church art and environment decorations may not be removed, moved or changed.
- All refuse including flower boxes, wrappings, flowers, arrangements etc. should be removed from the church. It should be left clean and tidy.

### **Decorations**

- NO TAPE, STAPLES OR TICKY-TACK is to be used. Ribbons and ties may be used.
- Bows or live flowers used as pew decorations cannot block access to the center aisle.
- An aisle runner may not be used due to safety concerns.
- Aisle candles may not be used due to safety concerns.
- All decorations must be removed from the church immediately after the ceremony.

### **Rice, Birdseed and Flower Petals**

- Due to safety hazards, rice, birdseed, flower petals and liquid bubbles are **NOT** allowed inside or outside the church.

### **Guest Book**

- A space in the Narthex can be set up for a guest registry for your guests to sign prior to the wedding; however signing of the book **MUST NOT DELAY THE ON TIME START OF THE CEREMONY.**

### **Worship Aid**

- A worship aid will be provided for guests to follow along with the Order of the Mass or your wedding ceremony without mass. It will include the liturgy (scripture readings/gospel) and musical selections you have chosen as well persons involved as readers, gift bearers etc. The worship aid will reflect the information that you provide on the Wedding Planning Information Sheet.
- If you prefer, you may provide your own worship aid. In this case, it must be similar in content to the St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church worship aid. A sample will be given to you.

### **Updated Rituals**

- The Unity Candle, Sand Ceremony, Unity Cross, and Flowers for the Blessed Virgin Mary are no longer part of the celebration of marriage. These can be done at other times. (rehearsal, reception)
- The Blessing and Giving of the Arras (coins) and the Blessing and Placing of the Lazo (cord, garland) or the Veil are permitted during the celebration of marriage.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

The marriage ceremony is a religious service and should not be interrupted or disturbed by noise or movement from the photographers. Photographers are guests in the church and are to conduct themselves in a reverent manner. Observance of the following policies is expected.

### Policies for Wedding Photographs

- NO flash photography is allowed during the ceremony.
- You are welcome to the church property for pictures inside and outside the church itself no earlier than **ONE (1) HOUR before** the ceremony. Photos of the ushers/groomsmen must be completed 30 minutes before the wedding so as not to interfere with their duties of ushering guests to their seats. **THE CEREMONY MUST BEGIN ON TIME.**
- Photographers are not allowed in the sanctuary (altar area) during any part of the wedding ceremony.
- Immediately after the ceremony, pictures/videos may be taken in the church using flash and lighting. All photography must be concluded **ONE (1) HOUR after** the ceremony. Please be mindful that if your wedding is in the afternoon, **the inside** of the church will be used for hearing confessions from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Silence at these times should be maintained.

### Policies for Wedding Videographers

- Bright lights on video cameras are not allowed during the ceremony.
- Video equipment may be set up in the Church no earlier than **ONE (1) HOUR before** the ceremony. Video equipment is to remain stationary.
- Neither professional nor guest video persons are allowed in the altar area during any part of the wedding ceremony.
- Persons making videos using cordless microphones must check with the Parish Music Director to insure there are no conflicts with the parish cordless microphones.
- Video photography and equipment must be concluded **ONE (1) HOUR after** the ceremony.

## **THE MARRIAGE LITURGY**

Your wedding will take place within the context of the Catholic liturgy. The liturgy may be either a mass – similar to that of the typical parish mass, or a wedding ceremony – a liturgy without communion. Either service will be conducted with beauty and devotion. During your marriage preparation time with the priest, these options will be discussed and scripture readings will be selected. Please enter your choices on the Wedding Planning Information Sheet found on the St. Matthias website or obtained from the church office.

See the chart on the following page.

I	II	II	III
<p><b>MARRIAGE WITHIN MASS</b> <i>INTRODUCTORY RITES</i></p> <p>Greeting of the Bride and Groom [bridal party] Procession Entrance Song Sign of the Cross Greeting of the People Introduction <b>Glory to God</b> Collect</p> <p><b>LITURGY OF THE WORD</b> First Reading Responsorial Psalm Second Reading Gospel Acclamation Gospel Reading Homily</p> <p><b>RITE OF MATRIMONY</b> Address to the Bride and Groom Questions before the Consent The Consent The Reception of the Consent The Blessing and Giving of Rings [The Blessing and Giving of the Arras] [Hymn or Canticle of Praise] The Universal Prayer</p> <p><b>[Creed, if prescribed for the day]</b> <i>LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST</i> Presentation of the Gifts Prayer over the Offerings Eucharistic Prayer [Blessing and Placing of the Lazo(or-Veil)] The Lord's Prayer</p> <p>Nuptial Blessing</p> <p>Sign of Peace Invitation/ Distribution of Holy Communion Period of Silent Prayer Prayer after Communion Solemn Blessing Recessional</p>	<p><b>MARRIAGE WITHOUT MASS</b> <i>INTRODUCTORY RITES</i></p> <p>Greeting of the Bride and Groom [bridal party] Procession Entrance Song Sign of the Cross Greeting of the People Introduction</p> <p>Opening Prayer</p> <p><b>LITURGY OF THE WORD</b> First Reading Responsorial Psalm Second Reading Gospel Acclamation Gospel Reading Homily</p> <p><b>RITE OF MATRIMONY</b> Address to the Bride and Groom Questions before the Consent The Consent The Reception of the Consent The Blessing and Giving of Rings [The Blessing and Giving of the Arras] [Hymn or Canticle of Praise] The Universal Prayer</p> <p>Lord's Prayer</p> <p>Blessing and Placing of the Lazo (or Veil) Nuptial Blessing</p> <p>Simple Blessing Hymn /Recessional Music</p>	<p><b>MARRIAGE OUTSIDE MASS WITH DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION (EXCEPT CIRCUMSTANCES)</b> <i>INTRODUCTORY RITES</i></p> <p>Greeting of the Bride and Groom [bridal party] Procession Entrance Song Sign of the Cross Greeting of the People Introduction</p> <p>Opening Prayer</p> <p><b>LITURGY OF THE WORD</b> First Reading Responsorial Psalm Second Reading Gospel Acclamation Gospel Reading Homily</p> <p><b>RITE OF MATRIMONY</b> Address to the Bride and Groom Questions before the Consent The Consent The Reception of the Consent The Blessing and Giving of Rings [The Blessing and Giving of the Arras] [Hymn or Canticle of Praise] The Universal Prayer</p> <p>Blessing and Placing of the Lazo (or Veil) Nuptial Blessing Lord's Prayer Sign of Peace Invitation to and Distribution of Holy Communion Period of Silent Prayer/Canticle of Praise Prayer after Communion Simple Blessing Hymn/Recessional</p>	<p><b>MARRIAGE BETWEEN A CATECHUMEN OR UNBAPTIZED AND A CATHOLIC</b> <i>INTRODUCTORY RITES</i></p> <p>Greeting of the Bride and Groom [bridal party] Procession Entrance Song</p> <p>Introduction</p> <p><b>LITURGY OF THE WORD</b> First Reading Responsorial Psalm</p> <p>Gospel Acclamation Gospel Reading Homily</p> <p><b>RITE OF MATRIMONY</b> Address to the Bride and Groom Questions before the Consent The Consent The Reception of the Consent The Blessing and Giving of Rings [The Blessing and Giving of the Arras] [Hymn or Canticle of Praise] The Universal Prayer</p> <p>Lord's Prayer (Christians to join)</p> <p>Blessing and Placing of the Lazo (or Veil) Nuptial Blessing</p> <p>Simple Blessing Hymn /Recessional Music</p>

## **WEDDING MUSIC**

Holy Matrimony is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. Although it is an individual couple who is entering into marriage, the sacrament is entrusted to the Church to be celebrated with reverence and dignity. Sacred music is an essential component of the Rite of Marriage. These guidelines are to be followed for all weddings taking place at St. Matthias.

### **Who to Contact**

- Couples will plan music for their ceremony with our St. Matthias Music Director at 281.356.2000. The Director will guide you through your selections, offer suggestions, and answer your questions. Once your selections are made, please enter your choices on your Wedding Planning Information Sheet which can be found on the St. Matthias website or obtained from the church office.

### **General Considerations**

- All music played or sung must be sacred or traditional. Sung music must be liturgically appropriate and reflect sacred text. Secular music (eg. popular, country) is prohibited.
- It is important that the entire assembly worship at the wedding ceremony. Music, particularly hymns, responses, and acclamations should be sung by the entire community. Therefore, the Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, and other Mass Acclamations are always sung.
- Prelude music begins 15 minutes prior to the wedding.
- Solos can be sung only during the parts of the ceremony where congregational singing is not expected.

### **Musicians**

- Because a wedding is first and foremost a sacred celebration, St. Matthias musicians ensure that the integrity and dignity of the Roman Catholic liturgy is respected and maintained.
- St. Matthias has available for wedding musicians: pianist, organist, and cantor.
- A cantor is required at any wedding with sung music.
- A microphone at the cantor stand is provided. Extra sound equipment is not available.

### **Fees**

- Fees are discussed with the music director. The director will also make sure that the music selections are approved by the priest before the wedding.
- The fees are to be paid directly to each wedding musician or cantor at the time of service.

## WEDDING REHEARSAL

- When you arrange your wedding date with the Priest/Deacon preparing you, please make sure **you reserve a time for the rehearsal**. The rehearsal is normally scheduled the Friday evening at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. before the Saturday wedding. Dates and times can only be set or changed by the Priest/Deacon assisting the couple.
- St. Matthias' wedding coordinator will be on site for the rehearsal and on the wedding day, one hour before the ceremony and one hour afterwards, to ensure the celebrations proceed smoothly, promptly and according to guidelines.
- The rehearsal itself is not the time for decision making of how people will line up or who will do readings etc. These items need to have been worked out and fully agreed upon before this evening.
- **The rehearsal shall begin promptly at the time scheduled.**
- Please allow plenty of time for traffic especially during the Texas Renaissance Season Oct. – Dec.
- The bride and groom should insist that all members of the wedding party attend the rehearsal – bride, groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls, ring bearers, parents of bride and groom, step parents who will be in the procession, grandparents, special friends or relatives who will be in the procession, ushers, readers, and gift bearers.
- If a member of the wedding party is not able to be at the rehearsal, it is helpful to everyone else to delegate someone to take that person's place.
- The rehearsal should last no more than 45 minutes.
- Please encourage your party to take the rehearsal seriously and pay attention so that it will begin on time and thus end on time, allowing your party to proceed to the rehearsal dinner or whatever plans you may have for the evening.

## YOUR WEDDING DAY

- The wedding party should arrive at the church one hour before the wedding.
- The bride, groom, and attendants may use the wedding preparation room. They should arrive with make-up and hair completely ready for the ceremony. The gentlemen usually arrive in full dress for the wedding. The gentlemen may then wait in the church narthex where they will receive their boutonnieres. Please do not leave valuables in automobiles or the wedding preparation room. The parish cannot be held responsible for lost or stolen items.
- Please leave the room clean and in good order. Take all trash to the dumpster in the rear parking lot.
- Bring bottled water, if desired.
- A guest book may be present in the narthex BUT signing it must not delay the on-time start of the ceremony.
- Guests may arrive 30 minutes before the wedding ceremony.

### **Liturgical Procession**

The order of procession will be discussed at the committee's initial meeting with the bride and groom and practiced at the wedding rehearsal.

## CONCLUSION & PRAYER FOR ENGAGED COUPLE

The celebration of your marriage as a sacrament is one of the most important things you will ever do. The rest of your life will be affected by what you do on that day. Please pray together for the wisdom and grace you need to prepare properly. Come to the altar prepared in spirit to be blessed by your love for each other. If any of us at St. Matthias can be of help to you before or after your marriage, please contact us.

### PRAYER FOR ENGAGED COUPLES

*Lord God, Heavenly Father,*

*The source of all love,  
the wise plan of your providence has brought this couple together.  
As they prepare themselves for the sacrament of marriage  
and pray for your grace,  
grant that, strengthened by Your blessing  
they may grow in their respect for one another  
and cherish each other with a sincere love.*

*Bless and guide this couple as they prepare to  
celebrate this beautiful sacrament.  
Give them patience during times of stress.  
Give them reassurance in times of doubt.  
Strengthen their love for one another,  
for their family and friends, and for You.*

*We ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord.*

*Amen.*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We acknowledge that we have read, understood, and will comply with all Marriage Preparation Guidelines, rules and regulations of St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Witness:

\_\_\_\_\_