

Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage

From the very beginning, the scriptures tell us that God made the marriage of husband and wife a sacred way of life. Jesus gave it an even more profound dimension by raising the love of husband and wife to a sacrament. His assurance that He will be an integral part of two lives becoming one. St. Paul compares the love that Christ has for His Church to the love, which a Christian husband and wife have for each other. They are called to be living witness of this love in the world today.

You are asking to be married at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church of Corpus Christi and in doing so are asking the priest or deacon and those who will be present to witness your pledge of enduring love - a love that must effect the sacred reality of this holy vocation to which, in your vows, you are responding. The understanding of this is the most sacred and most important aspect of any marriage, for on it everything depends. The externals of this happy day in your lives will be your wedding, but the living-out of this commitment in the months and years ahead will be what will make for you, a marriage.

The Church wishes to give you every opportunity as you begin to prepare for this important day in your life to discuss, pray, listen, and ask. The time that is required and the effort that is asked of you are little when measured against a lifetime. We hope that you will see our program "Preparing for Marriage" here at St. Philip the Apostle and our concern for the sacredness of this occasion in this light. For our part, we are present to help you in whatever way we can and to support you in our prayers so that our wedding day will be the first day of a happy life together.

- Priests and Deacons of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church

We need six months' notice of your marriage so all necessary papers may be prepared and the prenuptial instructions completed. No final date for the wedding can be set until all preparations are complete. The Bishops of Texas require that preparations must be finalized at least two months before the date of the wedding.

Time of Wedding

The Sacrament of Marriage can be celebrated at any time on Saturdays up to 3:00 p.m. Evening weddings can only be arranged for Mondays through Friday. If neither Catholic party is a member of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church, written permission must be given by either the pastor or parochial vicar of the Catholic parties.

Marriage Preparation Requirements

The parish has a program that it requires for those preparing for marriage at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church "Preparing for Marriage and Sponsor Couple." This program involves a married couple from St. Philip the Apostle meeting in their home with a couple preparing for marriage. The host couple witness to their own marriage and assists the couple preparing for marriage in discussing their own attitudes toward common areas of married life. These sessions are to be arranged between both couples at mutually agreeable times. The couple must also take part in one program offered by the Family Life Office of the Diocese of Corpus Christi, either the "Pre-Cana" or "Engaged Encounter." The Family Life Office may be reached by calling 361-289-6501.

Minister of Ceremony

The Pastor, Parochial Vicar or deacons of the parish are available to officiate at weddings for parishioners. Other priests or deacons are welcome to officiate at a wedding, but must have prior delegation from the pastor before final plans are made. If someone other than one of the priests or deacons of the parish is to officiate at the marriage, he should be directly involved in all paperwork and planning.

Paperwork

Upon inquiry, the secretary in charge of marriage planning will ask for some basic information about both parties as a first step in the preparation process.

Within a short time, the couple will be contacted for an appointment to complete the pre-marital paperwork. The Marriage Preparation Program is explained as are the parish guidelines regarding weddings here at St. Philip the Apostle. If, during the course of the preparation, a need for counseling should arise, the couple will be assisted in that regard.

When preparations are complete, the couple is to meet with the priest or deacon who will be witnessing the marriage to discuss the Liturgy and any other concerns, a recent copy of the baptismal certificate (less six months old) of the Catholic party(ies) issued by the church is required. A photocopy is not acceptable. If there is a previous marriage, the situation must be clarified before proceeding with plans for marriage. A certified copy of the marriage license and divorce decree are requested in these cases. All other preliminary paperwork must be completed, including the "Affidavit of Free Marital Status" which is to be completed at least two months before the date of the marriage and before any wedding invitations are ordered.

Marriage License

The State of Texas requires a waiting period of seventy-two (72) hours from the time the marriage license is issued to the time of the wedding ceremony. A license can be obtained at any county courthouse. The Nueces County Courthouse is open Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The marriage license should be given to the consultant, priest or deacon who is conducting the rehearsal.

Witnesses

There must be two witnesses for the wedding. Generally, the Best Man and the Maid of Honor are listed as witnesses. They need not be Catholic but should be in good marriages themselves if they are married.

Liturgy for the Wedding Celebration

When both parties are Catholic, the usual practice is for the wedding ceremony to be celebrated within the context of the Eucharist. For mixed marriages between a Catholic and a baptized Christian of another denomination or a non-baptized person, the ritual for the marriage should take place within a service of the Liturgy of the Word without Communion so as to be sensitive to the faith of the non-Catholic or un-baptized person.

In mixed marriages, the non-Catholic party is always welcome to invite his or her minister to take part in the ceremony. In every case, the couple should meet with the priest or deacon after the marriage preparation is completed to plan the wedding liturgy.

Music and Liturgy

Before contracting musicians or planning the music, please meet with the Music Minister of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church. It is the couple's responsibility to meet with the Music Minister to plan and approve all music for the wedding. All music during the ceremony must be of a sacred nature and must be approved by the Music Minister. He can provide the names of cantors, soloists, and other instrumentalists should they be requested. Other musicians are welcome, but must first be approved by the Music Minister. The customary offering is \$200.00.

Stipends for Church and Ministers

The customary stipend for St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church for all registered parishioners is \$100.00. The customary stipend for non-parishioners married at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church is \$200.00 (this is to defray the cost to the parish for utilities and maintenance). The stipend for Consultant is \$50. Parishioners are defined as registered, contributing members of the parish six months prior to contacting the parish about a wedding.

Altar Servers

The parish will provide altar servers for your wedding, usually three of them. If you have relatives or friends who would like to serve at your wedding, please let the parish know two months before the wedding so servers from the parish will not be scheduled. The customary offering for each server is \$10.

Flowers

Flowers enhance the environment and augment the sacredness of the place as well as what is taking place in it. Flowers are not permitted, however, on top of the Altar of Sacrifice, but can be placed at other areas of the sanctuary. Any flowers are considered donations to the church and cannot be removed after the wedding. Only fresh flowers or greenery is allowed in the church for weddings or any other celebrations. Tape or any adhesive materials cannot be used on any of the pews or other church furniture. A separate sheet of "Guidelines for Florists" should be given to whatever florist is involved with the decorations for the church. Strict observation to these guidelines is required.

Seasons

The liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent are not festive seasons in the Church's liturgical life, but reflect a penitential or preparation character, usually seen in the purple or violet colors of decorations. Liturgical decorations in the sanctuary and throughout the church have a permanent place over wedding decorations during these seasons, as well as at Christmas or Easter.

Printed Order of Service

An Order of Service for an individual wedding liturgy is an excellent participation aid for guests, some of whom may not be familiar with the liturgy to be celebrated. It is the responsibility of the couple to secure the necessary copyright permissions (check with the Music Director for more information). An order of Service typically provides an outline of the service, words and music to those parts, which the congregation is expected to sing and speak, direction and explanations of unfamiliar items and an attractive appearance, which contributes to the beauty of the liturgy. A fee of \$25 is charged for the copy set and printing (up to 500 copies).

Order of Preparation

A comprehensive program is offered for each couple in order to provide experiences for personal growth, as well as growth as a couple within the framework of Christian marriage. The order of this preparation at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church is the following:

1. Contact the parish administrator in charge of weddings and check on open dates and times for your marriage. Provide the church with basic information.
2. Make an appointment to see the priest or deacon officiating at your wedding; he will call you.
3. Complete marriage preparation through the direction of the church.
4. After marriage preparation is complete, meet with the priest or deacon officiating at your wedding for planning the liturgy of your wedding.
5. Meet with the Music Director for planning the wedding music.
6. All outstanding paperwork must be completed two months before the wedding.
7. All fees must be paid at the parish office one month prior to the wedding.
8. Rehearsals will be conducted by the Parish's Consultant. If the Eucharist is to be celebrated at the wedding, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be made available a half hour before the rehearsal or at times arranged with the officiating priest.
9. Wedding Day!

Candelabras

If candelabras are to be used, instruct the florist the use, sufficient plastic sheeting underneath to catch any falling or melting wax. Additional candles brought into the church must be cared for by the ushers or the florist themselves. The florist must remove them within four working days.

Aisle Runners

If aisle runners or other pew decorations are used, the florist or some other person is instructed to remove them after the ceremony. Decorations, other than flowers must be removed from the church sacristy within four working days.

Bride's Room

A bride's room is available for the convenience of the bride and her attendants. Boxes, paper and personal belongings must be removed immediately following the ceremony. We are not responsible for lost articles.

Church Etiquette The vestibule, sacristy, and bride's room are also part of the church and should receive the same respect as the principal part of the church. Loud talking should be avoided. Absolutely no smoking or alcoholic beverages are permitted in any place in the church out of our belief that this is God's dwelling place among his people. Throwing flower petals, rice, confetti, or birdseed is prohibited in and around the church building and other parish facilities.

Photographs

Photographs and recordings of a wedding can bring back memories for many years to come, but they can also serve as a distraction for everyone involved if proper etiquette is not observed. If you plan to have photographs taken or have the ceremony recorded, you are asked to give the enclosed "Guidelines" to the photographer(s). Please inform them that they are to check in with the priest or deacon before the ceremony to make sure that there is an understanding of the rules governing their activities during the liturgy. Only the official photographer(s) are permitted to take photographs during the ceremony. Members of the congregation are prohibited from doing so.

Natural Family Planning

The Catholic Church acknowledges the need for family planning, but teaches that it can never be done simply for selfish reasons or by artificial means. For this reason, the Church has endorsed the Billings Method (Natural Family Planning) and recommends that all couples familiarize themselves with it. For more information, call the Office of Natural Family Planning at 361-767-1228.

Rehearsals

A rehearsal for the ceremony is conducted to familiarize all participants with the liturgy and their own involvement in it. They should always begin on time for the sake of those who are present. A Parish Consultant will conduct the rehearsal as well as assist the wedding party on the day of the wedding itself. When the wedding liturgy will be celebrated within the context of the Eucharist, the usual practice is for the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be celebrated one half hour before the rehearsal time. It is the responsibility of the Catholic party(ies) to inform all Catholics and family members of the scheduled time for the Sacrament.

Address for Invitations

St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church
3513 Cimarron Road
Corpus Christi, Texas 78414

