**YOUR WEDDING AT ST. ANN’S**

**GUIDELINES**



***May Christ always fill your hearts with joy!***

**Revised February 2022**

**Wilmington, Delaware**

**Marriage in the Catholic Church**

 Christian Marriage reflects the covenant between God and his People; a covenant of love based on relationship and fidelity. If the marriage is lived in this context, the couple becomes a sign of Christ’s presence to one another, the community and the world. The marriage covenant is further strengthened and renewed whenever the couple gathers with the worshiping community to hear God’s Word and to share in the ongoing sacramental life of the Church. The Church joyfully celebrates every intimate partnership of married life and love. For we see in every Christian marriage a genuine call to holiness.

 Marriage among baptized Christians constitutes a special sacrament. Lived faithfully and well, marriage between Christians is a real incarnation in the world of the never-ending love of God for humanity, the unconditional love of Christ for his bride, the Church. The gift of the sacrament is at the same time a vocation and commandment for the Christian spouses, that they may remain faithful to each other forever, beyond every trial and difficulty, in generous obedience to the holy will of the Lord: “What therefore God has joined together let no one separate.”

 This booklet contains the information you will need if you are planning for marriage and want to celebrate the Sacrament at St. Ann’s Church.

***To begin……….***

 You have asked to celebrate your marriage at St. Ann’s. We welcome you most sincerely and offer our congratulations as you make a life-long commitment to each other.

 In celebrating your wedding at St. Ann’s, you do so in faith, seeking God’s blessings on your wedded life. Keep upmost in your minds you are exchanging vows in a religious ceremony asking Christ Himself to witness your commitment. While there are many traditions and customs associated with weddings, we need to always be attentive to the religious nature of a church wedding and of God’s presence at your wedding. Nothing should detract from the sacredness of this holy event.

**First Steps**

 A. To celebrate your marriage at St. Ann’s, it is normally expected that one of the parties, groom or bride, is a Catholic registered at St. Ann’s Parish, or that your family are registered members. Persons not members of St. Ann’s and who, for good reason request marriage at St. Ann’s, may be married at St. Ann’s after review by the parish priest and with the permission of their proper pastor. Preference for wedding dates is given to couples who are registered parishioners of St. Ann’s six months before requesting a wedding date.

 B. The guidelines of the Diocese of Wilmington call for a year’s preparation program for this serious and life-long commitment. In asking to have your wedding at St. Ann’s, you are accepting the requirements of this preparation which include:

 1. Effort to attend Sunday Eucharist weekly.

 2. Preparation sessions with the priest or deacon who will officiate at your marriage.

 3. Participation in the Diocesan Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter Program.

4. Special circumstances may require further preparation. (Examples: marriage of those who were baptized but never raised as Catholics.) Every effort will be made to adjust to special situations and keep the preparation period to one year.

 5. No wedding may be even tentatively scheduled if an annulment of a previous marriage is needed and/or in process. The final decree and completed counseling (if any) must be in hand before a date can be discussed.

 6. Exceptions to the above norms (there are no exceptions to #5 above) can be made in cases of age, illness or usual pastoral circumstances as long as the intent of the guidelines is maintained.

 C. No weddings may be "booked", i.e. scheduled, over the phone. Both parties must meet with a priest or deacon to establish their freedom to marry in the Catholic Church before any wedding date may be set. Your freedom to marry is established by procuring a "new copy" of your Baptismal certificate no more than 6 months old. Originals are not valid for the purpose of establishing freedom to marry. You may look for the date of your baptism from the original copy and then contact the church of your Baptism and tell them you are being married. Ask them to send a new copy to St. Ann's to the attention of the priest or deacon who is preparing you for marriage. This is a simple step and all parishes know the procedure.

**Officiants**

1. Only a priest or deacon with faculties (permanent or temporary) from the Diocese of Wilmington may officiate at your marriage. Normally this will be one of the parish priests.
2. Visiting priests or deacons in good standing are welcome to officiate with the explicit and written permission and delegation of the pastor of St. Ann’s. The visiting priest or deacon must agree to prepare the couple for marriage and see that all requirements are fulfilled. If, for a good reason (distance, health, etc.) the visiting officiant is unable to prepare the couple, special arrangements with one of the parish priests should be discussed.

**Planning the Ceremony**

1. A Mass or Ceremony - If two Catholics are marrying, celebration of the marriage may take place within the Mass. We encourage a Mass, but it is not required. The sacrament, conferred by the couple, is separate from the holy Mass. If one of the spouses is a baptized Christian of another denomination, the ceremony outside of the Mass is encouraged. This is recommended since the Non-Catholic party may not partake of Holy Communion. If one of the couple is not baptized, the ceremony outside of Mass is the norm.
2. Weddings are required to take place on Saturdays, and must be scheduled no later than 2pm. A Friday evening wedding is a rare exception requiring permission based on the circumstances. A ceremony is roughly 30 minutes and a Mass is 45-50 minutes. It is important that your wedding starts on time or you may have less time for photos after your ceremony. All scheduling is subject to previously scheduled events and the norms of the liturgical calendar. (e.g. Celebrations are not held on Good Friday or Holy Saturday).

**Interfaith Marriages**

1. Church norms require that a Catholic commit to live out his or her faith and do all in his or her power to share the faith with their children. This promise is given by signature. Please discuss with the priest what this means and the purpose of it – it is required but must be explained and discussed to be understood properly.
2. Marriages of Catholics and Jewish people can be celebrated with the blessing of the Church in a “neutral place”.

 **Witnesses**

 A. Two official witnesses are required for valid celebration of Christian marriage. Normally, the best man and the maid/matron of honor serve as these witnesses. The State of Delaware requires witnesses be 18 years of age.

B. The witnesses must sign the civil license. This should be done at the

 rehearsal.

**Readers**

1. Those who are chosen to read from Scripture, when the Marriage is celebrated with a Nuptial Mass, must be Catholic.
2. If a ceremony is chosen, however, any baptized Christian is acceptable to read.

**Music**

 A. Music is an extremely important aspect of weddings and as such, must be planned thoroughly and thoughtfully.

 B. St. Ann’s employs a professional musician as its Director of Music. St. Ann’s Director of Music is responsible for maintaining the religious and musical standards of music programmed for any and all functions at St. Ann’s Church. Since your wedding will be a function at St. Ann’s Church, our Director of Music must be consulted. Even if you have already planned the service, requested a friend or relative to sing, or plan to use outside musicians, our Director of Music must be consulted. Only a professionally employed musician may be a visiting organist, and must obtain permission from the pastor to play.

 C. It is best to contact our Director of Music approximately three months before the date of your wedding. The Director of Music, Andrew Trites, may be contacted directly via email at atrites@stannwilmington.com. At that time, a meeting will be

 arranged so our Director of Music may help you plan the music for your wedding.

 D. The fee for the music consultation is $50. This also serves as a “benching fee” if permission is given to employ an outside organist or

 other musicians instead of St. Ann’s Director of Music.

 E. If you are employing the St. Ann’s Director of Music for your wedding,

 the fee is $250. This includes the consultation fee.

 F. If desired, our Director of Music may also help you find any soloist(s) you might wish to employ. The fee for

 most soloists is $200; however, certain instrumentalist and/or

 vocalists may require a greater amount.

**Photography and Video Guidelines**

To maintain the religious nature of the marriage ceremony, the following guidelines apply to all picture and video taking at St. Ann’s. These guidelines are to be given to the photographer and video personnel at the time you contract with them. Please avoid asking for exceptions.

A. Choir Loft

 1. Video cameras and operators are permitted in the choir loft.

 They must respect the needs and space of the organist and

 soloists.

 a. If there are no musicians scheduled for the wedding, cameras

 may be placed on either side of the organ near the rail.

 b. If any musicians will be present in the choir loft during the wedding, camera and operator placement is limited to the left side of the organ.

 2. Please do not move any furniture, books, etc. without permission

 from the organist. If permission to something is obtained, it is

 expected it will be returned to its original position after the

 ceremony.

B. A stationary camera may be placed at a designated location near the

 Blessed Mother’s statue.

**C.** **Photographers must remain away from the center aisle at all times**

 **both before and during the ceremony. The only exception is during**

 **the entrance and exit processions.**

D. The use of flash photography is discouraged except during the

 entrance and exit processions. **[Care must be taken by the**

 **photographer(s) not to block the entrances to the pews which will**

 **be occupied by the wedding party].**

E. Picture taking after the ceremony is limited to 30 minutes.

 Additionally, St. Ann Parish has a 4pm Mass and the church must be

 cleaned after your wedding and set up for Mass. Photos should be

 concluded and the wedding party should have left the church before

 3:30pm. If this guideline is not followed and additional help is

 brought in to clean if you exceed the time limit in order to start Mass

 on time, the cleaning fee will not be refunded.

F. The Sanctuary furniture and microphones must remain in place. The

 photographer will be responsible for any repairs needed if this rule is

 not observed.

**Flowers, Decorations, Etc.**

A. The wedding couple is responsible for procuring flowers. They may

 visit the sanctuary with a Rectory staff person to determine what

 they would like. We do not allow more than four or five vases in the

 sanctuary (2 on the steps on the predella; 2 alongside of the altar,

 and one on the floor in the middle of the altar. If desirable one vase

 of flowers may be placed on the shrine to Mary. No trees, palms or

 bushes allowed (most couples have 2 vases on the sides of the main

 altar). The pews may be bedecked with reusable flower

 arrangements but must be removed by the party immediately after

 the wedding. **No runner is permitted over the carpet.**

B. On the day of the wedding, the church is normally **open two hours**

 before the scheduled time, so it is expected that proper

 arrangements will be made with the florist for delivery within that

 time.

**C. The florist and/or wedding party is expected to remove any boxes**

 **or containers used to cart flowers, programs, etc. from the**

 **premises.**

D. If your wedding is scheduled to take place during a special liturgical

 season, such as Christmas or Easter, please note that any wedding

 arrangements must be planned around the decorations which are

 already in place for the season.

E. If there are special needs, please consult with the parish

F. Wedding or Unity Candle – The Wedding or Unity Candle is not part

 of the Church’s Rite of Marriage. Too often this non-ritual symbol

 overshadows the primary symbols of the wedding, the consent and

 the exchange of rings. If you intend use of a candle, we suggest you

 incorporate it at the wedding reception or dinner.

G. No receiving line at the Church.

 F. No bird seed, rice, confetti, etc.

**Wedding Offerings**

A. After your music consultation, you will receive a letter concerning

 fees for musicians and Church offerings. The fees for musicians were

 already discussed.

B. Following is a list of offerings for St. Ann’s Church.

 1. The wedding offering for the Church is $300 for regularly

 contributing members of the parish belonging to St.

 Ann’s one year prior to their wedding request. The fee for all

 others is $500.

 2. There is a refundable clean-up fee of $50. This fee will be

 returned after the ceremony unless there has been

 misuse of church facilities.

 3. Organist and soloists fees, see Music heading.

**The Rehearsal**

We recommend strongly that only those involved with the wedding ceremony come to the rehearsal (bride, groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, readers of Holy Scripture, ushers, parents)

A. The rehearsal should be scheduled with the priest as soon as the

 wedding date is set. Since there may be more than one rehearsal

 that day, it is essential that everyone involved arrive at the church

 on time! With everyone’s cooperation, the rehearsal should last no

 longer than one hour.

**B. Please bring your *marriage license* to the rehearsal.**

**C. Readers of Holy Scripture and Prayers of the Faithful**

 **should bring the readings to the rehearsal.**

**Summation**

 As said in the beginning, all of these norms are meant to serve and emphasize the religious nature of your wedding and your marriage. The purpose behind them is to promote the dignity and respect of everyone involved in your preparations.

 When making any arrangements for your wedding, please speak to the parish office directly. **Unless there is an emergency, do not ask family members to speak for you.**

 Please plan to be an active member of St. Ann’s or the parish community where you plan to live. It will make your marriage more successful and will help the entire human family!

***The Newly-Wed’s Prayer for Each Other…***

 *God our Father, in your own good care and wisdom we have come to know each other. We have come to discover something of the mystery of each other. We have come to love each other. Pour out your blessings on (name of spouse), whom I want to love for the rest of my life: blessings for safety, for strength, for joy. Help us as we form a family together to find a new way to love the families where we have been loved and nourished till now. In these hectic weeks and afterwards, help us laugh when small plans don’t work out, and make us willing to support each other in real problems. Let us stay always secure in one another, secure in you and secure in prayer. Grace our relationship with the gift of your Holy Spirit, so that, day by day, our affection may grow into self-sacrifice, our passion into deep human care and our warm feelings into lasting commitment. Bring to fulfillment the wonder of your ways which you have begun to reveal in us.*

 *………………………………………..We pray this through Christ Our Lord. Amen*

**Living Faithfully**

 The Scripture passages that many couples choose for their wedding ceremony are a marvelous blueprint for loving.

 “ Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

 These words of St. Paul are worth daily meditation not only for their insight into the true shape of love, but for strengthening our wills to follow this way of love. The love that he describes flourishes in faithful, stable relationships. This applies, first and foremost, to a marriage. It is true also for the entire family.

 When a woman and a man vow to be true in good times and in bad, they are confirming a decision to love one another, but, as married couples have taught us, this decision to love is one we have to make over and over again, when it feels good and when it does not. It is a decision to look for, act on and pray for the good of the people we say we love. It is a pledge of fidelity. Our world today needs living witnesses to fidelity. These are the most convincing signs of the love that Christ has for every human being. Couples who are living faithful lives of mutual love and support- though not without difficulties – have the gratitude of whole Church.

*-from a Pastoral Message; The U.S. Catholic Bishops to Families,*

 *November 17, 1992*.