

SAINT THOMAS APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH
2665 Woodley Road, NW, Washington, DC 20008
202.234.1488

MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

The purpose of these guidelines is to help you celebrate and live the vocation of love in the sacrament of marriage. “The Church’s treasure of prayer and worship, learning and service, contemplation and spiritual guidance are always available to you. The grace of the sacrament of matrimony and the power of commitment that you have made to each other are the continuing well springs of strength.” The people of Saint Thomas Apostle Parish pray that you will discover these treasures together and that your wedding day will be a happy and memorable one for you and your families and friends.

PLACE FOR THE WEDDING

The customary place for the celebration of a Catholic marriage is the parish of the bride. **For weddings at Saint Thomas Apostle Church, you must either live within the boundaries of the parish or have been a registered parishioner for several years.** The pastor is responsible for the preparation of any couple to be married at Saint Thomas Apostle. When the engaged couple first contact the pastor, he will explain the program and how the process of preparation will proceed. Ordinarily, he will do all the paper work with the couple and schedule marriage preparation as well, or he will delegate this task to another priest or deacon.

WEDDING TIMES AVAILABLE

Saturday at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

No weddings are celebrated on Sunday.

Monday-Friday: By special arrangement with the parish priest.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION (PRE-CANA)

You must enroll in a Catholic marriage preparation program to prepare for your wedding. Some of the ones available in the Archdiocese of Washington include:

Archdiocese of Washington. Two consecutive Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center, 5001 Eastern Avenue, Hyattsville, MD 20782. For info visit: www.adw.org or send an email to: flm@adw.org or call Course Office at 301.853.5334.

Saint Peter Parish on Capitol Hill. Four consecutive Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Saint Peter Church, 313 Second Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003. For info visit: www.saintpetersdc.org or send an email to dre@saintpetersdc.org or call 202.547.1430 x105.

Catholic Engaged Encounter. One weekend (Friday to Sunday) at hotels in the DC area. For info visit: www.dcengagedencounter.org.

“Three to Get Married”. Thursday and Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday at Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat Center, 7007 Bradley Boulevard, Bethesda, MD 20817. For info visit: www.bethesdacfd.org.

LITURGICAL PREPARATION

Two weeks before the wedding the couple should meet with the priest officiating at their wedding and bring with them the liturgical selections taken from the *Together for Life* booklet. At the same time, the couple should also bring the offering for the parish and the marriage license from the District of Columbia.

REHEARSALS

Rehearsals are normally scheduled the evening before the wedding at 5:00 p.m. The wedding parties are requested to be punctual.

OFFERING

It is customary to give a special offering to the parish on the occasion of the wedding, since the preparation and celebration of the wedding involve considerable time and expense. The offering for the church is \$750.00. This does not include the fees for musicians. The check should be made out to Saint Thomas Apostle Church. Any offering for the priest should be given to him directly.

MUSIC

Please contact Mr. Thomas Cowan, Music Director, at tgcowan@aim.com or 202.483.3693 to discuss music for your wedding. An organist and cantor are required for wedding Masses.

FLOWERS

Flowers may be obtained from the florist of your choice. It is customary to leave the flowers for use at the altar after the wedding. Please call the rectory for information regarding the placement of flowers.

RICE, BIRD SEED, FLOWER PETALS, RUNNER

The throwing of rice, bird seed, flower petals or any other object either inside or outside the church, and the use of a runner for the center aisle, are strictly forbidden for safety reasons.

PHOTOGRAPHERS

You may have the photographer/videographer of your choice record the wedding ceremony. Your marriage is a solemn and important event for you, and therefore your photographer should conduct himself or herself in an unobtrusive manner which respects the religious ceremony taking place. Please inform your photographer to speak with the priest before the wedding ceremony to discuss placement during the ceremony. Flash equipment may be used. Photographers are not allowed in the sanctuary (inside the altar rail). After the celebration, the church will be open for taking pictures. **Please limit the time for pictures to a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes.**

RECEIVING LINE

In order to ensure the smooth flow of the liturgy and to allow time to prepare for other liturgical celebrations following the wedding, the wedding party may not form a receiving line at the door of the church.

CIVIL LICENSE

A Civil Marriage License from the District of Columbia must be obtained by the couple. You may apply for this license at:

Marriage License Bureau
500 Indiana Avenue, NW
Room 4485
Washington, DC 20001
202.879.4840
www.dccourts.gov

DC law requires that a minister officiating at a wedding ceremony must be licensed by DC. If you are inviting a priest or deacon to celebrate your marriage who is not yet licensed in DC, please speak with the pastor.

DOCUMENTATION

The officiating priest or deacon is responsible for all the necessary paperwork for a couple's wedding. Among the required documentation are the following:

- **Baptismal Certificates** (one current copy for baptized persons, obtained by each party through the place of one's baptism).
- **Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire** (administered to each separately).
- **Permission for Mixed Marriage** (for a Catholic to marry a baptized non-Catholic).
- **Dispensation from Disparity of Cult** (For a Catholic to marry an unbaptized person).
- **Letter of Freedom** from one's pastor (if applicable).
- **Certification** of participation in an approved Catholic marriage preparation program.
- **Civil License** obtained by the couple from the D.C. Government.

If either party has been married before, one of the following:

- **Declaration of Nullity of Bond** due to lack of canonical form.
- **Declaration of Annulment** for formerly attempted marriages.
- **Declaration of Death** of previous spouse.