

Saint Matthew Catholic Church Wedding Guidelines

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding!

“The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1603) We are here to help you prepare well to enter into that vocation, body and soul. Prayer and study and asking lots of questions all help you to be better prepared for your big day.

We know that there is a lot that goes into planning a wedding and that many things hinge upon the date of the wedding. Dresses, venues, caterers and photographers all take time to find and book. That being said, we strongly recommend that you don't book anything until you have a confirmed date on the calendar.

We look forward to helping you get ready for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony and for the beautiful life you will live together as husband and wife.

The purpose of this handout is to guide and assist you as you begin your preparation for the wedding. Wedding preparation is a multi-step process, involving some meetings at the church with the clergy and a diocesan Pre-Cana workshop. There are a number of customs and procedures of the Catholic Church and St. Matthew parish that we want to make you aware of to aid you in your planning and preparation.

Overview:

1. Send the Wedding Inquiry Form to acasinal@stmatthewcatholic.org, available on our website. *This does not reserve the wedding date.* You can also call the office at 704-543-7677 for more information.
2. Initial Interview with clergy – come meet with us and tell us about your plans. This meeting can happen as soon as you get engaged, and **must** happen no less than six months before the proposed wedding date.
The wedding date may only be reserved after this meeting.
3. Begin your Pre-Cana studies and start collecting the necessary documents. You will continue meeting with the clergy throughout this time.
4. Select and get in touch with a Saint Matthew wedding director and the music director. This can happen as soon as you have a confirmed date.
5. Look over all of the wedding day details below and make any necessary selections. You can talk through these details with your Pre-Cana director or with you wedding director as you go.

Each of these steps is detailed below. If you get to something confusing or that you need more information about, you can call or email any time!

A checklist is provided on the last page for your convenience. You will be able to see at a glance what is completed and what still needs some attention.

Step 1: Getting Started

Please meet with us as soon as possible, but at least 6 months prior to the proposed wedding date.

We are excited about accompanying you as you prepare for the sacrament of holy matrimony! The best way to get started is by emailing the **Wedding Inquiry Form** to acasingal@stmatthewcatholic.org. We will then contact you to set up the initial interview. (Be advised that this is not a reservation of a particular date.)

These are the things we need to begin the planning process:

1. **Initial interview with a priest or delegate:** You will begin the marriage preparation process by scheduling an interview with a priest or his delegate.
2. **Baptismal Certificate:** Saint Matthew will contact the parish of your baptism to request a new (issued within the last six months), annotated baptismal certificate. We need this in order to ensure your sacramental freedom to marry. In order to do this, you will need to tell us the place and approximate date of your baptism.
3. **Intended wedding date:** Some couples, when they contact the parish, have already chosen a wedding date. Be advised that we cannot confirm a time and date for your wedding until your initial interview with the priest, deacon or delegate. They will work with you to make sure that nothing stands in the way your readiness to marry before a date is confirmed.

In order to reserve a date at Saint Matthew, you must have been a registered parishioner at Saint Matthew for at least three months. There is a \$200 non-refundable reservation fee for those who have not been a registered parishioner for at least a year.

Step 2: Initial Interview with the Clergy

No less than six months before the wedding.

Your marriage preparation will begin with a meeting with one of the priests, deacons or a delegate. In this meeting, the priest, deacon or delegate will lay out the program of marriage preparation and give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about it. This will be a very comfortable conversation so that you can get to know each other, and for you to have the chance to tell the priest, deacon or delegate about yourselves, your courtship, your upbringing in the faith, etc.

If there has been a prior marriage of any kind by either the prospective bride or groom (meaning that either of you has formally said "I do" to anyone, anywhere) please inform the priest, deacon or delegate at this meeting.

If it is determined that there is nothing standing in the way of your marriage, we will then be able to schedule the date and time of your wedding and rehearsal.

- Weddings take place on most Saturdays of the year.
- Possible wedding times: Saturday at 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m.; church or chapel

Once your date is confirmed, you may contact one of our Saint Matthew wedding directors and our music director to begin planning the ceremony details. (See Step 4 for more information.)

Step 3: Pre-Cana Study

This will be ongoing throughout the six months prior to your wedding.

Preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church requires a great deal of study and learning. You are preparing for a sacrament that will last as long as you both shall live! So, it only makes sense that you should know well the gift of God that you are preparing to receive, and that you should learn how to be ready to receive it.

The Pre-Cana studies have the following parts:

1. **On-Going Meetings with your Pre-Cana director:** You will meet to study the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony and plan your Pre-Cana preparations. The frequency and number of these meetings is at the discretion of the director.
2. **FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Inventory:** FOCCUS is a series of questions answered by both the bride and the groom which examines all aspects of your relationship. This instrument is not an exam, but merely a tool to help you take a look at your relationship. You will identify your strengths and your weaknesses, and, in subsequent meetings, will talk about how to improve on areas in your relationship that need growth.
3. **Catholic Charities One-Day Marriage Preparation Workshop:** This one-day course gives you an opportunity to receive an in-depth treatment of certain important topics, such as
 - Marriage as Sacrament and Covenant
 - Families of Origin and Procreation
 - Marital Sexuality and Natural Family Planning
 - Communication and Conflict Resolution
 - Money and Finances

Register here: www.ccdoc.org/en/marriagepreparation.

4. **Natural Family Planning Course:** Natural Family Planning teaches couples how they are to embrace God's beautiful design for the life of intimacy that husband and wife will share. As the use of contraception has become so prevalent in our society, NFP is an essential part of the preparation that couples receive for marriage. The course can be taken at a class offered by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Charlotte, www.ccdoc.org/nfp.
5. **Good News about Sex and Marriage** by Christopher West: We will give you a copy of this book. It's a great way to get the conversation started about some of the realities of married life.

At this point, you will also be collecting some important paperwork:

1. **Baptismal Certificate:** Saint Matthew will contact the parish of your baptism to request a new (issued within the last six months), annotated baptismal certificate. Saint Matthew may contact you for more information regarding your baptism.
2. **Freedom to Marry Affidavit:** The priest will provide more information about these.
3. **Marriage License:** It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to obtain two original copies of their marriage license prior to the ceremony from the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds (located at 720 E. Fourth St., Charlotte, NC 28202; phone no. 704-336-2443) or, other NC county register office. **Both originals should be submitted a few days before the wedding to the priest or deacon officiating.**

Step 4: Liturgy and Music

Wedding Readings and Liturgy

Use the *Together for Life* booklet to choose the readings you would like to have at your wedding. Please communicate your choice to your wedding director and your Pre-Cana director.

Wedding Directors

Once your date is confirmed, you may contact one of our Saint Matthew wedding directors to begin planning the ceremony details. St. Matthew has two wedding directors

- Marjory Dury, cell: 704-562-7886
- Rosanna Alvarez, cell: 980-297-3704

It is a requirement for you to use a wedding director from St. Matthew Catholic Church. Our directors are familiar with the wedding policies and procedures at St. Matthew and will help you navigate the rehearsal and the wedding day. The fee for the director is \$250, paid directly to the director two weeks prior to the wedding ceremony.

Wedding Music

Our music director will walk you through everything you need to know about music for your wedding day. Whether you are planning a full Mass or a ceremony, the incorporation of music will help to make your wedding beautiful.

- Process: Please plan to schedule a meeting with the bride/groom or whoever is involved with selecting the music. If you have ideas of preferred songs, that's fine. If not, no worries. Our music director will offer many suggestions and walk you through the entire ceremony/Mass.
- Music Planning Meeting: Meeting takes about 20-30 minutes Let us know your availability, and we will work out a timeframe that accommodates everyone.
- Budget: Our wedding music fee is \$450 total, which includes payment for musician, cantor/soloist and coordination. If you desire additional musicians, (i.e. trumpet, flute, violin, string trio, harp, etc...), then there is an additional amount due for each.
- Deposit: We ask for a deposit of \$225 to hold the date for the musician and cantor/soloist. The final \$225 is due 2 weeks prior to the wedding. All checks are to be made payable to St. Matthew Catholic Church and dropped off to the front desk of the church office. Funds will be disbursed to musician(s), cantor/soloist, etc.

Step 5: Details for Your Wedding Day

Please be on time. We cannot stress the importance of being on time. Due to other scheduled activities at the church, a late start will shorten your allotted time for taking wedding pictures at the end of your ceremony.

Bride's room

- Available 90 minutes prior to your wedding time. All personal belongings, floral boxes, trash, and everything you brought into the room must be removed from the bride's room before you enter the church or chapel for the commencement of your wedding ceremony.
- Your hairdresser and professional make-up artist are not to be invited to the bride's room.
- Please limit the number of people in the bride's room to the bride, bridesmaids and mothers.

Flowers & Other Décor

- Pedestals are available for two floral arrangements to be placed in back of the altar on either side of the crucifix in the church or a single arrangement can be placed on a pedestal at the foot of the cross. Weddings in the chapel may have two floral arrangements placed on either side of the Tabernacle.
- Flowers are to remain in the church after the wedding.
- No flowers are to be placed upon the altar.
- Bows may be placed on the pews via pew clips (**these must be provided by either the florist or the bride**).
- The candles on either side of the altar may be decorated.
- Candelabrum are not permitted. Existing flowers and decorations already placed on the altar are not to be removed.

Due to time constraints, the following rules have been set in place:

- No confetti, bird seed, balloons, or anything that remains on the ground are to be used in or around the church.
- No flower petals to be thrown on the floor of the church by the flower girl.
- No aisle runner is permitted.
- No receiving line may be held at the church after the ceremony.

Honorarium for the Clergy

On the day of your wedding, the groom is usually responsible for the honorarium given to the priest or deacon officiating at the marriage. The suggested minimum stipend is \$250. However, should you desire to give a larger offering, this is entirely at your discretion. (Blue envelope for this stipend is included with this packet.)

Notes on Photography and Videography

Only formal pictures of the bride and groom and their bridal party are to be taken in the Sanctuary or the Chapel. Informal "fun" photographs don't fit with the sanctity of the church or chapel, and should wait until you are outside the church or at the reception.

You will be allowed **one-half hour** after the ceremony (provided the wedding starts on time) for photography in the church or chapel. Before the ceremony, pictures may be taken in the narthex (vestibule) area, outside on the church grounds or in the bride's room. **No pictures are permitted in the church or chapel prior to the ceremony.**

There may be no manned cameras (video or still) used on the sanctuary (altar area) during the ceremony. An unmanned video camera may be placed in a designated area at the side of the altar. Still cameras and manned videos may be used in back of the church or chapel and also behind the first tier of pews provided this is behind all seated wedding guests. Please check with the priest or wedding director for specific placement of these cameras. **All flash photography must cease once the bride has walked down the aisle** to the altar and has joined the groom. Flash photography may resume once the ceremony has concluded.

We ask you and your staff to please be considerate of the organist and/or other musicians. Noise is very distracting during their performance. All equipment should be placed in an area that will not obstruct free movement of the wedding party or their guests.

Please do not place anything on the altar. If you need additional height for your photography work, please bring a step stool. Do not stand on the edge of the baptismal font or on the chairs or pews.

There is a separate page that can be given to your photographer or videographer ahead of time, should you so desire. A digital copy is also available on our website at www.stmatthewcatholic.org/sacraments/matrimony.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS FOR WEDDINGS AT ST. MATTHEW CATHOLIC CHURCH

We welcome you and your staff to St. Matthew Catholic Church. Photography and videography are allowed; however, we ask you to adhere to the following rules:

- Only formal pictures of the bride and groom and their bridal party are to be taken in the church or the chapel. Informal "fun" photographs are inappropriate and **are not permitted in the Sanctuary or Chapel.** Such photographs should be taken outside the church or at the reception.
- You will be allowed **one-half hour** after the ceremony (provided that the wedding starts on time) for photography in the church or chapel. Before the ceremony, pictures may be taken in the narthex (vestibule) area, outside on the church grounds or in the bride's room. **No pictures are permitted in the church or chapel prior to the ceremony.**
- There may be no manned cameras (video or still) used in the sanctuary (altar area) during the ceremony. An unmanned video camera may be placed in a designated area at the side of the altar. Still cameras and manned videos may be used in back of the church or chapel and also behind the first tier of pews provided this is behind all seated wedding guests. Please check with the priest or wedding director for specific placement of these cameras. **All flash photography must cease once the bride has walked down the aisle** to the altar and has joined the groom. Flash photography may resume once the ceremony has concluded.
- We ask you and your staff to please be considerate of the organist and/or other musicians. Noise is very distracting during their performance. All equipment should be placed in an area that will not obstruct free movement of the wedding party or their guests.
- Please do not place anything on the altar. Also, if you need additional height for your photography work, please bring a step stool. Do not stand on the edge of the baptismal font or on the chairs or pews.

These guidelines were prepared with the hope of making each wedding picture special and creating some wonderful photographic memories while at the same time being respectful to the place where they are being taken. We thank you for your cooperation.

WEDDING INFORMATION AND CHECKLIST

Turn in the Wedding Inquiry Form: It can be printed and dropped off at the church office, or emailed to acasingal@stmatthewcatholic.org.

Date of Initial Interview: _____

St. Matthew Confirmed Wedding Date and Time: _____

Rehearsal Date and Time: _____

Contact Saint Matthew Wedding Director. My wedding director is _____

Contact Music Director. Notes: _____

Readings:

1st Reading: _____ **Responsorial Psalm:** _____

2nd Reading: _____ **Gospel:** _____

Complete:

FOCCUS online assessment, Date completed: _____

Pre-Cana Workshop, Date completed: _____

Natural Family Planning/Diocese, Date completed: _____

Appointments with Pre-Cana Director:

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

4. _____

Required Paper Work:

Baptismal Certificate, new and with notations: Bride Groom

Freedom to Marry Testimonies: Bride Groom

FOCCUS Certificate

Pre-Cana Certificate of Completion

Natural Family Planning Certificate of Completion

Marriage License (two originals turned in to the Church office)

BUDGETING:

Wedding Director: \$250. Please make the check directly to wedding director.

Music: \$450 total. Please make the check to St. Matthew Catholic Church.

***Note that additional instruments will increase the cost.*

\$225 due at the time of reservation.

Final \$225 due two weeks prior to wedding.

Priest Honorarium \$250 minimum is suggested, blue envelope provided to be given directly to clergy performing your wedding mass or ceremony. Make check payable directly to priest or deacon.