

Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
501 Tidwell Road
Houston, TX 77022
Phone 713-692-6303 Fax 713-692-6314
www.StCharlesHouston.org

Matrimony

Steps to follow for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony at Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church:

1) Initial meeting with priest or deacon

If possible, bring the baptism certificates of the Catholic party during the first meeting. If not possible, the staff will assist you in getting the baptism certificate from the church of baptism or produce a sworn statement affirming that you were baptized Catholic.

The couple meets with the priest or deacon, usually at least six months prior to the tentative date of the wedding, to receive general information.

During this meeting, the marriage preparation process will be explained. The prenuptial questionnaire is filled out under oath to examine the status of the prospective bride and groom as well as their freedom and capacity to marry.

2) Set up date of matrimony

1. If no major issues need to be resolved prior to the wedding, the couple may choose the date and time of the marriage ceremony.
2. The couple needs to have enough time to obtain updated copies of their certificates of baptism, as well as any other required documents, and to complete the marriage preparations.
3. At Saint Charles Borromeo Church, the church sanctuary is available for weddings:
 - a. on **Fridays at 1 p.m., 3 p.m., and 5 p.m. and**
 - b. on **Saturdays at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m.**
4. Saint Charles Church offers matrimony **group celebrations** twice a year: one in **July** and one in **December** on a Saturday at 1 p.m.
5. We strongly recommend that couples wait to reserve a venue for the wedding reception until the priest or deacon has confirmed that no major issues need to be resolved prior to the wedding.

3) Marriage preparations

Couples must select at least one of the following options:

1. **Engaged encounter:** English-language prenuptial preparation talks for engaged couples who are not living together. The encounter takes place on a weekend. Overnight stay required with separate accommodations for prospective brides and grooms. It starts at 7 p.m. on Friday and ends at 4 p.m. on Sunday. This option costs \$225 per couple, which includes two nights lodging, materials, stipends for the speakers, and several meals. To register preferred dates and venues for the retreat, visit www.familylifeministryhouston.org or call Family Life Ministry at 713-741-8730.
2. **Marriage preparation in English at this parish:** Ask Deacon Charles Conant (281-979-3554) or Deacon Thomas Gandara (713-899-8627) if they have time to conduct a one-on-one marriage preparation, otherwise the couple will have to attend one of the group programs offered by the Archdiocese at www.familylifeministryhouston.org
3. **Marriage preparation in Spanish at this parish:** Just show up the following Monday at 7 p.m. in the Building Trailer "A" at Saint Charles Borromeo Church. If either party is already a baptized Catholic but has not received First Communion, notify those in charge of the preparation of the need to receive First Communion on the day of the marriage. Marriage preparation is delivered by Jesus and Martina Pacheco (832-633-0562) and Pepe Romo (832-215-9309).
4. **Conferencia para novios:** A Spanish-language preparation for engaged couples who are not living together or who have been living together for less than two years. Saturday overnight stay is required with separate accommodations for brides and grooms. The event starts on Saturday at 8:30 a.m. and ends by 6:30 p.m. on Sunday. The conference takes place at Cameron Retreat at Saint Dominic Center, 2403 Holcombe Blvd, Houston, TX 77021. This program costs \$150 per couple. For available dates and registration, please visit www.familylifeministryhouston.org or call Family Life Ministry at 713-741-8730.
5. **Con-validation in Spanish:** The Spanish-language weekend experience is designed for civilly married or cohabitating couples who are seeking a sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church. This program is offered at the Cameron Retreat at Saint Dominic Center, 2403 Holcombe Blvd, Houston, TX 77021. The event takes place on Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. No overnight stay is required. This program costs \$125 per couple. For available dates and registration, please visit www.familylifeministryhouston.org or call Family Life Ministry at 713-741-8730.
6. **Con-validation in English:** The English-language weekend experience is designed for civilly married or cohabitating couples who are seeking a sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church. It is offered in different parishes within the city. Couples should register well in advance of their wedding date. This program costs \$125 per couple. For available dates and registration, please visit www.familylifeministryhouston.org or call Family Life Ministry at 713-741-8730.

4) Required documents

1. **Certificates of Baptism:** Obtain an original baptismal certificate (dated in the last six months) for both the bride and the groom from the parish where they were baptized.
2. **Marriage License or Civil Certificate of Marriage:** The couple must obtain a marriage license at any County Court House of Texas. It is validated for 90 days only and can only be used 72 hours after it is issued. In other words, the license is not valid for the first 72 hours and is invalid if the marriage does not take place within 90 days of the date issued. (Call Harris County at 713-755-6405). The marriage license must be brought to the church office prior to the wedding. The priest or deacon will sign the marriage license on the day of the ceremony.
3. **Testimony or Affidavit of Free Status:** Before the ceremony, the prospective bride and groom must each bring two relatives or friends who have known them for at least ten years. These witnesses will sign under oath a document before a priest or deacon stating that the bride and groom, as far as they know, are free to marry. We need two witnesses for the groom and two witnesses for the bride.
4. **Previous civil marriages:** Absence of Canonical Form—If a Catholic has entered marriage before a justice of the peace (or even before a Protestant minister) without obtaining permission (called a “dispensation”) from the Catholic bishop of the diocese, then that marriage would not be recognized as valid by the Catholic Church because of a “lack of form.” Therefore, if the Catholic’s wedding was solely a civil ceremony, or ritual performed in another faith without the Church’s permission, then the union can be declared invalid. But it is necessary to bring all the previous marriage licenses and the divorce decrees to prove and state in writing that those marriages were invalid in the Church by filling out the Absence of Canonical Form paperwork.

Because the requirement of canonical form is a law of the Catholic Church, it applies only to Catholics. It is important to remember, however, that the Church recognizes as valid the marriage of two persons who are not Catholic, whether they are non-Catholic Christians or non-Christians and whether they marry in their own church or another church or with a civil ceremony. The only requirement for the marriage of non-Catholics is that they perform some legitimate ceremony that the laws of this country would recognize. Non-Catholics who had previous marriages will be considered formal cases and will have to be submitted to the Tribunal as a formal case.

5. **Mixed religion marriage:** If the bride or groom does not profess the Roman Catholic faith, the Catholic party will need to apply for a mixed religion marriage permission or dispensation. The priest or deacon will fill out the application form and send it to the archbishop’s office.
6. **Marriages outside the Archdiocese:** The completed marriage packet is sent to the Chancellor’s office including baptismal certificates issued within 6 months and affidavits of free status (2 each for the bride and groom). Indicate the diocese of the wedding location church and a letter (fully addressed) from the pastor of the couple to the pastor of the parish where the wedding will take place granting permission for the couple to be married outside the jurisdiction of the parish must also be included.

5) Donations

How much does it cost to get married in the Catholic Church?

Nothing. Sacraments are not for sale. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2121) makes clear that the First Commandment forbids simony, which is the buying or selling of sacred things. It's appropriate, however, for the faithful to share their joy and make a generous contribution to support the Church and its ministers.

Christ's faithful have an obligation to provide for the needs of the Church and for the worthy support of its ministers (Canon 222). God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

1. Donations for the Church:

a. For a private ceremony:

\$300 for registered parishioners.

\$500 for non-registered parishioners.

This donation is to cover the expenses for the usage of the church building, electricity, air conditioning, maintenance, janitorial services, salaries for staff, and office expenses. It does not include music and floral arrangements. It's up to the couple to hire the services of a musician or to buy a floral arrangement. The couple should give the church donation to the receptionist at the front office when they reserve the church for their ceremony. Please request a receipt. In no case should financial circumstances prevent a couple from approaching the Church for marriage.

b. For a group ceremony:

Free will offering. Saint Charles Church offers group celebrations twice a year: one in **July** and one in **December** on a Saturday at 1 p.m.

2. **Donation for the priest or deacon:** The services of the priest or deacon are free, but it is customary to offer a stipend. Usually, no specific amount is suggested. If a couple wishes to do so at the end of the ceremony, they may give a free-will offering to the priest or deacon who presided over their wedding.

6) Music

If the couple wishes to have music in the church during the celebration, they may hire a choir or soloist of their choice. But it must be an individual or choir that knows Catholic hymns that are appropriate for a Catholic ceremony. We recommend choirs or individuals who sing regularly at our church.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Bertha Salazar, 832-229-2421 | Piano, organist, soloist, violin optional |
| 2. Enrique Gomez, 281-795-4981 | Children choir, guitars |
| 3. Abel Castillo, 713-377-4375 | Three Adolescents Choir, guitar and bass |
| 4. Francisco Gomez 832-716-2399 | Guitar, keyboard |
| 5. Juan y Griselda 832-208-6365 | Guitar, dueto |
| 6. Veronica Aguilera, 832-418-0569 | Choir, guitar, keyboard |

*Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, 501 Tidwell Road, Houston, TX 77022,
Phone 713-692-6303, Fax 713-692-6314, www.StCharlesHouston.org*

Revised 12/12/2019

7) Decorations and floral arrangements:

1. Please do not glue adhesive tape on the church pews.
2. The pew decorations may be hung with ribbons or with plastics hooks, which the couple may buy or rent from a florist.
3. Do not throw petals or rice during or after the ceremony.
4. Please make sure the temple, inside and outside, is clean after the wedding celebration.

8) Photography and video

The couple may hire the services of whomever they wish for photography or video. These professionals must conduct themselves with respect and not interrupt the ceremony.

9) Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession)

The groom, bride, bridesmaids, groomsmen, and the sponsors may receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation one week before the wedding. Confessions at Saint Charles Borromeo are held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 6:50 p.m. and on Saturdays from 4 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. and 6:30 to 7 p.m. It is desirable that the wedding couple receive Holy Communion during the wedding ceremony, and, to do this, they must be spiritually prepared in a state of grace.

10) Rehearsal/practice

About two weeks prior to the ceremony, the rehearsal coordinator will call the couple to set up the rehearsal date and time in the church to practice the ceremony. Couples should let us know if their cell-phone number changes. Everyone who will take part in the ceremony should attend the rehearsal. We need updated phone numbers to be able to contact the couple. We beg promptness for the rehearsal because we have several rehearsals on the same day at different times.

11) Planning the ceremony

1. Be present at the rehearsal with all the participants
2. Practice the lineup of the people who will walk in during the entrance procession
3. Choose who will read the scriptures during the ceremony. We will use the reading for the Sacrament of Matrimony
4. Practice the Rite of Marriage and the exchange of rings. The priest or deacon will ask the couple to repeat after him the exchange of vows
5. The couple may assign someone to read the petitions during the Prayer of the Faithful
6. The couple may assign two people to bring the offerings of bread and wine to the altar
7. The couple should tell non-Catholic guests or those who have not received their First Communion to abstain from receiving Holy Communion until they are prepared to do so
8. The couple should make sure they leave the church, inside and outside, clean after the ceremony. They must remember to take all belongings with them.

12) Cancellations and reimbursements

Please call the church office if, for some reason, the ceremony is canceled. Also, the couple should please let us know if there are any changes in address or telephone numbers so that we can contact them.

The reimbursement for cancellations for the use of the facilities is only made if the cancellation date is done 6 months prior to the ceremony. If the cancellation is done less than 6 months before the ceremony, there will be no refund. The spiritual things don't have a price. Priests and deacons do not charge for their services. A free will donation for clergy is voluntary and appreciated.

Rite of Marriage

Consent

Priest: Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands, and declare your consent before God and His Church.

Groom: I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife, I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

Bride: I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband, I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

Priest: You have declared your consent before the church. May the Lord in His goodness strengthen your consent and fill you both with His blessings. What God has joined, men cannot divide.

All: Amen.

Blessing of rings and coins

Priest: Lord bless and consecrate N and N in their love for each other. May these rings be a symbol of true faith in each other, always reminding them of their love, (and may these coins be a symbol of mutual help throughout their lives), through Christ our Lord.

Lector: Amen.

Exchange of Rings

Groom and Bride: _____, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

MEANING OF THE SIGNS OF MATRIMONY

1. **Rings:** These are a reminder of the promise of love that the couple makes before God and before men on the wedding day. They also symbolize the commitment both people make to remain united until death.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL SIGNS:

2. **Coins:** These represent the material goods that both people will share and symbolize, as well as the mutual help that they will give to each other during their marriage.
3. **The Bible and the Rosary:** These two elements are an important part of the beginning of both people's new life together. Make sure the Bible is an approved Catholic edition.
4. **Bouquet of Flowers:** A bouquet of flowers is presented by the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the end of the ceremony.
5. **Lasso:** This is placed on the couple's shoulders during the ceremony to signify the tradition of uniting with a knotted cord. The rope is usually placed at the beginning of the Prayer of the Faithful and removed at the end of the prayer. The couple kneels with the lasso on their shoulders while attendants stand praying for them.

Outline of Rite for Celebrating Marriage

During Mass

1. Entrance Rite. Only those who are part of the entrance procession will remain by the entrance door. Everyone else must be invited to sit in the pews as they enter the church. Assign someone to invite guests to come in and close the church doors after the bride enters the church.
2. Scripture Readings for Marriage: Choose volunteers to do the readings. Ask them to practice the reading before the wedding.
3. Homily
4. Rite of Marriage: Exchange of Marriage Vows
5. Blessing and exchange of the rings (optional additional signs: coins, rosary beads, Bibles, unity candles, lassos)
6. Prayer of the Faithful: Escorts may participate by reading the petitions
7. Presentation of the gifts for the Eucharist: Bread and wine
8. Communion: Only for Catholics who have already received First Communion
9. Blessing
10. Bouquet of flowers for the Blessed Virgin Mary
11. Picture of the couple with the priest or deacon before exit
12. Please leave the church as soon as possible to allow the next ceremony to take place.