

**ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY  
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

## **Marriage Guidelines**

Congratulations on your engagement and decision to celebrate your marriage in the Roman Catholic Church! This brochure gives you some guidelines as you prepare for your wedding day.

### **Required Steps**

- Schedule the first appointment with the priest at least six months in advance of the desired wedding date. This gives you ample time to prepare to receive the Sacrament and to complete the required preparation.
- Schedule and complete the **FOCCUS** inventory with the pastor. This is an instrument designed to help the engaged couple to identify their similarities and differences, their strengths and areas needing growth.
- Participate in a **marriage preparation**—you can attend either the Engaged Encounter Weekends or classes offered in the Diocese.
- Attend a **Natural Family Planning** session.

### **Required Documents**

**-Baptism Certificate:** (a copy dated within 6 months of your wedding)  
You may obtain this certificate from your church of baptism.

#### **-Dispensation(s):**

The priest will help you obtain any dispensation required.

#### **-Self-Testimony of the Bride & Groom**

(Form A): The priest will complete this form with you.

#### **-Witness Questionnaire: (Form B)**

Preferably a parent, or someone who knows you very well, is asked to give this testimony before a priest in their local parish.

#### **-Marriage License:**

This license, good for 90 days, can be obtained from Santa Clara County Clerk-Recorder's office in the County Government Center, East Wing, First Floor, 70 West Hedding Street (at First Street) San Jose, CA 95110. The license is presented to the priest on or before the wedding rehearsal. If you are already married, you must provide a copy of your marriage certificate issued by the county of your civil marriage.

## **Wedding Celebration**

#### **-Wedding Date & Time:**

Please arrange the wedding date and time with the priest before booking a reception site, etc. Weddings at St. Thomas are normally celebrated at 10:00 am, 12:00 pm, or 2:00 pm on Saturdays.

#### **-The Hall:**

Our parish hall is available for your reception though with the fee of \$250 (active, registered parishioners) or \$500 (non-active, non-registered parties) and a fee for liability insurance (currently between \$102 and \$318 depending on the number of guests and whether or not alcohol is to be served.) Use of the hall also depends on availability.

#### **-Rite of Marriage:**

The couple will be given a booklet containing the rite of marriage and selections of prayers and readings for either within Mass or outside Mass depending on which you choose.

#### **-Musicians:**

Musicians from our parish are available. The couple is responsible for speaking with the musician(s) with regard to music selection and musicians' fees. Popular songs and recorded music are not appropriate for the reception of the Sacrament. We have an excellent sound system and an electronic keyboard that can imitate a pipe organ.

#### **-Lectors:**

Couples are asked to invite friends or family members to proclaim one or more of the scripture readings and the intercessions. As per diocesan guidelines, those who proclaim the Scriptures at a wedding should be baptized and confirmed though the Prayer of the Faithful can be read anyone. It is

important that you choose those who have the necessary gifts for the proclamation. They should be at the wedding rehearsal so that they may practice with the sound system.

**-Church Etiquette:**

Our church is a sacred place with the Blessed Sacrament reserved in it. We ask that all please conduct themselves in a respectful manner whenever they are in church.

**-Food and Drink:**

Please do not consume food or drinks in church. Chewing gum is not appropriate. Water is permitted for health reasons.

**-Photography/Videography:**

You are free to use unobtrusive photography during your wedding ceremony. So as not to detract from the Sacrament being celebrated, we ask that your photographer(s) to minimize moving around after the gathering rite.

**-Flowers and Other Decorations:**

You may bring in your own flowers and other fitting/suitable decorations. However, any flowers, plants, and decorations already in church on the day of your wedding may be moved/removed only if they will be placed back in the same place after the wedding. Tape is not allowed on any of the chairs. The use of runners is discouraged. Please inform the wedding coordinator of the number of floral pieces and the time of their arrival. The parish is always grateful

for floral arrangements left for use at weekend Masses.

**-Candles and Rice:**

Since candles in the Catholic tradition are symbols of the light of Christ, the use of a “unity candle” is to be done in conjunction with the Easter Candle.

**-Throwing Rice or Other Items:**

The throwing of rice, birdseed, flower petals, etc. is not allowed, either inside or outside the church because of the difficulty of cleaning up afterwards.

**-Offerings and Fees:**

--It is customary to make an offering to the parish on the occasion of a wedding. The suggested donation is **\$500**. This amount includes a \$100 fee for the parish wedding coordinator. A deposit (half the donation) should be sent to the parish office soon after the booking of your wedding, and the remainder should be paid at least a month prior to the wedding. It is very helpful if you write the date of your wedding on the memo line of your check. A full refund of any deposit will be made if your wedding is canceled.

--Musicians have their own established fees.

--The use of the hall for a reception is \$250 for active, registered parishioners OR \$500 for non-active, non-registered parties. Keep in mind that the hall can seat about **150 comfortably** and is subject to the safety laws of the fire Marshall.

--Often times people ask about an offering for their priest. Most people offer \$250, but

it is not required. Please bring these fees or gifts to the rehearsal and give them to the priest in clearly marked envelopes. If you are not able to afford any of these fees, please speak with the pastor. There is never a charge for Sacraments!

**-Directions to St. Thomas:**

Directions to our parish for your guests can be found on our parish website:

[www.StThomasSJ.org](http://www.StThomasSJ.org)

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