



## St. Thomas the Apostle Church Preparing for your Marriage & for your Wedding

*Congratulations on your recent engagement! We at St. Thomas the Apostle want to assist you in preparing for both your wedding day and for married life.*

*Our foremost concern is to help you marry well and be  
"together for life" with God's active presence.*

*St. Thomas the Apostle Church is not only a place of worship; it is also a parish, a community of faith. We expect those privileged to be married at St. Thomas to respect the sacredness of the marriage ceremony and the Church itself.*

*At St. Thomas, engaged couples agree to willingly participate in a marriage preparation program that is distinct from planning the details of the wedding day. The wedding is contingent upon the couple's successful completion of all of the requirements of the marriage preparation program as required by the Diocese of Lansing in harmony with those of St. Thomas the Apostle Church.*

*The policies outlined in this document are meant to clarify what is expected of you as a couple as you prepare to marry; we believe following them will help ensure your wedding is a happy, holy, and sacred event. Please carefully read these guidelines and ask questions if you are unclear about any of the information as you will be responsible for knowing this information and adhering to it. It is our hope that your wedding at St. Thomas the Apostle Church will be a special time of prayer to be warmly remembered, and that your marriage will be filled with God's life and love!*

- THE PASTORAL STAFF OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH

## Prayer, Mass, and Your Marriage

In the belief of the Catholic Church, when two baptized Christians marry it is the awesome undertaking of a sacramental vocation. We encourage couples to pray together individually for God's loving and guiding presence in their relationship. We are here to assist you with any prayer need or help in knowing the faith of the Church; just ask!

A recent study showed that of couples that pray together daily and attend weekly church services, **LESS THAN 2% GET DIVORCED!** Those couples that are religious also report being happiest in their marriages. Asking couples to attend Mass weekly and pray together is another way the Church wants to help you build a happy, healthy marriage and life filled with the active presence of God.

## Sunday Eucharist

The Catechism provides beautiful reminders of the role the Eucharist plays in the life of a Catholic :

2177. The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. "Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal church." [110]

2180. The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." [117]

## Basic Requirements for Marriage at St. Thomas

### Parish Membership

#### The Marriage Application Process at St. Thomas

Registered, participating members of St. Thomas Parish, or their son or daughter, are given precedence in scheduling a wedding. You must be a registered member of St. Thomas for at least **SIX MONTHS PRIOR** to *applying* to be married at St. Thomas to be considered for the Parish Member rate for the use of the Church. See page 8 for details.

If you are not registered at St. Thomas, but are a registered, participating member of another Catholic parish, you may marry at St. Thomas as a Visiting Parishioner. You will be asked to provide membership verification from the parish where you are registered. A Visiting Parishioner fee will be assessed for the use of the Church. See page 8 for details.

### Free to Enter Marriage

Both parties entering the Marriage must establish that they have never been married, or that any previous marriage was declared Invalid by the Catholic Church. Please contact the Parish office for information on Procedures for Declaring the Invalidity of a Marriage. A wedding date will not be set until previous marriages have been declared invalid, however, marriage preparation may begin before then.

### Completion of the Pre-Marriage Requirements

In addition to completing necessary forms and attaining a civil marriage license, the couple will complete the following pre-marriage requirements: FOCCUS, Engaged Encounter Weekend, a four-session course on Natural Family Planning, meetings with a priest, and become involved in a parish ministry. Additional pre-marital preparation, such as WeCARE, may be required. Catholic education classes for non-Catholic individuals are advised.

1. As a couple, read these guidelines and

then prayerfully reflect on the questions listed on the back of the enclosed MARRIAGE PREPARATION APPLICATION. Completely fill out the application and together write your thoughts about the reflection questions. Send the application, reflections, and a current photo of the two of you to: St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Attn: Julie Mussio, Marriage Coordinator, 530 Elizabeth St, Ann Arbor MI 48104

2. After the Marriage Coordinator receives your application, reflections, and photo, one of the priests will contact you to set up an introductory meeting. After that meeting, you will meet with Julie Mussio, marriage coordinator to set the date and start your marriage prep..

3. After approval is secured, the Marriage Coordinator will inform you and set up a meeting to set a wedding date and time, as well as a date and time for the rehearsal. At this meeting, information for various marriage prep requirements will be provided, you will be asked to sign an agreement for the use of the church (if the wedding is to take place at St. Thomas), and sign an agreement to willingly complete the Marriage Preparation Requirements. If your wedding will be at St. Thomas, your deposit of \$300 is due at this time.

### Planning to Marry or Prepare Elsewhere?

St. Thomas the Apostle Church is happy to assist parishioners who are planning to marry at another Catholic parish to complete their marriage preparation requirements. Parishioners also may complete their marriage preparation requirements at another Catholic parish and marry at St. Thomas provided the two parishes have a written agreement about the arrangement and the marriage prep expectations of both parishes. If either case is your situation, please let the Marriage Coordinator know for additional details.

**Q. Before we are approved, can you tell me what dates are available so we can start planning the reception and rehearsal dinner?**

**A.** No. Weddings are scheduled on a "first come, first served" basis according to the date you submit your application and are approved. It would be premature to give a date before final approval is given, the agreements signed, and the deposit secured. The rehearsal date and time will be set when the wedding date is set.

**Q. Are there specific times and days when weddings are scheduled?**

**A.** Yes. Weddings are scheduled for Friday at 4:00 and 5:30 p.m., and Saturday at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. No weddings are scheduled after 1:30 p.m. on Saturday due to the regular Parish schedule of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the evening Mass. Weddings and rehearsals are not scheduled on the first Friday of any month due to the Parish schedule of Eucharistic Adoration. Weddings are not scheduled during the Liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent.

**Q. I'm going to send in my application. Can you just check to see if a date is open?**

**A.** Sorry, no.

## Q and A

### Q and A

**Question: Does my fiancé have to convert to Catholicism?**

**Answer:** No. However, the non-Catholic individual will be encouraged to engage in some sort of Catholic education. The Catholic individual will be asked to declare: "I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ and, with God's help, intend to continue living that faith

in the Catholic Church. At the same time, I acknowledge the respect I owe to the conscience of my partner in marriage. I promise to do all I can to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics.”

**Question: My fiancée’s family isn’t Catholic and it would cause tension with his family to have a Mass. What are our options?**

**Answer:** If celebrating Mass would create a genuine familial problem within an inter-faith couple, you could have what is often called a “word service.” A word service follows essentially the same format as the Nuptial Mass, but the Celebration of the Eucharist is absent. Should you decide to celebrate the Nuptial Mass, the non-Catholic party wouldn’t be able to participate in the Eucharist, but a special blessing can be made at that time so as not to leave them, or their family out. Please discuss these concerns with the Presider or Wedding Coordinator in advance of your wedding.

## Marriage Preparation at St. Thomas

**Get all necessary paperwork in order.** Catholics must submit a current baptismal

**Interdenominational/interfaith couples are to participate in instruction in each other’s faith practice.** A Catholic person, for instance, should seek

certificate, issued no more than six months *prior* to the wedding date, from their church of baptism. Non-Catholic Christians are required to submit a copy of their original baptismal certificate or a letter from their church of baptism stating the date and place of baptism.

If previously married, a copy of the annulment or defect of form must be submitted.

**If you aren’t already, get involved in the Parish.** The Marriage Coordinator will help you find opportunities, introduce you to different ministries, and work with you to find out how your talents can best serve the Parish.

**Take the FOCCUS Inventory** (Facilitating Open Couples Communication, Understanding, and Study). FOCCUS is a pre-marital inventory to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of your relationship, attitudes, communication skills, family dynamics, and finances among other issues. You will be assigned a FOCCUS sponsor couple and set up an initial meeting with them to take the inventory. After you take the inventory, set up two to three additional meetings with your sponsor couple to review the inventory findings.

**Attend an Engaged Encounter Weekend.** This weekend retreat is designed to give couples the opportunity to speak honestly and intensively about their future life together outside of the myriad, consuming details of planning the wedding day. Visit [WWW.LANSINGCEE.ORG](http://WWW.LANSINGCEE.ORG) for more information and to register online.

**Attend Natural Family Planning classes.** A four-session NFP class sponsored by the Couple to Couple League is required for those being married at, or completing their Marriage Prep with, St. Thomas the Apostle Church. Classes meet once a month for four months. (NOTE: The introductory NFP session offered after some Engaged Encounter Weekends will **NOT** fulfill your NFP requirement.) Go to [WWW.CCL-MI.ORG](http://WWW.CCL-MI.ORG) for a current schedule of classes and registration information.

educational opportunities with his/her fiancé (e) from the minister or rabbi of the partner. In

interdenominational/interfaith marriages, the Catholic party is asked to make a declaration that states: "I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ and, with God's help, intend to continue living that faith in the Catholic church. At the same time, I acknowledge the respect I owe to the conscience of my partner in marriage. I promise to do all I can to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics." We ask the person of no denomination to list his/her own creed or beliefs about God to compare with the Catholic partner's stance.

**Please contact the Priest/Deacon assigned to you.**

Priest/Deacon assignments will be set approximately six months prior to your wedding.

**Check out Catholic Information Classes.** Non-Catholic individuals are encouraged to attend Catholic Information Classes such as RCIA. Contact Worship Coordinator Linda Madden at 761-8606 x2803 or [lmadden@rc.net](mailto:lmadden@rc.net) for additional information.

**Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation**

(Confession and Absolution) if you are Catholic as part of your preparation for the covenant of marriage. Spiritual healing and reconciliation aid us in freely committing ourselves to God, our future spouse, and the world. You may make an appointment with a priest or avail yourself of the Sacrament in a Catholic church sometime during the two weeks prior to your ceremony.

**Helpful information**

**St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 734-761-8606**

**Marriage Coordinator, Julie Mussio x2602**

**St. Thomas organist, Timothy Tikker x2802**

**Engaged Encounter Weekend, [WWW.LANSINGCEE.ORG](http://WWW.LANSINGCEE.ORG)**

**NFP Couple to Couple League, [WWW.CCL-MI.ORG](http://WWW.CCL-MI.ORG)**

**Washtenaw County Marriage License Information:**

[www.ewashtenaw.org/government/clerk\\_register/cr\\_vitals\\_marriage\\_info.html](http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/clerk_register/cr_vitals_marriage_info.html)

**Q and A**

**General Guidelines for use of the Church**

**Cancel throwing rice, birdseed, confetti, etc.** The throwing of rice, birdseed, etc., the use of balloons, or the spraying of foamy substances like shaving cream or "Silly String" does not relate to any part of the Christian Marriage Liturgy, and are an insurance risk, and are forbidden on Church property. The throwing of flower petals (i.e. by a flower girl processing down

**Question: We both have friends and family who we want to include in the ceremony. Besides bridesmaids and groomsmen, how can we include them?**

**Answer:** Guests can be ushers, readers, Extraordinary Ministers, participate in the Presentation of Gifts, be altar servers, and, of course, participate in the Mass. You will also need someone to make sure the Church is cleaned up after the ceremony.

**Question: May we include other musicians in our ceremony?**

**Answer:** Yes. Refer to the Music Guidelines and have any plans approved by the Music Minister, Timothy Tikker, well in advance of the wedding.

**Question: Can a visiting Priest or Deacon preside at our wedding at St.**

**Thomas? Can the minister from my fiancé's church preside at the wedding?**

**Answer:** Yes. A priest or deacon from another Catholic church may preside. St. Thomas asks that a \$200 fee be paid in addition to the other church fees. Non-Catholic ministers may not preside at weddings at St. Thomas, but they may participate in specific ways. Alert the Wedding Coordinator to this issue for specific guidance.

the aisle) is not allowed inside or outside of the Church. Please refrain from this practice. Please inform your family and friends not to throw these or similar items on Church property. Should this request be ignored, you will forfeit your deposit.

**Assign someone to clean up after the wedding.** Select someone from your wedding party, a family member, or other reliable person to clean the Bride's room of hangers, flower boxes, etc., remove Worship Aids from the pews, remove pew bows, guest book, etc. immediately following the ceremony. The Wedding Coordinator will check all areas of the Church to make sure this is done. Should your party leave a mess, you will forfeit your deposit.

**Follow Church etiquette.** No alcohol, food, beverages, running, yelling, etc.

## Planning for your Wedding Day

**Dress for a prayerful, sacred event.** The Sacrament of Marriage takes place within the context of a prayerful, sacred, religious ceremony and suitable clothing for you and

**Have additional decorations approved by the Wedding Coordinator.** Pew bows attached with non-damaging plastic clips are the only other decorations besides fresh flowers and plants that are allowed at St.

your wedding party is a sign of respect. Dresses that are strapless, backless, halter top-style, and other revealing designs are not appropriate. Adding a covering of some sort for the ceremony, such as a jacket or shawl is appropriate if the style of your dress is outside of the given guidelines.

**Contact the Music Minister.** After a wedding date has been set, contact Timothy Tikker at 734-761-8606 x2802. He must approve all music plans, regardless of musicians used. A separate packet with Music Guidelines and a CD of wedding music selections will be provided to you to help you select music that is suitable for celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage.

**Decide on flowers.** If you choose to have flowers or plants decorate the Church, instruct your florist to deliver them one hour before the ceremony, via the Elizabeth St. entrance, and to take flowers for the wedding party to the Bride's Room. No flowers may be placed in front of the Altar. Only fresh flowers and plants are permitted. Plants and flowers that decorate the church for different worship settings may not be removed or moved to accommodate wedding flowers.

It is appreciated if flowers used in the Sanctuary of the Church are left for the weekend liturgies.

**Consider a Worship Aid.** Worship aids (sometimes referred to as "programs") are strongly recommended for your wedding to assist your guests in following the liturgy and participating as fully as possible. The Wedding Coordinator will provide a sample for guidance. Please submit a draft of your worship aid for approval to the Wedding Coordinator at least one month prior to the wedding.

**Mind the time.** You have just 30 minutes after the ceremony for pictures so receiving lines or dismissal pew by pew is not allowed.

Thomas. Under NO circumstances is tape to be used on the pews or any other surface of the Church. Please clear your plans with the

Wedding Coordinator well before the wedding day.

**Miscellaneous.** Unity candles and memorial candles are not properly part of the Liturgy of the Mass and are not allowed. Memorial intentions may be properly included in the Prayer of the Faithful, or can be included in your Worship Aid.

For safety reasons, the use of an aisle runner is strongly discouraged. Please discuss with the Wedding Coordinator if you are thinking of using an aisle runner.

### The Sacrament of Marriage - a sacred experience in the life of the Church

Marriage, like every sacrament, is a sacred event in the life of the Church. The entire Church celebrates with you. The context of your marriage presumes a faith in God, and in the sacredness of this sacramental action. While your wedding involves you and your family, that is only part of the picture. Your wedding is a celebration of the faith of the parish community and the Church. Because of this, there is a specific liturgy for marriage that clarifies the sacredness of this event and its place in the life of the Church.

Here are some of the ways the Catechism of the Church describes marriage:

1659. The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been endowed with its own special laws of the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of the children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament (cf. CIC, can. 1055 § 1; cf. GS 48 § 1).

1660. The Sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love which Christ has loved his Church; The grace of the Sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on their way to eternal life. (CE Council of Trent: DS 1799)

### General Guidelines for use of the Church... continued

**Provide the photographer and/or videographer our guidelines.** If you have a photographer and/or videographer at your wedding s/he must follow the enclosed guidelines

### Q and A

**Question: Why is the Rite of Marriage within the Mass?**

**Answer:** The Catechism provides excellent guidance on this issue. In the Latin Rite the

celebration of marriage between two Catholic faithful normally takes place during Holy Mass, because of the connection of all the sacraments with the Paschal mystery of Christ. [120] In the Eucharist the memorial of the New Covenant is realized, the New Covenant in which Christ has united himself for ever to the Church, his beloved bride for whom he gave himself up. [121] It is therefore fitting that the spouses should seal their consent to give themselves to each other through the offering of their own lives by uniting it to the offering of Christ for his Church made present in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and by

regarding photography and videography in the Church. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of these guidelines to the people you contract with for these services. If the photographer or videographer does not comply with the guidelines you will forfeit your deposit and the photographer or videographer will not be permitted to work at St. Thomas again.

No flash photography is allowed after the processional (this rule applies to guests as well). The photographer and/or videographer can have access to the church one hour before the wedding (unless a funeral is scheduled). The videographer must record from a stationary position set up before the ceremony and may not use additional lighting. The Presider will not wear a microphone for the purpose of recording.

You will be given up to 30 minutes following the conclusion of the ceremony for pictures in the Church. The Wedding Coordinator will inform you of the amount of time you have left, depending on the scheduled use of the Church for other functions.

receiving the Eucharist so that, communicating in the same Body and the same Blood of Christ, they may form but "one body" in Christ. [122]

**Question: I'm Catholic, but not my fiancé. Can we marry in the Catholic Church?**

**Answer:** Yes. As long as one of you is Catholic, and both of you are free to marry. If your fiancé has not been baptized in any faith, however, you will have a 'Word Service'. A Word Service does not include the Celebration of the Eucharist.

## Fees

### Registered

**Parishioner:** If you or your immediate family have been registered parishioners for at least six months prior to applying to be married at St. Thomas, your fee for the church will be \$400. The fee for the Church must be paid at least one month before the wedding. Your fee will be reduced in \$50 increments for each of the following applicable items:

- you are using Sunday envelopes for weekly contributions
- you contribute an average of \$15 per week to St. Thomas Parish
- you have been volunteering time and talent in a parish ministry

**Visiting Parishioners:** If you were not registered at St. Thomas for at least six months prior to applying to marry here and are a registered, participating member of another Catholic parish, the fee for the church will be assessed at the Visiting Parishioner rate of \$1000. If you are registered elsewhere, you will be asked to provide verification from the parish where you are registered stating that you are a member and have permission to marry at St. Thomas. The fee for the Church must be paid at least one month before the wedding.

**Refundable deposit:** When the wedding date is set, a \$300 refundable deposit for the use of the Church is due. The deposit will be refunded shortly after the wedding provided you comply with the guidelines. If you are not marrying at St. Thomas, this deposit is waived.

**Priest stipend:** The customary stipend for the priests of St. Thomas Parish is \$200. This stipend should be paid at least one month prior to the wedding.

**Visiting Priest:** Visiting priests, with proper permission, are welcome at St. Thomas.

**Organist and cantor stipends:** Our organist, Timothy Tikker, serves at all weddings. His stipend is \$150. The stipend for a cantor is negotiated with each Cantor individually. These stipends should be paid at least one month prior to the wedding.

### Extraordinary Ministers/Altar Servers:

Please provide a gratuity of \$10 each if we provide Eucharistic Ministers and/or Altar Servers.

## YOUR MARRIAGE PREP CHECKLIST

- Complete and return the application form with complete answers to the reflection questions and a recent photo of the two of you to St. Thomas Church, Attn: Julie Mussio, 530 Elizabeth St., Ann Arbor MI 48104. If needed, submit copy of any annulments.
- Have introductory meeting with the priest to approve your wedding.

- Meet with the Wedding Coordinator after meeting with the priest. At this meeting you will set the wedding and rehearsal date and time, sign the agreement to participate fully in Marriage Prep, and sign the agreement for the use of the Church. You will be given Marriage Prep materials, the Music Guidelines and CD, and information on planning the liturgy for your ceremony. The \$300 deposit is due at this time.
- Submit baptismal certificates, affidavits, and other paperwork as requested.
- Take the FOCCUS Inventory and meet with your sponsor couple two or three times.
- Attend the Engaged Encounter Weekend. Give the certificate of completion to the Wedding Coordinator. Go to [WWW.LANSINGCEE.ORG](http://WWW.LANSINGCEE.ORG) for more information.
- Attend Catholic Information Classes and/or interfaith education as requested.
- Attend a four-session course of Natural Family Planning Classes offered by the Couple to Couple League. A complete schedule of classes is available at [www.ccl-mi.org](http://www.ccl-mi.org)
- Contact the Music Minister, Timothy Tikker, to plan and have approved your music for the ceremony
- When you have completed your marriage prep, or two months before your wedding, whichever is later, contact the priest who will preside at your wedding and meet.
- Approximately two months before the wedding, meet with the Wedding Coordinator to finalize plans for the ceremony.
- At least one month before the wedding, pay all remaining fees for the Church. Have your Worship Aid approved.
- Obtain a civil marriage license. You can't get married without it!
- If you are Catholic, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Attend the rehearsal. Bring your civil marriage license and Worship Aids to the rehearsal if you have not already dropped them off to the Marriage Coordinator.
- Get married!