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Mark 10:8

ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CHURCH

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

GUIDELINES

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ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH

203 EAST AVENUE
NORWALK, CONNECTICUT 06855

Dear Friends,

Congratulations on your decision to marry. Marriage will bind you together for life in a relationship so close and so intimate that it will influence everything that you do. Your priests realize that this is a very important time in your life and will help you as you make preparations for your life together.

It is our hope that, as you journey to your wedding day, these days and months will be filled with great excitement and joy for you. The prayer of your family, friends, and parishioners is that, together, your love will grow deeper and stronger as the years go on.

The information in this booklet will assist you in your civil and religious preparations for the celebration of this sacrament.

Wishing you God's blessing as you prepare for your life together!

Sincerely yours in Christ,
The Priests and Staff of
St. Thomas the Apostle Parish

MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Marriage has been established by the Lord as the great Sacrament of God's Covenant with His people. It is designed to be "a sign" of God's love, fidelity, mercy, and healing. As a couple prepares to receive this Sacrament, they must be aware that their sacramental union will be a reflection of the relationship with Christ and the Church. Marriage is a lasting covenant of fidelity; a union of life and love with an openness to new life.

The Sacrament of Marriage is also a covenant with the Community. Christian couples are called to the sacramental vocation of their marriage by allowing the joy and peace and love in the Christian home to radiate to others.

The joy and peace of marriage lived out by a couple in faithfulness to each other before the Lord is not achieved without effort and sacrifice. In this way the couple experiences the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection as lived out day-by-day.

Although it is a union of two persons, married love does not destroy individual personality. Each personality matures and develops through the course of married living in accordance with the great law of love: ***"Give yourselves to one another so as to be able together to give yourselves to others."***

Marriage Preparations

Preparation for marriage must begin nine months to one year before the wedding date.

Marriage is usually celebrated in the parish of the bride; it may be celebrated in the parish of the groom.

Under extraordinary circumstances the marriage of individuals outside the parish may be celebrated in St. Thomas the Apostle Church. A letter giving permission for the wedding must come from the church of the bride or groom.

Ecumenical marriages (between a Catholic and other Christian) and inter-faith marriages (between a Catholic and non-Christian) should be planned with the clergy of both faiths. A meeting with the Pastor or Parochial Vicar should be scheduled prior to setting your wedding date.

A program of marriage preparation (Pre-Cana) is required by the Diocese of Bridgeport. This preparation consists of a one-day Marriage Conference at the Catholic Center in Bridgeport, as well as meetings with one of the Parish Priests. Couples 19 years of age or under are required by the Diocese to obtain permission of the Bishop to marry in the Church. Please visit:

<https://formationreimagined.org/marriage-prep-reimagined/>

for a schedule of sessions and to register.

The following documents are required for Marriage:
Recent Certificates, i.e. within six months of issuance, with the issuing parish seal:

Baptismal, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Once you have finished your Pre-Cana course, please call

the Parish Office to set up an interview with the parish priest. This interview is called a PMI, which stands for Pre-Marital Investigation. Bring your Pre-Cana Class Certificate and the **CURRENT**, sealed Sacramental Certificates to this meeting.

The State of Connecticut Marriage License should be given to the priest at least **one week** before the wedding. It must be issued **in Norwalk**, from the Town Clerk's Office, no earlier than 65 days prior to the wedding date. Application must be made by both parties in person.

PLANNING YOUR CEREMONY

To help you plan your wedding celebration, you will receive the book, Together For Life. Use this book to choose Readings, Prayers, and Blessings. If you have your own favorite Readings, etc., you must have them approved by the priest.

MUSIC

Music is an important part of the wedding ceremony. The couple is responsible for contacting the organist as soon as their wedding is scheduled. Music arrangements are made directly with the parish wedding organist. The parish recommends Marge Kelley for weddings. (See the Checklist Card for contact information.) ***An outside organist is not permitted unless they have been approved by the Parish Music Director.***

The selections should be liturgically and theologically appropriate for the Marriage Ceremony as suggested in the parish hymnal and by the organist. The use of pre-recorded music is not permitted during the ceremony. The parish organist has the final word on appropriate music. The fee for the organist, soloist, and other musicians vary.

You will be informed of the fees when you contact the selected individuals. All fees are the responsibility of the couple. They should be paid in cash or bank check before the wedding ceremony.

DECORATIONS

Flowers may decorate the sanctuary. *They should not be removed from the church after the wedding.* Decorations may be placed on the pews – but **never** with tape. The parish recommends Springdale Florist. (See Checklist.) Flower petals, rice, confetti, birdseed, etc., may **NOT** be thrown inside or outside the church. Flower girls may **NOT** drop petals in the church. This is a safety issue.

SCHEDULING YOUR CELEBRATION

Weddings are scheduled through the parish office. Based on information received at that time, a preliminary meeting with the parish priest may be necessary.

Weddings may be scheduled on Saturdays at 11:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m., or 2:00 p.m.. All other days and times must be approved by the Pastor.

The wedding rehearsal usually takes place one or two nights before the wedding. It should be scheduled at the same time the wedding date is set.

ALTAR SERVERS

Altar servers are not scheduled to assist at weddings. If you have relatives or friends who are servers and you would like them to serve, tell the priest. They are most welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOGRAPHY

Professional photographers and videographers must consult with the priest at least one month prior to the ceremony. Proper professional conduct is expected at all times.

We hope that this booklet will help you as you start your new journey through life together. Remember, we are here to help. You may call us with any questions that you have.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5



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