

Wedding Preparation Guide  
San Antonio Catholic Church

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Port Charlotte, Florida

33980

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love one another as I have loved you (john 15:12)

Congratulations!

Your wedding is an important event in the life of our parish community, as well as a joyous milestone in your lives. Our Church rejoices with you and we are eager to help make your wedding an occasion that will be remembered with deep satisfaction. Your wedding need not be elaborate to be meaningful and beautiful. The true meaning and beauty lie in the spirit and attitude of those who take part.

This booklet will help you to prepare for the celebration of this sacrament here at San Antonio. The following guidelines will answer many of your questions and make your preparation a little smoother. The priest or deacon of the parish who will be helping you will give you any clarification that you may need.

Preparation occurs in phases. To assure ample time for a quality preparation, **you must visit with a priest or deacon of this parish as a couple at least six months** prior to your anticipated wedding date.

As you proceed with your preparations, please ensure that you follow the policies and procedures outlined in this booklet, and communicate with the proper persons involved in the planning of your wedding so that your wedding will be as memorable as we are sure you want it to be.

We pray that your wedding here at San Antonio is one of the happiest and most beautiful memories of your life, and the beginning of a healthy and happy marriage.

Fr Stuart Gullan-Steel  
Temporary Administrator

## **Phase 1: Conference with a priest**

The first stage in your preparation is meeting with a priest or deacon of the parish for the required pre-marriage interview. The purpose of this meeting is to establish a rapport and a relationship between the priest and the engaged couple. It also determines that both parties are free and ready to marry, and to schedule a meeting for the pre-marriage inventory survey. After this initial meeting, a date can be set for the wedding. **At least one of the parties must be Catholic.**

Catholics are ordinarily expected to celebrate their wedding in the parish in which one of you is a member. Catholics who are not members of San Antonio parish and live elsewhere, must seek permission from both their own pastor, as well as the pastor here at San Antonio. An individual is considered a parishioner by registering in a parish, and attending Mass at that parish for at least three months.

## **Phase 2 : Instruction and Spiritual Preparation**

This phase of preparation is intended to assist you with developing life skills, and a sacramental understanding of marriage in order to help you live your vows more completely. This preparation is accomplished in a variety of ways to suit various needs. Options include an Engaged Encounter Weekend, and one day options. The Diocese of Venice requires that couples attend two workshops, one on life skills, and one on sacramentality. Information on these workshops can be found at [www.dioceseofvenice.org](http://www.dioceseofvenice.org) .

The priest or deacon can help guide you on this phase of preparation. Upon completion, you will receive a certificate; this certificate will discount the cost of the marriage license when presented. A copy is needed for San Antonio also.

Of fundamental importance to the preparation process is the aspect of spirituality, your readiness to be united before God in the Sacrament of Marriage. It is highly desirable that each of you has a strong and active faith relationship with God. God is the third person in your marriage, and like your personal relationship, this relationship needs to be fostered through participation in church life. If one of you is not Catholic we want you to know that you are welcome at San Antonio or, alternatively, you are encouraged to develop your faith relationship in your own tradition and see in that a valuable contribution to your union.

For spiritual preparation, Catholics should consider:

- Full, active and conscientious participation in a Catholic parish. This includes attending Sunday Mass, being a registered parishioner, partaking in faith formation opportunities, and supporting the parish.
- The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the wedding.
- Prayer and meditation centered around themes of love, commitment, and marriage as a source of God's presence.

### **Phase 3: Preparation for the Ceremony**

Upon completion of the pre-marriage preparation, you and the priest or deacon will meet again to review the outcome, and to help you begin to plan the wedding ceremony.

The priest or deacon will then assist in the planning of the wedding, including the selection of readings, and details of the day.

If you choose to engage the services of a 'Bridal Consultant', that person may not be involved in the rehearsal or wedding ceremony. **Under no circumstances will the priest or deacon deal with any individuals other than the bride and groom during the preparation and planning process.** For more information, consult with the priest or deacon who is preparing you.

In your overall planning of the wedding, please remember that our church at San Antonio is first and foremost, a place of worship. With this in mind, you should also be aware that our worship area is set for liturgical needs. This means that our sound system may not be changed in any way for a wedding and no furniture moved or removed except for chairs and kneelers for the bride and groom. The church will be open one hour prior to the wedding.

**\*\* No food or drink is permitted in any area of the church building\*\***

#### ***Music***

The music for your wedding must be secured through the music director. This should be done two months prior to the wedding. The music director will assist you in selecting the music and scheduling the musicians and cantor. **If you wish to hire outside musicians, you must get the approval of the music director prior to contracting them, as well as approval of the musical selections.** Diocesan approved selections are available.

Since the wedding is a worship service, music which is consistent with the Christian understanding of love and marriage is the most appropriate type of music. The music director will guide you through this process. The musicians fees are \$100/keyboard and \$85/cantor.

#### ***Flowers***

San Antonio offers, when possible, to coordinate the weekly altar flowers with the couple's wedding colors. If you choose to provide your own, you are limited to two arrangements in the sanctuary.

Please observe the following guidelines with regards to flowers and candles, and review them with your florist

- Nothing may be removed from or placed on the altar
- Nothing may be higher than the altar.
- The florist may place decorations in the church one hour before the wedding. The decorations must be completed 30 minutes prior to the scheduled time of your wedding.

- Any pew decorations must be secured with plastic clips ONLY.
- Candles are not allowed.
- Flower girls may not drop petals.
- Ring bearer pillow is symbolic - the wedding rings cannot be placed on the pillow.

### *Photographs*

We understand that photographs are an important part of your wedding. We also believe in the dignity and solemnity of the wedding as a worship service. The photographer will need to discuss with the priest or deacon witnessing your vows regarding what pictures may or may not be taken during the ceremony itself.

After the wedding you may remain in the church up to \*30 minutes\* for photographs. The priest or deacon will be happy to pose with you immediately following the ceremony.

### *Videotaping*

For those having their wedding videotaped, we ask that you advise the videographer of the following parish regulations:

- The camera must be set up in the rear of the church and/or either side of the sanctuary, but not in the sanctuary.
- Once in place, the equipment may not be moved during the ceremony.
- No flood lights or special lighting may be used during the ceremony.
- No wires may be laid across the aisles.
- Nothing may be affixed in any way to church walls or furnishings.
- There will be no tampering with or connection to the church's sound system.

**\*\*\*\*We reserve the right to ask any photographer or videographer who is not following these procedures to comply or leave the premises.\*\*\*\***

## **Phase 4: The Rehearsal**

Rehearsals are usually set for the evening before your wedding. **It is important that rehearsals begin on time, and be completed within one hour. Everyone taking part in the ceremony should attend the rehearsal, and arrive 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time.** Tardiness on the part of anyone may shorten the time you have to rehearse. All present should remember that the rehearsal is taking place in an area dedicated to the worship of God.

The use of alcoholic beverages before or during the rehearsal is not permitted. As noted above, no food or drink may be brought into the building.

**\*IMPORTANT ITEMS TO NOTE\***

- A wedding date can only be set through a priest or deacon who has agreed to officiate. The date is confirmed when payment is received. (See fees and offerings)
- Catholic parties must obtain a recent copy of their baptismal record from the parish concerned.
- Non-Catholic Christian parties must provide evidence of baptism.
- Each person must provide two witnesses who know the person well enough to attest to his/her freedom to marry by completing the specified form. Usually parents or family members are the best witnesses.
- Inter-faith marriages require a dispensation/permission for the Catholic person to marry a non-Catholic. The priest or deacon is responsible for obtaining this.
- All prior marriages are generally considered valid. As such, a person is free to marry in the Catholic Church only if a former spouse has died or an annulment of the previous marriage has been obtained. A wedding date cannot be set prior to obtaining an annulment.
- It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain a civil marriage license form the State of Florida. No wedding can be performed without license in hand. Please bring the license to the church no later than the rehearsal with page two completed and bring with it a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

**Please be aware of the following**

- Confetti, bird seed, rice, flower petals, bubbles, and balloons are not allowed.
- Bridal runner is not allowed.
- There is no smoking in our church building, nor consumption of alcohol allowed on church grounds.

**\*\* Please note: in consideration of your guests, the priest, and staff,  
if for any reason the wedding has not commenced within 15 minutes of the scheduled time,  
that time will be taken from the post-wedding photographs.**

## **Phase 5: The Wedding Day**

On the day of the wedding, the ushers/grooms-men should be ready to escort guests to their seats 30 minutes prior to the time the wedding is scheduled to begin. The groom should be in the side hall 15 minutes prior to the wedding.

The bride and her parents should arrive at least 15-20 minutes prior to the beginning of the wedding.

Arrival times will be reviewed and settled at the rehearsal.

### **Minimum Fees and Offerings in Addition to the Musicians Fees**

Registered parishioners and children of registered parishioners	\$250
Local non-parishioners.	\$350
Those who are not members of San Antonio and live elsewhere	\$450
Altar Servers (if present) each	\$ 20
A personal gift to the presider may be offered, the amount of which is at your discretion.	

A personal gift may be given to the priest or deacon who undertook your preparation for marriage if he is not officiating at the wedding.

\*\*\*\*IMPORTANT - YOUR DATE IS NOT CONFIRMED UNTIL THE SAN ANTONIO FEE IS PAID- THIS SHOULD BE PAID WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THE CONFERENCE WITH THE PRIEST IN PHASE 1.

\*\*\*\* THIS FEE IS REFUNDABLE UP TO THREE MONTHS PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED DATE.

We are happy to have been a part of this special day. We hope you feel that you have a special relationship with the priests, staff, and community of San Antonio Church. We hope that you will understand that because of the scope of our weekend activities, it is usually not possible for the priests to attend rehearsal dinners and receptions.

**WE WISH YOU MANY HAPPY YEARS TOGETHER!**

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

PRIEST \_\_\_\_\_

PMI QUESTIONNAIRE \_\_\_\_\_

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE: BRIDE \_\_\_\_\_  
GROOM \_\_\_\_\_

PRE-NUPTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE \_\_\_\_\_

MARRIAGE LICENSE \_\_\_\_\_

WITNESS FORMS (TWO EACH) \_\_\_\_\_

MUSIC \_\_\_\_\_

WEDDING DATE AND TIME \_\_\_\_\_

REHEARSAL DATE AND TIME \_\_\_\_\_

FEES \_\_\_\_\_

MARRIAGE PREPARATION/INSTRUCTION \_\_\_\_\_

PRIEST PERMISSION TO MARRY \_\_\_\_\_

DEATH CERTIFICATE/DECREE OF NULLITY \_\_\_\_\_