



St. Thomas Aquinas

CATHOLIC CHURCH

MARRIAGE PREPARATION & GUIDELINES



The Community of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church offers you God's blessings as you begin your preparation for marriage in the Roman Catholic Church.

This guide will assist you in understanding the expectations for the preparation process and for the day of your wedding. Marriage in the Catholic Church of St. Thomas Aquinas is governed by the rules and regulations of the Roman Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orlando.

We pledge to do all we can to help you prepare well and to make your wedding day a memorable day, filled with meaning and the sacredness that it deserves.

700 BROWN CHAPEL ROAD, ST. CLOUD, FL 34769 ~ 321-355-3411

WWW.STACATHOLIC.ORG ~ INFO@STACATHOLIC.ORG

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Fr. Derek Saldanha, Pastor

frderek@stacatholic.org

Fr. Michael Batista , Parochial Vicar

frmichael@stacatholic.org

Artemis Otazia, Music Director

aotazia@stacatholic.org

Megan Holmberg, Marriage Coordinator

321-355-3411

mholmberg@stacatholic.org

Annulment Advocate, Located at Holy Redeemer Church 407-847-2500

imenjura@orlandodiocese.org

TO BEGIN YOUR MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS, PLEASE CONTACT THE PARISH OFFICE.

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized (Code of Canon Law 1055).

The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility, which in Christian marriage obtain a special firmness by reason of the sacrament (Code of Canon Law 1056). Therefore, the Sacrament of Marriage must be approached with faith and devotion, since this action can have a deep effect in one's life. Thus, a period of preparation is required before receiving this Sacrament of Marriage.

REQUIREMENTS AND PREPARATION

In order to be eligible to be married at St. Thomas Aquinas, one member of the proposed couple must profess the Roman Catholic faith and be a registered member of the parish of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Both bride and groom must be "free to marry in the Roman Catholic Church." Any person who has been previously married in the church or civilly married, and whose previous spouse is still alive, regardless of civil divorce or civil annulment, is not free to marry in the Church without receiving an annulment from the Catholic Church. Persons in such situations should seek a possible annulment in the Roman Catholic Church prior to any further marriage preparations. Please make an appointment with the Regional Annulment Advocate located at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church by calling 407-847-2500.

Please note that marriage preparation can take between 4 to 6 months before a couple approaches the altar for the Sacrament of Marriage. During this period of preparation, the process of assessment and readiness determination must occur before a wedding date is set. After this determination has occurred, a period of instruction and wedding ceremony preparation will follow.

The Catholic Church reserves the right to ask the couple to delay wedding plans due to the special circumstances and un-preparedness. Marriage instructions include interviews with the Parish Priest, completion of the Diocesan mandated Pre-Cana class, as well as documentation and paperwork as required by the Catholic Church. All Christians are required to provide proof of Baptism.

A marriage prepared outside the Diocese of Orlando and St. Thomas Aquinas Parish will require your pastor to forward a complete Pre-Nuptial file to his Tribunal. That Tribunal will forward the file to the Orlando Diocese Tribunal along with a transmittal letter designating the parish where the wedding will take place. Mail to: Diocese of Orlando Tribunal, PO Box 1800, Orlando, FL 32802 USA.

TYPES OF NUPTIAL CEREMONIES OFFERED AT ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

There are three types of nuptial ceremonies offered at St. Thomas Aquinas; a Full Mass with Nuptials, a Liturgy of the Word Service with Nuptials or a Nuptial Ceremony. The priest or the marriage coordinator can assist you in choosing

- A full Mass with Nuptials includes the Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, the exchange of vows and the nuptial blessing. This type of ceremony must be presided over by a priest, includes music and readings and lasts approximately 1 hour. Typically this type of ceremony is for a first wedding between two Catholics, but can also be for a convalidation between two Catholics.
- A Liturgy of the Word Service with Nuptials includes the Liturgy of the Word, the exchange of vows and the nuptial blessing. This type of ceremony can be presided over by a priest or a deacon, includes music and readings and lasts approximately 45 minutes. Typically this type of ceremony is for a wedding between a Catholic and a non-Catholic or a convalidation.
- A Nuptial Ceremony is the exchange of vows and the nuptial blessing. This type of ceremony can be presided over by a priest or deacon, there is no music, a gospel reading only by the priest and lasts approximately 10-15 minutes. Typically this type of ceremony is for a convalidation.

If you plan to have an outside priest preside over your ceremony, permission is required. If the priest is currently active in the Diocese of Orlando, he can send a letter directly to our Pastor. If the priest is currently active in another Diocese, he must have a letter submitted from his Diocese through our Tribunal. If you have any questions or concerns about this process, please speak directly to our Pastor.

DONATIONS TO THE CHURCH FOR YOUR WEDDING

The donation for the use of the church is tax-deductible. It is determined by parishioner status. An active parishioner is one who has been registered with the parish for a minimum of six months and has been regularly attending Mass and supporting the parish with their regular tithes. Active parishioners are vital to the success and sustainability of our parish. Their regular contributions fund parish programs for the community as well as administrative costs. Non-parishioners or non-active parishioners are those who attend Mass at parishes other than St. Thomas Aquinas and do not support St. Thomas Aquinas.

Parishioner activity and financial contributions are recorded with the use of parish registration number on envelopes or online giving. It is important to use the envelopes or online giving so that your participation is recorded. Going to Mass every Sunday is an essential part of Marriage Preparation.

Donations for weddings assist the parish in administrative costs for marriage preparation, utilities and other expenses. All fees are due a minimum of two weeks prior to the ceremony and can be paid by cash, check or credit card.

Note that if you plan to have an outside priest preside over your ceremony or any outside musicians, you must contact the our Pastor for permission and further instructions on providing paperwork.

Please see the following fee schedule.

TYPE OF CEREMONY	ACTIVE Parishioner Rates*	Non-Active or Non-Parishioner Rates*
Full Mass with Nuptials	Presider Stipend \$100 Ceremony Coordinator \$100 Cantor \$100 Accompanist \$150 Altar Server: \$25	Church or Chapel \$500 Presider Stipend \$100 Ceremony Coordinator \$100 Cantor \$100 Accompanist \$150 Altar Server: \$25
Liturgy of the Word Service with Nuptials	Presider Stipend \$100 Ceremony Coordinator \$100 Cantor \$100 Accompanist \$150	Church or Chapel \$500 Presider Stipend \$100 Ceremony Coordinator \$100 Cantor \$100 Accompanist \$150
Nuptial Ceremony		Presider Stipend \$100
File Prep Only	Materials / Mailings Fee \$150	Materials / Mailings Fee \$150
	*Please note that there is a fee to complete FOCCUS or Fully Engaged that you will pay directly on the website and there is a fee for Pre-Cana and Convalidation Workshops that will be paid directly to the Diocese of Orlando upon	*Please note that there is a fee to complete FOCCUS or Fully Engaged that you will pay directly on the website and there is a fee for Pre-Cana and Convalidation Workshops that will be paid directly to the Diocese of Orlando

REHEARSAL AND CEREMONY

Scheduling

Rehearsals are typically held one day prior to the wedding ceremony at an agreed upon time for a Full Mass or Liturgy of the Word Service. Times are reserved according to the availability of the church. Please be on time to the rehearsal as there may be another rehearsal or wedding ceremony the same day. *Your rehearsal will start PROMPTLY at the scheduled time.* You will be advised of available times.

Rehearsals are intended only for the wedding party and immediate family. Please be considerate of this rule. We cannot accommodate all guests of the wedding on the day of the rehearsal as there may be other rehearsals or weddings following.

Wedding Times

Weddings are held at the following times: (please note that we do not celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony during the Lenten Season).

Friday, 2:00 pm; Friday 5pm; Saturday, 11:00 am; Saturday, 1:00 pm;

For other days and times, please contact the priest or Megan Holmberg.

Note that your ceremony will start PROMPTLY at the scheduled time. For a Full Mass Ceremony, if the bride or groom are not present after 15 minutes, the ceremony will be a Liturgy of the Word Service only. If the bride or groom are not present after 30 minutes, the ceremony will be a Nuptial Ceremony only. For a Liturgy of the Word Ceremony, if the bride or groom are not present after 15 minutes, the ceremony will be a Nuptial Ceremony only.

The start of the wedding ceremony will NOT BE DELAYED due to the absence of anyone but the bride or groom. Please ensure that the groom and groomsmen arrive 45 minutes prior to the ceremony. The bride and bridesmaids should plan to arrive at the church 30 minutes to 1 hour prior to the ceremony. Guests should be arriving 30 minutes prior to the ceremony. Once the procession has begun, the outside doors will be locked and nobody will be allowed to enter until entrance procession is complete.

Documents Needed

The marriage license must be presented to the presider on the day of the wedding. Marriage licenses are obtained at any Florida County Courthouse. Please visit www.stateofflorida.com/getting-married-in-florida.aspx for more details on that process.

Accessories

The church will be open 1 hour prior to your ceremony. This is the start time for any flowers or decorations to be placed.

Etiquette

Neither alcoholic nor non-alcoholic beverages, nor food of any kind are allowed inside the chapel and church at the rehearsal or on your wedding day. Only water is acceptable. Please advise your wedding party and guests at the rehearsal of this rule. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Since your rehearsal and wedding are being held in a sacred place, we expect the bridal party and guests to be dressed modestly in order to maintain the sanctity of the Church and the sacredness of the occasion.

Please share these etiquette guidelines with your bridal party and guests.

The Church is a Sacred Place where Christ is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle. In order to maintain the sanctity and decorum of such a Holy place, we must be mindful of our conduct which extends to the manner in which we dress while we are visiting the Church.

We expect everyone to dress respectfully keeping in mind the sanctity of the place and the sacredness of the liturgy that you are participating in. Clothing that is too casual or too flamboyant will be a source of distraction for the congregation while at the same time taking away from the sanctity of the occasion.

With this in mind, all those attending liturgies at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church are asked to take note of the following guidelines:

- Dresses and skirts should be modest in length, i.e. to the knee. The neckline for dresses, sweaters, and blouses must be modest and not revealing. Short skirts or dresses and revealing blouses are not appropriate.
- Clothing for both men and women should fit comfortably and not be formfitting or tight or overly casual.

It is our hope that these guidelines will help us enter the Church with a greater awareness of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and thereby allow Christ to transform our lives.

YOUR WEDDING DAY

Celebrant

A celebrant will be chosen to officiate at your wedding Mass or Liturgy of the Word vow ceremony when the date is approved and booked in the church schedule. A visiting priest to St. Thomas Aquinas must ask for

delegation from the Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas. Please see details below.

Delegation

This concerns only a visiting priest from outside the Diocese of Orlando whom you have asked to preside at your ceremony. He must request from the Chancellor of his Diocese a “Letter of Suitability” stating that he is in good standing with his Diocese and enjoys full faculties for the exercise of his priestly ministry. He needs to submit this to the Diocese of Orlando Tribunal, PO Box 1800, Orlando, FL 32802-1800. This should be completed early in his acceptance of celebrating the marriage so the Diocese can approve. A copy should also be sent to the Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas with a letter requesting permission to celebrate a particular ceremony. Simple Delegation letter from the Pastor to do the service is necessary.

The Wedding Liturgy

A selection of readings, blessings and prayers for the Liturgy is provided in *Together for Life*, a booklet received at Pre-Cana. We will provide it in case you did not receive it. The clergy member preparing the couple and the musician will assist in the process of creating the Liturgy with the couple’s selections from the book. Couples are asked to complete the selection form from *Together for Life* and present it to their clergy or coordinator at least one month prior to their ceremony.

Wedding Music

Couple contact the musician three months prior to the date. The musician assists the couple in making their music selections and schedule the pianist, cantor and any other musicians or special request of the couple. All wedding music is provided by the talents of the St. Thomas Aquinas musicians and approved through the office. Please do not invite other musicians or vocalists without consulting the musician and without the prior approval of the pastor.

Photography and Videography

Photographers may discretely photograph during the ceremony. Photographs may be taken for thirty minutes immediately following the ceremony inside the Church and thereafter for another thirty minutes, outside the Church if desired. An additional letter of specific guidelines is available with this guide for you to present to your photographer and videographer.

Church Wedding Day Coordinator

A church coordinator/sacristan representing St. Thomas Aquinas is essential in directing the rehearsal and assisting the priest at the wedding liturgy. Although welcome at weddings, it is understood that the private wedding event planner’s role in the wedding concerns the secular aspects of the day. **If you have hired an event planner for the secular elements, please advise this person that St. Thomas Aquinas has a church coordinator who will handle all matters of the rehearsal and wedding ceremony while in the Church.**

Groom, Ushers and Groomsmen

The groom is asked to arrive 45 minutes prior to the scheduled time of the ceremony. The groom and groomsmen are expected to arrive dressed in their wedding attire. Ushers and groomsmen should be attentive

to guests, escorting them to their seats. Mingling in the narthex of the church is discouraged as this may delay the start of the ceremony, formal seating of guests is suspended 5 minutes prior to the beginning of the liturgy and guests arriving late will be seated by the wedding coordinator via the side aisles once the procession has concluded.

The Bride and Bridesmaids

The bride and bridesmaids are asked to arrive 30 minutes to one hour prior to the liturgy. All ladies are expected to arrive dressed in their wedding attire, make-up applied and hair ready. It is customary that the bride waits in the bride's room for the liturgy to begin so that she and the groom do not see one another prior to the bride's procession into the church.

Bride and Attendants' Dresses

Your wedding day is a very special one and hopefully, will be remembered for many years to come with happy memories. The Bride and Bridesmaids have to remember, however, that the wedding is not just a time to party but an important Sacrament celebrated in the Church which is a very sacred place. ***The manner in which we dress must reflect our dignity as sons and daughters of God and must be respectful of the sanctity of the Church. Any clothing that shows cleavage, low cut, strapless or back-less gowns or mini-skirts even though perhaps beautiful and fashionable for certain affairs, may not be worn in Church.*** If a bride or a bridesmaid insists on wearing a dress that may be deemed inappropriate by the priest, for a religious ceremony, she will be asked to put on a shawl, which we will provide. In order to avoid such a situation, please abide by this rule. If a bride has any questions regarding proper dress, there usually is a problem. Brides in this case, should check with Ms. Megan Holmberg before purchasing any dresses. Sadly, in the case of the rest of the bridal party, Maid of Honor and bridesmaids, violation of the dressing guidelines will forfeit their participation in the wedding ceremony, and they will sit in the back of the church. These guidelines apply to lectors and any other person selected to participate in the wedding ceremony. ***Everyone MUST wear appropriate attire for Church, especially covered shoulders.***

Flowers

You have the option of arranging for your own flowers the day of your wedding, we just ask that they are flowers befitting a sacred space. Please advise the church wedding coordinator of any flowers that will be delivered to the church. Advise florist to make deliveries one hour prior to the ceremony.

Pew Adornment/Bows

Floral or ribbons must be attached without the use of tape or other adhesives. No scotch tape, nails or thumbtacks on the pews. Highly suggested are ribbons, elastic or special pew handers that do not mar the finish of the pews.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Baptized Catholics are encouraged to celebrate the Holy Sacrament of Marriage in a state of grace. It is recommended that before entering into the Sacrament of Marriage, Catholics celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation to prepare them for this sacred union. The priest is pleased to make arrangements for the bride and groom to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at some point before the wedding.

THE FOLLOWING ARE NOT PERMITTED AT THE WEDDING CEREMONY:

- Aisle runner - risk of injury
- Unity Candles - the unity candle is not in the Catholic Marriage Rite and if desired this ritual can be performed at the reception
- Strollers, wagons, pets, etc. are not allowed during the procession
- Receiving Line - please reserve the receiving line for the reception. This will allow a smooth transition after the wedding liturgy for photographs
- Flower petals (real or silk), rice, birdseed, bubbles or confetti in or outside of the church/chapel area
- Alcohol and food - use of alcoholic beverages before the rehearsal or the wedding is strictly forbidden. As free consent makes a marriage, one jeopardizes the validity of the marriage if he or she is under the influence. Bottled water in the bride's room is acceptable. We also request that there is no food, gum or snacks in the Church or Chapel.

St. Thomas Aquinas Photography and Videography Guidelines

Photographer must not interfere with the liturgical action of the wedding ceremony in any manner. Photographers will be greeted by the church wedding coordinator when they arrive to answer any questions.

Tripods and other equipment must be kept in a stationary manner with minimal movement during the ceremony. Designated areas for equipment are available. Photographers and equipment are strictly prohibited from the sanctuary.

- The use of additional lighting is not permitted during the ceremony but may be used for formal photos at the altar after the conclusion of the wedding.
 - Flash photography will be permitted only before and after the wedding liturgy.
- Cameras are not permitted beyond the steps of the sanctuary. Please be respectful of the space surrounding the couple and the priest during the ceremony.
- The church/chapel will be open to free movement of photographers only up to 30 minutes AFTER the wedding liturgy. Thereafter, photographs may be taken outside the Church.
- We request that the photographer use discretion and be respectful at all times throughout the service and adhere to the directions of the parish's wedding coordinator.

St. Thomas Aquinas Photography and Videography Guidelines

Please share this page with your wedding photographer and / or videographer.

Photographer must not interfere with the liturgical action of the wedding ceremony in any manner. Photographers will be greeted by the church wedding coordinator when they arrive to answer any questions.

Tripods and other equipment must be kept in a stationary manner with minimal movement during the ceremony. Designated areas for equipment are available. Photographers and equipment are strictly prohibited from the sanctuary.

- The use of additional lighting is not permitted during the ceremony but may be used for formal photos at the altar after the conclusion of the wedding.
- Flash photography will be permitted only before and after the wedding liturgy.
- Cameras are not permitted beyond the steps of the sanctuary. Please be respectful of the space surrounding the couple and the priest during the ceremony.
- The church/chapel will be open to free movement of photographers only up to 30 minutes AFTER the wedding liturgy. Thereafter, photographs may be taken outside the Church.
- We request that the photographer use discretion and be respectful at all times throughout the service and adhere to the directions of the parish's wedding coordinator.