

S. **Anthony of Padua Church Policy for Marriage**

Welcome to St. Anthony's and thank you for choosing to worship in our community. As you prepare to celebrate your upcoming marriage, our staff, especially our marriage coordinator, will assist you in this process. As our church policy states, "We, the faith community to which you belong, care about you and your future success in marriage: We want to help you in the growth of your relationship with each other and with God. Our goal is to assist you to prepare, not just for your wedding day, but for your married life together." This policy establishes definite diocesan and parish norms and guidelines for marriage preparation. The common policy for marriage preparation is not intended to make it difficult for couples to marry in the Catholic Church. Rather, it recognizes the seriousness of marriage and the responsibility of a caring church to help couples prepare adequately for a community life and love together.

*N*otification to the Parish

A territorial or affiliated parishioner may schedule a wedding at St. Anthony of Padua Church.

- **A territorial parishioner** currently lives within the boundaries of St. Anthony of Padua Church or St. Agnes Mission.
- **An affiliated parishioner** has chosen to be part of our faith community by officially registering in the parish **and** actively taking part in the life of this faith community for six months prior to scheduling their wedding. Active participation can be demonstrated through regular contributions made to St. Anthony of Padua Church or St. Agnes Mission through the use of envelopes or personal checks. Participation can also include active participation in one of our parish outreach ministries.

Couples are to contact the parish marriage coordinator a minimum of six months before the preferred wedding date. Many couples do plan their wedding at least one year in advance; it is advisable to plan early to ensure that the date you have selected is available.

Required Documents

The following documents are to be presented when the wedding is booked:

- A “Certificate of Baptism,” for each baptized party that is dated within six months of the date submitted and includes notations.
- A “Certificate of First Communion”
- A “Certificate of Confirmation”
- A “Certificate of Death,” if either party has been widowed
- If the couple is already married civilly and is seeking a convalidation of their marriage, a certified copy of their marriage licence.

The following must be submitted to the church office no later than 6 to 8 weeks before the wedding date:

- The “Civil Marriage License”
- “Together for Life,” ceremony selection form
- Names and addresses of Best Man and Maid of Honor or Official Witnesses
- If either the bride or groom is not Catholic, two “Freedom to Marry” affidavits must be completed for the non-Catholic party. A parent or someone who has known the non-Catholic bride/groom from early childhood may complete the form. “Freedom to Marry” forms are available from the marriage coordinator.

Initial Interview

The initial interview takes place with the marriage coordinator and generally takes 1 to 2 hours to complete. During this appointment:

1. You will schedule the date for the wedding and rehearsal only upon full payment of the church fee/offering (see page 11 for our refund policy) and presentation of sacrament certificates.
2. The marriage coordinator will explain the marriage preparation process and answer any questions you may have.
3. You will receive information about acceptable marriage preparation programs and marriage-related handouts.
4. You will complete the pre-nuptial questionnaires and the FOCCUS assessment.
5. You will be required to sign an agreement that you are aware of the wedding policies at St. Anthony’s and will abide by the policies as stated in this booklet.

Preparation Process—The preparation for a wedding at St. Anthony’s consists of the following steps:

1. Contact the marriage coordinator to determine available dates/times. If the date and time you desire is available and the required documents have been obtained, a meeting can be scheduled with the marriage coordinator.
2. Complete the Initial Interview with the marriage coordinator as described on page 2 of this booklet.
3. Meet with the counselor to review your FOCCUS results.
4. Choose and complete **one** of the marriage preparation options listed below:

Option A

St. Anthony of Padua Marriage Preparation Program —

This parish program is designed to provide engaged couples with assistance in preparing for a successful Christian-based marriage. This is an intensive weekend program. The marriage coordinator will provide you with the available dates.

Option B

Catholic Engaged Encounter — This is an intensive weekend event and is currently held at the diocesan retreat center in Three Rivers. A copy of the certificate issued at the end of the weekend should be given to the marriage coordinator.

Option C

Individual Couple Counseling with an Approved Therapist — This option is recommended if either of you have been married before or already have children. It involves counseling with one of the marriage counselors approved by our pastor. Counseling sessions must be scheduled, so it is recommended that appointments be made well in advance.

5. It is strongly recommended that each couple complete a class in Natural Family Planning (NFP).
6. Complete your final appointment. This meeting must be scheduled with the marriage coordinator and should take place six to eight weeks prior to your wedding. At this time you will bring in the marriage license, “Together For Life” selection form, witness information, and list of your bridal party. This appointment also includes the meeting with the priest or deacon who will be officiating at your ceremony.

The Parish Priest

The priest will determine your eligibility for marriage according to civil and Catholic Church laws. The priest witnessing the marriage has the responsibility to make a two-fold assessment:

- I. The couples readiness for marriage, and
2. The level of faith of the Catholic parties.

Although a wedding date will already be scheduled at the initial interview, the church fee paid, and all of the required documentation completed, the priest may delay the wedding if serious reasons surface at a later date. The wedding will be delayed until the matter is resolved.

Reasons for Delay

The church holds that the right to marry is an important natural right. However, it is not an unrestricted one. There can be serious reasons for delaying the marriage.

- Refusal of the couple to take part in the process of preparation for marriage.
- Non-practice of the Catholic faith by the Catholic party or parties, with *no intention* of returning to the practice of the faith. This may also include the lack of intention to provide religious education in the Catholic faith for children of this marriage.
- Either the bride or groom is under twenty-one (21) years of age.

If a major obstacle to the marriage is discovered, the priest, after proper consultation and evaluation, will make the decision whether there is to be a delay of the wedding.

Interfaith Marriages

Faith and religious practices are meant to be a source of unity in a marriage. When a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, special attention is required to insure that the differences in faith do not become a cause of conflict and division.

The *Catholic party* in an interfaith marriage will be asked to

make an explicit promise that everything possible will be done to see that the children of the marriage will be baptized and educated in the Catholic faith.

An interfaith marriage may not have two religious ceremonies. Permission can be obtained for a non-Catholic minister to be invited to participate in the Catholic marriage service when appropriate.

*T*ypes of Ceremonies:

Marriages celebrated in a Catholic Church may be celebrated in one of two ways: (1) A Nuptial Mass, or (2) a Simple Ceremony. Both are discussed below:

Nuptial Mass: (approximately 1 hour)

This is a marriage ceremony performed during the celebration of the Mass. A Nuptial Mass is recommended when both parties are Catholic and attend Mass regularly.

If you are thinking about a Nuptial Mass, please keep in mind the sensitivity of your guests, and in particular, your fiancé/fiancée and his/her family, if they are not Catholic. A Nuptial Mass requires participation in prayers and responses and reception of Holy Communion. The reception of Communion by a non-Catholic is not allowed without special permission from the Bishop of the Diocese of Fresno.

Reception of the Blessed Sacraments is a very important element of Catholic Christian life. Frequent reception of the sacrament of reconciliation and the sacrament of Holy Eucharist is important. Therefore, on the day of the marriage, every Catholic member of the wedding party should receive Holy Communion, if the marriage is celebrated during Mass. A Catholic should avail himself or herself of confession at least one or two weeks prior to the marriage. **Confessions will not be heard at the time of the rehearsal or on the day of the wedding.**

Simple Ceremony: (approximately 45 minutes)

This is a marriage ceremony performed with prayers, scripture readings, and the Rite of Marriage.

Banns of Marriage

Banns of marriage will be announced in the parish bulletin.

Location

Catholic weddings in private homes, out of doors, or in wedding chapels are not permitted in the Diocese of Fresno.

The marriage should take place in the parish church of the bride, but it may take place in the church of the Catholic groom. In the case of an interfaith wedding, the marriage should take place in the church of the Catholic party.

Ceremony Times:

12:30p.m. Wedding: In at: 11:30a.m. Out by: 2:00p.m.
3:00p.m. Wedding: In at: 2:00p.m. Out by: 4:30p.m.

Rehearsal:

The rehearsal is usually scheduled on Friday evening, the day before the wedding. All ceremony participants are to be present and on time. This includes parents of the bride and groom, readers, bridesmaids, groomsmen, gift bearers, ring bearer and flower girl. Respectful dress by the wedding party is expected.

Absolutely no food, drinks, or gum are allowed in the church.

The times for the rehearsals are as follows:

6:00p.m.- 6:45p.m.
7:00p.m.- 7:45p.m.

Please make sure you are on time. If you are late for your rehearsal, it may be canceled. Each rehearsal is allotted 45 minutes.

*P*romptness

All churches have a very strict schedule on weekends. Therefore, it is imperative that both the rehearsal and wedding start at the scheduled time. The Bride and the Groom are to be at the church at least one half-hour before the ceremony is to begin or the wedding may be canceled. Your wedding party, parents, and grandparents are to be ready to start the procession ten minutes prior to the scheduled start time. If the ceremony starts late, the photography time may be eliminated or reduced.

*P*roper Attire

Since you have selected to have your wedding in a church, the atmosphere of your wedding should be one of great reverence. For this reason, the modesty of your apparel and that of your wedding party is of extreme importance. Remember that your grandchildren will someday view the photos and video of your wedding. St. Anthony of Padua Church urges the following:

- Shoulders and back should be covered at all times. This means that strapless, halter, or spaghetti-strap gowns should not be worn. However, a shawl, jacket, or wrap may be worn to cover the shoulders, provided that they are worn in such a manner that the shoulders are covered while in the church.
- No low cut or revealing gowns should be worn.
- Dresses, skirts, and slits should be no higher than 2 inches above knee.

*C*onduct

The wedding party should maintain a respectful *silence* at all times. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on the church grounds. If a staff member or priest has reason to believe that any wedding party member is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, he or she will not be allowed to participate in the wedding ceremony. Cellular phone and beeper use is not permitted inside the church. Please be courteous and turn these off prior to entering the church for the rehearsal and the wedding. There is absolutely no gum chewing, food, or beverages allowed inside the church.

Wedding Preparations

When making plans for your wedding, please observe the following guidelines.

Flowers, Pew-Bows, Runners, Etc.

Please make certain that your florist knows the exact time of the wedding. Decorating may begin 1 hour before ceremony, and a designated person must be responsible for the removal of the pew-bows and other flower arrangements. It is necessary that any leaves, petals, or ferns that may have been dropped when setting up or removing the flower arrangements be cleaned up. The church will not assume responsibility for loss or damage to the decorations. Please ask your florist to use pipe cleaners, ribbon, or rubber bands if decorations are to be attached to the pews. Absolutely no tape, staples or thumbtacks of any kind are allowed on the pews. Decorations may not be connected (“swagged”) from pew to pew with ribbon, netting, cloth, etc.

The use of aisle runners and arches is strictly prohibited. Only the candelabras provided by the church may be used.

Invitations

The correct address for your invitations is:

**St. Anthony of Padua Church
5770 North Maroa Avenue
Fresno, CA 93704**

Marriage License

To obtain a marriage license, you must apply together and in person at the Fresno County Clerk’s Office, or at any other County Clerk’s Office in the State of California. A license is valid for 90 days after issuance. Please provide the marriage coordinator with your license and the return mailing envelope at least 6 weeks before your wedding.

The address of the County Clerk’s office is:

**2221 Kern Street
Fresno, CA 93721
Telephone: (559) 600-2575**

Unity Candle

St. Anthony's will provide a "Unity Candle" if you desire to use one for your ceremony. **Only our church unity candle is allowed.**

Witnesses

Typically the best man and the maid/matron of honor are the official witnesses, but you may choose any two adults to act as witnesses. They need not be Catholic. Their legal names and addresses must be provided in writing at least 6 weeks before the wedding. They will sign the marriage license after the marriage ceremony concludes.

Church Decorations and Altar Linens

You may place flowers in the sanctuary for your wedding, however, decorations provided by our church are not to be removed. Also, the altar linens cannot be changed as they are reflective of the liturgical season.

Bouquet, Lasso (Lazo), Coins (Arras), and Bible/Rosary

The custom of the bride and groom presenting a bouquet of flowers to Our Lady is not only acceptable, but is encouraged. The custom of lasso "lazo", coins "arras", and bible/rosary, as well as other cultural customs, are allowed with prior approval.

Rice, Confetti, Rose Petals, Bubbles, Doves, Balloons, Etc...

For your safety and the safety of your guest, rice; confetti; rose petals, (both artificial and real); bird seed; etc. are not to be thrown in or around any part of the church. Similarly, bubbles, doves, butterflies, balloons, and bells, are not allowed. Please inform your families and friends of this policy.

***P*hotography and Video**

The church remains a place of worship before, during, and after the wedding. Respectful conduct must be observed at all times. Understandably, occasions like these are to be recorded for remembrance. The use of cameras, for still and videotaping is allowed. They must not, however, interfere with the liturgy nor become a distraction to those in attendance. Only **contracted persons** are allowed to take pictures or video tape during the service.

Videotaping is permitted in the sanctuary only in designated areas (no bright lights). The video camera must remain on a tripod. Only one professional photographer is allowed in the sanctuary.

Formal posed pictures may be taken before or after the ceremony. However, because other functions are scheduled to follow your wedding, your time is limited. Normally, 30 minutes is allowed after the ceremony. Studio equipment, such as screens and special lighting, is not permitted in any area of the church building. **Additional information is provided in the “Guidelines for Photography and Videotaping”, which will be given to you at the initial meeting.**

***C*hurch Doors**

The exit doors of the church are to remain closed. Since the church is large, it is very expensive to heat and air condition. Please assign one of your ushers to see that the outside doors are kept closed before, during, and after the ceremony.

***B*ridal Waiting Room and Schedule**

A small bridal waiting room is available for use 1 hour prior to the wedding. The bridal room is to be cleaned of personal items immediately after the ceremony.

***G*uest Book and Receiving Lines**

A guest book or receiving line is **not permitted** due to time constraints.

*M*usicians and Soloists/Wedding Music

Our Music Director, David Sarkisian, must be contacted a minimum of eight weeks in advance to approve all wedding music. He will help you with your music selections and, as necessary, recommend musicians for your wedding. He will answer any questions about musician payments.

Please be aware that the use of the processional commonly known as "Here Comes the Bride" must be approved by our Music Director. Secular, i.e. "pop", music is not allowed. Mariachi music must also to be approved by the Music Director. **Please note that pre-recorded music is not allowed (i.e. CD's and other digital audio media).** David can be reached at :439-0124, ext. 222.

*M*usician and Vocalist Fees

Fees for the musician and vocalist must be paid *prior* to the wedding. **Fees for the musician and vocalist are separate from any other church fees.**

*C*hurch Fee/Offering

The amount of the church offering/fee is available from the marriage coordinator upon request. **(Only cash, a cashiers check, or a money order will be accepted.)** This fee includes use of: the church for the rehearsal and wedding, the use of the unity candle and candelabra, and use of the Bridal Waiting Room. Additionally, it provides for the services of the church marriage coordinator and wedding hostess, and the costs for paperwork, documentation, and processing.

Please note: Your payment is non-refundable. Should you have to cancel your wedding for any reason, you will forfeit all money paid to St. Anthony of Padua for your wedding.

One of the following priests at St. Anthony of Padua will be assigned to your wedding:

Monsignor Robert Wenzinger
Father Bert Mello

*G*ratuities

It is customary to provide a gratuity to the priest and the altar server. Gratuities are not included in the church offering/fee.

For the priest, a suggested gratuity amount is \$100 or more for a Nuptial Mass and \$50 or more for a Simple Ceremony.

If you are having a Nuptial Mass, a gratuity of \$25.00 for the altar server is appropriate (cash only, please) .

Gratuities should be brought to the rehearsal and given to the wedding hostess to avoid distractions on the day of the wedding.

*M*arriage Preparation Options

St. Anthony of Padua Marriage Preparation Program (Option A)

At your initial meeting with the marriage coordinator, you will be provided with the dates and times for upcoming classes.

Class Fee: \$125.00 per couple.

Pre-registration is required.

Class size is limited.

Contact the marriage coordinator for information and registration.

Catholic Engaged Encounter (Option B)

Held on weekends at the diocesan retreat center in Three Rivers, CA

Retreat Fee: \$275.00

Housing & meals are provided.

Pre-registration is required.

For information and registration: www.ccefresno.org

Individual Couple Counseling (Option C)

Referral by the pastor is required for one of the following therapists:

Don Farmer, LCSW

Zetta Hadden, LCSW

St. Joseph's Counseling Center

Timeline for Marriage Preparation:

At least 6 months in advance—Contact Marriage Coordinator to determine available dates, select a date and time for the wedding and rehearsal, pay the church offering/fee, and begin pre-marriage preparation.

8 weeks or more before your wedding—Complete your formal marriage preparation (either a pre-marriage class, Engaged Encounter Retreat, **or** counseling). If you have not yet done so, contact the Music Director for approval of the music for your ceremony. (Even if you are using outside musicians, you must contact our music director for approval of all selections.)

6 weeks before your wedding—Provide the following documents to the Marriage Coordinator: marriage license, names and addresses of your official witnesses, the completed “Together for Life” selection form, a list of your bridal party, and any outstanding documents (i.e. completed Freedom-To-Marry forms).

1 week before your wedding—Participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. At St. Anthony’s, the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) is scheduled on Saturday morning from 10:00am to 12:00pm.

The evening before your wedding —Make sure that you and your wedding party are on time for the rehearsal. Please be prepared to give the wedding hostess the musician/soloist fee(s) and the priest and altar server gratuities at this time.

Your wedding day—Arrive at the church at least one-half hour before the ceremony is to begin. Enjoy your special day!

Our hope is that the information in this booklet will assist you as you prepare for your wedding at St. Anthony of Padua Church.

We are happy to share our worship space with you for your special day and sincerely desire to work with you to make your celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage both meaningful and memorable. The priest assigned to witness your wedding and the marriage coordinator are willing to offer any assistance when asked.

May the Lord help your love continue to grow and may your happiness together know no limits.