

# Guide to Sacramental Marriage

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding in the Catholic Church!

We are excited you are preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony with us! It is our hope and prayer that through your journey of preparation, you will acquire a deeper understanding of God's plan for your marriage, and that you will learn the truths and virtues you will need to live out your vocation as husband and wife.

## Getting Started:

- Complete a Marriage Intake Form.
- A parish staff member will call you for more details
- A priest or deacon will then call you to setup a meeting.
- Read through this guide to understand the Wedding Process.

**Do not set a date until after the initial visit with the deacon!** This is imperative in order to avoid complications, disappointments, and to respect the discernment process.

**We require a minimum of 6 months marriage prep:** The period of engagement is a period of discernment, and ample time is an important element of good discernment. For this, and other reasons, we require a minimum of 6 months from initial contact with the parish until proposed wedding dates. This is especially imperative if the place of marriage is in a different city. **If you are going to another country to be married we require 1 year of prep.**

Our Sacraments Coordinator is **Janice Maginn** and she can be reached at (512)-328-3220 X-103 or [JMaginn@sjnaustin.org](mailto:JMaginn@sjnaustin.org).

## Steps in the Wedding Process

### Step 1. Welcome and orientation

Once you have submitted the online Marriage Intake Form, you will be contacted by Janice Maginn, the Sacraments Coordinator at St John Neumann. She will request

from any Catholic parties a **currently dated baptismal certificate with notations**. For a non-Catholic, baptized Christian, a Certificate of Baptism or a signed witness affidavit (we will provide) from a family member stating that the person was baptized and the approximate date is also requested. Once those have been received she will schedule an appointment for the couple with a deacon.

## **Step 2. Meet with the Deacon**

## **Step 3. Booking the Church**

After completion of the meeting with the deacon, reception of baptismal certificates, a signed off copy of our St John Neumann covenant for the celebration of a Christian marriage and full payment of the church facility fee you may schedule the wedding date.

## **Step 4. Turn in Your Witness Affidavits of Freedom to Marry Forms**

At your initial meeting with the priest or deacon you will be given a short form to be filled out by a friend or family member that will testify to your suitability for marriage. Each couple will be given four affidavits (2 to be filled out for the bride and 2 to be filled out for the groom) and these are to be returned within 30 days of booking your wedding.

## **Step 5. Begin Marriage Prep**

There are 3 components required for marriage preparation to be completed.

1. Take a Pre-marital Assessment (FOCCUS)
2. Attend a Marriage Discernment Classes or Retreat
3. Take an introduction to Natural Family Planning (NFP) Course

We offer several approved marriage prep options. Please select at least one of these options below and notify Janice Maginn which option you have chosen:

### **A. Sponsor Couple or Couple to Couple Preparation offered at St. John**

**Neumann:** This encompasses several meetings in the home of a SJN trained married sponsor couple who exemplify a firm marital commitment themselves. This is a free marriage prep option. The couple will work through a workbook with the Sponsor Couple. You will meet in the home of

the sponsor couple approximately 6 times. We feel this is the most beneficial marriage prep option. You will also need to take the FOCCUS test. Our clergy will email you the link for that test. The last component is the NFP class. Sign up for that is at the following link

<http://www.austinfcc.org/services/couples/>

**B. Together in God's Image:** Diocesan marriage formation nights will be offered online via ZOOM or you may attend a weekend retreat in person. The Diocese makes these decisions closer to the date of the class. Registration is available at <https://www.austindiocese.org/marriage-prep-calendar-1> . Please complete the FOCCUS questionnaire before attendance. Our clergy will email you the link for that test. The required NFP class component is included in this class.

**C. Online marriage preparation through catholicmarriageprep.com:** This online option has you meet with a trained couple online. After completion of their course, the couple will email you a certificate of completion. The second component is the required NFP class. They offer this portion also, but for a fee. You can choose to take our free one instead at this link. <http://www.austinfcc.org/services/couples/>. The last component is the FOCCUS test. Our clergy will email you the link for that test.

### **Step 8. Obtain a Marriage License:**

A marriage **license** may be granted by any county in Texas. The license expires if the marriage does not take place within 30 days from the date of issue. The license is not valid if the marriage takes place in less than 72 hours after the license has been issued. **Please bring your license to the rehearsal and give it to your SJN wedding liaison.** She will make sure the priest/deacon and witnesses sign it after the ceremony. The license will be delivered to the Sacrament Coordinator at SJN. She will make a copy and mail it to you before she mails it to the county for recording. The county will then mail you the original after they have recorded it.

# Fees and Stipends

St. John Neumann receives many requests for wedding ceremonies which places demands on our facilities and our staff. To help support our mission and provide services for your wedding day, we ask certain fees from couples celebrating their wedding here at St. John Neumann. To reserve the date of your wedding full payment must be paid at time of booking. Cancellation 6 months prior to the ceremony you will receive a full refund minus a 200.00 service fee. Cancellation 3-6 months prior to wedding you have the option of rescheduling at no cost or a 50 % refund minus a 200.00 service fee. Cancellation 3 months prior to wedding no refund is given. Please call the Sacraments Coordinator at 512-328-3220 ext 103 to book and pay fees for your date.

## Wedding Fee

**Saturday Weddings at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm. Friday weddings are available if the church is free of events and pastor approval is granted**

Parishioner of SJN \$1500.00 \*fee

Non Parishioner within Diocese \$2500.00 \*\*fee  
(Couple is required to use deacons or bring in an outside priest)

Included in the wedding fee:

- Music-SJN assigned Organist and Cantor
- Wedding liaison (present at rehearsal and wedding)
- Building usage:1 hour for scheduled rehearsal, 3 hours for day of wedding
- Utilities and Custodial service

## Stipends and additional costs

- The stipend for the priest or deacon is a free-will offering, and is NOT included in the above costs, but is suggested.
- Flowers are available via our flower guild. See the comprehensive document for more info.

\* A parishioner is one who is an active, registered, contributing member for 6 months (at the time the wedding date is booked) or lives within the parish boundaries.

\*\*Not a registered parishioner of St John Neumann however, resides within the Diocese of Austin. If you are not a member of SJN, you must supply your own priest. However, we can provide a deacon if there is no mass.

# Wedding Planning

## The Rehearsal

We ask that you schedule the rehearsal time *before* making arrangements for your rehearsal dinner. It will begin on time and be completed within 1 hour. We ask that you make sure everyone participating in the wedding are present (bridal party, ushers, readers, Eucharistic ministers, immediate family) at least 15 minutes before the rehearsal is to begin.

## The Wedding Ceremony

**If both parties of the couple are practicing Catholics**, the Church invites them to marry within the context of the Eucharist (Wedding Mass). In this case a priest is the presider at the Eucharist. **For a marriage between a Catholic and a fiancé of another religious tradition**, we invite them to marry within the Liturgy of the Word, followed by the Rite of Matrimony and concluded by the Lord's Prayer (without mass). In this case, a Deacon will serve as the minister.

From the selection of your readings and music, to your choice of attire and attendants, the wedding takes place because of you. You are the ministers of this sacrament. Which readings will you have proclaimed? Which special rituals? Who will have a special role? The clergy of St John Neumann are prepared to assist you in your discussions, reflections, and choices for the best expressions of your love and faith. The couple should meet with the presider of your ceremony one month prior to the wedding to review the planned liturgy. There are also parts of the Liturgy that can involve participation from your family and friends such as bringing up the gifts, reading from scriptures, serving at the Altar, or administering Holy Communion. Please note that certain roles should be filled by individuals who have held that role before; especially Altar Servers and Eucharistic Ministers. Please make sure that you have at least two ushers who are not groomsmen.

\*SJM does require that you provide a Wedding Program for the attendees of your wedding.

## The Wedding Day

The Church will be available an hour and a half prior to your wedding. Photographs must be completed within 30 minutes after the ceremony. **The church is the House of the Lord. We ask that all who participate in the rehearsal and wedding are respectful of the space and Church surroundings. Please ask parents of young children to monitor them closely and to keep them seated. *Food and beverages, including alcohol, gum or tobacco are prohibited anywhere in the Church.***

## Dressing Room Facilities

The Church provides a room for the convenience of the bride and her attendants. Please observe the following:

- **No food or drinks (bottled water is permissible) are to be brought into the Church, bride's room or premises. This includes alcohol. Smoking is not permitted as it is a Westlake Hills city ordinance.**
- The room must be left clean. All flower boxes, paper, etc. that is brought into the Church and dressing area must be cleared after the wedding.
- The Church is not responsible for valuables left in the room. The bride and groom should appoint someone to clean up the rooms and take care of any valuables belonging to the wedding party.

## Flowers and Candles at the Wedding

St John Neumann has a Flower Guild and they would be more than happy to assist you in providing the flowers and decorations for your ceremony. If you choose to hire an outside florist, please let them know they are required to sign a contract with our Flower Guild prior to the wedding day. Please contact Janice for more information and guidelines. Leaving the flower arrangements in the church after the wedding is a great way to extend the investment you put into the flower arrangements. Please plan to donate any flowers used in your Ceremony to **SJN. A Unity Candle may not be used as part of the wedding ceremony.** No glass items, including aisle candles, Votive candles, vases, are permitted in the aisles and pathways to the Church.

## **Music**

After the wedding has been scheduled the Director of Music, will be contacting you to review the music. All music and musicians used in the liturgy need to be approved by the Director of Music and they will help you with selecting music that is appropriate to the liturgy. The Catholic Church treats the wedding liturgy with great reverence and avoids the use of any type of secular music during the ceremony. No Broadway, country western, rock and roll, or related types of music will be allowed in the sacred space. Recorded music will also not be permitted in the wedding. The SJN staff organist plays at all weddings and an SJN staff cantor will sing at all weddings. The musicians do not typically attend rehearsals and will ask for a \$100 rehearsal fee if this is requested. Our musicians will reserve the date for your wedding after full payment is made to the church.

## **Photography and Videography**

Prior to the wedding, your photographer will need to read, sign, and return the SJN Mixed Media Agreement. Our Music Director will send this document to them. Photos/videos may be taken only at those points designated by the SJN wedding liaison. Videographers are asked to have stationary cameras placed and not roam the Church during the ceremony. No TV lights or bright spotlights are allowed. After the ceremony, photos must be completed within 30 minutes.

## **The Minister**

If you are an active member of SJN, you may express your desire for a particular priest or deacon here at St. John Neumann; but be aware that they may have to defer you to one of the other ministers for various reasons. If you are not a member, you are required to bring in your own priest or we can assign a deacon for a service only. You can also invite a guest priest or deacon to be the presider. This priest or deacon is required to submit a Testimony of Suitability Letter to our Bishop 30 days prior to the marriage. It has long been customary to offer a monetary gift (stipend) to the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage and/or witnessing your ceremony. While the amount is strictly voluntary, an offering comparable to the organist's fee is suggested.

## **Wedding Liaison**

A St John Neumann Wedding Liaison will be assigned to the couple. The Liaison will attend the rehearsal as well as is there the day of the wedding. Wedding consultants employed by the bride or groom have **NO AUTHORITY** in planning any part of the liturgy or in decorating or arranging the Church.

## **Additional Advice and Guidelines**

The Church assumes no responsibility for private property lost, damaged or stolen at Church events. This includes automobiles damaged, etc. It is suggested that the party make arrangements for purses, jewelry, etc. to insure the safekeeping of personal property. The Church cannot accept delivery or take responsibility for items used nor can these be stored in Church. The Church offices are closed Friday evening and Saturday.