

We are so looking forward to helping you in making this a beautiful occasion for the two of you. This is a helpful bullet point summary to help you with the standard requirements for marriage at St. John Neumann as contained in our wedding covenant policy document. Further clarifications of these points are contained in that document which we ask you to read to avoid confusion.

- Do not schedule any wedding date or reserve any venue until you have met with a priest or deacon.
- To reserve the date of your wedding, a meeting with the clergy, baptismal certificates with notations, a signed off copy of this **ST JOHN NEUMANN COVENANT FOR THE CELEBRATION OF A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**, and the full church fee must be paid. Contact JMaginn@sjnaustin.org.
- 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.
- Obtain a new, certified copy of your Baptism certificate with notations from your place of Baptism. Non Catholic parties will need proof of Baptism as well.
- Saturday Weddings are available **ONLY** 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)
- 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.

- You will need to meet with the director of Music, soon after the wedding date has been set.
- You will be asked to attend a marriage preparation retreat, an introduction to Natural Family Planning course, and several face to face interviews with a priest or deacon.
- You will be asked to obtain signed witness statements. The office will provide this document for you.
- A state marriage license needs to be obtained 30 days before the wedding.
- No secular music or recorded music will be permitted for the wedding.
- No unity candles
- No rose petals, rice, glitter, sparklers, or bubbles are permitted on the Church property.
- No food, drinks, alcohol, tobacco, or bubble gum in the Church or preparation areas.
- No tape, glue, tacks, or staples can be used to affix decorations.
- Modesty in vestments; avoid plunging necklines, open back dresses, short skirts, or midriffs. Covered shoulders should be preferred.
- Flowers should not crowd the sanctuary or be placed on the altar.
- Photographers and videographers are encouraged to use decorum while taking photos. They are not to enter the altar area at any time during the ceremony.
- A stipend for the minister is customary.
- Photos may be taken directly before or immediately after the wedding.
- The Church and dressing rooms are available an hour and a half before the wedding and a half hour after the wedding.
- Everything, except the flowers, needs to be cleaned and removed from the Church before you depart.
- Any exception to these parameters needs the permission of the Pastor or his delegate.

ST JOHN NEUMANN COVENANT FOR THE CELEBRATION OF A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

ST. JOHN NEUMANN
5455 BEE CAVE ROAD
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78746

Thank you for contacting St. John Neumann Catholic Church and expressing your desire to celebrate a Christian marriage. We are so happy for you and your possible future together and we look forward to being a part of this celebration. Marriage is both a beautiful celebration and a challenging vocation, so we strive to provide everyone looking to get married with some basic means of formation and discernment. In the following pages we have outlined the basic preparation requirement to serve as a guide. It is helpful if read it before you meet with the priest or Deacon and make reference to it as you go along.

These guidelines are divided into two sections. The first section deals with the steps of preparation for marriage and married life. The second section deals with the wedding ceremony itself and the steps needed to make arrangements. Please read the guidelines in their entirety in order to avoid complications.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM

This is your marriage and your preparation program; and we highly recommend that every couple take thought as to how they can personalize their formation. Every couple should ask themselves, "What can I do in order to prepare well for Marriage?"

Below are the standard steps of preparation that we require of couples.

- Step 1. Do not set a date until after the initial visit with the priest or delegate!** This is imperative in order to avoid complications, disappointments, and to respect the discernment process.
- Step 2. 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.**
- Step 3. Contact our Sacraments Coordinator:** Her name is **Janice Maginn** and she can be reached at **(512)-328-3220 X-103** or **JMaginn@sjnaustin.org**. She will begin the process of arranging a meeting between you and one of the ministers here at the Parish for an initial interview.
- Step 4. Obtain a new, certified with church seal, Baptismal Certificate.** A church seal stamped copy of a newly issued (within the last six months) Baptismal Certificate, with notations, is required from the Catholic parties. This certificate must be obtained from the original records of the Church in which you were baptized. When contacting your Church of baptism to obtain the certificate give your name, date of birth, parents' names and approximate date of your Baptism and let them know that it is for a Catholic wedding and must include **notations**. You may secure the address of the Church of your Baptism from the original certificate, look it up on the internet or call the parish office (512-328-3220). For a non-Catholic, baptized Christian, a Certificate of Baptism or a letter from a family member stating that the person was baptized and the approximate date is also requested. Any questions regarding this information may be inquired of the priest or deacon handling your marriage preparation.

Step 5. Have an initial meeting with one of the ministers at St. John Neumann. You will be contacted by a priest, Deacon, or their secretary in order to arrange a time for the initial meeting. This first meeting with the priest or deacon will include getting to know you as a couple and explaining the marriage preparation process required at St. John Neumann. At this time the **prenuptial questionnaire** will be completed and the priest or deacon will continue to work with you in completing all necessary canonical paperwork required by the Catholic Church.

If either party has been previously married in or outside of the Roman Catholic Church, a **Document of Nullity** from a marriage tribunal may be required. No definite wedding plans will be made until this is completed. The priest or deacon working with you in preparation will be able to assist you.

Step 6. 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 7. Begin Marriage Prep

There are several approved marriage prep options. Please select at least one of these options: There may be other options at a later date but, at this time, during the pandemic, your options are listed below.

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 <https://www.vitaefertility.com/nfp-talk-marriage-prep/>

B. Together in God's Image: Diocesan marriage formation nights through the Diocese of Austin will be offered online via ZOOM or 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 is included in this class.

C. Online marriage preparation through <https://catholicmarriageprep.com> you may take their NFP class or take the class at this link <https://www.vitaefertility.com/nfp-talk-marriage-prep/>. 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 liaison will then put it in the safe and on Monday it will be delivered to Janice Maginn, the Sacrament Coordinator for SJN. She will make a copy and then scan and email it to you before she mails it to the state for recording. **The Wedding liaison must have the license before the ceremony can begin on the day of the wedding.**

Others requirements: We do not intend this preparation for marriage to be a series of tasks to be fulfilled; but as tools to aid you in safe guarding the sacredness of marriage and help you in your own discernment. What has been presented above is the standard preparation process, but at times there may be other steps that may be asked of you, and we invite you to put forward your own initiatives. Please know that we strive to avoid what is unnecessarily burdensome and

we will seek to make any extra ordinary requests as painless as possible. Your commitment is for life; and we treat it seriously, but not without understanding.

GUIDELINES AND PREPARATION FOR THE WEDDING CEREMONY

The first priority is the marriage discernment and preparation, outlined above, and we should keep our attention focused on that process even though at the same time we are preparing the big celebration. And it is proper that we should celebrate Marriage with all the ceremony that is we can muster. Below are a series of requirements that you need to keep in mind as you prepare the celebration and liturgy.

Setting the Date: Only after your initial visit with a minister and the minister has given an initial approval, can you schedule your wedding date. To set this date we require baptismal certificates, full payment of the church fee, a signed off copy of this document, and your meeting with the clergy. Please contact Janice Maginn for more details. The date for the wedding will need to be coordinated between the Church calendar, the calendar of available ministers, and your calendar.

If you are not being prepared here at St. John Neumann you will have to give some confirmation that you have had an initial meeting to begin marriage preparation and that they have given approval to move ahead with setting a date (usually an e-mail or letter from the minister).

Weddings at St. John Neumann are reserved for **11:00 AM and 2:00 PM ONLY on Saturdays**. Friday weddings are available if the church is free of events and pastor approval is granted. Some weekends are reserved for special reasons, and not all times are available on every weekend. Please consult with the parish office on what is available before deciding on your wedding date.

At the time of reservation you will need to make full payment. **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.**

Fees: Fees for the use of the church building and marriage preparation expenses were reviewed and approved by the Parish Council

- 1. Parishioner of SJN \$1500.00*fee**
- 2. Non Parishioner within Diocese \$2500.00**fee
(Couple is required to use deacons or bring in an outside priest)**

*** 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.**

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.

As per the Council, the standard for determining parishioner status for facility rental is based on these criteria:

- (1) The couple or their parents must be **registered** members of the parish for a minimum of six months before scheduling their wedding at parishioner rates.
- (2) The couple or their parents must have a **documented** history of some financial contribution for at least a 6 month period, which justifies the lower fee for rental of facilities.
- (3) Rental fees are based on parishioner/non-parishioner status at the time the Church is reserved for a future date.

For both parishioner and non-parishioners being prepared by a priest or deacon from St. John Neumann but **NOT** celebrating their wedding ceremony at the parish. Please consider a small stipend to the minister who does the preparation.

The fee is to defray the expenses of the marriage preparation materials, mailings, janitorial services, and the use of the campus facilities.

However, we also do not wish to exclude anyone from the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony due to financial difficulty. If a couple can truly not pay the expense without significant financial difficulty, they may make their situation known to the priest. Proof of hardship may be required.

For exceptionally small and simple weddings (under 30 people) a small chapel is available. The venue has no space for musicians and the fee for use is 325.00 for active Parishioners (Active Parishioners are couples, or their parents, who are registered members of St John Neumann and who have a documented history of some financial contribution for at least a 6 month period) and 600.00 for non-parishioners. For more information consult the office.

Music: After the wedding has been scheduled you should contact our Office of Music Ministry if you are going to have any music at your wedding. You can do this by contacting **our Director of Music, at (512)- 328-3220 x-166**

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/pianist plays at all weddings and an SJN staff cantor will sing at all weddings. They are a joy to hear and well equipped to handle almost any nuance you may desire for the sacred music. They also have a thorough knowledge of the musical needs of the liturgy in this space. The musicians do not typically attend rehearsals and will ask for a \$100 rehearsal fee if this is requested.

With advanced notice the Music Ministry also has the ability to contract other musicians and instrumentalists who are familiar with SJN. Any visiting musicians that participate in the music for the wedding, as an accompaniment or a solo piece, will need to have a familiarity with liturgical music and attend needed rehearsals. A \$50 fee for every half hour of rehearsal required will be charged. Any requests beyond these arrangements will need approval from the Pastor or his delegate. Our musicians will reserve the date for your wedding after full payment is made to the church.

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.

The Liturgy: 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. SJN does not provide Altar Servers.

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

Wedding Liaison: A St John Neumann Wedding Liaison will be assigned to the couple. The Liaison will attend the rehearsal as well as be 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.

Flowers and Candles at the Wedding: The use of flowers and other decorations can greatly enhance a wedding ceremony, and we welcome your creativity in this regard. Adornments should be simple and moderate in number; complementing the wedding ceremony, not overshadowing it. Flowers are to be arranged in such a manner as to respect the sacred space. The altar space should be free of flowers so that the priest can move freely around it. Any flowers placed at the front, side, or corner of the altar must have approval by the Pastor before they are placed. Christmas and Easter placements also need his final approval. No other changes can be made later without the Pastor's approval. Please take in consideration the different liturgical colors and seasonal themes of the Church. Plants, banners, altar cloths, etc. are an important part of the designated liturgy for the season. You are invited to work your colors/theme around these items. Out of consideration for our donors, regularly placed plants and flowers for our weekend liturgies cannot be moved. Wedding flowers can be easily placed in front of them. Potted plants must have waterproof pot covers or be provided with saucers. Silk flower arrangements in the Sanctuary are not considered liturgically correct and are not permitted.

Leaving the flower arrangements in the church after the wedding is a great way to extend the investment you put into the flower arrangements. We will lovingly enjoy and acknowledge them at our next liturgy.

*****Please plan to donate any flowers used in your Ceremony to SJN.*****

The church does not provide candelabras. If rented from a florist, they must use oil filled candles and have someone come and removed them from the church as soon as they wedding ceremony is over. Make arrangements with your groomsmen or ushers to light the candles 10 to 15 minutes before the wedding ceremony. A candle lighter is available for your use. Remember that full dignity and decorum are expected of everyone when they are in the Sanctuary/altar area.

A Unity Candle may not be used as part of the wedding ceremony.

Decorations, flowers, bows or ribbons are not to be taped or tacked to the pews. Use only non-destructive methods of attachment (covered floral wire, ribbon or special pew attachments may be used). An Aisle runner, fresh or silk petal flowers are not permitted. No glass items, including aisle candles, Votive candles, vases, are permitted in the aisles and pathways to the Church.

Throwing rice, confetti, flowers petals, birdseed, etc is not allowed on parish grounds. Bubbles are also not allowed.

The placement of flowers and candelabras are to be approved by the Wedding Liaison. Following the photos after the ceremony, the bride's wedding consultant or other designated member of the wedding party or family will be responsible for the removal of decorative items along with any floral boxes. They must be removed immediately so the Sanctuary can be readied for the next liturgy.

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 obtain and sign our Wedding Flower and Decoration Policy Guidelines. Please complete this before the ceremony.

Photography and Videography: Photographs are an important memory of the wedding ceremony. To assist in making the process of photographs as care free as possible, we have designed the following policies. Prior to the wedding, your photographer will need to read, sign, and return the SJN Mixed Media Agreement. Photographers and videographers are encouraged to use decorum while taking photos. They are not to enter the altar area at any time during the ceremony. 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. Please consult the **Wedding Liaison** prior to the ceremony. No TV lights or bright spotlights are allowed in the Church building. **Photos may be taken up to 20 minutes prior to the Liturgy. After the ceremony, photos must be completed within 30 minutes.** The wedding party should return immediately to the Altar area. It is helpful to have a photographer assistant or someone who can round up people for each subsequent picture so the photographer does not have to. If the bride and groom would like the presider to pose with them for a photo after the ceremony, this photo should be taken first.

Any video and/or sound recordings made during your ceremony will require signed Artist Releases from each musician and the Presider. It is the responsibility of your photographer/videographer to contact the Director of Music to complete that process. Please have these completed and submitted prior to your wedding.

Dressing Room Facilities: The Church provides a room for the convenience of the bride and her attendants, however; you are encouraged to come dressed for the wedding. The groom and groomsmen are asked to come dressed for the wedding also. For Saturday evening weddings, the bride's room is not available until 6:00 pm.

Please observe the following:

- **No food or drinks (bottled water is permissible) are to be brought into the Church (Bride's room or Sacristy). This includes alcohol. Consuming food, drinks, gum or the use of tobacco in or outside the church is prohibited both at the rehearsal and the wedding. Smoking is not permitted as it is a Westlake Hills city ordinance.**
- Hair spray may be used only in the restroom.
- 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.

The Rehearsal: This is usually scheduled the evening before the wedding typically at 5:00 PM. It will begin on time and be completed within 1 hour. We ask that you make sure all members of the wedding party are present (bridal party, ushers, immediate family) at least 15 minutes before the rehearsal is to begin. This allows the members of the immediate wedding party to become familiar with the environment of the Church building and with the public roles they will assume as part of the liturgy. We ask that you schedule the exact rehearsal time with St John Neumann **before** making arrangements for your rehearsal dinner. The rehearsal time should be placed on the parish calendar at the same time as the date and time of your wedding. There may be other rehearsals scheduled on the evening you select. The couple should meet with the presider of your ceremony one month prior to the wedding to plan the liturgy. This will allow for relaxed and joyous rehearsal time for you, your family and friends before the actual wedding ceremony.

The Day of The Wedding: The Church will be available an hour and a half prior to your wedding. Photographs must be completed within 30 minutes after the ceremony. To avoid disappointment, we ask that you be conscious of the demands on the parish facilities that include the celebration of the Eucharist, Confession, or other parish activities.

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 and outside the Church.

Children's safety issues: For the sake of the security and safety of children, they are never to be apart from direct adult supervision while on church property. That means that children may not wander the parish property alone. Also, children who need to leave the pews during the liturgy to go to the bathroom **must** be accompanied by an adult.

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 clothing or other items used nor can these be stored in Church.

St. John Neumann can be difficult to find for persons not familiar with Austin. Also please allow for traffic on Fridays. Traffic in Austin on Fridays at 3:30 can be very bad. Please provide your family and guests with simple directional maps. The Church offices are closed Friday evening and Saturday.

***** I have read and agree to these policies outlined above*****

Bride

Groom

Date signed