

Marriage Guidelines

*Journey of Faith
into the
Christian Community*

St. Aloysius Catholic Church

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What is Sacramental Marriage?

Sacraments are special acts of worship which celebrate the presence of the Holy Spirit at particular moments in the life of the community of faith and its members. Sacraments involve a relationship with Jesus and therefore, presume faith on the part of the individual and the community. Christian marriage is a sacrament, the joining together of a man and a woman into a community of love called a family. In the love which binds two in one, the Christian community finds a reflection of the tremendous love of God for us, a love which binds us to God and to each other. Husband and wife confer the Sacrament of Matrimony on each other. In doing this, the two become a source of renewed grace each day and a reminder to each other of God's presence and love.

Marriage Preparation at St. Aloysius

The staff of St. Aloysius Church is readily available to assist couples in preparing for marriage and in making plans for the wedding, but the most important preparation is for a life-time of marriage. Couples must first establish the availability/commitment of a priest/deacon for their planned wedding date, and that should be done at least SIX MONTHS in advance of the prospective wedding date.

Adequate time is needed to allow time for interviews with the priest or deacon who will assist the couple in assessing their readiness for marriage. It will also allow ample time for participation in and completion of the approved marriage preparation program. The six-month requirement is counted from the date the couple first contact the church office and sign the Wedding Intent Form. The couple should pick up a Marriage Preparation Packet from the church office either prior to or at the first meeting with the priest or deacon. This packet includes brochures with information about the marriage guidelines at St. Aloysius, the schedules and

registration information for various marriage preparation programs, as well as important information for preparing the wedding liturgy. At the first meeting with the priest or deacon the couple must sign a statement declaring that they have read, understand, and agree to follow all the marriage guidelines of Diocese of Baton Rouge and of St. Aloysius Parish.

The Church is concerned more than ever for the well-being of married couples and has taken a deeper look into marriage preparation in an effort to offset problems that could arise during marriage. In keeping with this, the Church requires that all couples participate in a marriage preparation program. These programs consist of a series of discussions and presentations on the spiritual, physical and practical understanding of married life. Before their first meeting with the priest/deacon, the engaged couple will receive an email giving them instructions for the on-line completion of a confidential relationship assessment instrument. In addition, St. Aloysius requires participation in a Sponsor Couple Program during which the engaged couple has a series of meetings with another married couple to discuss various aspects of marriage. This will provide couple to couple contact to share practical aspects of married life. Finally, the engaged couple will register and participate in an Engaged Encounter Weekend.

Required Documents

The Church requires from the Catholic parties a baptismal certificate newly issued within the past six months. Birth certificates are not needed for the Church requirements, but are needed to acquire the civil marriage license within 30 days, but not less than 3 days from the Clerk of Court prior to the wedding date. The civil marriage license should be acquired from the civil parish Clerk of Court's office where the couple wants the marriage to be recorded. Be sure to visit the website of the Clerk of Court's office to learn the fees/document you must bring to acquire your license. Your marriage license must be delivered to St. Aloysius Church office at least a week in advance of your wedding.

Natural Family Planning

Pope Benedict XVI has urged each parish to provide information and training in natural family planning for all engaged couples. These couples are strongly urged to consider how they will deal with their mutual gift of fertility. Reading material and information about how to register for a natural family planning course are included in the Marriage Preparation packet.

Previously Married

Any prior marriages in the history of either party to a prospective marriage should be disclosed to the priest/deacon in one's first communication with a priest/deacon about sacramental marriage. A sacramental annulment process may be required before making new sacramental marriage plans.

Church Fees

If a St. Aloysius priest/deacon agrees to do your wedding, he personally does not require any "fee" for doing so. An honorarium of the couple's choice to the officiating priest/deacon – for his time and effort in facilitating your preparation requirements and the actual wedding ceremony elements – is customary. Because of the costs of utilities, maintenance, paperwork, and the just remuneration for the staff, the fee for weddings at St. Aloysius Church, is \$500 (\$225 deposit/ \$275 balance due before wedding) for registered parishioners and/or their children and \$700 (\$425 deposit/ \$275 Balance) for non-parishioners. **The non-refundable deposit must be received in the parish office before the church is reserved for the wedding.**

For weddings elsewhere, a fee of \$100 is assessed to cover partially the costs of materials and paperwork. Please understand that the parish subsidizes the wedding since these figures do not even cover the actual costs involved. Of course, these financial expectations always depend on the couple's situation. **No one is ever denied a wedding at St. Aloysius Church due to the lack of financial resources.** We are happy to celebrate the weddings of those who cannot afford the fee, provided this is also reflected in the simplicity of the wedding with regard to music, number of attendants, décor, reception, etc. If an exception is to be made, the officiating cleric will make the appropriate recommendation to the pastor who has to approve the request.

Wedding Ceremony

The couple is invited to be actively involved in the preparation of their wedding liturgy. The Church's liturgy provides many options for the prayers, readings, vows and blessings.

The couple should visit the website www.catholicweddinghelp.com for helpful information regarding the wedding ceremony. The priest or deacon and the parish liturgy director will assist the couple in selecting appropriate texts for the wedding. Christian weddings are not private events but are sacramental celebrations which take place in the presence of the faith community. A couple who enters into a marriage covenant is an important symbol for the faith community – a symbol of the love that God has for each one of us. For this reason the wedding liturgy at St. Aloysius is celebrated in a way that always has the married couple visible to the community. As with all rites of the Church, the active participation of assembly in the prayers, acclamations and singing is considered the norm.

In addition to the wedding party, liturgical ministers are needed for the celebration of a wedding liturgy. Ushers, readers, server/cross bearer, communion ministers, and musicians have an important role to play in your wedding. The people that you choose to serve in these liturgical roles must have the gifts and the proper training necessary to participate in your wedding liturgy. A wedding liturgy coordinator or the Director of Liturgy will advise your liturgical ministers about any procedures unique to St. Aloysius Church.

The Place and the Officiating Minister

Since weddings are acts of worship and prayer, in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, weddings must take place in a parish church and are not allowed in private homes, gardens, or reception halls.

Marriages may be celebrated in the parish church of either the bride or the groom. With the permission of the bishop, when one party is an active member of a different religious tradition, the wedding can take place in the worship place of the non-Catholic party and in the presence of the religious leader of that religious community. A catholic priest or deacon can be invited to participate in the ceremony. In an interfaith marriage that takes place in a Catholic church, the religious leader of the non-Catholic party is invited to take part in the ceremony to the extent allowed by Church law.

No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the premise of St. Aloysius Parish prior to or during the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony.

A visiting priest or deacon who officiates at weddings in St. Aloysius Church must receive a letter of delegation from the pastor of St. Aloysius Church. The visiting priest or deacon must understand and agree to follow the marriage preparation guidelines of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, as well as the wedding liturgy guidelines of St. Aloysius parish. Furthermore, a cleric from outside the Diocese of Baton Rouge must have the testimonial of suitability for ministry from his own religious superior or bishop before he is allowed to exercise ministry at St. Aloysius (within the Diocese of Baton Rouge).

Wedding Liturgy Coordinator

A Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will be assigned to assist in the organization of your wedding liturgy. The Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will conduct the rehearsal, open and close the church, organize processions and see to matters of hospitality on the wedding day. This coordinator also sets up the sacred vessels, bread and wine, books, and linens needed for a wedding liturgy. The fee for the Wedding Liturgy Coordinator is \$75 which is not part of the church fee but is included in the total amount of the wedding fee listed at the end.

Date and Time

All couples must come in person to meet with a St. Aloysius Parish priest or deacon before a wedding date is set. At this meeting the couple must demonstrate that they understand and agree to follow all parish marriage guidelines. The nonrefundable church fee must also be paid at this time to reserve the wedding date. (See page 4 for church fee)

Diocesan policies do not permit weddings on Saturday evenings, Sundays, holy days, and certain other holidays. During the week, weddings may be held at any hour before 7:30 pm except at those times when daily Mass is scheduled. Saturday weddings may be held at either 10:00 am or 1:00 pm.

Due to the great number of parish activities, the church is reserved for your use 1 hour before the wedding and 1 hour after the wedding. This is the time available for setup, decorating, Photography/videography and clean-up. If additional time is needed before the wedding, this must be scheduled with the parish Liturgy Director and extra fee may be incurred.

Music

The music for your wedding must be appropriate for liturgical use and should lead the assembly gathered for the wedding to worship and prayer. The Director of Liturgy/Music (phone 343-6657 x3030) will assist you in selecting appropriate music for your wedding liturgy. In St. Aloysius parish, music for weddings is chosen based on guidelines from the diocese. A copy of these guidelines is included in the Marriage Preparation Packet.

The couple must contact the Directory of Liturgy to secure the services of the parish organist. The parish organist's fee is \$200 which is not part of the church fee but is included in the total amount of the wedding fee listed at the end. The use of an organist from outside the parish is allowed only with the permission of the Director of Liturgy.

The service of a cantor or song leader is also necessary for most weddings. The Director of Liturgy will provide the list of approved cantors from which the couple may choose for their own wedding and with whom they make private financial arrangements. If the couples desire a singer other than a trained cantor, the Liturgy Director will assist them in finding a time in the wedding ceremony for that person to sing.

Decorations and Flowers

Floral decorations add to the beauty and dignity of a wedding ceremony; however, good taste in the appointment of decorations must be used. During some seasons of the church year (esp. Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter) the church will be decorated with appropriate seasonal décor which cannot be removed. During Advent floral arrangements should be minimal and in keeping with the spirit of the season. During Lent, no decoration is allowed. The couple should contact the Director of Liturgy for guidelines before consulting with a florist.

In the church of the living God, only living plants and flowers are appropriate. Flowers or plants should not obscure the view of the altar, ambo, chair or the wedding party. No more than 2 floral arrangements are allowed in the sanctuary. Consideration should also be given to placing flowers in the gathering space and in the body of the church. The parish has green plants which normally decorate the church; additional greenery is usually not necessary.

Floral arrangements may not be nailed or attached in any way to walls, arches, beams or doors. Pew markers must be attached with ribbon or plastic hangers only. Taping pew markers to pew ends is not allowed.

Additional candles (i.e., unity candle, pew candles) may be used in moderation. **Pew candles and large sanctuary candelabra must be placed in glass globes or lanterns.** The florist should provide covering to protect the floor and upholstery from wax drippings. All candelabra must be placed so that there is no danger of fire. Florists will be held responsible for any damage to church facilities caused by decorations.

Due to safety concerns and details about the opening procession, the white aisle runner is not allowed.

Finally, all decorations must be removed from the church in the hour after the wedding. The couple should contact the Liturgy Director if they wish to leave any floral arrangements for Sunday masses.

Photographers

While Photography/videography during the wedding liturgy is allowed, the photographer/Videographer is required to consult with the wedding coordinator prior to the ceremony and to use proper decorum and not become a distraction. During the ceremony, only one official photographer and one official videographer will be permitted. Movie and video lighting are not allowed. If the ceremony is to be video-taped, the technician is to stand outside the sanctuary area in a designated area.

The church is available for wedding portraits only one hour before and one hour after the wedding. Photographs after the wedding should be limited so that the wedding party will not be delayed in attending the reception. The photographer is responsible for proper decorum at this time.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal cannot be scheduled more than six months prior to the wedding date. The officiating minister will make arrangements with a wedding liturgy coordinator who will conduct the rehearsal. An outline of the names of all participants in the wedding liturgy, as well as the marriage license should be brought to the rehearsal. All members of the wedding party, including the bride herself, should rehearse for the wedding. The substitution of another person for the bride has no validity for a believing Catholic.

Bride's Room

A room for the bride and bridesmaids to dress is available in the convent. The wedding liturgy coordinator will schedule the use of the bride's room when 2 weddings are held in one day. The gathering place for the groom and groomsmen is the cry room in the body of the church, or if available, the parish hall.

Reception

Based on availability, the parish hall may be reserved for a wedding reception by parishioners who marry in St. Aloysius Church. Reservations are made with the parish by completing a "Facilities Request Form."

SCHEDULING: Receptions may be scheduled for weddings which are celebrated in the church on a week night, on Friday evening or Saturday morning. The hall is not available for weddings held on Saturday afternoon. Only one wedding reception may be scheduled in the hall per weekend. When both a morning and an afternoon wedding are held in the church on Saturday, no reception may be held in the hall on Saturday. Week night and Friday evening receptions must end by 11:00 pm. Saturday receptions must end by 3:00 pm. (On Saturday, clean up may continue in the hall past 3:00 pm; however, the parking lots must be cleared for the 4:30 pm vigil mass.) The time set for advanced access to the facilities (hall and kitchen) must be scheduled with the maintenance supervisor.

RESTRICTION: Alcoholic beverages are to be restricted to wine and champagne only. The kitchen is not equipped for cooking. Warming ovens, microwave ovens, and a refrigerator are available for catered receptions. Taping or nailing decorations to the walls, doors or windows in the hall is not permitted. Throwing rice or bird seed when the bride and groom leave the reception is not permitted; anything else thrown must be cleared by the maintenance supervisor.

HALL FEES: The rental cost for the hall is \$595 which includes an event insurance fee required by the insurance company. A non-refundable deposit of \$200 must accompany the Facilities Request Form. The balance of \$395 plus a separate damage deposit check for \$250 is due two months before the reception. If no damage occurs, the damage deposit will be returned after the event.

Preparing for Marriage

In preparing for marriage, the following steps must be followed:

1. Schedule meetings with priest or deacon.
2. Complete and discuss the results of a relationship assessment instrument with priest or deacon.
3. Participate in the sponsor couple program as instructed by the office.
4. Register for and participate in Engaged Encounter.
5. Consult with Liturgy Director on music, décor, ceremony at least two months prior to the wedding date
6. Final meeting with priest or deacon
7. Consult with Wedding Liturgy Coordinator to prepare for rehearsal
8. Wedding rehearsal (obtain civil license and bring to rehearsal)

Summary of Fees

Wedding Fee - \$500 parishioner (\$700 non-parishioner) which includes the following:

Non-Refundable Church Fee (\$225 parishioner; \$425 non-parishioner)

Wedding Liturgy Coordinator - \$75

Organist - \$200

Preparation Only - \$100

Parish Hall Rental – Total cost \$595 (including \$95 of event insurance fee).

Non-Refundable \$200 deposit at time of booking of Parish Hall

Final Payment - due two months prior to reception - \$395

Cantor – Negotiated Fee paid in advance

Notice: All fees, including those for the wedding liturgy coordinator and organist, should be made payable to St. Aloysius Church and are due in full two months prior to the wedding.