
WEDDINGS AT ST. ANDREW

St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church
910 Austin Drive
Saline MI 48176
734.429.5210
standrew@comcast.net

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I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a sacrament, one of the visible signs *in this world* of God's power, presence, and action. The vows exchanged at a wedding proclaim the power of love that joins a man and a woman, just as Christ is joined to his own body, the Church. This power is the very nature of God, who is love.

The church urges us to make weddings liturgical and public celebrations, because we have a common call to salvation. It is the task of our brothers and sisters in Christ, by prayer and service, to sustain all married couples in their life together. It is the task of married couples in their faithfulness to each other to be witnesses of God's faithful love for his family in Christ.

A wedding is the joyful beginning of the sacrament of marriage. We are glad to have this happy beginning celebrated at our parish church. A marriage calls forth God's blessing, and all who witness it share in that blessing. For all great events in our lives there are requirements: rituals, rules and practical details. This little guide, we hope, will answer your questions about the preparation for celebrating a marriage here at St. Andrew Church.

II. SCHEDULING INFORMATION

A) Who can have a wedding at St. Andrew Church?

At least one member of the couple must be a practicing Catholic** who is:

- a registered parish member for at least six (6) months prior to the request, *or*
- the child of a parish member, who lives away from their parent's home and who has a letter of permission from his/her pastor, *or*
- an individual from Saline whose family is hosting the wedding and is marrying an active Catholic** from another part of the state or country. The Catholic must have a letter of permission from their pastor.

Emphasis: *You need a letter from the pastor of the parish where you live and worship. Every pastor is responsible for the spiritual well being of his parishioners. Since marriage is one of the most significant spiritual events in our lives, the church insists that you ask for your pastor's permission if you intend to celebrate this great moment in a church that is not your local church.*

**By 'practicing Catholic' the Church means someone who is baptized, has received first communion, has been Confirmed: a practicing Catholic attends weekly Mass and regularly approaches the Sacrament of Reconciliation, i.e. Confession. If a person has been away from the Church, he/she should mention this to the Priest and be prepared to resume regular practice of the Faith.

B) Who schedules weddings?

Only the Pastor or the Deacons (Deacon Paul Ellis or Deacon Douglas Cummings) may schedule a wedding at St. Andrew Church. An individual who wishes to be married at St. Andrew Church must speak directly to the Pastor, Associate or Deacon. The request cannot be made by parents or other representatives.

Note: Usually a Nuptial Mass is celebrated for the wedding of two Catholics. When a marriage occurs between a Catholic and someone of a different tradition, a wedding without a Mass is generally celebrated.

C) When can a wedding be scheduled?

Ordinarily the times allotted for weddings at St. Andrew are Friday evenings after 6:00pm and Saturday at 11:00am or Saturday at 2:00pm. No more than two weddings will be scheduled per weekend at the church.

Weddings on weekdays or evenings may be scheduled if there is space in the general parish schedule.

III. THE PREPARATION PROCESS

A marriage is a lifelong commitment, and a wedding is never a casual event. Because it is such a serious moment, the Church asks that those wishing to be married in the Roman Catholic Church prepare themselves by taking part together in a preparation program established by their diocese.

A) ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH REQUIREMENTS

First of all, the man and the woman requesting marriage must be free to contract a marriage and must be of proper age to do so. Consult with your local parish priest about prior marriages, divorces or annulments.

Weddings between two Roman Catholics:

- A wedding of two Roman Catholics must take place in a Catholic church or chapel.
- The marriage must be witnessed by a Catholic priest or deacon who is in good standing with the diocese (e.g., rent-a-priest weddings are invalid).
- The couple must have the written permission of their pastors if they are to be married in a Catholic church that is not their home parish.
- Both members of the couple must present recently issued and annotated baptismal certificates.
- There must be a period of preparation under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church prior to the marriage ceremony.

Weddings between a Roman Catholic and a non-Catholic:

- The marriage, to be recognized by the Church, requires permission. [The priest will help to secure this permission or dispensation.]
- The wedding must be witnessed by a Catholic priest and/or an ordained witness or Rabbi.
- The wedding may, with permission, take place outside of a Catholic church.
- There must be a period of preparation under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church prior to the marriage ceremony.

B) DIOCESE OF LANSING REQUIREMENTS

A nine-month period of preparation is required by the Diocese of Lansing:

- The preparation will include meetings between the couple and their parish priest or deacon or someone delegated to do the preparation
- The couple will attend either a *WE C.A.R.E.* workshop or an *Engaged Encounter* weekend as a part of their preparation.
- Marriage preparation also includes an introductory course in Natural Family Planning (NFP).

- For those who have been married previously, a *Building Bridges* Remarriage Seminar is part of the preparation.

C) MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS AT ST. ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH

Meetings to attend (at the parish):

- There will be an initial pastoral interview nine months prior to the wedding to schedule the date and several more scheduled meetings during the following months. Note: A recently issued and annotated baptismal certificate will be requested at the first meeting.
- At one of the meetings, the couple will receive a booklet, *Together for Life*, which contains the readings and ritual prayers for weddings.
- There will be a final meeting with the priest or deacon officiating at the wedding immediately prior to the wedding rehearsal.
- There should be at least one meeting arranged with the music director in preparation for the wedding. (*See Arrangements for Music.*)

Courses to attend (outside of the parish):

- The engaged couple will be contacted by a trained parish FOCCUS couple to schedule several marriage preparation sessions. (**FOCCUS** means **F**acilitating **O**pen **C**ouple **C**ommunication, **U**nderstanding & **S**tudy.) The FOCCUS couple will administer a pre-nuptial inventory at their first meeting and review it with the engaged couple during several subsequent sessions.
- Per diocesan requirements, the couple will also attend a *WE C.A.R.E.* workshop or *Engaged Encounter* weekend as well as an introductory course in Natural Family Planning (as noted above).
- For those who have been married previously, a *Building Bridges* Remarriage Seminar is part of the preparatory process.

Note: about marriage preparation elsewhere:

- If you do not live in the Diocese of Lansing, you may complete your marriage preparation in the diocese where you are living. You will be asked to follow the marriage preparation plan of that diocese. **The priest or deacon or pastoral associate who supervises your pre-marriage preparation must send a letter to the pastor of St. Andrew Church** indicating that they will be supervising your marriage preparation and that they will be responsible for completing the marriage preparation file. When the preparation is completed, they must send the file to St. Andrew Church in a timely fashion prior to the wedding.

IV. THE PRACTICAL DETAILS

A) THE REHEARSAL AND WEDDING

- The rehearsal should be scheduled for the evening before the wedding and will follow the plan that the bride, groom and Presider decided on at their last meeting.
- The church will be available for pre-wedding photographs and decorating at least an hour before the ceremony.

B) CHURCH DECORATIONS

There are only a few limits that we place on decorating for weddings.

- Pew bows may not be attached to the pews by metal clips or wire or tape! However, simple plastic clips, ribbons or elastic may be used.
- Flowers around the altar may not be higher than the surface of the altar, and flower sprays may not be placed in front of the altar. Note: if you intend to use a unity candle as part of your ceremony, it is a good idea to remember it when planning the flower decoration..
- We do not recommend aisle runners. The aisle is short and the tile makes the use of a runner unsafe.
- Any decorations for a liturgical season must be left in place (e.g. Christmas decorations may not be removed from the altar area and Lenten decorations must remain in place).
- Please do not throw rice, birdseed, or flower petals on church property.

C) PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographers and videographers must check with the Priest or Deacon prior to the wedding regarding their position, movement, intrusiveness, use of flash, etc.

D) ARRANGEMENTS FOR MUSIC

The music director of St. Andrew Church has oversight for all liturgical music in celebrations at the church. You will have to make an appointment with the music director at least **two months** prior to your wedding to review and plan your music. The Diocese of Lansing requires that the parish music director evaluate all musical texts and judge if they reflect the Christian concepts of love and fidelity. The music director must also approve all guest singers and instrumentalists.

For more details on planning music for your wedding, visit the Diocese of Lansing guidelines for weddings:

<http://www.dioceseoflansing.org/worship/weddingplanningaid.pdf>

E) DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

- Michigan law requires that you obtain a **Marriage License** *no sooner* than 30 days prior to the wedding date *and no later* than 3 days prior to the wedding. This should be brought to the pre-rehearsal meeting.
- **Certificates of Baptism** should be obtained from the places where the bride and groom were baptized. The copy of the certificate should be dated *no earlier* than 6 months before the wedding date.
- An **Annulment Certificate** must be given to the pastor if either the bride or the groom was previously married. A person who was previously married may not be married in a

Catholic ceremony until the former marriage is granted a declaration of nullity. This includes all marriages witnessed in the churches of other Christian denominations, other faiths, or even civilly.

F) WEDDING FEES

A list of stipends for the use of the Church, for music planning and performance will be provided at your first visit with the Pastor.