

# St. Stephen Deacon & Martyr Roman Catholic Parish

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## Guidelines & Preparation for Marriage

And the  
two  
shall become  
one  
Ephesians 5:31

### **Who may be married at St. Stephen?**

Any one who lives within the boundaries of St. Stephen Parish, or is known to us through religious formation, parish registration, stewardship, or any parish activity/ministry. If a couple wishing to be married at St. Stephen is from another parish they must first receive permission from their parish. Importance is always given to a couple getting married in their parish and couples are encouraged to marry in the parish community to which they belong. **Diocesan policy states that each couple must contact the priest, and/or parish office, at least six months in advance of the anticipated wedding date.**

*Due to the Covid19 Pandemic, we cannot guarantee how many guests can attend your wedding. We will discuss this as we get closer to your wedding date.*

## **Necessary Documents**

- **Baptismal Certificate:** (Please download Wedding application) for detailed information. Those of other Christian denominations must also show proof of baptism.
- **First Communion and Confirmation:** When you receive your new baptismal certificate confirm these sacraments (if completed) are noted on the back. If not noted, please show proof to the baptism church so they can update their records and you can present an up to date baptism certificate. If the Church is out of town, please bring your First Communion and Confirmation certificates and we will copy them.
- **Questionnaire:** At the time of your first appointment, (at a later time and date), you will complete this form with Father Joe.

## **Convalidation**

### **- Blessing of Civil Marriages -**

For couples who are having their civil marriage "validated", the preparation and liturgy guidelines that apply to you are:

- All necessary documents as listed above under the heading "Necessary Documents."
- If you have a previous marriage, the guidelines for Previous Marriages apply.
- Please follow all guidelines for the wedding liturgy.

## **What about Previous Marriages?**

- If you are a Catholic and were previously married in the Catholic Church, you must first obtain an annulment through the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, 872-8402, before beginning preparations for marriage.
- If you are a Catholic and have a previous civil marriage you need to provide the official marriage license, official divorce decree, and complete a "Canonical Lack of Form" with the priest.

## **The Wedding Mass**

To select the readings, come to the parish office. A list of readings will be given to you from whom you can select the readings for the wedding. Or you can go to [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org) for readings. One of our sacristan's assigned to your wedding will do the read your selections.

There are two types of wedding ceremony: A wedding within Mass, or a wedding outside of Mass. The couple should consider how important the Mass is in their lives and whether they attend Mass on a regular basis. If you are not familiar with participation in the Mass you should consider having your wedding without Mass. For Catholics marrying a non-Catholic, the norm is a Wedding outside of Mass.

**It is important that you be on time and that weddings begin at the scheduled time.**

## **Unity Candle**

Many couples have adopted the Unity Candle for their wedding. Because the Unity Candle symbolizes the same theme of unity as the Lasso, it is asked that the bride choose either the Lasso or the Unity Candle for the ceremony - not both. Which has more meaning for you?

## **Flowers**

No artificial flowers. Only fresh flowers are permitted and they are left in the church after your wedding as a gift to the community for Sunday Mass. **One large arrangement to be placed in front of the altar is sufficient.** You may put ribbons or flowers on the pews using ribbons - no tape, thumb tacks (anything that will damage the pew). If you are getting married during the Christmas or Easter season, you should be aware of the flowers that will already be in the church. No arches, aisle runners, candelabra, or flower petals thrown on the floor.

## **Music**

Music is encouraged for your celebration. The following musicians are the only approved musicians for this parish and they can be of assistance to you in planning the music for your wedding:

Deborah Montoya	915-252-6556
Adrian Salas	915-491-0115
Marie Irroballi	915-549-3938
Peter Kolar	915-855-7478
Manny Flores	915-875-5352
Lisa Chavez	915-892-0070

Only religious music is acceptable during the wedding liturgy (please discuss your selections with the musician). Popular songs heard on the radio are not acceptable, but may be played before or after the liturgy. Classical music and marches are acceptable with the exception of Wagner's *Bridal March (Here Comes the Bride)*. Your wedding is a celebration of faith and the music should reflect this.

## **Other items...**

Throwing bird seed, rice, bubbles, etc. inside or outside the church is not permitted as it is a hazard and a legal liability for the parish and for you. We also do not permit bubbles as they stain the floor and side walks. These items are best kept for the couple's departure from the wedding reception.

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## **Photographers**

The photographer is encouraged to attend the rehearsal or they can speak with the priest before the ceremony for any special instructions.

Photographers are asked to choose one spot from which to take pictures so as not to be moving around during the ceremony. Additional pictures may be taken after the wedding, if needed. You may also take pictures around the church such as in the garden and fountain area.

## **The Wedding Rehearsal**

Rehearsals are scheduled for the week of the wedding, usually the **day before** the wedding. Please call at least four to six weeks prior to wedding to schedule your rehearsal.

Confessions will not be a part of your rehearsal. If you or any member of the wedding party wishes to celebrate the Sacrament of Eucharistic, Reconciliation (confession) is required and they should do so before the wedding. St. Stephen holds reconciliation on Saturdays at 4:00 – 4:45 pm. (Please check webpage – times and day may change)

## **The Procession**

It is customary at Catholic weddings for the bride and groom to be escorted by their parents, or together as a couple.

Couples who are civilly married usually chose to process together. If you have children, they may accompany you in the procession.

- Dispensations are needed for those marrying a non-Catholic. Your recent baptismal certificate will be required along with request for a dispensation. If not baptized please bring birth certificate. (This will be discussed at initial meeting with Father Joe).

## **Necessary Documents (90 days prior to Wedding)**

- Affidavit of Free Status: every individual needs two (2) different witnesses to come to the office and give testimony that bride/groom is free to marry. This testimony is usually obtained from a parent or family member. All four witnesses will be seen at the same time. (Please make appointment to fill out this form).
- A valid Texas Marriage License must be obtained and given to the office at least **(4 FULL DAYS)** before your scheduled wedding. **(DO NOT GO BEFORE A JUDGE – OR YOU WILL DELAY YOUR WEDDING FOR 12 MONTHS)**

## **Marriage Preparation**

- *Marriage Preparation Sessions* – will be discussed at a later time.
- Participation at *Engaged Encounter* weekend ([www.cceelpasolascruces.org](http://www.cceelpasolascruces.org))