



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for choosing St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church for your wedding. The Sacrament of Marriage is a blessed occasion as two people come together before God and in front of their families and friends to devote heart and soul to one another for a lifetime.

A wedding is indeed a sacred occasion as well as a time of great joy and celebration. St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church provides a beautiful setting for the Sacrament of Marriage, and I am sure it will always hold a special place in your heart as you journey through life together.

As you prepare for your special day, please know that we are here to help you every step of the way. To that end, our wedding guidelines and policies are provided to give you as much information as possible. Please take care to read the document thoroughly so that we may work together in planning this beautiful occasion. If you have any questions as you read our wedding guidelines, please contact our **Director of Liturgy and Sacraments, Michelle Alley** (michelle@scschurch.com or 504-835-9343 ext. 1506) who is responsible for all weddings.

Thank you again for choosing St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church. Be assured of my prayers and let us know if we can do anything at all to be of assistance.

Sincerely in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Hedrick".

Rev. Timothy D. Hedrick
Pastor

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA WEDDING GUIDELINES

"So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together,
human beings must not divide" - **Mark 10:8-9**

The faith community of St. Catherine of Siena (SCS) is delighted that you are considering our beautiful church for your celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Our every aim is to assist you in preparing a prayerful and joyful celebration. This packet contains important guidelines and policies governing this blessed occasion. Please contact our **Director of Liturgy and Sacraments, Michelle Alley** (michelle@scschurch.com or 504-835-9343 ext. 1506) with any questions.

Reserving the Church

We know you are excited about booking your wedding date at SCS! In order to officially save the date, you must have the **name** and **address** of your **officiating priest** or **deacon**. If you are not a registered parishioner, you are required to provide an **outside priest** who will handle the preparation and perform the ceremony. You must also have met at least once with your priest or deacon before we can put your wedding date on our calendar. The priest or deacon must complete the **First Steps to the Altar** (Attached below) form agreeing to prepare you for marriage. You must also complete the **SCS Wedding Contract** (Attached below) and turn it in with a deposit. Once it is confirmed that you have met with the officiating priest or deacon, our parish Director of Liturgy and Sacraments will put your date on the church calendar and you can start planning.

Preparation

Each couple is responsible for completing with the priest or deacon of your choice all marriage preparation in accordance with the requirements of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. All paperwork with supporting documentation must be submitted to SCS no later than **two months prior** to your celebration. For more complete directions, please see **Appendix A** below.

Decorations

SCS is an active parish church, and the sanctuary is decorated according to liturgical seasons and feasts. These decorations are part of any liturgical celebration and will normally remain in place for your wedding. For complete guidelines concerning floral and other decorations, please see **Appendix B** below.

Wedding Party

Space limitations as well as liturgical decorum limit your wedding party to no more than **20 persons total**, including bride and groom. Any children participating in your wedding party should be at least **3 years of age**.

The entrance processions shall be limited to grandparents, step-grandparents, parents, step-parents, bridesmaids, the flower girl, the ring bearer, and the bride along with her father or the gentleman who will be escorting her down the aisle. Other family members or guests should be seated prior to the procession. Only the bride and groom, along with the maid of honor and best man, will be placed at the base of the steps to the sanctuary. Kneelers will be provided for them. The remaining members of the bridal party will be seated in the front pews on either side of the aisle.

Bridal Attire

Due to the sacredness of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, St. Catherine of Siena promotes beauty and modesty in choice of attire. The bride, the bridal party, mothers, grandmothers, readers, Eucharistic ministers, gift bearers and any other women participating in the liturgy must be mindful of their dress. **Strapless** dresses are **NOT permitted**. All dresses must have an **appropriate neckline**, not be low cut, and not be transparent. The back must not show below the waist. If someone's dress does not meet these requirements, they will be required to wear a shawl provided by the Church for the duration of the wedding. If you have any questions about whether your dress selection fulfills these requirements, please contact the Director of Liturgy and Sacraments **in advance**.

Music

The sacred nature of your wedding liturgy requires the use of approved music ministers and the careful selection of appropriate music. Our **Music Coordinator** will assist you with music selection. We urge you to be in contact with her before planning any aspect of your liturgy. Please see **Appendix C** below.

Photography/Videography

The sacred nature of the wedding liturgy also demands discreet and professional behavior on the part of recording professionals. For more details, please see **Appendix D** below.

Wedding Times

You may choose to celebrate your wedding at SCS on Friday evenings between 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., on Saturdays between 10:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., and 6:00 p.m. - 8 p.m. Weddings will not be scheduled during Holy Week.

Wedding Rehearsals

Rehearsals are scheduled on the Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday prior to the wedding ceremony.

Wedding Coordinators

When booking the Church, wedding coordinators are provided by the parish. They will open and close the church for rehearsal, conduct a rehearsal between 45-60 minutes, open and close the church for the wedding, and direct the wedding party during the ceremony itself. If an outside coordinator is used, he/she does not coordinate the church ceremony.

Altar Servers

St. Catherine of Siena can supply altar servers if requested. We ask that you give them a \$25 stipend.

Decorum

Proper respect and decorum are required at all times on parish premises. At no time is eating, drinking, or smoking allowed in or around the church or rectory (parish office). Alcohol and individuals under the influence are not allowed on our property. Failure to abide by these guidelines will result in the immediate dismissal of offending wedding party members. Failure to leave upon request will delay or cancel the wedding.

Punctuality

Out of respect for parish staff and for other scheduled events, wedding parties must be prompt for both the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. Weddings beginning more than 20 minutes late will be restricted to a Liturgy of the Word and Exchange of Vows.

Maintenance Disclaimer

Our church is an old building. There may be times when unforeseen circumstances force us to attend to maintenance and other repairs, which in extreme cases may involve the possibility of scaffolding or other materials which cannot be removed.

Offering

In order to cover the costs associated with the use of our church, we request an offering of **\$1,000** from couples celebrating their weddings at SCS. This offering covers utilities, other building costs, and the assistance of two Wedding Coordinators.

Couples who have been **registered parishioners** of SCS for **at least one year prior** to booking their wedding may be eligible for a **discounted offering of \$500**, provided that they have demonstrated an identifiable pattern of sharing their time, talent, or treasure with the parish. Final determination of eligibility is at the discretion of the Pastor.

Alumni of St. Catherine of Siena School are **eligible for a \$200 discount**, provided that they have not already qualified for the parishioner discount. They should apply for the discount when submitting the contract by indicating the year of graduation.

For all couples, a non-refundable **\$250 deposit** (payable to “St. Catherine of Siena”) is required to reserve your wedding date. The balance is due **no less than 60 days prior** to the celebration.

Refunds & Cancellations

Wedding deposits are non-refundable. Should a couple wish to transfer the date of their wedding, they may request that the deposit be applied to the new date if the original date of booking is still more than 12 full months from the date the transfer is requested. If it is deemed necessary for St. Catherine to cancel a wedding due to circumstances beyond its control (e.g. hurricane, unforeseeable major church repair, pandemic, or parish schedule conflict) we will refund all payments made to the church. No other expenses incurred will be reimbursed.

Transportation and Timing on Wedding Day

If ushers and/or groomsmen are being transported to the church by limousine, the ushers will arrive 45 minutes before the scheduled time of the wedding. The bride and bridesmaids are due at the church no later than 15 minutes before the wedding. If it is raining upon arrival, the limousine should pull into the School Parking Lot as close to the gate as possible and the bride will enter from that side of the church. If it is raining after the ceremony, the wedding party may be picked up in the same location. If at all possible, please provide St. Catherine with a contact number for one of the drivers on the job. This would help in case of delays.

Next Steps

After carefully reading the **Wedding Guidelines**, please contact our **Director of Liturgy and Sacraments**, Michelle Alley (michelle@scschurch.com or 504-835-9343 ext. 1506) with any questions. She will be happy to answer your questions and guide you through the next steps, including how you can reserve a specific date and time for your wedding at St. Catherine of Siena. Once you have spoken with Michelle, you are welcome to print out and complete the **Wedding Contract** and **First Steps to the Altar** form below. (No date is considered to be reserved until the contract is returned with the requested deposit.)

APPENDIX A: THE MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS

The priest or deacon you choose to prepare you for marriage is responsible for guiding you through the process. Below we summarize for you what this will involve for the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana.

Archdiocesan policy states that you must begin preparing for your marriage with a priest or deacon no less than **eight months prior** to your wedding, preferably with the clergyman who will officiate at your wedding. A donation to your presider is not included in the offering that you make to the church.

With your clergyman you will need to complete a **Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire**. This will require you to obtain recently issued baptismal certificates (within last six months) for both bride and groom and perhaps the acquisition of certain permissions from the Archdiocese.

Your preparation will also involve the taking of the FOCCUS survey, an instrument used to help couples to identify aspects of their relationship where greater communication is needed.

You will also be asked to participate in an approved **Marriage Preparation Program**. Among the options are a weekend retreat or an in-home marriage preparation program (six evenings at a mentor couples home). We suggest that you reserve a spot on your preferred date as soon as possible since these seminars tend to fill up. A certificate of participation must be included among your marriage preparation documents.

If neither the bride nor groom is a registered parishioner of SCS, the parish pastor of one (who is a Catholic) will have to provide a letter granting his permission for the wedding to take place at our church.

The clergyman officiating at your wedding must be registered in the **State of Louisiana** as an authorized minister of marriages. If he is not, he must complete an **officiant registration** through the state. If the clergyman needs any assistance with this, he can contact the **chancellor** for the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

If your clergyman is not on staff at SCS, he must also request in writing **delegation** from our pastor to witness your wedding.

If your clergyman is not currently working in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, he will have to provide a testimonial **letter of suitability**.

If you are being prepared by someone other than a priest on the SCS staff, your **completed paperwork** must arrive at our office no less than **two months** prior to your wedding. If you are being prepared outside the Archdiocese of New Orleans, your paperwork will have to clear not only your home chancery (diocesan office), but also the New Orleans chancery before it will be forwarded to us. We urge you to allow sufficient time for this processing to occur.

Necessary Paperwork Checklist:

- _____ Pre-Nuptial Inquiry
- _____ Recently Issued Baptismal Certificates (Within last six months)
- _____ FOCCUS Premarital Inventory
- _____ Marriage Preparation Seminars Completion Certificate/Letter
- _____ Permission letters from home parish priest
- _____ Letter of Delegation for non-SCS priests
- _____ Testimonial of Suitability for Visiting Priests not of this Archdiocese (if needed)

It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain from the State of Louisiana a **valid civil marriage license**, issued no more than 30 days before the ceremony and no fewer than 72 hours before the ceremony. The license should be hand delivered to the officiating clergyman at the rehearsal. No wedding can take place without a license. The license is to be signed by the bride, groom, witness(es), and priest or deacon on the day of the wedding. Please do not leave this license with anyone other than the officiant of your wedding. The clergyman is responsible for mailing the completed license to the Clerk of Court. Remember: A wedding cannot be performed without this license.

If you wish to have a Nuptial Mass, it is important to note that the Archdiocese of New Orleans regulations state that a Nuptial Mass may be celebrated only if both bride and groom are practicing Roman Catholics. Special permission is needed for a Mass to be celebrated at a wedding between a Catholic and baptized non-Catholic.

APPENDIX B: FLORAL AND DECORATION GUIDELINES

These guidelines will assist you in knowing what is permitted in our church. **Couples are responsible for communicating these guidelines to their florists.**

Unless prior permission has been given by the Wedding Coordinator to do otherwise, florists may set up no more than **one hour before** the scheduled ceremony.

Any seasonal decorations placed by St. Catherine of Siena must be left in place. For example, the statues in Church are covered during the last two weeks of Lent before Easter.

Couples are responsible for **leaving two flower arrangements** on the high altar (where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved) after the wedding.

Additional floral arrangements can be placed in front of the main altar and/or on pedestals on either side of the sanctuary

All flower arrangements touching marble or linen are to be placed in plastic saucers.

Floral arrangements are to be brought to the church **already assembled**. The florist is not to use the altar, sanctuary or narthex to make arrangements. Please remind your florist of the sanctity of the sanctuary. The altar is not to be used as a work table. Also, the florist must be prompt in removing equipment, etc., after the wedding.

Floral arrangements may be attached to the end of pews or to the pulpit, but no staples, wire, clamps or tape may be used to do so. Pews and aisles are not to be blocked or cordoned off in any way. Anything that drapes must be placed so that no one trips over it.

If candles are used, only candles in drip-proof globes will be allowed.

Unity Candles and other secular unity symbols are **not** permitted.

Rice, confetti, bubbles, seeds, petals, etc. are **not** allowed inside or outside the church.

Aisle runners are **not** allowed inside or outside the Church.

Signs or inappropriate items will **not** be carried in the entrance procession

It is the responsibility of the florist and/or wedding party to remove any decorations attached to the pews immediately after the ceremony along with flower boxes and other refuse.

Professionals ignoring these guidelines risk losing permission to service future weddings at St. Catherine of Siena Church.

APPENDIX C: WEDDING MUSIC GUIDELINES

Every aspect of your wedding celebration has as its **primary purpose** the engagement of those assembled in active prayer and worship. For this reason, only sacred music is appropriate to the occasion. Furthermore, all sacred music used within a wedding celebration must also be **liturgical**, that is, it must contribute to the active participation and prayer of the assembly. As a result, not all sacred music is appropriate to the celebration and not every song is appropriate to every moment. To ensure the best possible liturgical experience, therefore, all selection and placement of music must be approved by our **Music Coordinator, Lorraine Hess** (504-722-4443 or music@scschurch.com).

Minimally, the cantor will sing the responsorial psalm and the Gospel Alleluia. Of course, if you wish, the cantor will also lead the assembly in other singing, as well as offer meditative song.

All musicians are to be considered independent contractors. Their fees are **NOT included** in the offering you make to the parish. Our music coordinator will provide a list of approved and recommended accompanists and cantors. You are welcome to contact anyone from this list. If you prefer to use someone that is not on the list, please contact the music coordinator for approval. Although the SCS Wedding Music Coordinator may be able to assist you with referrals, all arrangements and payments concerning outside musicians will be **your responsibility**.

Although your selection of music will be coordinated by your cantor, accompanist, and you, the music coordinator is happy to provide a list of suggestions. Final music selections should be emailed to the music coordinator **two months** before your wedding.

In order to encourage participation at their ceremony, couples will often choose to create a **worship aid (program)** for their celebration. While the Wedding Music Coordinator will be happy to review a draft copy of your program, the design and printing of the program are the responsibility of the couple.

APPENDIX D: PHOTOGRAPHIC / VIDEOGRAPHIC GUIDELINES

Given the sacred nature of the marriage celebration, photographers and videographers must be careful not to disrupt or distract those in attendance. **Couples are responsible for communicating these guidelines to their photographer and/or videographer.** Failure to abide by these guidelines will lead to restrictions for future weddings.

Professionals are to follow the directives of the **Wedding Coordinator** at all times concerning where they may stand or move.

Professionals must not be conspicuous nor obstruct any of the proceedings. At no time should they stand in the aisle or enter the sanctuary.

Flash photography may be used only during the entrance and exit processions.

No equipment is allowed in the sanctuary.

Video cameras may be stationed to the side of the sanctuary provided they remain **immobile**.

No photos are allowed in the sanctuary once the prelude music has started. At this time all members of the bridal party must be in their respective places in order for the liturgy to begin.

Photographers are allowed to use the choir loft during the ceremony.

Pictures may be taken immediately after the conclusion of the liturgy. Out of respect for church staff, photographers must complete their work within **20 minutes** of the end of the liturgy.

Photographers and videographers need to be considerate of each other when positioning themselves for picture taking. They are not to obstruct each other's views.

Finally, please remind your photographers and videographers that the sacrament of matrimony is a sacred occasion. Excessive movement detracts from the solemnity of the occasion.

“The First Step to the Altar”

The Sacrament of Marriage is a calling from God. By it, He infuses His grace into the lives of husbands and wives and this “First Step” will help organize your preparation for holy matrimony.

Bride	Groom
	Name _____
	Address _____
	Address _____
	Phone _____

Contact your parish church or the church where the wedding is to take place if you need assistance in asking a priest or deacon to perform the ceremony.

Meeting with Priest or Deacon

I, _____ (_____) _____ - _____ (print name and phone #), a priest/deacon have met with the couple named above. We have discussed:

- the uniqueness of the bond of marriage as a sacrament (to be reiterated at final meeting)
- their canonical freedom from any prior bond of marriage
- a preliminary date for the ceremony
- which Marriage Preparation Program is best for the couple (the first two should be offered as primary): *Mentor Couple Program, Engaged Encounter Weekend, Days for the Engaged, Online*
- which priest/deacon will complete the Pre-Nuptial Inquiry, and officiate at the ceremony (see box below); which priest/deacon/lay marriage preparation minister will oversee their marriage preparation process, administer and analyze the Pre-Marital Inventory,

The couple named above has agreed to complete their Marriage Preparation Program **two months in advance of the ceremony**.

•Today’s Date: _____ 20__

•Date of Ceremony: _____ 20__

•Date by which Marriage Preparation Program must be completed: _____ 20__

Signature of above priest/deacon: _____

The Officiating Cleric

Father/Deacon _____ (print name) will be officiating at the ceremony.

Place of ceremony: _____

Date and Time of ceremony: _____ 20__ ____:____

Signature of officiant: _____ phone # (_____) _____ - _____

Note to officiant: This form does not constitute canonical delegation to officiate at this ceremony.

Officiant may initial here to request delegation from the canonical pastor.

Understand that some pastors grant delegation only upon submission of all required documents.

Upon completion of the above, and not before, a couple may either reserve a church or confirm their prior reservation of a church with a monetary deposit. This form does not absolutely bind the parish or the officiant to the ceremony date listed above if a canonical prohibition or other impediment to marriage is discovered.

Wedding Ceremony Date: _____ Ceremony Time: _____

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA WEDDING CONTACT

(Please PRINT legibly)

GROOM

BRIDE

Full Name: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Church Parish: _____

SCS Alums Only: Year of Graduation _____ Year of Graduation _____

We have **carefully read** the above St. Catherine of Siena Wedding Guidelines, and we **agree to follow** all of the guidelines as stated, including those which are stated in the four appendices. Furthermore, we understand what is required of us by church and civil law in order for our wedding to take place at St. Catherine of Siena. We also understand that it is our responsibility to communicate to others as appropriate those guidelines which pertain to their involvement in the ceremony (e.g. florists, photographers).

Groom Signature *Date* *Bride Signature* *Date*

In order to reserve the Church for your wedding, please mail **this wedding contract**, a **\$250 non-refundable deposit check** (payable to **St. Catherine of Siena**), and **First Steps to the Altar Form** to:

**St. Catherine of Siena
Attn: Michelle Alley
105 Bonnabel Blvd.
Metairie LA 70005**