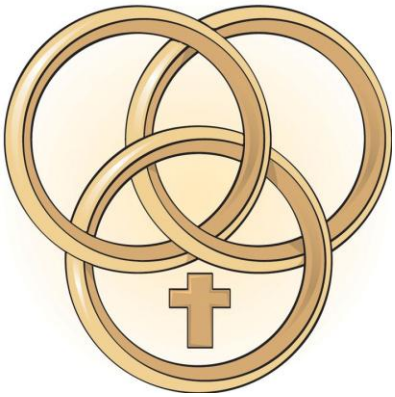
St. Andrew Catholic Church
Cape Coral, Florida



Marriage Preparation Handbook

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Important Contacts

St. Andrew Parish Office
Tania Muriel
239-572-4545, x102
FAX: 239-574-2450
tania@standrewrcc.org

Parish Music Director and Organist
Mark Ayers
813-404-2983
mayers@standrewrcc.org

Spanish Music
Ingrid Olivarez
239-265-8868
designedbyingrid@gmail.com

Wedding Coordinator
Rehearsal and Wedding Day
Cynthia Ocasio
239-297-4157
cyfontanez@gmail.com

PLEASE NOTE: When a wedding has been scheduled, St. Andrew Church does not automatically inform the Music Director or Wedding Coordinator. Couples who desire music in English or Spanish, or who would like the assistance of our Wedding Coordinator, must contact the appropriate individuals above.

From our Pastor

Dear Engaged Couple:

Congratulations on your engagement! The Church rejoices with you as you prepare to be united as husband and wife in the Sacrament of Marriage.

Catholics believe that marriage is one of the vocations to which God may call us, a way of life that focuses one's discipleship to Christ, which begins with Baptism. The Sacrament of Marriage unites a man and a woman to one another and to God in a covenant of love that is lifelong, total, faithful, and open to the gift of new life. Through married life, a couple responds to God's call to holiness, serves as a sign of Christ's love for His Church, and builds up society and Church by the formation of a new family.

For many generations, the Catholic Church has helped couples prepare for sacramental marriage. Here at St. Andrew, we will do all we can to help you understand this vocation, prepare to begin living it, and prayerfully celebrate it so that you may fully open your hearts to receive God's grace, and learn to love one another as you have never loved before.

The priests and staff of St. Andrew Parish are happy to help you through the process of marriage preparation and wedding planning. This handbook is meant to provide information that will be essential during the months ahead, and it may answer many questions that commonly arise. Should you have additional questions after reading it, please do not hesitate to contact us using the information on the preceding page. May the Lord bless your engagement and guide you through this time of personal and spiritual growth.

Sincerely yours,



Rev. Eduardo Coll

Pastor

Essential Steps of Marriage Preparation

Because the Catholic Church wants every engaged couple to form a strong, lasting, and holy union, marriage preparation involves far more than wedding planning and will take at least six months to complete. During this time, members of our parish family will help you to explore and deepen your relationship to one another and to the Church, and to plan your wedding day with thoughtfulness, seriousness, and prayer.

Preliminary Parish Participation

A Catholic parish is much more than a place where sacraments are celebrated—it is a community of Christ's disciples joined by faith, worship, and service. Therefore, to be married at St. Andrew, the bride, the groom, or both must be registered and active parishioners for **at least 6 months before** beginning marriage preparation. Active status is defined by involvement in parish life, most importantly, by regular participation in Sunday Mass. This is verified by the use of donation envelopes (even when these are returned empty and contributions are made online). Young adults who have grown up in St. Andrew Parish may already be part of an active family registration under their parents' names. Pease contact the Parish Office to verify this.

Couples who belong to another parish and wish to be married at St. Andrew can only do so if one or both parents of the bride or groom have been an active parishioners at St. Andrew for at least 6 months. These couples will also be asked to obtain a letter from the pastor of their home parish verifying they are parishioners and granting permission for them to be married at St. Andrew.

2) Meetings with a St. Andrew Priest

Marriage preparation formally begins when an engaged couple meets with one of the priests of St. Andrew Parish. At this initial meeting, the priest will get to know you, explain the Church's understanding of the vocation of marriage, and ask key questions that will determine your freedom to be married in the Church. *No wedding date can be set until the priest has verified this freedom and also checked the parish calendar to see if a wedding is possible on a desired date and time. Please do not make firm arrangements with any reception venue until this has been done.*

You will meet several times with the priest during the months prior to your marriage. During these meetings, he will help you begin the appropriate form of sacramental preparation. He may lead you through a marriage preparation inventory called FOCCUS, which is a tool to assess your understanding of each other and your readiness to commit to marriage. He will also describe the different forms of the Rite of Marriage and provide you with resources that will help you to make selections for the wedding Mass or ceremony.

3) Marriage Preparation Programs

In the Diocese of Venice, the form of marriage preparation depends on the circumstances of the bride and groom, as follows:

A) age 55 and Under: *Beloved* and *Day of Reflection*
Beloved is a twelve-part video series on the Sacrament of Marriage produced by the Augustine Institute as part of *Formed,* an online resource on many topics of Catholic life. *Beloved* is meant to help couples understand sacramental marriage as the Church understands it, and to assist them in growing in union with each other in Christ.

St. Andrew Parish maintains a parish subscription to *Formed,* meaning that parishioners can register and access *Beloved* and any of its other videos at no cost. The St. Andrew priest helping you to prepare for marriage will provide you with information on how to set up a *Formed* account and access *Beloved* *(see page 18)*. He will also supply you with a workbook that is meant to facilitate your discussion of these videos. Once you have finished viewing and discussing the entire *Beloved* series, please bring the workbook to the priest as proof that you have completed this portion of marriage preparation.

In addition to completing *Beloved*, couples are required to participate in a *Day of Reflection for Sacramental Marriage,* a one-day retreat held throughout the year at various locations in the Diocese of Venice. The St. Andrew priest with whom you are meeting will provide you with registration information and a current list of retreat dates and locations.

B) Couples over age 55: *Two Become One*
Two Become One is a one-day marriage preparation retreat designed for older couples. It is offered several times each year at various locations in the Diocese of Venice. The St. Andrew priest with whom you are meeting can provide you with registration information and a current list of dates and locations.

C)over 75: *Private Instruction*

Marriage preparation for these couples will consist of 4 hours of instruction by a Priest or Deacon, possibly including the *Two Become One* retreat mentioned above.

4) Necessary Documents

A. Baptismal Records

Before their initial meeting with a priest, Catholics must obtain a Certificate of Baptism, including all notations, **dated within the last three months**. The information on this certificate often attests to other sacraments you have received and helps verify your freedom to marry. If you have an older certificate, the information it contains will be useful when you contact the parish of baptism and request a new copy.

In unusual circumstances when a new baptismal certificate cannot be obtained, the priest with whom you meet can describe other means of verifying a baptism.

Non-Catholic Christians must provide either an original baptismal certificate from the church of baptism or an affidavit from the baptizing minister.

B. Affidavits

The parish Priest will give both the bride and the groom two affidavit forms to be completed by their parents, siblings or other close relatives who can personally attest to ther freedom to marry. These must be signed in the presence of a Catholic priest, deacon, or public notary, who will serve as a witness.

C. Preparation Program Certificate

After a couple has participated in *Beloved* or another marriage preparation program, they will receive a certificate of completion which must be given to the priest with whom they are meeting to prepare for marriage. In return, the priest will give them a certificate that in Florida, will reduce the cost of their marriage license (see below).

D. Marriage License

The final required document is a state marriage license. The priest with whom you are meeting can give you information about Florida license requirements and fees. You may also obtain this online at: www.leeclerk.org/services/marriage-licenses-ceremonies, or by calling 239-533-5007.

Because Florida recognizes the value of accredited marriage preparation programs, couples who participate in one are offered a discount on the license fee. The priest will give you a document you can submit to the County Clerk's office to verify this.

Couples who will be married outside Florida must check with civil authorities in the locale where their marriage will take place about license requirements, as these vary between states and counties.

Please be sure that you give your marriage license to the celebrant either at the wedding rehearsal or beforehand, as *Catholic priests or deacons cannot officiate at a wedding without verifying that a valid license has been obtained*. The priest or deacon must also sign and return the license without delay after the wedding.

When a man and woman are already civilly married and seek to be sacramentally united in the Church, there is no need to obtain a new marriage license. However, they will be asked to provide the priest or deacon with a copy of the license/certificate verifying their civil marriage.

5) Special Circumstances

A. Previous Marriages

When the groom, the bride, or both have been previously married, *even if only civilly or for a very short time*, additional steps must be taken and documents obtained to ascertain their freedom to marry in the Church. The priest assisting you will ask you for more details about these circumstances and inform you of what must be done before a wedding date can be set.

B. Interfaith Marriages

When either the bride or groom are not Catholic, a special dispensation or permission must be requested from the diocesan Bishop. This is handled by the priest.

C. Couples Preparing Elsewhere for a Wedding at St. Andrew

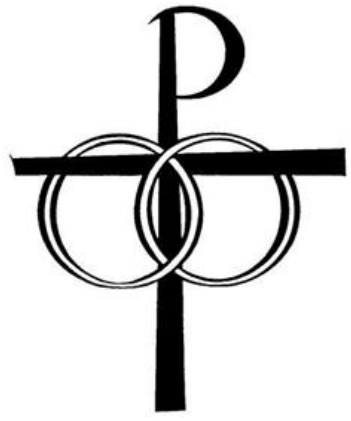
A bride and groom who live elsewhere but wish to be married at St. Andrew must have one or both parents who have been registered parishioners of St. Andrew for <u>at least 6 months</u> before the wedding date. They must fulfill all marriage preparation requirements of the diocese in which they reside, and provide a letter from the pastor of their parish verifying this and granting permission for them to be married at St.
Andrew. Once they have done so, the priest or deacon assisting them at their home parish will send their complete marriage preparation file to the local diocese, which will review it and send it to the Diocese of Venice, which will forward it to St. Andrew Parish. As these steps take additional time to complete, such couples must allow additional time for the preparation process.

D. Couples Preparing at St. Andrew for a Wedding Elsewhere

If you are being prepared at St. Andrew for a wedding at another parish, the priest at St. Andrew will submit your complete marriage preparation file to the Diocese of Venice, which will review and approve it for sending to the diocese where your wedding will take place. They must also contact the parish where their wedding will be held to ensure they follow all policies of that diocese and parish concerning marriages. As these steps take additional time to complete, couples in such circumstances must allow additional time for the preparation process.

E. Involvement of Outside Clergy

If a member of your family or a close friend is a Catholic priest or deacon and you would like him to officiate at your wedding, or to concelebrate, please speak to the St. Andrew priest who is assisting you about what will be required to make this possible.



Planning the Wedding Mass or Ceremony

1) Forms of Celebrating the Catholic Rite of Marriage

In the Catholic Church, a wedding may be celebrated as a Mass or a ceremony. The principal difference between the two is that a ceremony does not include the celebration of the Eucharist.

When the bride and groom are both Catholic, a wedding Mass is usually offered, but a ceremony is possible as well. When a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, a ceremony is the typical form of celebration. A ceremony is always performed when either the groom or the bride is not a baptized Christian.

The parish priest assisting you will help you to choose which form is most appropriate for your circumstances. Whether a Mass or a ceremony, careful and prayerful planning will bring many blessings to your married life in the years ahead.

2) Days, Times, and Costs

Weddings at St. Andrew are usually celebrated on Saturdays between 12:00 PM and 1:30 PM. Beginning later than this is not possible because of afternoon Masses. Wedding Masses, which typically take longer than ceremonies, should definitely begin before 1:30 PM.

Because of the penitential nature of the Lenten season, weddings are discouraged during this time, and must be celebrated with less festivity when they do take place. No weddings are celebrated on Sundays, during Holy Week, or the Saturday before Christmas.

If you confirm a date and time and then find it necessary to cancel or reschedule, please promptly inform the Parish Office so this can be noted in the parish calendar and the date made available to another couple.

It is essential that both the rehearsal and the wedding begin and end on time, as there frequently are other liturgies scheduled in the church and chapel. Tardiness may abbreviate the celebration of your wedding and/or reduce the time available for photos after the wedding.

Details of offerings and fees associated with a wedding Mass or ceremony can be found on Page 15 of this Handbook.

3) Readings and Other Liturgical Texts

In the Liturgy of the Word of a wedding Mass or ceremony, God's Word and the Church's belief about the Sacrament of Marriage are proclaimed. The priest who is assisting you will give you the booklet *"United in Christ,"* from which you can choose Scripture passages. Only readings from Sacred Scripture may be proclaimed during a Catholic wedding.

The same booklet also contains multiple options for the vows, intercessions, and blessings that are part of the Rite of Marriage. As you make your selections, you can note these on the form included in this booklet. Please give this completed selection sheet to the celebrant at least one week before your wedding.

4) Lectors and Other Liturgical Roles

In addition to the members of your wedding party, you may choose relatives or friends to proclaim the first reading, second reading, and intercessions at your wedding Mass or ceremony. It is best to select people who have been lectors at their parish or are otherwise comfortable speaking in public. These individuals should be given an advance copy of the text(s) they will read, and be present at the wedding rehearsal. If no one among your guests is willing to serve in these capacities, please inform the priest in advance, as it may be possible for one of our parish readers to do so.

If your marriage will take place at Mass, you may designate individuals to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine for the Eucharist. You may also choose ushers who will assist with seating your guests and distribute any worship aid booklet that you may choose to prepare.

Two Altar Servers are required to assist the priest at a Wedding Mass. These will be provided by St. Andrew Parish.

5) Music

Couples who would like music at their Mass or ceremony must contact our Music Director **at least 8 weeks in advance**, using the contact information on Page 3 of this Handbook. The Music Director will guide you through the music selection process, keeping in mind that music appropriate for the reception may not be appropriate to the wedding liturgy. Any questions regarding the suitability of wedding music selections are decided by the Music Director. Music fees are outlined on Page 15 of this Handbook.

A. Cantor/Soloist

The Cantor will sing the Responsorial Psalm between the first and second readings, lead the congregation in singing, and perform any solo pieces that are chosen. A Cantor is not automatically present at every wedding. **If you wish to have a Cantor, you must inform the Music Director.**

B. Additional Instruments

If you desire instruments at your wedding liturgy in addition to the organ and piano, our Music Director can assist you in contacting other musicians.

C. Non-Church Musicians

Those who play or sing during Catholic weddings must possess a high level of musical skill and be familiar with Catholic liturgy. Because of this, the use non-church musicians at weddings is only allowed if they have been approved in advance by our Music Director, who will make the final decision about their ability to properly fulfill their role in the wedding liturgy.

6) Optional Traditions

A. Marian Devotion

The beautiful Catholic tradition of offering of prayers and flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary is welcome. Your florist can furnish appropriate flowers for this presentation.

B. Veil, Cord, Coins

In some cultures, weddings include the blessing and placement of a veil and/or cord over the shoulders of the bride and groom, and also the formal exchange of coins. If you desire this at your Mass or ceremony, please speak with the celebrant in advance so the necessary preparations can be made.

C. Non-Liturgical Signs of Celebration

The use of bubbles, confetti, rice, birdseed, flower petals and similar items is never allowed inside or outside of the Church. Also strictly forbidden is the release of doves, balloons, butterflies and the like.

7) Flowers and Other Decorations

You may engage a florist of your choice to provide additional floral decorations, which may not replace any flowers or plants that are already in place in the church. There are restrictions on the use of flowers in the sanctuary during the seasons of Advent and Lent; the priest with whom you are meeting will inform you of these.

Flowers may not be placed in the aisles, on the altar table, or on the pews or doors. Any arrangements must be placed so they do not obstruct the movements of the Mass or ceremony. Aisle runners and flower petals are not allowed. All flowers and decorations must be removed from the Church immediately after the wedding.

Page 16 of this Handbook contains detailed instructions for florists. Please read these and provide your florist with a copy.

8) Photos and Videos

You may arrange for photographs and/or videos with professionals of your choice. The entire church building must be respected as sacred space. Video cameras (no lights) and flash photography are permitted, but equipment may be placed only on the main floor of the church. Neither the church nor the chapel are equipped with cameras for livestreaming.

At no time may a photographer, videographer or guest position themselves on the sanctuary steps or in the raised sanctuary area. After the wedding liturgy ends, a couple has 30 minutes for pictures with the wedding party. All other photos and videos must be taken at the reception.

Page 17 of this Handbook contains specific instructions about photography and videography. Please read these and provide a copy to those who will be performing these services during your wedding liturgy.

9) Receiving Lines

Receiving lines are not allowed inside or outside the church. If one is desired, it should be part of the reception.

10) Electronic Devices

To preserve a reverent atmosphere, cellular phones, pagers and other electronic devices must be turned off or put on silent mode inside the church.

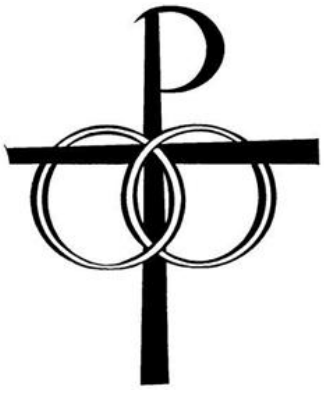
11) The Rehearsal

A rehearsal is usually held one or two days before a wedding, at 5:30 or 6 PM. Its purpose is to allow you, your wedding party and others you have chosen for key roles in the Mass or ceremony an opportunity to become familiar with the ritual so it can proceed reverently and beautifully on your wedding day. The rehearsal will normally be led by the priest or deacon who is the celebrant, and by our parish Wedding Coordinator. Privately hired wedding coordinators are not allowed to direct a rehearsal or wedding. Rehearsals normally last 30—45 minutes, and it is your responsibility to ensure that all the wedding party is present and punctual. Please be sure you bring your Marriage License to the rehearsal if you have not previously given it to the celebrant.

12) Wedding Coordinator

St. Andrew Church offers a Wedding Coordinator to help with the many details that are part of a wedding Mass or ceremony, and the rehearsal. The Coordinator is a parishioner who is familiar with the church and chapel spaces, with the wedding liturgy, and with parish policies. A Coordinator may not be needed for very small weddings. Please discuss this with the St. Andrew priest who is assisting you in your preparation.

If you would like the help of our Wedding Coordinator, you must contact them using the information on Page 3. *Please note that outside Wedding Coordinators are not allowed to direct wedding Masses, ceremonies, or rehearsals at St. Andrew.*



Offerings and Fees

Venue Deposit (refundable, see below): $100

Church/Chapel Offering: $350.00

Organist, piano, or guitar Fee: $150.00

Guitarist Fee (only for music in Spanish): $150.00

Cantor Fee: $150.00

Altar Server Fee (2 required for a Wedding Mass): $10 for each server

Beloved/Amado Workbook: $20.00

TOTALS (*includes all applicable fees above*)

Wedding Mass with Cantor and organist: $790

Wedding Mass without Cantor and organist: $490

Wedding Ceremony with Cantor and organist: $770

Wedding Ceremony without Cantor and organist: $430

Simple Convalidation ceremony without music: $200.00

Couples preparing elsewhere for a wedding at St. Andrew: $970 (*not including Beloved*) (see page 9)

Couples preparing at St. Andrew for a wedding elsewhere: $100 (see page 9)

For weddings taking place at St. Andrew, 50% of the applicable total above is due within one week after a wedding is booked. The remainder is due no later than one month before the wedding. Checks should be made payable to St. Andrew Catholic Church. The Parish Office also accepts Visa and Mastercard.

The Venue Deposit included in the fees for all weddings celebrated at St. Andrew will be returned, ***unless:***

- The Wedding Party, family, or guests do not abide by the policies in this booklet.
- The Wedding Party, family, or guests causing the liturgy to begin late.
- The Church is not left in an orderly condition after the liturgy.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FLORISTS

Please give these in advance to your Florist.

- The church or chapel will be open one hour prior to the wedding for the delivery and setup of floral arrangements.

- Cell phones and pagers must be turned off or set to silent mode inside the church or chapel, as fitting reverence is expected at all times in these sacred spaces.

- Flowers may be placed in front of the altar, in front of the ambo (pulpit), and also in the vestibule (entry way) of the church or chapel. They may not be placed on the altar table.

- Flower arrangements and other decorations in the elevated sanctuary area should not impede movement during the liturgy. The sacristan or wedding coordinator on duty can assist with the placement of additional flowers, etc.

- No floral arrangements, candles, hurricane lamps, trellises, canopies, ribbons, aisle runners or other decorations are allowed in the aisle or on the pews.

- Aisle runners are never allowed.

- Existing flowers, plants, church decorations, and furnishings may not be moved without checking with the parish sacristan or wedding coordinator.

- All flowers and decorations brought for the wedding must be removed after photographs are complete.

- Flower petals, rice, confetti, birdseed, bubbles, etc. may not be used inside or outside the church or chapel. The release of balloons, doves, butterflies, etc. is also forbidden.

INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT PHOTOS & VIDEOS

Please give these in advance to your Photographer and/or Videographer

- The church or chapel will be open one hour prior to the wedding.
- No equipment should be brought in or set up while any other liturgy is in progress in the church or chapel.
- Cell phones and pagers must be turned off or set to silent mode inside the church or chapel, as fitting reverence is expected at all times in these sacred spaces.
- Only hand-held cameras or video cameras on a stand are permitted.
- Photos/videos may be taken in the vestibule (entrance area), or outdoors on the parish grounds, before the entrance procession begins.
- Group photographs may not be taken in the sanctuary before the wedding.
- Photographers/Videographers may not interfere with the processional or recessional by having couples stop in the aisle. They should not walk in front of the couple or other members of the wedding party during these movements. They must never enter the elevated sanctuary area.
- Flash photography should be kept at minimum during the wedding, especially during the exchange of vows.
- Walking around the church or chapel during the liturgy should be minimized.
- Neither the church nor the chapel are equipped with cameras for livestreaming.
- After a wedding, a maximum of 30 minutes will be allowed for photos/videos.
- Any chairs or other furnishings moved to facilitate group photos must be returned to their original location after photos have been completed.
- Questions about any other matters concerning photos/videos should be directed to the parish sacristan or wedding coordinator on duty.

Accessing the Beloved Video Series

1) Go to the *Formed* website, either by scanning the QR code on the card at the bottom of this page, or by going to www.formed.org

2) Click on “Formed for Individuals”

3) Provide the e-mail address you wish to use

4) Click on “Continue to Sign-up/Login, and enter the required information.

5) St. Andrew Parish maintains a *Formed* subscription available to all parishioners. When you are asked to identify your parish from the drop-down menu, select “St. Andrew Cape Coral.” By doing so you will not be charged any fees.

6) Once your registration is complete, access the *Beloved* videos at these links:

English: Beloved: Finding Happiness in Marriage - Formed

Spanish: Amado: Encontrando la Felicidad en el Matrimonio - Formed

Alternatively, you can enter “Beloved” or “Amado” in the website search box to locate these videos.

7) Be sure to use your workbook to make notes on each video and keep track of the ones you have viewed and discussed.

NOTE: If you already have a “Formed” subscription, you can go directly to Step 6.

A Prayer for Engaged Couples

We praise you, O Lord, the wellspring of all love
who in your providential plan
have called us to the vocation of married life.
Graciously strengthen our hearts, we pray,
so that, sustained by your heavenly blessing
we may keep faith and please you in all things,
grow in mutual respect and charity,
and come happily to the Sacrament of Marriage.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*)



Acknowledgements

By signing below, we state that we have read this Marriage Preparation Handbook and agree to follow all the policies stated in it.

Signature of Bride: _____
Date:_____

Printed Name: _____

Signature of Groom: _____Date:_____

Printed Name:

_____

Venue Deposit Return:

Recipient Name:

_____

Mailing Address:

_____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____