



St Theresa of Avila Catholic Church

1022 N. Burnside Ave
Gonzales, LA 70737

Wedding Guidelines

Congratulations on your engagement and upcoming marriage! As one of the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church, the Rite of Marriage is a sacred ceremony, expressing and celebrating the faith of the couple being married. Realizing the beauty of the Sacrament and desiring to help couples celebrate this sacrament, the staff and clergy at St Theresa of Avila Catholic Church will help you prepare for the celebration of this Sacrament in your lives.

The following are the basic guidelines that will give a couple a general idea of the requirements here at St. Theresa Church prior to completing the Wedding Application. This list is not all inclusive and a more extensive explanation will be reviewed at the first meeting with the Wedding Coordinator prior to signing the Wedding Contract.

Scheduling

- The Diocese of Baton Rouge requires a minimum of six months of marriage preparation prior to the ceremony; therefore, applications must be submitted eight months prior to the wedding date in order to begin the process in a timely manner.
- Weddings may not be celebrated on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.
- The latest a wedding may start on a Friday is 6:30pm. For Saturday weddings, the latest time would be 10:30am before the Vigil Mass and the earliest time after the Vigil Mass is 6:30pm.
- Weddings are discouraged during the Lenten season, but can be reviewed with the Pastor for exceptions.
- Rehearsals are typically held the night before the wedding, but may be scheduled up to a week prior to the wedding depending on availability. The rehearsal date must be scheduled at the same time the wedding date is scheduled.
- Diocesan guidelines require the wedding ceremony to only be conducted inside the church building.
- The wedding will only be finalized after the Wedding Application has been completed and the clergy member conducting the initial interview has confirmed eligibility.

Fees

- St. Theresa Church does not charge for the administration of sacraments. However, it is proper that a fee be assessed to offset the costs incurred by the church.
- This fee **DOES** include the following:
 - Use of the use of the church (heating, air conditioning, cleaning)
 - Planning meetings and materials
 - The assistance of wedding coordinators in planning and managing the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony.

- This fee **DOES NOT** include the following:
 - Musicians
 - Florists
- The fee for weddings at St Theresa Church is \$450 for registered parishioners and \$650 for non-registered or out of parish couples
- A 50% deposit is required within two weeks of signing the contract.
- The complete balance is due one month prior to the wedding date.

Required Documents

- The Church requires from the Catholic parties a baptismal certificate newly issued within six months prior to the wedding date.
- 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 24 hours, from the Clerk of Court prior to the wedding date. The civil marriage license should be acquired from the civil parish Clerk of Court office where the couple wants the marriage to be recorded.
- Be sure to visit the website of the Clerk of Court office to learn about the fees/documents you must bring to acquire your license. Requirements vary slightly from one civil parish to another. You must bring your marriage license with you to your scheduled rehearsal. After the wedding, the completed license will then be mailed by the church office to the Clerk of Court.

Guest Celebrants:

A priest or deacon not currently assigned to St. Theresa of Avila may preside at your wedding.

In order to do so, the following are required:

- Priests and Deacons currently serving in the Diocese of Baton Rouge are welcome to preside at weddings in St. Theresa of Avila Parish. They are asked to contact the pastor of St. Theresa of Avila in writing to request delegation. Delegation is a requirement and must be requested at the beginning of the marriage preparation process.
- Priests and Deacons of a Diocese other than Baton Rouge or a religious order must contact the pastor of St. Theresa of Avila in writing, to request delegation. Delegation is a requirement and must be requested at the beginning of the marriage preparation process.
- Also, priests and deacons of a Diocese other than Baton Rouge or a religious order must contact the Chancery Office at the Diocese of Baton Rouge to request permission for ministry in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. This is mandatory and must take place at the beginning of the marriage preparation process.
- Note: Any priest or deacon who is scheduled to preside at a wedding at St. Theresa of Avila Church must himself conduct the entire process of marriage preparation with the couple. He is also responsible for sending the completed pre-marriage preparation file to the church office no later than 2 weeks prior to the wedding date.

Preparation

- The couple will be required to complete one of the two diocesan marriage preparation programs (a fee is required for both programs:)
 - The Engaged Encounter Retreat is a diocesan program which begins on Friday evening and concludes with a Mass on Sunday afternoon. Modeled on the highly successful Marriage Encounter Weekend for married couples, this program is recommended for more mature couples who are interested in finding ways to deepen the relationship they have already built.
 - Witness to Love is a virtual diocesan program which begins on Saturday morning at 9 a.m. and ends at 4:30 p.m. and Sunday morning 9a.m to 11:30a.m followed by a pre-recorded Mass. This program is designed to give couples an opportunity to dialogue honestly and openly about their prospective life together.
- A wedding coordinator will be provided by the church (included in the wedding fee) This coordinator will be your main point of contact in planning the details of your wedding as well as facilitating the rehearsal and assisting at the wedding ceremony. No outside coordinators are allowed to preside over the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony.

Wedding party

- The bridal party is allowed a maximum of 16 persons: the bride and groom, eight bridesmaids and groomsmen, including the best man and maid and/or matron of honor. Additionally, children are allowed in the wedding party. However, we asked that they be at least three years old at the time of the wedding and able to walk down the aisle unattended.
- There should be no drinking prior to the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony. No drinking will be allowed in the Church building or property prior to the start of the rehearsal or wedding.
- Please note that gum chewing and food are not allowed anywhere in church. Please dispose of these items before entering the church.

Liturgy

- The wedding coordinator will provide the couple with a list of options for scripture readings and guidelines for prayers of the faithful. These should be decided at least one month prior to the wedding.
- If altar servers and extraordinary ministers of holy communion are desired for the ceremony, those who have served within that ministry in their own parish church may participate in the ceremony. Such trained ministers must be at least of high school age and should be chosen at least one month prior to the wedding. Lectors and gift bearers may participate, whether they are trained or not. All ministers listed must attend the rehearsal if they are to serve during the ceremony.

Music

- All music selected is to be recognized as liturgical music or classical music where appropriate.
- Couples are asked to contract separately for the services of musicians including vocalists, organists and/or instrumentalists. Couples are responsible for financial arrangements with musicians. The wedding coordinator can offer a list of musicians if necessary.
- The wedding coordinator will provide a list of acceptable music choices for the liturgy. Any music requested that is not on the list must be approved by the pastor three months prior to the wedding. These requests must be communicated to the wedding coordinator.

Decorations and flowers

- All church furniture and candles must be kept in place at all times. They may not be moved or altered in any way.
- No flowers are to be placed on the altar (table). No floral arrangement should obstruct the view of the altar or interfere with the ceremony. The pulpit (ambo) and the readers should be clearly visible from all parts of the congregation out of respect for the Liturgy of the Word. No more than two (2) floral arrangements are allowed in the sanctuary. If there are any questions about the placement of the flowers, please consult the wedding coordinator.
- No flowers may be placed in the sanctuary during Lent and Advent.
- Do not use the altar as a worktable. Nothing should be placed on the altar at any time.
- Pew markers must be attached with ribbon or plastic hangers so that they do not scratch or damage the pews. Taping pew markers to the pew ends is not allowed.
- No runners, candles or any other decor may be used in the aisles due to safety concerns.
- No rice, flowers, confetti, glitter, bird seed, bubbles, fireworks, etc. are allowed inside or outside the church for maintenance and liability reasons.
- Unity candles, sand, etc. are not part of the Catholic tradition and are not permitted at St Theresa Church.

Photographers and Videographers

- Photography and videography of the ceremony should be done with extreme sensitivity to the sacredness of the sacrament of marriage. It should never intrude upon the wedding, cause a delay or be a distraction to the assembly.
- Group photos are allowed up to 90 minutes before the wedding and 30 minutes after the ceremony.
- Photographers are not allowed in the raised sanctuary area.
- Photographers and videographers should dress professionally and respectfully. No shorts or jeans are permitted.
- Flash photography is permitted only during the procession, flowers to the Blessed Mother and the recession.
- Photos are only permitted on the steps leading to the altar but no further.
- No furnishings or church decor may be moved for photos.

- Equipment must not block any aisles or passageways.
- The couple is responsible for obtaining signed contracts for the photographer and/or the videographer to be turned into the wedding coordinator at the 3 month out meeting.

Rehearsal

- The rehearsal will be conducted by the St Theresa Wedding Coordinator only.
- The couple should bring the Civil Marriage Certificates to the rehearsal and give them to the Wedding Coordinator.
- The following members of the wedding party are required to attend the rehearsal: bride and groom, anyone participating in the procession (parents, grandparents, bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls, ring bearers), ushers, readers, gift bearers, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Anyone participating in the wedding ceremony who cannot attend the rehearsal must inform the Wedding Coordinator.
- It is important that the rehearsal begins on time and is conducted in a timely manner. Please communicate this to all those attending.

Wedding Day

- At no time are food or beverages to be brought into any part of the Church or anywhere on the church premises.
- Smoking in any of the buildings is not allowed at any time.
- No drink or food is allowed prior to the wedding as you observe the one-hour fast before receiving Holy Communion.
- Ushers are asked to arrive 45 minutes before the scheduled time of the wedding.
- The bride and bridesmaids, the groom and groomsmen, and all in the wedding party are due at the church no later than 30 minutes prior to the wedding.
- Parents who would like to greet their guests should do so outside the front of the building so as to keep the main entryway and aisle free of congestion.
- Limousines or other special transportation vehicles may not block any parking places or the main highway in front of the church.