

**Marriage Policy**  
**St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church**  
**Peoria Heights, Illinois**

Congratulations on your engagement!

**REQUIREMENTS FOR MARRIAGE**

Catholics who seek to be married should be practicing Catholics who regularly attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.

To be married at St. Thomas, at least one of the parties must be a Catholic (1) who is a registered member of this parish, (2) whose parents are registered members of this parish, (3) or who is registered at another Catholic parish, provided that his or her local pastor gives his permission for the marriage to take place at St. Thomas.

**WEDDING PLANNERS**

It has become more common for a couple to hire a wedding planner to assist the couple. A wedding planner is NOT required. If you do not have a wedding planner, you should designate a person who will be responsible for cleaning up after the ceremony. Anything brought into the Church should be removed by your designated person so the Church is left as you found it.

If you have a wedding planner, he or she can assist at the rehearsal, though the rehearsal will be directed by the celebrant. The wedding planner should help line up all persons entering the Church at the beginning of the ceremony. The wedding planner may also guide the placement of decorations, secure the bride's room during the ceremony, direct pictures before or after the wedding, communicate with photographers or videographers for the ceremony, take charge of the marriage license, and distribute the stipends to the celebrant and musicians.

**COST**

There is no fee for parishioners or children of parishioners to be married at St. Thomas. Non-parishioners are asked to pay a rental fee of \$500 for the use of the church.

Couples traditionally offer an honorarium to the priest celebrating the wedding. The amount of the honorarium is left to the couple. If you were prepared for marriage elsewhere by another priest, please also remember the priest who prepared you for marriage.

You should inquire with your musicians about the stipends to be paid to them for their services. The organist or pianist, soloist or cantor, and any other instrumentalists should be offered the agreed upon stipend.

### **INITIAL MEETING WITH THE PRIEST**

Couples who wish to be married at St. Thomas must make an appointment for an initial meeting with one of the parish priests at least eight months before the wedding. A date for a wedding may never be scheduled before this initial meeting

During the initial meeting, the priest will gather the required information about the bride and groom, in order to verify that both are free to marry. The priest will inform you at this meeting of all documents that you are required to supply for your marriage. The priest will also inform you of the requirements of the diocesan program of marriage preparation which are described on the website of the Diocese of Peoria

### **LENGTH OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

Engaged couples generally participate in a program of marriage preparation that lasts between eight and twelve months. Under some circumstances, this time may be shortened but not to less than four months. This period of marriage preparation focuses primarily on preparing engaged couples for a successful lifelong marriage with each other. This marriage preparation focuses secondarily on planning the solemn religious ceremony.

### **PREPARING IN A DIFFERENT PARISH**

If a couple can't meet with the priest who will celebrate the wedding, it may be possible to arrange for marriage preparation through another priest. This might occur because of school, employment, or military obligations.

If a member of St. Thomas plans to complete marriage preparation here for a marriage to be celebrated elsewhere, please contact a priest at least eight months before the wedding. The priest who completes the preparation will send the marriage documents to the church where the wedding will be celebrated. You must follow the local policies for the marriage celebration in the parish where the wedding will take place.

If a Catholic who lives outside of Peoria wishes to marry at St. Thomas, the parish should be contacted at least eight months before the wedding. No wedding date will be scheduled until (1) both the bride and groom meet personally with a priest at St. Thomas or (2) the parish receives information that the couple has met with a priest who has accepted the responsibility of preparing them for marriage. At least one month before the wedding, St. Thomas must receive the completed marriage preparation documents. No marriage will take place unless these documents have been received.

### **WEDDING CEREMONY AND MASS**

The marriage of two Catholics generally takes place within a Mass.

The marriage of a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic generally takes place outside of Mass, as the non-Catholic spouse and the non-Catholic family are not able to receive Communion. If the non-Catholic party consents, the marriage can be celebrated at a Mass.

A marriage between a Catholic and a person who has not received the sacrament of baptism cannot take place during a Mass because of the sacramental nature of the Mass.

#### **TIME FOR THE CEREMONY**

To accommodate the Saturday confession and Mass schedule, weddings are scheduled no later than 2:00 pm on Saturdays. According to the policies of the Diocese of Peoria, weddings are not permitted on Sundays.

Please inquire if you would like to request a wedding on a weekday, such as a Friday evening.

#### **REHEARSAL**

The wedding rehearsal takes place the evening before the wedding at a time mutually agreed upon by the couple and the priest. In addition to the bride and groom, please arrange for the following to be present: the bridesmaids and groomsmen, the flower girl and ring bearer, the ushers, any parents or relatives who are to be seated separately before the ceremony, and the readers. Please arrive early so the rehearsal can start on time. The rehearsal typically lasts 45-60 minutes.

#### **MARRIAGE LICENSE**

Couples must contact the Peoria County Clerk to request a marriage license within 60 days of the wedding ceremony. The Marriage License should be brought to the rehearsal. Even if the couple lives outside of Peoria County, the Peoria County Clerk issues all marriage licenses for weddings celebrated in Peoria Heights.

#### **CONFESSIONS**

Catholics are encouraged to make a good confession before their wedding. The celebrant will generally offer to hear confessions after the rehearsal for anyone who wishes to take advantage of the opportunity.

#### **BRIDESMAIDS' AND GROOMSMEN'S ROOM**

The bride and bridesmaids may use the bridesmaids' room in the chapel basement. The groom and groomsmen may gather in the church basement. According to availability, these rooms may be used on Saturday morning up to the time of the ceremony. Everything in these rooms must be cleaned up by someone designated by the couple immediately after the ceremony.

## **ATTIRE**

The religious nature of the wedding ceremony requires that the gown for the bride and her attendants be modest. Low cut gowns must be avoided.

## **CHOICE OF MUSIC**

The parish organist will discuss your choice of music for the wedding ceremony. Because your marriage is a religious celebration, only sacred music can be used at the ceremony. Other secular music including show tunes and Broadway songs must be reserved to your reception.

Other musicians and cantors from outside the parish may be chosen with the prior approval of the pastor. All music must be reviewed by the parish organist. If a musician is chosen, but no cantor, the couple will need to select a Responsorial Psalm to be read.

No recorded music is allowed. Music must be performed by musicians who are able to respond in real time to the actions of the wedding ceremony.

## **FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS**

Couples may order floral arrangements for placement in front of the altar or pulpit. Additional decoration planned for the sanctuary must be discussed with the pastor before the ceremony.

Decorations along the aisle are permitted if they do not damage the pews and are removed after the ceremony. Experience has demonstrated that aisle runners do not work well in the church and often become as a tripping hazard. Do not plan to use an aisle runner.

Decorations can be put up on Saturday morning unless there is another ceremony to take place in the Church. If a funeral takes place on the morning of the wedding, decorations cannot be put up until the funeral is over.

The use of glitter is absolutely forbidden in the church.

## **UNITY CANDLE**

The unity candle is not a part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage and is not required. Couples who wish to have a unity candle may do so. Please supply two taper candles for the Unity Candle stand.

The use of sand is not permitted during the ceremony.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

You are welcome to make arrangements for still and video photography at the marriage ceremony. The photographer must not distract from the ceremony nor enter the sanctuary. Fixed cameras are not permitted in the sanctuary. Questions may be directed to the pastor.

Pictures may be taken on the steps in front of the altar before the ceremony and for up to 30 minutes after the ceremony. Pictures may also be taken on the grounds outside the parish. Photos must be completed before confessions begin at 4:00 pm.

Under no circumstances is it permitted to rearrange furniture in the church, to enter the sanctuary, or to take pictures in the chapel where parishioners gather for confession.

Because your time for photos after the wedding is limited, please plan to take as many of your pictures as possible before the ceremony.

#### **AFTER THE CEREMONY**

It is not permitted to throw rice, confetti, or bird seed after the wedding. Soap bubbles or flower petals are permitted, though the party is responsible any clean up afterward.

Because of the limited time before Saturday confessions and Mass, the couple may not form a receiving line for guests nor dismiss guests individually from their pews. Guests should be received or greeted by the couple at the reception.

#### **CLEAN UP**

Any candles, aisle runners, flower petals, programs, and any other decorations that have been brought must be removed after the wedding before Confessions at 4:00 pm on Saturday. Floral arrangements may be left in the church for the benefit of the parish. Except for floral arrangements left behind, couples must follow the rule: Leave the church as you found it.

Please make arrangements with someone at your wedding to assist with the clean-up. At the time of the rehearsal, the couple must indicate to the pastor who will be responsible for removing any wedding items from the church after the ceremony.

#### **ALCOHOL**

Alcohol is strictly forbidden on parish property. No alcohol may be consumed prior to the rehearsal or prior to the wedding ceremony. Individuals who violate this policy may be ejected from the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony. Violation of this policy may result in the cancelation of the wedding.

#### **CONTACT US**

For answers to other questions or to begin your marriage preparations, please contact the parish office:

St. Thomas Parish  
904 E Lake Ave  
Peoria Heights, IL 61616  
(309) 688-3446  
[www.stthomaspeoria.org](http://www.stthomaspeoria.org)

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#### **CHECKLIST**

- ☐ Designate someone to remove and clean up any decorations or materials brought in for the wedding.
- ☐ Secure the marriage license from the Peoria County Clerk.
- ☐ Return the Together For Life checklist with your selected readings.