

ST. NICHOLAS AND ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC CHURCHES

Preparation Guidelines
for the
Sacrament of Marriage



FOR THIS REASON
a Man
WILL LEAVE HIS
FATHER AND MOTHER
AND BE UNITED TO
his Wife,
AND THEY WILL
BECOME ONE FLESH.

GENESIS 2:24

Congratulations!

The Catholic Community of Zanesville rejoices with you in your marriage engagement. We are happy to assist you in the preparation of that sacred ritual which consecrates your love and commitment to each other, with God, and in the midst of the community of your family and friends. This booklet is offered as a guide to help you prepare for your wedding at either St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas. It contains the policies and procedures of the Catholic Church in general, and of the Diocese of Columbus, locally, and of our parish community, in particular.



I. Your Wedding in the Community of the Church

In choosing to be married in the Christian faith of the Catholic tradition, you are proclaiming publicly that you desire to live out your marriage commitment in the Church, a community of people dedicated to our Lord Jesus Christ. Your wedding liturgy is an act of worship in praise to God, not only for the love you have found in each other, but also as a point of strength and nourishment as you continue the journey of life together. Further, for Catholics, celebrating marriage under the auspices of the Catholic Church is essentially important for the union to be sacramental in nature.

In order that we, the Church, may share with you the wisdom, teachings, and values of our Faith regarding Christian Marriage, we ask that you spend a minimum of six months in preparation. This preparation period is often referred to as “Pre-Cana,” named after the village of Cana in Galilee, where our Lord Jesus attended a special wedding and, at Mary’s intercession, performed the miracle of changing water into wine.



II. Understanding Marriage - Three Core Principles

“The royal destiny of marriage, which is a community of love as in the Trinity, is to beget something outside itself. The “nuptial chalice” is too small for the love it contains and therefore it must overflow. Since God is in all love, love cannot be limited. It must go on even unto infinity... God communicates His Power of creativity to His subjects. This does not mean that people marry in order to have children; they have children because they are truly in love... In each child God whispers a new secret to the world; adds a new dimension of immortality to creation; and makes the clinging hearts of husband and wife feel a little freer, as they look into that strange and mutual hope which has come to them from God... There is something awesome about a child, for it is the unveiling of love. A great secret has been let out and one stands in supreme awe before it.”
(Fulton J. Sheen, *Three to Get Married*.)

Three Questions are asked by the Church, on the day of your wedding, before you exchange your wedding vows. They comprise a brief synopsis of Marriage, in three keys elements. Essentially, you are being asked if you understand that the Sacrament of Marriage is *more* than just a contract between two people; It is a *covenant*, between the two of you, into which you also invite God, not as a bystander, but as a participant in your love. In order for you to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage, you will need to understand these three questions, and sincerely answer each one in the affirmative (by saying “Yes” or “I have/I am” during the wedding celebration).

1) Have you come here to enter into Marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly?

Freedom. God honors and respects our free will. Saying YES to Marriage means saying YES, not only to an indivisible, exclusive union with your spouse, but also choosing to maintain that YES, *every day* (in good times and in bad).

2) Are you prepared, as you follow the path of Marriage, to love and honor each other, for as long as you both shall live?

Fidelity. Faithfulness is layered with greatness. There is great dedication and great loyalty. There will be great sacrifices and great trials, as well. Being faithful, preserving fidelity, with God's help and strength, is a gift that the two of you mutually give and receive, *every day* (for better and for worse).

3) Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God, and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church?

Fruitfulness. By its very nature, the Sacrament of Marriage is meant to be life-giving and life-affirming. The beautiful sexual embrace between husband and wife is an act of total mutual giving: to each other and to God. In the same way, it is to be an act of total mutual receiving: from each other and from God. This giving and receiving is part of God's amazing plan for Marriage. The love that is shared in the intimate marital embrace is meant to always be open to the possibility of receiving even greater gifts, including the supreme blessing of children. God waits to share the fruitfulness of His love with you, *every day* (whether richer or poorer, in sickness and in health).

III. The Marriage Vows

Priest (or Deacon): "Since it is your intention to enter into the covenant of Holy Matrimony, join your right hands, and declare your consent before God and his Church."

Groom: "I, (name), take you, (name), to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life."

Bride: "I, (name), take you, (name), to be my husband. I promise to be faithful to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life."

One of the ways that the Church expresses the unity of all believers is through the unity of the liturgy (in this case, the wedding), especially in its essential parts (cf. Catechism #813, #815). In other words, it would become hard to recognize the unity of the Church if everyone started using different words for the most important parts of the liturgy. By using the vows provided by the Church, the couple is acknowledging that they are part of something larger than themselves. The wedding unites them not only with one another, but with the whole Body of Christ, the Church.

The mutual consent of the bride and groom to be married to one another is what brings about the grace of the Sacrament (cf. Catechism #1623-1640). The words that express that consent should reflect the sacredness of the moment, which the Church ensures by providing the wording for the vows, for every wedding.

Because consent is what makes the marriage, it is important for everyone to be clear that the bride and groom have actually declared their mutual consent. If the vows aren't clear about that—or if they contain wording that might be interpreted as placing conditions or limits on the marriage—then the validity of the marriage becomes questionable.

Therefore, the Church provides these specific vows, which are simple, clear, precise, and beautiful. You do not need to memorize them; They are shared here for your reflection and your prayerful preparation, in anticipation of the moment when you will share them with each other, on your wedding day!

IV. Answers to Common Questions

What is the first step in planning your marriage?

It is most prudent to begin this Pre-Cana process by contacting the parish office as soon as possible after your engagement. Once you have read through this booklet, please contact one of the parish offices (see section ***XI. Contact Info***, page 22) to schedule a preliminary meeting, at which time you may be able to schedule the official date for your wedding.

What if one of us has been married before?

With regard to marriage, Jesus said, “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder,” (Mt 19:6). Therefore, if either of you have ever been married before (whether in a civil ceremony or in a religious context, of any denomination), an annulment needs to be obtained, through a diocesan court, in order to be married in the Catholic Church. A civil “decree of divorce” (or civil “decree of annulment”) are both different from an ecclesial (church) annulment. An annulment through the Catholic Church examines whether or not a deficiency in consent (and/or capacity) kept the indissoluble bond of sacramental marriage from ever existing in the first place. Since the annulment process can take up to one year to complete, a wedding date may only be set **after** the annulment process is complete. Please address this with the pastor/deacon *at your first meeting*.

Who may be married at St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas?

Weddings at St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas are permitted those belonging to one of the three following groups (**A**, **B**, or **C**):

- A)** All ***registered**** parishioners of either parish (must be registered at least one year prior to the first marriage preparation appointment) who are ***actively practicing***** their Catholic faith, at St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas.

*The term “***registered***” means that at least one of you is:

- ☐ officially registered (under your own name, and not as a child under your parents’ registration) and thus are listed on the roster of parish membership at either St. Nicholas Parish or St. Thomas Aquinas Parish;

The term “*actively practicing***” means that at least one of you is:

- ☐ a Catholic who has received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, and Holy Eucharist;
- ☐ attending Sunday Mass and Holy Days regularly;
- ☐ supporting your parish through the giving of your time, talent, and/or treasure;
- ☐ receiving regular communications from the parish.

or...

B) Those with strong family/historic connections to either parish, who have family who are *still currently* **registered*** and **actively practicing**** in either parish. The couple, themselves, are also required to be **registered*** in a Catholic parish in their own current locale, and **actively practicing**** their Catholic faith, in their local Catholic parish of registration***.

*The term “**registered**” means that at least one of you is:

☐ officially registered (under your own name, and not as a child under your parents’ registration) and thus are listed on the roster of parish membership at the Catholic parish in your current home locale (if it is not Zanesville);

The term “actively practicing**” means that at least one of you is:

☐ a Catholic who has received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, and Holy Eucharist;
☐ attending Sunday Mass and Holy Days regularly;
☐ supporting your parish through the giving of your time, talent, and/or treasure;
☐ receiving regular communications from the parish.

*****In this case, you will need to acquire a “letter of good standing” from the current pastor of the Catholic parish in which you are registered and actively participating.**

or...

C) A couple who are parishioners at another Catholic parish, who are **registered*** in that Catholic parish in their current locale and who are **actively practicing**** their Catholic faith, in their local Catholic parish of registration***. (Please see **Appendix 6** for further information regarding a **Visitor Fee.**)

*The term “**registered**” means that at least one of you is:

☐ officially registered (under your own name, and not as a child under your parents’ registration) and thus are listed on the roster of parish membership at the Catholic parish in your current home locale (if it is not Zanesville);

******The term “*actively practicing*” means that at least one of you is:

- ☐ a Catholic who has received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, and Holy Eucharist;
- ☐ attending Sunday Mass and Holy Days regularly;
- ☐ supporting your parish through the giving of your time, talent, and/or treasure;
- ☐ receiving regular communications from the parish.

*********In this case, you will need to acquire a “letter of good standing” from the current pastor of the Catholic parish in which you are registered and actively participating.**

Who will preside at your wedding?

Typically, only a priest/deacon currently assigned at St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas presides at weddings in the parish. Exceptions may be made for other Catholic priests/deacons to preside at your wedding who are: pastors of your current parish of registration (if it is not St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas), brothers, uncles, cousins, or close family friends of the bride or groom. Permission of the current pastor of St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas must be sought out, at least one month *prior to* your wedding. More distant relatives/friends of the family, who are the pastors/ministers of non-Catholics, are welcome to join in the celebration, in an auxiliary capacity, provided they contact and make arrangements with the pastor, at least one month *prior to* the wedding.

What is typically involved in marriage preparation?

The priest/deacon will meet with you four to five times, to get to know you as a couple, and to discuss the Sacrament of Marriage. The following is our standard series for marriage preparation:

1) Initial meeting with the priest/deacon:

- Informal discussion regarding your relationship, background, family, friendships, freedom to marry, etc.
- Preliminary **Couples’ Survey** – provided for your subsequent completion, done as a project together

- ▶ Online link to **Dynamic Catholic *Better Together* online inventory** – a tool to help you both ascertain thoughts and feelings about issues fundamental to a healthy marriage (provided by the priest/deacon)
- ▶ Planning your attendance at a Catholic PRE-CANA RETREAT
- ▶ Reviewing all necessary civil and ecclesial (church) forms
- ▶ Opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have

2) Review of the **Couples' Survey** and the ***Better Together* inventory**

3) Attend a PRE-CANA RETREAT (Day/Weekend)

4) Planning of wedding ceremony, music, readings, etc.

Is there an initial procedure in arranging for marriage preparation?

As mentioned above, it is best to contact the pastor at least six months before you plan to get married, as your schedule will most likely fill very quickly once you are engaged. Also, it is parish policy that marriage preparation appointments be arranged by the engaged couple, themselves (rather than parents/family of the couple). Should you be coming from another Catholic parish to be married here, please contact your local parish to learn what they offer in terms of marriage preparation. (When you reside out of town, it is most practical that you arrange for marriage preparation at your nearest Catholic parish. Should this be the case, please be sure to contact the priest/deacon who will be presiding at your wedding, to inform him of your Marriage Preparation, in your local parish.)

May we prepare for marriage here at St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas, while planning to be married at a different Catholic church?

If you are currently attending one of the Zanesville Catholic parishes for Mass, the pastor, or a parochial vicar, will be happy to aid you in preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage, according to the policies of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus. You should, however, ask the priest who is to preside at your wedding to contact the priest preparing you here, as the Marriage Preparation process begins.

Is there a standard day and time when weddings are celebrated?

All weddings are celebrated only on **Saturdays**, by the pastor (or a delegated Catholic priest/deacon), at either **11:30am** or **1:30pm**. Due to our regular weekend liturgical schedule, and other parish activities, these two options are **DEFINITELY FIXED**. Also, to ensure that your wedding is both unique and unhurried, it is our policy to schedule only one wedding per available Saturday.

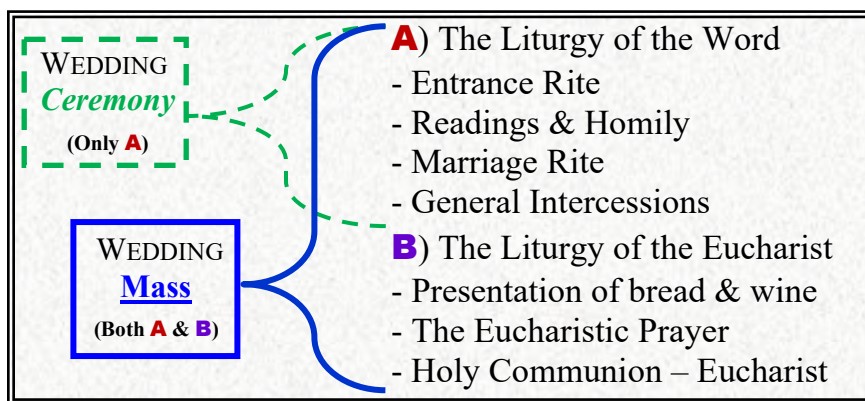
***V. The Wedding Liturgy:
Worship with the Church***

Your wedding celebrated in the sacred space of the parish church

Wedding liturgies are celebrated inside one of our parish churches, where it never rains or freezes; where it is neither stifling hot, nor infested with insects, etc. It is precisely *because* the Church respects and honors your relationship and life-long commitment, that we celebrate all Catholic weddings within a church building. It is within a parish church that our local Catholic community gathers, naturally and consistently, to worship the Lord and experience His love in Word and in Sacrament. It is also within the parish church where a spiritual sense of the sacred will undoubtedly permeate your special wedding day. For these reasons, it is not the policy of the Diocese of Columbus to allow Catholic weddings in locations other than our parish churches.

Celebrating your Wedding: Wedding Mass or Wedding Ceremony?

Should you celebrate your marriage with a Wedding Mass or as a Wedding Ceremony? Please consider the accompanying table and the following explanations to help you determine a properly fitting wedding liturgy:



A **Wedding Mass** is solely encouraged when *both* the bride and groom are actively practicing Catholics. The Wedding Mass includes the Liturgy of the Word, the Marriage Rite, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Since the Eucharist is the *Source and Summit* of our Catholic faith, sharing together in Holy Communion within a Wedding Mass is a further witness to a Catholic couple's mutual faith in the Eucharistic Presence of Christ Jesus. It reveals their clear commitment, with and through each other, to the Lord and their shared Catholic beliefs.

A **Wedding Ceremony** offers the couple a perfect option if one of them is not Catholic. The Wedding Ceremony combines the Liturgy of the Word and the Marriage Rite, but *ends before the Liturgy of the Eucharist would begin* in a Wedding Mass. Truthfully, it becomes awkward for a couple, if only one of them is able to receive Holy Communion as a Catholic, and the non-Catholic is unable to do the same. This situation becomes further magnified and difficult when only the Catholics attending a Wedding Mass are able to come forward to receive the Eucharist*.

* By way of explanation, the Catholic Church is not trying to be “elitist” or “restrictive” when we are unable to offer the Eucharist to our non-Catholic brothers and sisters. In reality, we pray for that day when *all will be one* within Christ. Until that day, however, it is disingenuous and artificial for a non-Catholic to receive Holy Communion, when he/she does not profess the same faith of the

Catholic Community, or share in the common & essential beliefs of the Catholic Faith. **Whenever a person receives the Eucharist at Mass, they are professing and affirming their sincere belief in all that the Lord Jesus did and taught, as proclaimed by the Catholic Church, since the time of Christ and His Apostles.**

The clergy preparing you for Marriage will discuss these options (**Wedding [Mass](#)** or **Wedding [Ceremony](#)**) with you, and help you to make an informed and appropriate decision. Be assured, though, that whichever liturgy you choose, your wedding will highlight and magnify your love for each other, and for God, and will be both holy and wonderful.

Your wedding celebrated in a different faith tradition

When a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, it may be desirable for the marriage ceremony to occur in a place other than the Catholic party's parish church. For example, at one point, it was a common tradition that the wedding typically took place in the church of the bride. If she was a Protestant, she may have wished to have the ceremony in her own church and faith tradition. The Catholic Church recognizes and truly appreciates these faithful sentiments, and so does not wish to hinder such a celebration. Thus, according to Catholic Church norms, a Catholic may marry a non-Catholic in such a ceremony and setting, provided the following arrangements have been made:

- 1) The couple takes part in a Marriage Preparation program, with the pastor/deacon of the Catholic party. This provides an opportunity for the couple to grow in mutual understanding: of each other, their relationship, and their faiths.
- 2) The couple applies (with the aid of the pastor/deacon) for a "Dispensation to Marry outside of Canonical Form" and/or a "Dispensation for a Mixed-Faith Marriage." These special considerations are secured through the local Catholic bishop, who has the ultimate pastoral authority for the Catholic party in a diocese. These dispensations will be sought as a natural part of the Marriage Preparation process, with the guidance of the priest/deacon.

§

VI. The Wedding Liturgy: Roles & Devotions

A) Musicians

Musicians serve a key role within the liturgy, in both providing for specific parts of the liturgy, and in helping to lead the assembly in participation. Please contact the Music Director of the church in which you will be married, at least three months prior to your wedding, to discuss and choose music for your wedding. (Please see section ***XI. Contact Info***, page 22). Because it is a ministry that requires particular skill and experience, only cantors (song leaders) and accompanists *familiar with the Catholic liturgy* are permitted. Finally, it is our policy that only sacred, **liturgical** music – as provided in the hymnals/resources of the parish – be used in the wedding liturgy. You may check with the Music Director for a listing of classic, timeless wedding hymns that will add both solemnity and splendor to your celebration.

B) Readers (Lectors)

These ministers perform a crucial role of proclaiming God's Word in the Scriptures, during the wedding liturgy (whether it is a [Mass](#) or it is a *Ceremony*). Most couples prefer to choose readers from among their family and friends. You may select one (or two) individuals to proclaim the chosen readings for your wedding liturgy*. It is best to select people who have experience as Readers in their own parish. You might encourage them to attend your wedding rehearsal, as well, to get a feel for the reading/s, the sound system, the space of the parish church, etc. *Please note: only the priest/deacon will proclaim the Gospel reading.

C) Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Only necessary with a Wedding [Mass](#), this individual may help the priest in distributing the Eucharist (that is, the Consecrated Host) to all actively practicing Catholics in attendance at your wedding, at

Holy Communion. Typically, you may choose one actively practicing Catholic, who *already has experience* in this ministry within his/her own parish.

D) Gift Bearers

Also necessary only for a Wedding [Mass](#), at least two people may be chosen, from among your assembled family and friends, to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine at the Offertory. While only bread and wine are brought forward, you may invite *up to four* people to walk in this procession.

E) Altar Servers (Acolytes)

A further consideration for a Wedding [Mass](#), you have the option to ask *up to two* of your friends or family members, who are *already trained* as altar servers in their own parish, to assist the priest/deacon with the wedding liturgy. In the Diocese of Columbus, altar servers may be either male or female.

F) Wedding Planners/Consultants

The Pastor of St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas (and his appointed Wedding Assistants) provides all necessary guidance and direction for wedding liturgies. With your desires and feelings in mind, he will make the final pastoral decisions governing the liturgy. Professional wedding planners/consultants may be quite helpful to you in many other ways, but you will not need their assistance within the parish church.

G) Unity Candle Lighting/Sand Mixing/Stone Blending

Diocesan policy does not permit the use of additional/atypical symbols from outside of the liturgy. The customary items used in the wedding liturgy have a rich and beautiful tradition, dating back centuries, each with its own long-established significance and theological eloquence. To incorporate any further symbols or adaptations can lead to conflicts of symbolism, confused purposes, and awkward misunderstandings. With these considerations in mind, then, a more appropriate setting for these types of expressive gestures would be your wedding *reception*.

H) Flowers to Mary

Offering flowers to Mary was a custom that went back to a time when many Catholic single women belonged to the Sodality (devotional fellowship) of Mary. When a woman married, she would then formally withdraw from the Sodality. The offering of flowers represented the woman's appreciation for the time and blessings enjoyed in that special association with Mary. If the bride-to-be does have a special devotion to the Blessed Mother, and the presentation of flowers is important to her, she is encouraged to set about this reverent offering, in a quiet and personal moment, at the end of the wedding *rehearsal*.

I) Pew Dismissal and/or Receiving Line

When a receiving line is formed at the church, immediately following the wedding, it causes undue delays in making the church available for other ensuing sacramental functions. This premise also applies to couples "dismissing" their guests, pew by pew, following the wedding. Therefore, it is our policy to allow your wedding guests to exit the church in the usual way, and to have your receiving line – and special moments of visiting – at your wedding *reception*, where you may greet your guests, at your leisure.



VII. The Wedding Day: Before & After

A) Rehearsal

The rehearsal time should be scheduled with the priest/deacon at the same meeting in which your wedding date is set. The rehearsal is usually scheduled for the afternoon or evening before the wedding day (typically at 5:30pm). The bride, groom, and wedding party will have a formal "walk through" of the liturgy, so that everyone is familiar and comfortable with the ritual. Please plan at least an hour for your rehearsal. Punctuality and appropriate attire are appreciated.

B) Alcohol, Drugs, or Tobacco Use

Alcohol or illicit drug use are not permitted on any parish church property. Likewise, the use of tobacco products is discouraged. Please be sure your guests understand and respect this rule. Drinking before the wedding is never a good idea. Inebriation, intoxication, or illicit chemical influence, inhibits a bride's/groom's ability to make a true and lasting promise of commitment, which is essential for a marriage to be considered legal and valid. Thus, if the bride and/or groom are either: 1) actively intoxicated, or 2) "recovering" from such intoxication: then the wedding *must be (and will be) postponed* to another date. Also, should a member of the wedding party be in this condition, they will not be able to join you, in any official capacity, at the altar or in the sanctuary. We ask that you please save your responsible celebrating for the wedding *reception!*

C) After the Wedding

To ensure that nothing is left in the church, you are encouraged to (please!) assign someone the responsibility of collecting all of your belongings after the wedding (i.e. shoes, socks, jackets, bags, boxes, etc.). Our parish sincerely appreciates your assistance in leaving the church as clean and orderly as it was for you, before your wedding!

D) Public Restrooms

St. Nicholas: the restroom is located in the hallway that leads south from the vestibule (entryway) of the church, just past the elevator.
St. Thomas Aquinas: the restroom is located in the south vestibule, accessible by the doorway nearest to the Confessional.



VIII. Flowers, Decorations, & Photography

A) Flowers

You may hire any florist you wish, but we recommend the florists listed in **Appendix 1**, who are familiar with our parish church. Please be respectful of the sacred nature of the sanctuary, and refrain from putting any flowers *on* the main altar of sacrifice, around the tabernacle, or on the ambo (pulpit). Instead, you may place flowers *in front of* the altar, or *in front of* the ambo. All liturgical items previously set in the church (such as the Advent wreaths, the Easter candle, etc.) may not be moved. During festive seasons, especially during Christmas and Easter, your floral decorations will be a wonderful *complement* to the decorations and arrangements already in place for our regular parish celebrations. The parish would also gratefully accept your wedding flowers as a kind gesture/donation, and would appreciate that they remain there after your wedding, as a testament to your celebration, at our subsequent weekend Masses. You may have your florist deliver your flower arrangements at the wedding rehearsal, or on the day of your wedding. The church will be unlocked and open at least a half-hour before your wedding rehearsal, and at least one hour prior to your wedding.

Also: Flower petals may be tossed by a flower girl, if you wish, but must be collected and discarded after the wedding.

PLEASE NOTE: See **Appendix 4** for a list of flowers/plants to which the pastor is highly allergic. Pollen dispersed by any of these flowers/plants within the church is likely to cause an allergic reaction, resulting in the wedding being delayed or rescheduled.

B) Decorations

Tasteful and elegant decorations, which do not distract from the wedding liturgy, are certainly welcome. If you would like bows or ribbons for the main aisle, they may be attached to the pews using *only* elastic bands, string, or filament. Tacks, nails, staples, tape, and other adhesives are all items that mar the finish and woodwork of our pews, and are therefore prohibited (and, if used, will be removed prior

to the wedding). Also, pew candle stands are not permitted, due to their inherent fire hazard. Aisle runners are also prohibited, since their tendency to abruptly slip can cause injury. You may place your decorations in the church directly before or directly following the wedding rehearsal. Church furnishings, fixtures, and appointments may not be moved. Your respectful treatment of the church and the altar sanctuary are appreciated.

C) Photographers/Videographers

Photographers and videographers are welcome to film the wedding, provided that they do not intrude upon, disrupt, or distract from the liturgical prayer and sacred nature of the liturgy. They should check-in with the priest/deacon at least thirty minutes prior to the wedding. Whether expert or amateur, they are to act and dress professionally, and are expected to respect the reverent tone and solemn tenor of the wedding. **Flash photography and external lighting are not permitted during the wedding, except during the processional entrance and the recessional exit of the wedding party and the couple.** Photographers should complete their work within thirty minutes, both before and after the wedding. Once the processional entrance is complete, photographers may *discreetly use the side aisles* of the church, but they are *not to use the main aisle, until* the recessional exit begins. The sanctuary (which begins at the bottom of the steps in front of the altar) is not to be entered by photographers/videographers during the wedding. All camera shutter chirps/clicks are to be muted for the entirety of the wedding. For video, only stationary cameras may be used. It is the couple's responsibility to share the above information with their photographers/videographers. Should any of the above listed (or similar) distractions become an issue/disruption during the wedding, the priest/deacon *will pause the liturgy*, until the problem is resolved. Please note that non-compliance may result in the photographer/videographer being directed to leave the premises. (Please see **Appendix 5** and be sure to provide a copy of it to your photographer/videographer.)

§

IX. Offerings & Gifts

A) Musicians

Should you request the talents of a musician (cantor, soloist, instrumentalist, pianist, organist, etc.) for your wedding, a customary stipend for each one is normally \$200.

B) Altar Servers

These two young ladies and/or gentlemen are generally presented with a gift of \$25.00, in appreciation for their service.

C) Wedding Assistants

This kind group of ladies of the parish will be present at your Wedding Rehearsal *and* at your Wedding, *working on behalf of the Pastor*, to assist you with arranging your wedding attendants, directing guests, and offering help with the flow and decorum of your wedding. A gift of \$100.00 is a kind gesture, for the “behind the scenes,” but important role they play in assisting you and the Pastor.

D) Presider – Priest or Deacon

Since many couples find it awkward to inquire about offering the clergy a stipend, the following is respectfully provided: A customary offering (which is appreciated, but not expected) for the presiding priest/deacon is \$200 - \$250, but any gift truly is appreciated.

Remember: you are *not* “paying for” the Sacrament of Marriage, but instead, simply offering the clergy a “thank you!”

§

X. Documentation

A) Civil Marriage License:

BY LAW, the parish must have the marriage license ***in its possession before a wedding may occur***. Ohio residents are to obtain a marriage license within the county where either one of the applicants resides. Once obtained, the license is valid anywhere in the State of Ohio. You can apply, in person, at your local county courthouse, although some counties do offer website options. The Muskingum County Probate Court – Marriage Department is located at 401 Main Street 1st floor, Zanesville, Ohio 43701. The hours are 8:30am – 4:15pm, Mon – Fri. The fee for the license is \$60.00, and is payable in cash only. The license is valid for 60 days from its date of issuance.

B) Diocesan Requirements:

(i.e., the current year)

1a) For a Catholic:

Please call the Catholic parish in which you were baptized and request the following: “**A currently-dated Baptismal Certificate with notations.**” This will have the signature of the current pastor, and the parish seal embossed/imprinted into the certificate. Please have them send it to the church in which you will be married. (Please see section ***XI. Contact Info***, page 22)

Please note: **Your original Baptismal Certificate (or a copy of it) does not meet this requirement**, since it: 1) Does not have the *notations* of the other Sacraments which you have received; and 2) Does not have the current year noted on it. ★

1b) For a non-Catholic Christian:

A legible copy of your Baptismal Certificate, with the date of your baptism, the place/location, and the identification of the Christian church/denomination in which you were baptized. Please give this to the priest/deacon preparing you for Marriage.

2) A Certificate from a PRE-MARRIAGE RETREAT offered by a local parish, or through the Diocese of Columbus. The following are some potential options:

- a) *Pre-Cana Day of Reflection* – One day spent together from 8:30am – 4:00pm, at a guided retreat, at a local Catholic parish or institution. Concise presentations are offered by Catholic married couples on the issues of marriage, intimacy, faith and family. The cost for this day of reflection is typically around \$175. For more information, contact the Marriage & Family Life Office of the Diocese of Columbus: (614) 241-2560.
<https://columbuscatholic.org/marriage-and-family-life-office>
- b) *Catholic Engaged Encounter* – A weekend away to concentrate, without distraction, on your relationship, covering important topics for your future married life. Engaged couples reflect on and discuss – with each other – the subjects presented by married couples. It begins Friday evening and concludes Sunday afternoon with Mass. Meals and lodging are included in the cost of registration, which is \$225. Contact the Marriage & Family Life Office of the Diocese of Columbus: (614) 241-2560, for more information, or visit their website: <https://columbuscatholic.org/marriage-and-family-life-office>
- 3) For your information: Presentations about Natural Family Planning (NFP) offer understandable and practical Catholic teaching regarding marital intimacy, that is both open to life and mutually fulfilling for the couple. These presentations are given by married couples, who practice NFP themselves. For further information, please call the Marriage & Family Life Office of the Diocese of Columbus: (614) 241-2560, for more information, or visit their website: <https://columbuscatholic.org/marriage-and-family-life-office>; or you may also contact the Couple-to-Couple League on the web: www.ccli.org.

C) Parish Registration:

- 1) Be sure to *register as a new family* at the church where you plan to attend Mass and raise your family. Even if you have previously been registered in that same parish, as a child listed under your parents’

registration, or even as a single person, it is important to **register as a family, once you have been married.**

2) If either St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas is the parish where you plan to come for Mass and practice your faith, that's great! You can simply stop by the parish office, and ask our staff for a registration form.



XI. Contact Information

Parishes: St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas
Catholic Churches

Pastor: Father David J. Young

Parochial Vicar: Father Chris Tuttle

Parochial Vicar: Father Donald Abii

Director of Music, St. Thomas Aquinas: Christopher Urbiel

Director of Music, St. Nicholas: David Gentil

Office Hours: St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas
Monday – Thursday: 9:00am – 3:00pm
Friday: Closed

Phone: 740-453-3301

Parish Websites: www.stnickparish.org
www.saintthomaszanesville.org

Declaration of Agreement

By officially setting a date with the parish for your wedding, you thereby knowingly and willingly affirm the following:

- That you have read, understood, and agree to abide by the rules and guidelines, as presented herein.
- That you understand these regulations and directives are non-negotiable, and are provided for the benefit of all parties involved.
- That you are responsible for sharing the relevant regulations, as outlined above, with the appropriate parties. (Photographers, videographers, etc.)
- That you recognize that the pastor of this parish (or delegated priest/deacon) has the responsibility and authority to assure both the civil legitimacy *and* the sacramental validity of Catholic weddings, within his pastoral jurisdiction.
- That you assent to the discretion and judgment of the pastor (or his delegated priest/deacon), in adherence to Catholic doctrine and Diocesan policy, involving matters or issues (whether liturgical or sacramental) relating to your wedding celebration, at either St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Churches.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Local Florists

Appendix 2: Sacred Scripture Selections

Appendix 3: Sample Wedding Program

Appendix 4: Restricted Flowers/Plants

Appendix 5: Photography Guidelines

(Detach and give to photographer/videographer.)

Appendix 6: Subsidiary Fee for Non-Parishioners
of St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas

Appendix 1: Local Florists

- I) *Ford's Flowers*
1345 Maple Ave.
Zanesville, OH 43701
(740) 453-0378
<https://fordsroses.com>
- II) *Imlay Florists*
54 N 5th St,
Zanesville, OH 43701
(740) 452-5496
<https://www.imlayflorists.com>
- III) *Florafino's Flowers & Gifts*
1416 Maple Ave.
Zanesville, OH 43701
(740) 452-8285
<https://www.florafinos.com>

Appendix 2: Sacred Scriptures Selections

Using this specialized collection of Scripture options, compiled for wedding liturgies, (or other Scripture selections you may have chosen) please make one selection from each group, and inform the presider of your choices. All readings are to be taken from the *New American Bible - Revise Edition* (the English translation used in all Catholic liturgies in the United States.)

+ Visit www.foryourmarriage.org to read any/all of these. +

I) *Old Testament Readings:*

- ☐ a) Genesis 1:26-28, 31
- ☐ b) Genesis 2:18-24
- ☐ c) Genesis 22:1-18, 21-25
- ☐ d) Tobit 7:9-10, 11-15
- ☐ e) Tobit 8:5-7
- ☐ f) Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16; 8:6-7
- ☐ g) Sirach 26:1-4, 13-16
- ☐ h) Jeremiah 31:31-32, 33-34

II) *Responsorial Psalms:*

- ☐ a) Psalm 33:12, 18, 20-21, 22
- ☐ b) Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9
- ☐ c) Psalm 103:1-2, 8, 13, 17-18
- ☐ d) Psalm 112:1-2, 3-4, 5-7, 7-8, 9
- ☐ e) Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5
- ☐ f) Psalm 145:8-9, 10, 15, 17-18
- ☐ g) Psalm 148:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12, 12-14

III) *New Testament Readings:*

- ☐ a) Romans 8:31-35, 37-39
- ☐ b) Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 (or 9-13)
- ☐ c) 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20
- ☐ d) 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8
- ☐ e) Ephesians 5:2, 21-33 (or 25-32)
- ☐ f) Colossians 3:12-17
- ☐ g) 1 Peter 3:1-9
- ☐ h) 1 John 3:18-24
- ☐ i) 1 John 4:7-12
- ☐ j) Revelation 19:1, 5-9

IV) *Holy Gospel Readings:*

- ☐ a) Matthew 5:1-12
- ☐ b) Matthew 5:13-16
- ☐ c) Matthew 7:21, 24-29 (or 24-25)
- ☐ d) Matthew 19:3-6
- ☐ e) Matthew 22:35-40
- ☐ f) Mark 10:6-9
- ☐ g) John 2:1-11
- ☐ h) John 15:9-12
- ☐ i) John 15:12-16
- ☐ j) John 17:20-26 (or 20-23)



Appendix 3: Sample Wedding Program

(*Sample*: PAGE ONE)



United in Marriage
and
Joined in Love



The Wedding [*Mass or Ceremony*]
Uniting

[*Enter Bride's maiden name*]
&
[*Enter Groom's name*]

Saturday, the [*Enter day*] of [*Enter month*],
two thousand [*Enter year*]
[*Enter Church Name*] Catholic Church

(*Sample*: PAGE TWO)

Wedding [*Mass or Ceremony*]

Prelude [Enter hymn/song selection(s) here]

Procession [Enter hymn/song selection here]

Opening Prayer

Old Testament Reading [Book, Chapter: Verses]
[Enter name of Reader here]

Responsorial Psalm “[Enter the Refrain of Psalm here]”

New Testament Reading [Book, Chapter: Verses]
[Enter name of Reader here]

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel [Book, Chapter: Verses]

Homily [Enter name of Presider here]

Exchange of Vows

Blessing & Exchange of Rings

Prayers of the Faithful

Presentation of the Gifts [Enter Hymn selection here]

Holy Communion [Enter Hymn selection here]

Nuptial Blessing

Recessional [Enter Hymn selection(s) here]

[Please note: Boxed section above is included only for a Wedding **Mass**]

(*Sample*: PAGE THREE)

Parents

[*Enter Bride's Parents' names here*]

[*Enter Groom's Parents' names here*]

The Wedding Party

Maid/Matron of Honor

Enter her name here

Friend/Relative of bride

Best Man

Enter his name here

Friend/Relative of groom

Bridesmaids

Name of *Bride's Friend/Relative*

Association w/ bride

Name of *Bride's Friend/Relative*

Association w/ bride

Name of *Bride's Friend/Relative*

Association w/ bride

Name of *Bride's Friend/Relative*

Association w/ bride

Groomsmen

Name of *Groom's Friend/Relative*

Association w/ groom

Name of *Groom's Friend/Relative*

Association w/ groom

Name of *Groom's Friend/Relative*

Association w/ groom

Name of *Groom's Friend/Relative*

Association w/ groom

Presider

(*Enter Name(s) of Clergy members here*)

Musicians

(*Enter Name(s) of Musicians here*)

(Sample: PAGE FOUR)

[Enter a word of thanks and appreciation here, for example:]

"The bride and groom would like to thank all those that have come to witness & share in this celebration. Your prayers and attendance make this day all the more special."

§

Appendix 4: Restricted Flowers/Plants (at the Altar)

Since the pollen of the *Asteraceae* family of flowering plants causes severe allergic reactions for some of our clergy, please refrain from decorating the altar steps and sanctuary area with any of the following:



Aster
Calendula
Chamomile
Chrysanthemum
Daisy (all types)
Dandelion
Goldenrod
Grasses (all types)
Marigold
Mum
Ragweed
Sunflower
Zinnia



§

Appendix 5: Photography Guidelines

Guidelines for Photography/Videography

(Please detach and give these pages to your
photographers/videographers.)

Thank you for helping to capture this very special occasion for the couple being wed. We appreciate the distinct service you provide, and we also understand that this is your livelihood. We welcome your presence and your expertise. In order to maintain the beauty and solemn dignity of the wedding liturgy, we ask that you observe the following guidelines. Should you have any questions or concerns, please discuss these with the presiding priest/deacon, from our parish, prior to the wedding.

- Please respect the holiness of the church and the wedding liturgy.
- Please be attentive and use professional discretion, to avoid any kind of intrusion, disruption, or distraction from the liturgical prayer and sacred nature of the ceremony.
- Please check-in with the priest/deacon at least thirty minutes prior to the ceremony.
- Whether you are an expert or an amateur, we ask that your behavior, demeanor, and attire be professional.
- We expect that all camera shutter sounds/beeps/clicks will be muted for the entirety of the wedding.

(continued ►)

- For video recording, only stationary cameras may be used.
- Flash photography and external lighting are not permitted during the liturgy, *except* during the processional entrance and the recessional exit of the wedding party and couple.
- Once the processional entrance is complete, photographers may *discreetly use the side aisles* of the church, but are *not to use the main aisle*, until the recessional exit begins.
- Please do not enter the sanctuary (which begins at the bottom of the steps in front of the altar) during the wedding.
- Please plan to complete your work within thirty minutes, before and after the wedding.

• Please note: Should any of the above listed (or similar) distractions become an issue/disruption during the wedding, the priest/deacon *will pause the liturgy*, until the problem is resolved. It should be further noted that noncompliance may result in the photographers/videographers being directed to leave the premises. (Unfortunately, there have been past instances, involving willful negligence - and outright offensive behavior - which have necessitated this exhortation. Please understand, though: We would much rather work *with* you, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation!)

Appendix 6: Visitor Fee for Non-Parishioners of St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas

Both of our parish churches are beloved structures in our faith community, and long-established, sacred homes for our liturgy and worship together. There is significant cost in maintenance and upkeep for these beautiful - but aging - buildings. For this reason, non-parishioners of St. Nicholas or St. Thomas Aquinas are assessed a **Visitor Fee of \$1,500** toward our continuing efforts to keep our church structures safe, solid, and sound, for years of weddings to come.

This fee is to be paid upfront, on the day that the date of your wedding is officially added to the parish schedule. A check may be written payable to the parish in which you are being married: St. Nicholas Parish or St. Thomas Aquinas Parish.

Since registered, active parishioners of St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas already contribute to the continual and crucial maintenance of our churches, through their weekly offertory gifts, and other generous donations, the **Visitor Fee** is waived for registered, actively practicing members of St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas.



Contact Information

Parishes: St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas
Catholic Churches

Pastor: Father David J. Young

Parochial Vicar: Father Chris Tuttle

Parochial Vicar: Father Donald Abii

Director of Music, St. Thomas Aquinas: Christopher Urbiel

Director of Music, St. Nicholas: David Gentil

Office Hours: St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas
Monday – Thursday: 9:00am – 3:00pm
Friday: Closed

Phone: 740-453-3301

Parish Websites: www.stnickparish.org
www.saintthomaszanesville.org

Revised: September 2026
Fr. David J. Young, Pastor