

# ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH EDMONTON, AB



## WEDDING GUIDELINES

*Updated February 2026*

Wedding Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_



# GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS

ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH  
210 HADDOW CLOSE  
EDMONTON, AB  
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## **PREPARING YOUR WEDDING**

This booklet has been prepared to help you plan your wedding celebration at St. Thomas More. We believe that adequate preparation will facilitate your growth in love for God and for each other throughout your married life. We are here to assist you in making your marriage celebration a happy and memorable occasion. If you have further questions please feel free to contact the parish office.

Normally a couple should contact a priest at least six (6) months before any proposed date of marriage. The priest will want to discuss your readiness for Christian marriage, preparation for marriage courses, the documents required for marriage, and the ceremony itself.

### **MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE**

All couples preparing for marriage must attend a Marriage Preparation course. A program is given here at St. Thomas More every year around February or March. You may also take a course offered at another Catholic Church or the Engaged Encounter program or online through the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton.

### **DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR MARRIAGE**

A Certificate of Baptism is required for those who have been baptized. For Catholics, an updated certificate must be obtained by contacting the parish where you were baptized. For those who were baptized in another denomination, a copy of the original certificate of baptism issued the day of your baptism must be presented to the priest.

The Marriage Preparation Course Certificate must be presented.

A Marriage License is required in order to comply with government regulations. This may be obtained from any License and Registry Service, AMA outlet or Insurance Agency. The license is only valid for 3 months from the purchase date. Both parties must be present to obtain a license.

*Marriage papers will be filled out with the priest. These papers will help verify that the couple understands the nature of Christian marriage and are prepared to undertake the responsibilities of married life.*

## **THE CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE**

### ***What is the plan of God regarding man and woman?***

God who is love and who created man and woman for love has called them to love. By creating man and woman he called them to an intimate communion of life and of love in marriage: “So that they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Matthew 19:6). God said to them in blessing “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28)

### ***For what ends has God instituted Matrimony?***

The marital union of man and woman, which is founded and endowed with its own proper laws by the Creator, is by its very nature ordered to the communion and good of the couple and to the generation and education of children. According to the original divine plan this conjugal union is indissoluble, as Jesus Christ affirmed: “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Mark 10:9)

### ***How does sin threaten marriage?***

Because of original sin, which caused a rupture in the God-given communion between man and woman, the union of marriage is very often threatened by discord and infidelity. However, God in his infinite mercy gives to man and woman the grace to bring the union of their lives into accord with the original divine plan.

### ***What does the Old Testament teach about marriage?***

God helps his people above all through the teaching of the Law and the Prophets to deepen progressively their understanding of the unity and indissolubility of marriage. The nuptial covenant of God with Israel prepared for and prefigured the new covenant established by Jesus Christ the Son of God, with his spouse, the Church.

### ***What new element did Christ give to Matrimony?***

Christ not only restored the original order of matrimony but raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, giving spouses a special grace to live out their marriage as a symbol of Christ’s love for his bride, the Church: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church” (Ephesians 5:25)

### ***Are all obliged to get married?***

Matrimony is not an obligation for everyone, especially since God calls some men and women to follow the Lord Jesus in a life of virginity or of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. These individuals renounce the great good of Matrimony to concentrate on the things of the Lord and seek to please him. They become a sign of the absolute supremacy of Christ’s love and of the ardent expectation of his glorious return.

### ***How is the sacrament of Matrimony celebrated?***

Since Matrimony establishes spouses in a public state of life in the Church, its liturgical celebration is public, taking place in the presence of a priest (or of a witness authorized by the Church) and other witnesses.

### ***What is matrimonial consent?***

Matrimonial consent is given when a man and woman manifest the will to give themselves to each other irrevocably in order to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love. Since consent constitutes Matrimony, it is indispensable and irreplaceable. For a valid marriage the consent must have as its object true Matrimony, and be a human act which is conscious and free and not determined by duress or coercion.

### ***What is required when one of the spouses is not a Catholic?***

In order to be considered licit, mixed marriage (between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic) requires the permission of ecclesiastical authority. In a case of disparity of cult (between a Catholic and a non-baptized person) a dispensation is required for validity. In both cases, it is essential that the spouses do not exclude the acceptance of the essential ends and properties of marriage. It is also necessary for the Catholic party to accept the obligation, of which the non-Catholic party has been advised, to persevere in the faith and to assure the baptism and Catholic education of their children.

### ***What are the effects of the sacrament of Matrimony?***

The sacrament of Matrimony establishes a perpetual and exclusive bond between the spouses. God himself seals the consent of the spouses. Therefore, a marriage which is ratified and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. Furthermore, this sacrament bestows upon the spouses the grace necessary to attain holiness in their married life and to accept responsibly the gift of children and provide for their education.

### ***What sins are gravely opposed to the sacrament of Matrimony?***

Adultery and polygamy are opposed to the sacrament of Matrimony because they contradict the equal dignity of man and woman and the unity and exclusivity of married love. Other sins include the deliberate refusal of one's procreative potential which deprives conjugal love of the gift of children, and divorce which goes against the indissolubility of marriage.

***When does the Church allow the physical separation of spouses?***

The Church permits the physical separation of spouses when for serious reasons their living together becomes practically impossible, even though there may be hope for their reconciliation. As long as one's spouse lives, however, one is not free to contract a new union, except if the marriage is null and be declared so by ecclesiastical authority.

***What is the attitude of the Church toward those people who are divorced and then remarried?***

The Church, since she is faithful to her Lord, cannot recognize the union of people who are civilly divorced and remarried. "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (Mark 10:11-12). The Church manifests an attentive solicitude toward such people and encourages them to a life of faith, prayer, works of charity and the Christian education of their children. However, they cannot receive sacramental absolution, take Holy Communion, or exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities as long as their situation, which objectively contravenes God's law, persists.

***Why is the Christian family called a domestic church?***

The Christian family is called the domestic church because the family manifests and lives out the communal and familial nature of the Church as the family of God. Each family member, in accord with their own role, exercises the baptismal priesthood and contributes toward making the family a community of grace and of prayer, a school of human and Christian virtue and the place where the faith is first proclaimed to children.

## **PLANNING THE CEREMONY**

The wedding ceremony may be celebrated within Mass or outside of Mass. A Mass is celebrated when both the parties are Catholic. If one of the parties is not baptized or a baptized Christian who is not Catholic, the wedding celebration takes place with a Liturgy of the Word in which the Eucharist and reception of the Body and Blood of Christ does not occur.

**Catholic parties should celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation within a week or so of the marriage. Couples should be aware that a wedding Mass DOES NOT satisfy their Holy Obligation to attend Mass on Sunday. Couples are encouraged to invite their guests to attend one of the Sunday Masses where the priest, when advised of the couple's presence, will present the newly married couple to the community at the end of Mass in order that the community may celebrate with them!**

Couples are expected to be involved in the planning of the Marriage Ceremony. This includes the selection of readings, prayers, and participants to proclaim the readings chosen. A planning guide will be provided for your use. As this is the most important part of your day, please spend time reading over and reflecting on the readings and prayers you select.

**READERS:** You will need 3 readers to proclaim the scripture readings and the Prayers of the Faithful during the ceremony. You should choose someone who has read in a liturgical setting and/or is comfortable reading in public. Provide them with the readings in advance to give them time to prepare. Ask those who have the necessary gifts to proclaim God's word effectively and reverently.

**USHERS:** Your ushers have a number of responsibilities. They make sure everyone is seated in the church before the ceremony begins. They are often called upon to give directions to your guests and must therefore know the layout of the church.

**RING BEARERS AND FLOWER GIRLS:** If you decide to have children as ring bearers and flower girls, it is important to keep in mind the comfort zone of the children. Thus, take real care in your choices. *Please note that flower girls are not permitted to drop flowers or flower petals or any such thing in the church or outside of the church.*

Ring bearers may bring the actual rings in the procession but make sure that they are attached in a way that they are secure.

## PLANNING THE MUSIC

Music is an integral part of the worshipping community's Liturgical and Sacramental Celebrations. The wedding ceremony is sacred and holy and thus only liturgical music is allowed in the church.

Music unites and brings together God's people. At a wedding ceremony we are brought together to worship God and thank God for the love that He has made visible to us.

With this in mind, the music that is chosen for your wedding should enable all those assembled to pray. The music chosen for your wedding should express a clear relation to God, not just to you, the couple. You may have the "perfect song" that expresses your love for each other, but if it does not express God's love or call us to worship, it would be more appropriately used at your reception. Only sacred music (music that reflects the sacred nature of Marriage) may be used in the wedding ceremony.

Our Music Director has helped plan and has assisted at many weddings. Experience has taught us that the most successful ceremonies involve those who know the Liturgy and are familiar with procedures followed in this parish.

Occasionally, couples planning weddings at St. Thomas More have relatives or friends who are involved in music ministry in other parishes. Our Music Director will try to accommodate your needs. **If musicians from outside the parish are used for the ceremony, a damage deposit will be charged to safeguard against damage to instruments.** The deposit will be returned to the couple within two weeks of the wedding if there is no damage to instruments. All damages are the responsibility of the couple. Should you desire the services of a musician from outside of the parish, this must be approved by our priest, and this person must meet with our Music Director prior to the wedding day.

You must consult with the parish music director before any decisions are made on music for your wedding. This will save you a lot of time and effort. The parish music director will spend time with you in selecting appropriate music and will arrange for an instrumentalist or soloist, if required. Refer to the STM Wedding Music Selection Form for further details.

There are some general guidelines that you are to be aware of before you begin your planning:

- ✓ **Recorded music is not permitted in Liturgical celebrations of the Roman Catholic Church.**
- ✓ **Only one processional is permitted.**

"Here Comes the Bride" is not permitted in Catholic marriage ceremonies. This is not liturgical music and is not reflective of what we are celebrating.

## **DECORATING THE CHURCH**

Wedding shops and florists are in the business of selling flowers and decorations. They are not usually the best people to advise you on what you need to make your ceremony "perfect" in this particular church. Floral arrangements, candelabra and pew bows are available for use from the parish free of charge.

Any decorations you are planning must be reviewed by the pastor. If you wish to purchase flowers, we recommend you provide only two large bouquets to be placed on either side of the sanctuary area.

For safety reasons, the use of candelabra in the aisles or attached to the pews is not permitted. The placing of an arch in the church is not permitted.

**PEW BOWS:** Pew bows may be used but they must be attached with string or elastic. This has been very successful in our church. Tape is not to be used on the pews as it removes the finish. Pew bows are the responsibility of the couple. If fresh flowers or heavier markers are to be used, your florist or decorator **MUST** consult with the parish office

**UNITY CANDLE:** The unity candle is not part of the Roman Catholic traditional ceremony, however, many couples like to use a unity candle. If you choose to use such a candle, you will need to provide it yourself. You may purchase such an item at many card stores or a bridal shop. The church does not provide this candle.

**Sorry, but the use of rose petals, confetti, rice, birdseed, soap bubbles, balloons etc. in the church or on church property is not permitted. If friends attending the wedding use any of the above, the couple will be charged for all cleaning costs.**

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

We realize that you will want photographs of this special day. In order to protect the dignity of the celebration, and to prevent you from being distracted and nervous, we have established the following guidelines.

We ask you to designate an official photographer who will be responsible for taking photographs of your wedding. You may also designate an official videographer.

No additional lighting or props may be used in the church.

**Photographers may not roam freely during the ceremony. He or she is not permitted in the sanctuary area. The photographer CANNOT take photos during the readings, the homily, or during Mass. Please ask photographers to introduce themselves to the presiding priest at least 20 minutes prior to the wedding ceremony.**

## **THE REHEARSAL**

We have designated volunteers who will take care of the wedding rehearsal.

The wedding rehearsal team is in charge of the rehearsal and will conduct the rehearsal accordingly. It is important that everyone be on time for the rehearsal which may be cut short, if it is started late, in order to accommodate the next wedding party.

**Only those directly involved in the wedding ceremony should be present at the rehearsal:**

- ✓ **The wedding party, including parents**
- ✓ **The person carrying the Processional Cross**
- ✓ **The readers**
- ✓ **The ushers**

Musicians are not involved in the rehearsal. It is intended to be a simple “walk through” of the marriage ceremony and should only take a half an hour.

## **THE ENTRANCE PROCESSION**

The Entrance Procession shows the special role of the bride and groom in the marriage liturgy. The procession needs to be faithful to the nature of marriage, which is a relationship of mutuality between wife and husband.

The Bride is not “given away”; rather, the couple give themselves to each other in marriage. Therefore, the procession should include both bride and groom and not just one of them.

The following order of procession is recommended for weddings at St. Thomas More. Any variation should be discussed with the parish priest prior to the wedding rehearsal.

## **ORDER OF PROCESSION**

Cross

Priest

Ring Bearer

Groomsman

Groomsman

Best Man

Groom with parents on either side

Flower girl

Bridesmaid

Bridesmaid

Maid of Honor

Bride with parents on either side or simply with her father

## **FEEES AND STIPENDS FOR WEDDINGS**

Getting married at St. Thomas More involves the use of the church, the services of the priest, music ministry and rehearsal team.

Both an instrumentalist and leader of song/soloist are required for weddings at St. Thomas More and will be provided by our Music Director.

### **One cheque payable to St. Thomas More Parish in the amount of \$600.00:**

**\$250.00 for the music ministry.**

**\$100.00 facility fee.**

**\$250.00 recommended minimum for the presiding priest.**

**NOTE: No wedding is refused for financial reasons.**

RECEIVING LINES are intended as an opportunity to welcome your guests at the reception. Due to the tight schedule of weddings and Masses, the church cannot accommodate receiving lines.

USE OF CONFETTI, RICE, BIRDSEED ETC: Please advise your friends that the use of any of the above is not permitted inside the church, on the church grounds or parking lot. Should your guests use any of the above you will be billed for the cleaning.

ORDER OF SERVICE PROGRAMS: Although it is not necessary, you may wish to provide your guests with a program for your wedding celebration. Samples are included at the back of this booklet. Couples are responsible for preparing the program. PLEASE, have your ushers remove all programs that are left behind after the service. This would help us tremendously.

## **CHECK LIST**

**As soon as possible: Register for a Marriage Preparation program approved by the Archdiocese.** You will need to provide a copy of your marriage preparation certificate to the priest.

### **6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING**

- Request an updated baptism certificate from the church where you were baptized (Catholic) or a copy of original (non-Catholic).

### **3 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING**

- Obtain Marriage License & give to the priest.
- Contact Music Director to begin planning the music.
- Select readings and prayers for the ceremony from the "Celebrating Our Love" booklet (provided by the parish).
- Select readers and ushers.
- Send out invitations with map to the church included (see back page) or after the church address please indicate that the church is located at the corner of Terwillegar Drive & 23rd Avenue.

### **2 WEEKS BEFORE THE WEDDING**

- Drop off fees and stipends at the Parish Office.
- Drop off Marriage Liturgy Information sheet (purple sheet) to the Parish Office.
- Prepare and print program (optional).

## **FOR THE REHEARSAL**

Please remind everyone to arrive early for the rehearsal.

- ✓ Only the following are needed for the rehearsal:
- ✓ Person who will carry the Processional Cross
- ✓ Ushers
- ✓ Wedding party, including parents
- ✓ Readers
- ✓ Servers (if required)

Musicians do not need to attend

Bring programs if you will be using them for your celebration.  
Bring unity candle (if using).

## **FOR THE WEDDING DAY**

- ❖ Ushers arrive at the church 45-minutes prior to the ceremony.
- ❖ Groom's party arrives 15 minutes before the ceremony.
- ❖ Bride's party arrives 15 minutes prior to the ceremony.

**SAMPLE PROGRAM: MARRIAGE WITHOUT MASS**

The Wedding Celebration of

John Paul Doe

&

Mary Susan Smith

Saturday, May 5, 2017

St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Church

Presiding Priest	(Rev. Fr.) John Doe
Parents	John & Mary Brown Garth & Zelda Smith
Maid of Honor	Suzan Jones
Bridesmaids	Alice Frank Jodi Childs
Best Man	Jim Wolf
Groomsmen	George O'Hara Michael Smith
Organist	Jane Black
Leader of Song	Mabel Green
Ushers	Bruce Getz John Jacobson

## Sample: Marriage without Mass — Continued .....

Processional: “Canon in D”  
Gathering Hymn: “God Created Earth and Heaven”  
(Catholic Book of Worship III, #512)

### Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Genesis 2: 1-13  
Ashley Brown – Cousin of the Bride  
Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 128): Blest are those who love you,  
Happy those who follow you,  
Blest are those who seek you O God.  
Second Reading: Colossians 1: 12-17  
Kim Jones – Friend of the couple  
Gospel: John 15: 9-12  
Homily: (Rev. Fr.) John Doe

### Rite of Marriage

Consent of the Couple

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

*(optional) Lighting of the Unity Candle*

General Intercessions: Alice Brown – Sister of the Bride

Nuptial Blessing

The Lord’s Prayer

Signing of the Register “God is Love”

Recessional: “Jesus, Joy of Man’s Desiring”

Thank you all for sharing this special day with us.

John & Mary

**SAMPLE PROGRAM: MARRIAGE WITH MASS**

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John Paul Doe  
&  
Mary Susan Smith

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**Sample: Marriage with Mass —Continued .....**

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First Reading: Genesis 2: 1-13  
Ashley Brown – Cousin of the Bride  
Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 128): Blest are those who love you,  
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Blest are those who seek you O God.  
Second Reading: Colossians 1: 12-17  
Kim Jones – Friend of the couple  
Gospel: John 15: 9-12  
Homily: (Rev. Fr.) John Doe

**Rite of Marriage**

Consent of the Couple  
Blessing and Exchange of Rings  
*(optional) Lighting of the Unity Candle*

General Intercessions: Alice Brown – Sister of the Bride

**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

Procession of Gifts: "When Love is Found"  
Nuptial Blessing  
Communion Hymn: "Come Let Us Sing"  
Signing of the Register "God is Love"  
Recessional: "Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring"

Thank you all for sharing this special day with us.  
John & Mary

