



IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

St. Anne Catholic Church Office 337-856-8212
Monday – Thursday 9AM-noon and 1:00PM to 3:00PM

Mrs. Angela Isaacs, Staff Wedding Coordinator
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Rev. Fr. Michael Russo, Pastor
Mrs. Faith Breaux, Parish Office Contact

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WEDDINGS FROM MY PERSPECTIVE -- *An Open Letter to Engaged Couples*

Rev. Michael J. Russo, Pastor

At the time of this writing, I have been a priest for over 35 years. I have experienced what makes a wedding ceremony remembered and cherished, and unfortunately what does not. Many years of experiencing prayerful ceremonies inherently leads me to recognize wedding planning that is not focused on the sacred. My role as pastor of St. Anne is to make sure the latter does not happen. A series of wedding guidelines is outlined here to ensure that your union is remembered as not only beautiful, but sacred to all who attend.

I want to first state that it is my every intention to make this preparatory time special for you. The St. Anne staff has been instructed to do all that they can to help you and to make this meaningful time in your life as “stress-free” as possible. However, in light of past experiences, I must insist upon the following; thus, the reason for this pastoral guidance to make sure that before booking your wedding date at St. Anne, everyone involved is committed to respecting the sacredness of the Nuptial Liturgy in the Catholic Church.

In the past, there have been some overly demanding postures from family members closest to the bride and/or groom, and often even disrespectful treatment of the parish staff. This occurred when “requests” were not granted that did not meet St. Anne’s guidelines—guidelines that the couple had agreed to in writing prior to scheduling their wedding date at St. Anne. In particular, these involved issues related to the Sacred Liturgy.

The Liturgy is a sacred prayer that has been handed down to the Church. As such, you or I do not dictate what should or should not happen in it; the Church does. The Church has its documented preferences when it comes to both the instruments used and the musical selections chosen. We are here to pray. The use of St. Anne’s musicians and other musical guidelines will ensure this will happen. For this reason, the guidelines provided to the couple at the first meeting with our Parish staff member are very clear. In fact, a series of detailed questions/answers is provided to assist you. Please do not ask for exceptions. Nuptial Masses at St. Anne are notably sacred and moving to all who attend.

The second issue I wish to address is the modesty of wedding gowns. I am uncomfortable listing too many restrictions in this area because I do not wish to be a fashion cop. But again, in light of past experiences, I must insist that the Christian virtue of modesty and decency be observed in St. Anne’s sacred liturgies. At times, I have been ashamed and even embarrassed by the revealing and very low-cut gowns of both brides and bridesmaids. In conscience, I will not allow this. All gowns are to be modest and shoulders covered; if not, a shawl must be worn. If you have any questions in this regard, the parish wedding coordinator will be happy to assist you.

Finally, the parish staff will correspond with the bride and groom directly, therefore rightly avoiding any confusion. After all, it is your wedding. The issues that often cause unnecessary tension are more the agenda of close family members, not the couple. My guidance to you is that you ask your loved ones to trust you enough to take charge of your wedding. In this preparatory time, remember to focus on your commitment to one another and the fact that you are preparing for a sacrament. Encourage loved ones to give you their affirmation and support. If you allow other people and things to intervene now in your life, they will most likely keep doing so for the rest of your married life. As one who has done extensive marriage counseling, trust me on this one.

I pray that you understand the reason for this message, and I once again pledge my support and assistance to you in any way that I can. Thanks for understanding and for your cooperation.

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Marriage as a sacrament is a serious and sacred commitment that calls a couple to each other in the most profound and permanent way. Their mutual love is a reminder of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. By the grace of this sacrament they become able to love one another as Christ has loved them. As a married couple they become a visible sign and reminder of Christ's sacrificial love for all people.

[POLICIES, 604.1 Diocese of Lafayette]

The following guidelines must be met to assure your freedom to be married:

Church Guidelines

- One must be eighteen (18) years of age or, if a minor, must have parental consent.
- One must not be related to the other by blood (i.e., not a sibling or first cousin).
- One must not be bound by a previous bond of marriage.

Moral Guidelines

- Both parties understand and accept the sacredness of Marriage and that it is a sacramental union if both parties are baptized Christians.
- Both parties understand that Marriage binds the couple in permanent union till death.
- In the case of a sacramental Marriage, for it to be received fruitfully by the spouses, neither party should be in a state of serious or mortal sin.
- The Catholic party is encouraged by the Church to have received the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion, as well as to practice their Faith, especially through a life of prayer and by a faithful attendance at Mass.
- Both parties should practice chastity in mind and body during the engagement period. If living together, there must be serious effort to remove oneself from the public scandal of the sin of fornication. This is to be transparently discussed with the priest.

SCHEDULING

WEDDING TIMES: Weddings may be scheduled on Friday evenings at 6pm (or before); Saturday mornings at 11am (or before), or Saturday afternoons at 1pm. For valid reasons, Saturday evening weddings can be allowed, but not on the first Saturday of the month due to the restrictive number of Masses a priest is allowed to celebrate on a given day.

CHURCH FEES: Registered parishioners of St. Anne are asked to make a donation of \$200 or more to help cover expenses for a sacristan and cleanup. Comparatively with neighboring Catholic Churches, non-parishioners are charged a \$1000 fee. *The wedding date is confirmed upon receipt of the fee.* One of the couple, or his/her parent, must have been registered for at least 6 months at the time the wedding is booked in order to be considered a parishioner. Additionally a \$250 fee is paid to the wedding coordinator. This payment/check is to be presented at the 1st meeting when it will be filled out with proper instructions.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE AT ST. ANNE

There are two meetings with the wedding coordinator and one with the pastor; a diocesan weekend course; and a personality compatibility online assessment.

AT THE INITIAL MEETING:

- a. Confirmation of wedding date/rehearsal date.
- b. Recording of Catholic documentation (to be brought to this initial meeting).

- c. Payment of fees (*If you are being prepared by another priest, you are to bring this fee to the Parish Office at the time of booking.*)
- d. Information distributed for the diocesan marriage course.
- e. Outline of music/photography/dress guidelines.

All fees are collected at this initial meeting.

Organist & Cantor fees are non-refundable.

CATHOLIC DOCUMENTATION: Baptismal certificates no older than 6 months of both the bride and groom are required at the first meeting. Recent certificates can be attained by contacting the parish church in which your baptism took place.

NON-CATHOLIC DOCUMENTATION: Written proof of baptism is required. This information should include the full name of the baptized, date of birth, parents' full name and date of baptism.

NON-BAPTIZED PERSONS: A copy of the birth certificate is required.

NON-PARISHIONERS WHO ARE CATHOLIC: Written permission, the *Letter of Release*, for a wedding at St. Anne Catholic Church is required from the prospective spouse's home parish.

ENROLLMENT IN THE DIOCESAN MARRIAGE COURSE

Engaged Encounter Weekend: To enroll, the couple must visit the website of the Diocese of Lafayette, click on Offices, click Marriage and Family Life, then click REGISTER.

Couples must also take the Prepare and Enrich online assessment. Go to the website of the Diocese of Lafayette, click Offices, Marriage and Family Life, then click REGISTER.

VISITING PRIESTS

We warmly welcome any visiting priest you desire to officiate at your nuptials. To avoid schedule conflicts, your first contact must be with St. Anne Catholic Church. A letter of delegation will be sent to a visiting priest from the Parish Office in a timely manner. While priests vary with ceremonial and rehearsal procedures, marriage preparation, guidelines for music, church décor, and bridal gowns are to be adhered to in all wedding ceremonies at St. Anne Church. We ask that you do not embarrass a visiting priest by asking him to make exceptions in these areas.

BRIDAL/MAID & LECTOR GOWNS

Practice Christian Modesty: Please understand that plunging necklines and bare backs are inappropriate for sacred worship. Feel free to bring a picture of a dress or gown should you have any questions. A detailed sketch sheet is provided to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings.

LECTORS

Lectors read the Scriptures chosen for the nuptial ceremony. Up to two (2) lectors may be chosen for this duty. **Lectors must be practicing Roman Catholics.** Church law does not permit a non-Catholic to participate in the Liturgy as a Lector.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion distribute the Body of Christ to the faithful when there is Holy Communion. If you have relatives who serve in this ministry and would like for them to do so at your Wedding, please inform the priest. As dictated by the Church, the use of such ministers is allowed only if the numbers in the congregation warrant it.

GIFT BEARERS

Because of the size of the Nave, this is discouraged.

BRIDAL ATTENDANTS

As a norm, we allow the number of bridal attendants for a wedding at St. Anne Church to be six (6) adult couples (12-person total), and two (2) children (ring bearer and flower girl). This is due to limited space to accommodate the entrance into the sanctuary for the exchange of vows. If more than six, only the best man and maid of honor may enter the sanctuary.

COMMUNION OUTSIDE OF A NUPTIAL MASS

Holy Communion is not distributed outside of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If the bride and groom elect to have a nuptial ceremony without a Mass, there may be no communion service in the nuptial ceremony.

REHEARSAL AND REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE

The rehearsal begins on time. Make this clear to each member of your wedding party. Persons hired to help coordinate your wedding are to be informed that they do not run the rehearsal.

Everyone involved in the nuptial ceremony is required to attend the wedding rehearsal. This includes: bride, groom, bride's attendants, groomsmen, flower girls, ring bearers, lectors, gift bearers, and ushers.

CHURCH SPACE IS SACRED SPACE: It is important that you remind your wedding party that the church building is a sacred building. For this reason, when coming into the church for the rehearsal, talking should be minimal. Out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament, caps, gum chewing and shorts are not permitted.

RINGS: The best man will carry the bride and groom's rings in his coat pocket. At a designated time in the ceremony, he will transfer the actual rings on a tray placed on the altar for the exchange of rings.

MUSIC

The reverence and dignity of the sacred liturgy should be reflected in your musical selections.

Standard Mass parts used at St. Anne Catholic Church services (English or Latin) will be sung by our cantor.

Secular music is forbidden, including music from movies, television, plays, musicals, and operas.

Use of pre-recorded music is forbidden. Without exception, all music for the nuptial ceremony must be performed live.

Only St. Anne Catholic Church musicians may perform at weddings. This includes organist, pianist, trumpeters, violinists, flutists, etc. To assist you, all musicians will be hired by the Staff Music Coordinator after informing us of your wishes. Any other arrangements made—financial or otherwise without permission—will not be honored.

MASSSES: If your wedding will not be a Mass, and you prefer to have no singing, you are not obligated to have a cantor.

All music must be approved by the Staff Music Director. It is very important that he be contacted as soon as possible after your first meeting to ensure his availability. Organist and cantor fees are to be paid upon first contact with the Music Director and are nonrefundable.

Frequently asked questions:

Q: *I have a friend/relative that sings. Can he/she sing for my wedding?*

A: Yes, but they may only sing before the opening prayer and after the closing prayer (prelude, procession). Everything else must be sung by our cantor.

Q: *May I request a certain instrumentalist (violinist, trumpeter, etc.) to play at my wedding? Can a friend/relative play?*

A: Only St. Anne staff musicians may sing at weddings or play the organ. Inform the Staff Music Director which instruments you desire, and the instrumentalists will be contacted. We employ only the finest musicians available.

Q: *Is a cantor necessary? What if we don't want singing?*

A: Yes, the standard Mass parts (Responsorial Psalm, Alleluia, Holy, Mem Acclamation, Amen, Lamb of God, etc.) are sung at all weddings.

FLOWERS AND FLORISTS

If the wedding date falls during one of the major liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmastide, or Eastertide) when seasonal items (including floral decorations and colored altar paraments) are already in place, such items **MUST** remain for the wedding.

If, on rare occasions, a wedding has been scheduled during the Advent season, decorations must be modest and understated due to the penitential nature of the preparatory time for Christmas.

Hanging decorations on the walls of the church is not allowed, as is the use of tape on walls, floors, and pews.

Flower arrangements in the sanctuary (**ONLY two placed on the High Altar**) are allowed. Two additional floral arrangements may be placed on the floor – one in front of the Eagle and one in front of the celebrant chair stand. No other flowers are allowed because of space constraints, particularly when the wedding party enters the sanctuary for the exchange of vows. The arrangements may be left for the weekend Masses if approved beforehand. The Church provides beautiful arrangements each weekend. We would be happy to accommodate your wedding color if we can, saving you floral expense. Please inform the wedding coordinator if this is your desire. It is the responsibility of the florist to remove pew decorations from the church immediately after the ceremony.

For safety reasons and liability, use of an aisle runner is not allowed.

Use of an archway either in the aisle during the procession or in the sanctuary is not allowed.

Candelabras are not allowed.

Pew markers are to be assembled **with ribbon only**.

It is necessary that the florist uphold these guidelines to be allowed to decorate for future weddings at St. Anne Catholic Church.

MISCELLANEOUS

UNITY CANDLE: The use of a “unity” candle is not allowed.

ADVENT: Weddings are discouraged during Advent because of its penitential nature. The Advent Season begins four (4) Sundays before Christmas.

LENT: Weddings are not allowed during Lent due to its penitential nature. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. The calendar date for the beginning of Lent varies each year according to the date of Easter. Please check a current calendar.

WEDDING DATES: Major Church feasts or Holy Days of Obligation will preclude the scheduling of a wedding. This policy applies also to the day prior to the feast or Holy Day. Such days include: January 1, Holy Week, August 15, November 1, 2, December 8, 24, and 25.

REHEARSAL TIMES: Wedding rehearsals are usually scheduled on the day before the Nuptial ceremony at 6pm. A time/date confirmation agreement will be signed by the bridal couple at the initial meeting.

CLEANUP: While a designated member of the custodial staff will do the major cleanup work after your wedding, you are responsible for collecting any personal items to ensure that the church is returned to its original condition. Groomsmen and bridal attendants are especially reminded to remove personal items and debris left in waiting areas.

MARRYING A NON-CATHOLIC: For pastoral reasons, it is best that a Nuptial Mass is not celebrated when a large number of the congregation is not Catholic. A Liturgy of the Word is recommended on these occasions.

MARRIAGE LICENSE: The license must be obtained at least three (3) days and no more than thirty (30) days prior to the wedding date. To obtain a marriage license, a birth certificate is required. For persons under the age of 18, a parent must sign consent. The marriage license is only valid for thirty (30) days from the date of issuance. The marriage license must be submitted to the church office **no later than two (2) weeks prior to the wedding date.**

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: To allow for the proper disposition of the sacred wedding vows, the couple is to receive the sacrament of reconciliation a few days before the ceremony.



Another good reason to not have your bridesmaids in strapless dresses!

GUIDELINES FOR WEDDING DRESSES

(For bridal gowns and maids)

FRONT SIDE



No strapless



No spaghetti straps
(straps must be at least 2 inches wide)



No halter tops



If shoulders are exposed, (sleeveless)
dress must come right off shoulders



No cleavage showing

BACK SIDE



Not allowed
too much back showing
(shoulder blades must be covered)



Not allowed
Strapless (shoulders exposed)

These guidelines apply to both the Nuptial ceremony and any photos that are taken in Church. One may opt to wear a shawl or bolero jacket that covers one's shoulders and back.

GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHY AT ST. ANNE WEDDINGS

EATING/DRINKING/GUM CHEWING in Church is not allowed; gum is to be removed.

We wish to be as accommodating as possible, but ask that you please be respectful of our sacred rituals. The best compliment anyone can give to a photographer at a Church ceremony is that no one even knew you were there!

BEFORE THE NUPTIAL SERVICE: Please avoid silly and inappropriate photo postures in Church.

DURING BRIDAL PROCESSION: You may move about and take pictures as you wish.

ONCE THE NUPTIAL SERVICE HAS BEGUN, photography is allowed as follows:

During the Readings, **ONLY ONE** photo is to be taken immediately at the beginning of the Reading. Hearing camera clicks during the proclamation of God's Word is inappropriate and distracting.

During the homily – **NO PHOTOGRAPHY**

Exchange of Vows – You may take photos as you wish, but you are **NOT** to enter into the Sanctuary. Please do not obstruct the view of the congregation.

During the Eucharistic Prayer at the Altar – **NO PHOTOGRAPHY**, including at the elevation of the Host and Chalice.

At the Rite of Holy Communion – absolutely **NO PHOTOGRAPHY** is allowed. The bride and groom are not to be photographed at the time they receive Communion or at **ANY TIME** when the congregation is receiving.

During the presentation of the roses to the Blessed Mother Statue/parents – You may take photos as you wish.

During the procession out – You may take photos as you wish.

FAMILY PHOTOS AFTER THE CEREMONY: This is allowed but should be done in a reverent and respectful way, keeping loud noise to a minimum. Silly posing (back bending kissing), dipping, sitting on the Sanctuary floor, etc., is inappropriate and not allowed. It is also important that the photographer be mindful of the Church's weekend Mass schedule so as to be out of Church when parishioners start entering for confessions and/or the weekend Mass. We ask that you do your best to limit the post-ceremony photos in Church to 30 minutes. This is out of respect for the sacristan who must remain to lock the Church or prepare for the next scheduled Mass.

SETUP SHOULD BE TO THE SIDE. YOU ARE ALSO ALLOWED IN THE CHOIR LOFT. NEVER IS THE PHOTOGRAPHER TO ENTER THE SANCTUARY.

Thank you for respecting these guidelines. If we can be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to ask. We want to work together to help make the Nuptial Ceremony as beautiful and prayerful as it can possibly be for the couple.

PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS

This page (signed below) is to be returned to the Parish Office before the wedding rehearsal.

- There may be only 1-2 official still photographers with a handheld camera at the wedding ceremony.
- There may be 1 videographer with a self-contained, battery-operated shoulder camera or camera tripod at the wedding ceremony.
- The photographer and videographer may stand in the nave only. **Photographers and/or videographers may not enter the sanctuary (the altar area) at any time during the Nuptial ceremony.**
- Photography during the homily, the Consecration (Liturgy of the Eucharist), or the Rite of Holy Communion is NOT ALLOWED.
- Photographers and videographers may use the choir loft by permission only. Flash photography of musicians is not allowed.
- Photographers and videographers are to show respect with proper dress when working in a sacred place. No jeans, T-shirts, tennis shoes, ball caps or hats.
- Post-Service Photos: May take place within a 30-minute time span out of respect for the sacristan who locks the Church and/or liturgies that may follow your wedding. Family photos should be respectful – no silly posing, dipping, sitting on the Sanctuary floor, etc. This is out of respect for our Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.
- The photographer and videographer must uphold these guidelines to be able to photograph or film future weddings at St. Anne Catholic Church.

Signature of Photographer: _____ Date _____

Signature of Videographer: _____ Date _____

Testament of photographer/videographer:

I have read the above guidelines and give my assurance that they will be followed. I have placed the guidelines in my file to reference on the wedding day.

Return this signed document as soon as possible to Angela Isaacs at the parish office.

ST. ANNE CATHOLIC CHURCH

201 Church Street • Youngsville, Louisiana • 70592

Phone: (337) 856-8212 • Email: matrimony@stannechurch.net

Website: stannechurch.net



SIGNATURE FORM OF COUPLE

We have read the guidelines for Marriage at St. Anne Catholic Church and agree to adhere to them. We understand that this agreement to fully cooperate is a requisite for confirming the date of our wedding.

Groom's signature

Bride's signature

Date: _____

This form is to be submitted to the Parish Office before the date of the wedding can be confirmed on the Church calendar.