

MARRIAGE GUIDELINES FOR ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CHURCH

GENERAL INFORMATION

WEDDING DATE AND TIME - Weddings are usually scheduled on Saturdays at set times of 2 PM or 7 PM. On occasion a 10:30 AM Saturday time or a Friday evening may also be available.

SETTING A MARRIAGE DATE - Call the Parish Marriage Coordinator or Deacon to check the available dates. The Wedding Registration Form for St. Vincent de Paul Church is available on our parish website. Once you complete the form call Maria at 713-663-3535 or Deacon Daniel Pagnano at 713-663-3540. A \$400 non –refundable deposit is required to set a date and it is applied to your church fee.

CHANGING DATE OR TIME - you can change the date and/or time as long as the church is available. *Changes can only be made by appointment* with the parish marriage coordinator.

PRIEST OR DEACON - The priests and deacons assigned to our parish officiate at weddings scheduled here. If you are asking a priest or deacon from another diocese, a letter of good standing from the chancellor of their diocese or religious order must be sent to our Chancery Office. The priest or deacon must ask St. Vincent's Pastor, in writing, for delegation to witness your wedding. Delegation is also required for priests in our Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

PREPARATION PROGRAM

PERSONAL PREPARATION - The most important part of your preparation for marriage is your own relationship with Christ as the Lord who leads and guides you through life. The minimum time for preparation is six months.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING - Couples must complete a Natural Family Planning Course. St. Vincent recommends the Creighton Fertility Care. Call Elizabeth Martinez, a Certified Fertility Care Practitioner, at 832-868-9181 or email her at: houstonfertilitycare@gmail.com or visit the website at www.houstonfertilitycare.com to arrange an appointment. For other methods you can contact the Family Life Ministry Office of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston or call 713-741-8706.

PRE-MARRIAGE MEASURES AND ASSESSMENTS - St. Vincent de Paul Parish uses two different pre-marital communication measurers or assessments. Arrangements to take either of the instruments are made through the parish marriage coordinator or the deacon. The measures and assessments are:

FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication and Study)... this inventory helps couples enhance their relationship by discussing important topics including communication, problem-solving, religion, dual careers, parenting, intimacy, finances, and more. FOCCUS is available to all couples preparing for marriage at St. Vincent de Paul regardless of where the marriage ceremony will occur.

PREPARE-ENRICH... this assessment is an online survey that helps each couple identify the unique strengths and potential growth areas of their premarital relationship. The assessment is a sophisticated instrument interpreted by trained facilitators called mentor couples over a series of meetings with the engaged couple. The Prepare-Enrich assessment is available to all couples preparing for marriage at St. Vincent de Paul whose marriage ceremonies will take place at St. Vincent de Paul Church.

ADDITIONAL PRIMARY MARRIAGE PREPARATION - In addition to the pre-marital assessments and the meetings with the priest or deacon, all couples must participate in one of the weekend encounter programs described below.

Engaged Encounter - is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. To register, you must go on the website www.archgh.org/family life, or call 713-741-8706 for available dates. There is a fee for the program.

Married in the Catholic Church (MICC) - is a parish based program scheduled twice a year. It is open to the archdiocese also. The program begins on a Friday evening and concludes on Saturday at our 5 PM Mass. There is a fee for the program.

DOUMENTS REQUIRED

BAPTISM CERTIFICATES – both the prospective bride and groom whether Catholic or non-Catholic must each present a newly issued Baptismal Certificate from the church of their baptism. Catholics must ask for all Sacramental notations to be added and the certificate must be dated within **six months** prior to your wedding date. All certificates should be mailed directly to you and then brought to the person preparing you or mailed to St. Vincent de Paul, attention Maria Gibbs.

PERMISSION is necessary for a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic whether a baptized person from a Christian denomination or a non-baptized person. The deacon or priest will guide you through the proper steps.

A **DECLARATION OF NULLITY** is necessary if there was a previous marriage regardless of church affiliation or where the marriage took place. This process may take up to 18-24 months. No date may be reserved for the church until the annulment is granted. The deacon or priest will guide you through this process.

AFFIDAVIT OF FREE STATUS is a sworn statement of a witness (person) who has known you for at least 10-15 years (family member, etc.). The Affidavit states that you are free to marry (*meaning you have never been married before in a Catholic church*). Affidavits must be signed and witnessed by a priest, deacon, or parish marriage coordinator. The seal of the church where it is witnessed and signed must be stamped or embossed on the affidavit form. The bride and groom must each have affidavits from two different people.

MARRIAGE LICENSE – As mandated by the laws of the state of Texas, a Texas marriage license must be in the hands of the priest or deacon performing the marriage. The State of Texas will give a sizeable discount to couples who are enrolled in a marriage preparation program. A certificate of completion for the Engaged Encounter, MICC, or the Mentor Program is given at the conclusion of the program. A copy remains in your marriage file; the original must be presented when you apply for your marriage license to receive the discount. The Marriage License may be obtained in any county in the State of Texas no earlier than 90 days or later than 3 days before your wedding date.

CHURCH MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE – Once your marriage is recorded in our marriage records, and notifications sent to your church of baptism, you will receive a church certificate.

CHURCH POLICIES AND VENDOR POLICIES

WEDDING COORDINATORS – A parish marriage coordinator will be on site to conduct the wedding rehearsal and on the wedding day to ensure the celebration proceeds smoothly, promptly, and according to the church guidelines. Private wedding coordinators hired by the couple **will not be allowed** for the church ceremony. Questions regarding programs, wedding processions, etc. **must be addressed** to the parish marriage coordinator.

CHURCH DECORATIONS –St. Vincent de Paul is a house of worship and a community of faith. We are not a “venue” as a reception hall or restaurant. Flowers for the church should enhance the liturgy and not detract from it.

- **During the special liturgical seasons of the Church, which are Advent, Lent, Christmas and Easter church decor may not be changed.**
- **Church Flowers - there are four designed marble stands for flowers. Silk Flowers are not considered liturgically correct and are not permitted.**
- **During the Christmas and Easter Season we provide flowers for the church.**
- *Other than the Christmas and Easter Season we ask if you are having flowers for your wedding you leave them for the weekend Masses.*
- **Pew decorations** must be discussed with parish marriage coordinator.
- *No Rice, Flower Petals, Bird seeds, Balloons, Bubbles* are allowed in or outside the church or its grounds for safety reasons.
- **Aisle Candles** and **Unity Candles** are not permitted.
- **Guest Books** can be placed in the gathering space (foyer) of the church; however, the book will be closed 10 minutes before the wedding is scheduled to begin. The parish marriage coordinator will bring it to the bride’s room.

A **BRIDE'S ROOM AND GROOM'S ROOM** are located off the vestibule of the church and are available one hour before the ceremony. *Brides and attendants* are to have make-up, hair, and nails done before church arrival.

ABSOLUTELY no food drinks or nail polish are allowed in the Bride's or Groom's rooms. Water is permitted.

THE CHURCH IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR VALUABLES LEFT IN THE BRIDE'S OR GROOM'S ROOMS.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DURING THE CEREMONY, the photographer is asked to *avoid unnecessary movement causing distraction to clergy and invited guests.*

-They need to remain stationary in the area where the parish marriage coordinator designates.

-Pictures with presiding priest or deacon must be taken first after the ceremony.

-Light stands and umbrellas are not allowed in the church during the ceremony.

-Once the wedding begins photographers usually take the majority of pictures from the choir loft. Except for the entrance procession AND the recessional no flash photography is allowed.

AFTER the CEREMONY, only the immediate wedding party should remain in the church. This will avoid the confusion of extra people taking pictures especially while your professional photographer is working with the wedding party. Your reception is the place where additional pictures can be taken.

The time period for pictures after the ceremony is **20 minutes**. The Sanctuary is not to be used as a studio. Limit pictures in this area.

VIDEOGRAPHERS – may set up their equipment in the following areas:
The choir loft or other area designated by the parish marriage coordinator.

FLOWER GIRL AND RING BEARER

The minimum age for a flower girl and ring bearer is **six (6) years of age**.

MUSIC

The first step in planning music for your wedding is to contact our parish music minister, Daryel Nance. He will first e-mail "Planning Your Wedding Music" and "St. Vincent's Wedding Music FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)" to you. In the "FAQ" you will quickly find answers to just about every music question brides and grooms often ask. Next you will need to schedule an appointment to meet with Daryel. At this meeting Daryel can either help you make your music selections, or can review music selections that you may have already chosen. Please contact Daryel at any of the following: e-mail dnance@svdp-edu.org, cell (713) 628-1841, office (713) 663-3539. Typically couples make an appointment to meet with Daryel within a month (or two) before the wedding.

The Catholic Church requires that all music – both old and new music – used in Catholic worship must reverently reflect the sacred prayer that is being celebrated.

WEEK BEFORE THE WEDDING

You are required to meet with the parish marriage coordinator the week of the wedding. At this time she will collect the marriage license, stipends, and balance of church fee if due. She will review the marriage guidelines and wedding ceremony and may ask for additional information. The stipends need to be made out directly to the priest/deacon, music director, and church fee to St. Vincent de Paul as well as the parish marriage coordinator. The altar server can either be cash or a bank check for \$20. The parish wedding coordinator distributes all stipends after the wedding.