

St. Thomas the Apostle Church

331 8th Street South
Brigantine, NJ 08203
609-266-2123

CONGRATULATIONS on your commitment to each other and to your faith! May your life together be filled with God's love, happiness and peace.

As a couple planning to marry at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, we offer the following guidelines and suggestions to assist you as you finalize the arrangements for your wedding. If you have any questions, the Priest/Deacon working with you will be happy to help you.

I. SET WEDDING DATE, TIME AND OFFICIATING PRIEST

A. DATE AND TIME

The date and time of your wedding should be worked out with the Parish Priest/Deacon **before** other wedding arrangements are made.

- For Saturday weddings, the *earliest* starting time is 11:30AM and the *latest* starting time is 1:00PM.
- Weddings may be celebrated on other days but all weddings need to be approved by our pastor prior to entering it in the date book.

Note: If your scheduled wedding is late in starting, it may be necessary to substitute a shorter liturgy (a simple wedding "ceremony" instead of the Nuptial Mass) to maintain the correct starting times of any other ceremonies scheduled to follow yours.

B. OFFICIATING PRIEST

All registered parishioners and Brigantine residents are welcomed to have a priest from St. Thomas Parish perform their wedding ceremony, or invite a visiting priest to do the service.

Any non-registered parishioner with no Brigantine address may rent the church for their wedding. If you have a visiting priest, he must prepare the couple for marriage and do all paperwork.

1. A PRIEST FROM ST. THOMAS PARISH

This priest will assist the couple with marriage preparation, planning the liturgy, and processing all the necessary paperwork.

2. A VISITING PRIEST

If you do intend to ask a priest other than one from the parish to officiate, please indicate when scheduling your wedding. Approval must be given by the parish priest beforehand. Normally, this is no problem; however, the priest performing the ceremony will be expected to assist the couple with marriage preparation, planning the liturgy, and processing of all required documents and dispensations.

There are two letters needed when having a visiting priest:

1. **A letter of suitability** from the visiting priest's diocese – this must be received in the parish office at least three months before the wedding date.
2. A letter from the visiting priest acknowledging that he is officiating the wedding and processing all required paperwork.

II. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

A. BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES

1. *For a Catholic:* a recent certificate issued/dated no longer than 6 months prior to the wedding date
2. *For a Non-Catholic:*
EITHER:
 - a.) a certificate/affidavit of Baptism, or
 - b.) a certificate/affidavit of Non-Baptism

B. PERMISSION CERTIFICATE(S)

1. *For persons under 21 years of age* --- permission of Parents/Guardians is required.
2. *Non- Registered Parishioners of St. Thomas:* the Bride or Groom must obtain a letter from their pastor giving them permission to marry outside of their parish.

C. PROOF OF FREEDOM TO MARRY

The priest working with you will explain if you need this document.

D. MARRIAGE LICENSE

The marriage license is a legal document. Please take special care that all information and spelling is correct. This directly affects the identity of the bride regarding the change in her last name.

1. You must have a **valid New Jersey Marriage License**.
2. The license can be obtained from either the Bride or Groom's hometown. If neither is from the State of New Jersey, the couple **must** get the license from the City of Brigantine, where the marriage is to be performed.
3. Give yourself at least 10 days to get the license.
4. The Licensing Officer will not issue the license sooner than seventy-two (72) hours after applying for it. Once issued, the license is valid for 30 days.
5. When applying for the Marriage License, the Bride and Groom should be accompanied by a third party (or parties) who can identify them for the Municipal Clerk.
6. The Town/Municipality files your Marriage License immediately after your wedding. A copy of the Marriage License and a Church certificate will be sent to you by the Parish.

***Very Important:* The Marriage License must be presented to the Priest at the time of your wedding rehearsal!**

III. INSTRUCTIONAL SESSIONS

There will be a number of Formational Sessions with the priest who will officiate at your wedding. The Priest will discuss the various options with you at one of your first meetings with him. A certificate will be given to you once the program is completed and must be given to the officiating priest.

Remember: It is your responsibility to follow-up on these arrangements.

IV. PLANNING YOUR MARRIAGE CELEBRATION

A. TWO TYPES

1. NUPTIAL MASS

This is a full Mass with the "Liturgy of the Eucharist." There should be a certain sensitivity to a non-Catholic fiancé and his or her family with regard to the reception of Communion. You might want to seriously consider the Simple Ceremony as outlined below.

Note: You and your guests should be aware of the restrictions found in the "Guidelines for Receiving Communion," which were issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). **See last page of this booklet.**

2. WEDDING "SIMPLE CEREMONY"

Because of differences in acceptance of doctrine and sacramental life, it can sometimes be more opportune for the wedding ceremony to take place "outside of Mass," so that the religious convictions of the non-Catholic party are respected. This "simple" wedding ceremony includes all of the prayers, Scripture readings, music, marriage "rite" and blessings found in the Nuptial Mass, but without the "Liturgy of the Eucharist" (Holy Communion).

B. SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation is an ideal preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage. Confessions are heard at the regularly scheduled time each Saturday.

C. WITNESSES

The official witnesses, "**BEST MAN**" and "**MAID-OF-HONOR**", for your marriage may be Catholic or non-Catholic and must be 18 years of age or older.

D. WEDDING REHEARSAL

The date and time should be arranged well in advance.

All those having an active part in the wedding should be at the rehearsal. Everyone is expected to be prompt and respectively attired for the rehearsal.

The license **MUST** be brought to the Church and given to the priest the day of your rehearsal.

E. MUSIC

- 1. YOU MUST HIRE OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CHURCH ORGANIST, MARY JANE KELSO.** She may be contacted at **609-266-2123** (St. Thomas Parish Center) or by cell phone **609-517-5460**. Check with her for her fee. It is very important to call her as soon as possible to make music arrangements.
- 2.** You may bring in any other vocalists or instrumentalists as long as you have Mary Jane's approval. She can also help you arrange for extra vocalists/instrumentalists if desired. She will quote you the extra cost for the extra musicians.
- 3.** All music must be approved by Mary Jane Kelso, Music Director.

F. CHURCH DECORATIONS

1. **FLOWERS:** Flowers are your option and encouraged for the Church. You may choose the florist of your choice but we do have an in-house florist who knows our rules and regulations and is very creative.

Bela Rosas Florist, Brigantine – 609-413-2704

email: ***linda@bellarosasflorists.com***

Note: Seasonal church decorations set by St. Thomas Art & Environment Committee are not to be removed or changed unless given permission.

2. **AISLE RUNNER:** For safety reasons, aisle runners are **not** allowed.
3. **PEWS:** There are 21 pews on each side (42 in total) of the Church. Bows and flowers may be attached to the pews but there are restrictions. **Glue and tape are not allowed, no exceptions!** Ribbon/elastic is recommended.

G. PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY

Photographs may be taken during the Mass Ceremony or Nuptial Mass– we ask only for respect and tact from the photographer. Please do not take pictures during the consecration of the Mass. Video equipment may also be used.

Be sure to check with the wedding coordinator about specific limitations that may apply to your wedding, and be sure your photographer(s) “checks in” with the wedding coordinator before the wedding begins. At no time should the photographer(s) interfere with or delay the wedding or the procession/recession.

NOTE: If your wedding is scheduled for 1:00PM on Saturday in the Church, please consider that we have a 4:00PM Mass and parishioners are praying and preparing spiritually before Mass. ***For this reason NO PHOTOGRAPHS will be taken after 3:00PM in the Church. Any later, guests will run the risk of getting blocked in the parking lot.***

H. ATTIRE

It is important to remember that your Wedding Ceremony or Nuptial Mass is a “church service” or “liturgy.” All present, including guests, should be appropriately dressed --- as they would be if attending Sunday worship services.

I. PROMPTNESS ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

PLEASE BE PROMPT!

The groom and his men should arrive **at least 45 minutes** before the scheduled time of the wedding.

The Bride and her party should arrive **at least 20 minutes** before the ceremony begins.

J. MISCELLANEOUS

1. **NO RICE, BIRDSEED, BALLOONS, CONFETTI, FLOWER PETALS, ETC....**

may be thrown at weddings held here at the Church of St. Thomas, neither INSIDE or OUT! Bubbles outside the church may be used.

2. **NO DRIVING OR PARKING OF VEHICLES** on the concrete walkway leading to the main entrance of the Church.
3. **NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES** permitted in or around the Church grounds, including inside the limousines and automobiles. This applies before, during and after the ceremony.

V. FEES/EXPENSES

A. CHURCH FEE:

REGISTERED PARISHIONERS/BRIGANTINE RESIDENTS: \$500.00
VISITOR RENTAL FEE: \$750.00

An offering is requested to cover any parish expenses related to your wedding ceremony. This offering goes directly to the Parish, and does not include any fees, stipends, or "tips for other services" you may desire.

B. PRIEST/DEACON

An offering to the Priest/Deacon officiating at your wedding is left to your own discretion.

C. MUSIC DIRECTOR/ORGANIST (NOT OPTIONAL) SEE MUSIC DIRECTOR FOR FEE

MARY JANE KELSO: (OFFICE) 609-266-2123, EXT. 105 OR (CELL) 609-517-5460
EMAIL: MJMVOICE@COMCAST.NET

D. ALTAR SERVERS (OPTIONAL) \$20.00 PER SERVER

ALL FEES – FOR THE CHURCH, ALTAR SERVERS, MUSICIANS, etc. should be taken care of prior to the rehearsal. Again, this avoids the embarrassment of asking for it on the day of the wedding when other interests are occupying your mind.

To Register for Marriage Preparation Classes, once known as Pre-Cana, please go on the Camden Diocese Website at : www.camdendiocese.org. Choose Faith Formation-Lifelong Faith tab, then submenu Faith and Family Life Formation, Marriage Preparation

GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

FOR CATHOLICS:

Catholics fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when they receive Holy Communion in the fulfillment of Christ's command to eat his body and drink his blood. In order to be disposed properly to receive communion, communicants should be conscious of grave sin, have fasted for an hour, and seek to live in charity and love with their neighbors. Persons conscious of grave sin must first be reconciled with God and the Church through the Sacrament of Penance. A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS:

We welcome to this celebration of the Eucharist those Christians who are not fully united with us. It is a consequence of the sad divisions in Christianity that we cannot extend to them a general invitation to receive communion. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we must all pray.

FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING COMMUNION:

Those not receiving sacramental communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

FOR NON-CHRISTIANS:

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus. While we cannot extend to them an invitation to receive communion, we do invite them to be united with us in Prayer.