THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

SAINT ANASTASIA
CATHOLIC CHURCH

5205 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080

904-471-5364

www.saccfl.org

Pastor: Father Timothy M. Lindenfelser

Congratulations on the announcement of your engagement!

The St. Anastasia Catholic Church staff is here to assist you in the preparation of the Sacred Ritual consecrating your love and commitment to each other in the midst of the community of your family and friends. This booklet is offered as a guide to prepare your wedding at St. Anastasia.

Your Wedding Ceremony in the Community of the Church

Many couples choose to be married before civil authorities, judges or justices of the peace. In choosing to be married in the Catholic faith, you are proclaiming publicly that you desire to live out your marriage commitment in the Church, which is not a building or institution, but a community of people. Your wedding liturgy is an act of worship in praise to God for the love you have found in each other and as a point of strength and nourishment as you continue the journey of life together.

It is an experience of transformation and prayer for all gathered with you on that day as well. Your wedding liturgy should call everyone (and not just you as the wedding couple) to a deeper encounter with the God who loves you. The wedding liturgy should remind everyone that your marriage is a great sign, "the mirror of God's everlasting love." (*Rite of Marriage)*

Initial Steps in Planning Your Wedding

Contact the Priest of Deacon

The first step in your wedding preparations is to contact the priest or deacon who will preside (officiate) at your wedding, **at least six months before the wedding date**. He will discuss the process of preparation for marriage with you, including Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana sessions, as well as obtaining and completing the necessary documents and paperwork. In addition, he will help you to make contact with our parish secretary. The parish secretary will be your principal point of contact for other staff members as you make your wedding preparations.

Reserve the Church

St. Anastasia Catholic Church is one of the most sought after locations in the area for weddings. Limitations of time, resources and personnel prevent St. Anastasia from honoring requests of every couple who wishes to be married here. St. Anastasia is committed to providing for the weddings of those who have identified themselves as members of our parish. As time and circumstances allow, the St. Anastasia community shares its worship space with other couples who wish to be married here. Based upon past experience, the parish has developed the following guidelines for scheduling weddings:

1. Any person who has been an active, registered member and lives within the boundaries of the parish for at least twelve months is entitled to schedule his/her wedding in our parish. The priest(s) and deacon(s) of St. Anastasia will be glad to preside at the wedding of parishioners, although anyone is welcome to invite another priest or deacon to preside, if desired.

2. Non-parishioners may schedule weddings at St. Anastasia as the calendar permits. The parish will provide the worship space as well as music and liturgical support, but the couple must make arrangements with their own priest or deacon who will be responsible for all of the details of the sacramental preparation as well as performing the wedding. Unfortunately, if your parish priest or deacon is unable to come to our parish or needs to cancel at the last minute, then the clergy of St. Anastasia will be unable to provide a substitute for him.

The parish secretary is able to reserve a date and time for your wedding and rehearsal once the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. The parish secretary receives a letter of intent from the priest/deacon that he will be the presider and that he has agreed to perform all sacramental preparations with you.
2. A completed contract is returned to the parish secretary.
3. 50% of the offering for the use of the church has been received (refer to the supplemental rate sheet for specific dollar amounts). Tentative Reservations Are Not Accepted

Weddings may be scheduled on Saturdays at the following times: 11am, 1pm, or 6pm.

As the season of Lent is the Church's time of solemn penitence and preparation for baptism and Easter, the Church discourages wedding celebrations during these forty days. Weddings may be celebrated by exception, but their celebration must conform to the subdued nature of the liturgical season. Weddings are NOT celebrated on Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, the weekend of Palm Sunday, during the Easter Triduum, or on Easter Sunday.

Weddings are not normally celebrated on Sundays at St. Anastasia Catholic Church. When a Sunday nuptial Mass occurs, the readings of the day are used, as is the Universal Law for Solemnities of the Epiphany, Pentecost, the Body and Blood of Christ, and on Holy Days of Obligations.

Alterations in times for any of the days listed above require special permission from the pastor of St. Anastasia Catholic Church.

The Wedding Liturgy: Worship of the Church

Every liturgical celebration, regardless of who is present or the nature of the event, is worship, the prayer of the entire Church. Contrary to a common notion in our society, the wedding liturgy is not an event or "show" featuring the bride and groom before an audience of family and friends. It is a religious ritual that focuses not only on the couple, but on the entire community gathered who offers praise and thanks to God who loves us and who manifests, in a special way, that love in the persons of the bride and groom.

The Community of family and friends are not mere spectators but are active participants in the wedding liturgy. The very word "liturgy" is translated from the ancient Greek as "the work of the people." How important it is to help the assembly of loved ones gathered find that voice of prayer and worship. In preparing your wedding liturgy, you will help your family and friends to do just that – become active participants in the ritual actions, words, songs, and gestures of a people gathered for prayer. This is the primary goal of your wedding liturgy preparations.

Within Mass or Outside of Mass

Should you celebrate your marriage in the context of Mass (the Eucharist) or a non-Eucharistic service? First, a definition of terms might be helpful. Every Mass consists of a Liturgy of the Word (entrance rite, readings, homily, general intercessions) and a Liturgy of the Eucharist (presentation of bread and wine, the Eucharistic prayer and communion). When a wedding is celebrated at Mass, the rite of marriage takes place after the homily and before the general intercessions. The Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows. When a wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, the rite of marriage follows the homily, before the general intercessions. This rite concludes with prayers and blessings.

Normally, when either the bride or groom is not Catholic, the celebration of the wedding occurs outside of Mass. Discuss your situation with the priest or deacon who is assisting in the preparation of your marriage. He will help you make the decision which will provide the best context for prayer and celebration. If a deacon, not a priest, is presiding at your wedding, then the celebration occurs outside of Mass.

The Importance of Hospitality in Making Choices

Keeping in mind that your wedding is liturgy, it is very important to make choices that are welcoming, hospitable and respectful of all who will gather for that communal prayer. The choices that are made for your wedding liturgy must attempt to engage and invite your family and friends, a particular community of faith, to active participation.
The choices of Scripture readings, hymns, sung responses and acclamations, processions, postures, the place of the bride and groom (as well as attendants), and prayers must help all gathered to enter into the celebration, even if many or most of the assembly (congregation) is not Catholic. For example, everyone gathered:

1) Should be able to participate in the congregational music chosen (familiar, appropriate to the occasion, singable for the assembly);

2) Should be given the means to participate fully in the liturgy (through the use of a worship aid or program);
3) Should be able to understand the readings proclaimed and the prayers offered (those asked to do these should be capable readers and have practiced prior to the day of the wedding);
4) Should be able to see (careful placement of plants and flowers so as not to obstruct the assembly's view or movement in the sanctuary or aisle);
5) Should be greeted and welcomed in a warm and inviting way;

Thus, as in all aspect of a wedding celebration, the liturgy itself should be hospitable.

Music

An important aspect of your wedding liturgy is the music which will help everyone to enter into the celebration. St. Anastasia personnel provide music that will enhance your celebration. Their expertise and familiarity with the liturgy enables them to complement your wedding in a prayerful and artistic fashion. In order to help you plan your music, couples need to make an appointment with the Director of Music and Liturgy shortly after the Wedding Agreement is approved by the Pastor by emailing staccmusic@aol.com

Once you have contacted the Director of Music and Liturgy, you will be provided with a list of musical selections suitable for Church weddings and a form to return. The Director of Music and Liturgy will contact you to schedule a meeting.

The People in Your Wedding Liturgy

As you know from Sunday Mass, the people who come together for worship take on a variety of roles. The various roles are normally defined as "ministries." Those individuals who perform those roles within the liturgy are called "ministers."

The Assembly

The fundamental ministry in any liturgy is that of the assembly – the people gathered for prayer and worship. Everyone in the church is, first and foremost, a member of the assembly – the couple, the wedding party, the priest or deacon, readers, communion ministers and the musicians. It is the assembly that celebrates the liturgy. Individual members fulfill specific ministries as part of the assembly.

You may have attended weddings where this important point was overlooked and which resulted in the majority of people at the wedding being treated as an audience watching a show. Again, the primary goal in preparing your wedding is *to encourage the full and active participation of everyone who will gather to celebrate your marriage.*

The Couple

In the Roman Catholic wedding liturgy, the bride and groom are the ministers of the sacrament. The priest or deacon serves only as the Church's official witness. It is the couple who gives themselves, one to the other, in marriage.

Since the principal focus will be on you during the liturgy, both of your behavior and attitudes can also help to set the tone for the entire assembly. Your participation in the prayers and singing can do a lot to help all gathered feel comfortable and at ease in taking an active role in the liturgy.

It is recommended that you not take on additional roles during the liturgy, such as a reader or communion minister. These ministries are best left to others in the assembly and will allow you to focus on your specific role within the liturgy.

The Presider

Usually, one of the parish priests or deacons is the presider.

Although the sacrament of marriage is usually celebrated in the parish church of the engaged couple, we recognize that for various reasons, couples may wish to celebrate at St. Anastasia Catholic Church. If you are a member of another parish, your pastor or associate pastor or deacon would be the presider at your wedding.

Additional priests or deacons can attend and assist at the wedding, provided they hold the necessary faculties. If they are going to assist at a nuptial Mass, they may concelebrate at the Eucharistic liturgy, but not during the rite of marriage.

Clergy of other faith traditions are also welcome to participate in the liturgy by reading a selection from sacred scripture or offering a prayer. Discuss these possibilities with your presider. As the wedding liturgy is celebrated at St. Anastasia Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic clergy presides at the wedding and uses the ritual of the Roman Catholic tradition.

When the visiting clergy (priest or deacon) presents your pre-nuptial papers showing that all permissions and dispensations have been obtained, the pastor of St. Anastasia will give him the required delegation to witness the marriage in writing.

The Witnesses

While the entire assembly is a witness to your wedding, three individuals have a special role to play in the liturgy and for the records of the Church. The presider acts as the Church's official witness. In addition, the two individuals who stand with you – traditionally the best man and the maid or matron of honor – fulfill a requirement as witnesses who formally attest to the fact that the wedding took place. They need not be Catholic or even baptized. Though not traditional, it is possible for these two witnesses to be exclusively male or female.

The Attendants as Greeters and Ushers

The groomsmen and bridesmaids can fulfill a vital role in your wedding liturgy by serving as greeters and ushers for those who gather for the wedding. In acting as the initial ministers of hospitality, they can greet the people as they enter the church, give them a printed program and guide them to a seat near the rest of the assembly.

Additionally, members of the wedding party can also help to encourage the participation of the assembly. Their attentiveness, as well as their participation in the prayers and singing, can help all gathered feel more comfortable in entering the wedding liturgy.

The Cantor

The cantor serves a key role within the liturgy in both singing parts of the liturgy particular to this ministry, and in helping to lead the assembly in participation. Because it is a ministry that requires specific skills and experience with the parish's challenging acoustics and logistical complexities, normally only approved cantors are recommended.

The Organist

The Director of Music will either be the organist for your wedding or will designate the person who will play the organ at your wedding.

Readers (Lectors)

These ministers perform the crucial role of proclaiming God's Word and offering the general intercessions during the wedding liturgy. While it is possible to ask people who regularly serve in this ministry during the Sunday liturgy, most couples choose readers from among those who will attend their wedding liturgy. You may select one or two individuals to proclaim God's Word to the gathered community. Additionally, a third person can be asked to read the general intercessions. Unless they are regular readers in the parish, those whom you select should be good public speakers and should be given an opportunity for sufficient practice in the parish's acoustics.

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist

Only necessary when the wedding occurs within Mass, these individuals help the presider in the distribution of the Eucharistic bread and wine. Consult with your presider or our Director of Music and Liturgy as to who is the best choice.

Altar Servers

If there are guests attending your wedding who are experienced altar servers, then you may ask them to serve at your wedding. Please first consult with your presider.

Gift Bearers

Again, only for weddings within Mass, two people from the assembly may be invited to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine.

Using the Parish

No Bride's Room

Please come to the Church dressed for the ceremony.

None of our facilities have a place for the bride or any of the wedding party to get privately dressed. Each of the secluded waiting spaces for the bride and her attendants are only intended for them to wait, but are not equipped for dressing. The groom and the best man gather in area designated by the presider. The groomsmen are to assemble in the rear of the church to help with the ministry of hospitality. If you are traveling from a distance, we suggest that you rent a motel room near the parish for the day. You and your attendants could comfortably dress at that location.

We would like to think that, because it is a Church wedding, nothing will happen to your valuables left in your vehicles or in other areas of the church, but it is an unfortunate reality that visible valuables could be stolen. For your protection, please be sure to lock your handbags and valuables in the trunk of your car. Do not leave them in the bride's waiting area.

Furnishings

The altar, ambo (pulpit), and other furnishings are fixed and *cannot* be moved. Likewise, the seasonal décor and other appointments in the Church (Advent wreath, Christmas Trees, Easter Candles, and seasonal flowers) may *not* be altered. We will provide kneelers, chairs, altar candles, and other elements of the liturgy, as needed.

Candelabra may be placed in the sanctuary but you need to rent them yourselves. In your rental agreement be sure that the company will come before the ceremony to assemble them, and removed them **immediately** after the ceremony (not the following day). Remember that there will be other liturgies after your wedding and we cannot be responsible for storing or keeping track of any décor that you rent.

Rice

Bird seed, rice, and any other confetti-like substance may not be thrown on the Church's property. It is helpful to advise guests of this policy in advance and before the wedding date.

Child Care

On-site child care may be available during your wedding ceremony. Please contact the Parish Office for details.

Concerning the Handicap

St. Anastasia is equipped with handicap-assessible entrances on all of its entrances. There are handicap parking spots located to the north of the sanctuary.

{Recommendation that there is verbiage specifically explaining that only service animals trained to assist the blind are allowed inside the church.}

Military-Style Weddings

Military swords remain in the Narthex (lobby) during the liturgy. Sword ceremonies may only occur outside the doors of the church. The typical location is in the west Portico or in the south courtyard / Columbarium walkways.

Florists

Before you meet with, and choose, a florist, come and sit in the church and plan. Think about the space needed for the wedding party. Allow some mental spacing for chairs near the altar, the presider and kneelers. All of these take up floor space and add color to the sanctuary.

You may use any florist you wish. We can recommend the use of florists who are familiar with St. Anastasia's liturgical space. We also suggest coordinating your colors with the liturgical seasons.

During festive seasons, especially Christmas and Easter, floral decorations may be a complement to, not a substitute for, decorations already in place for regular parish celebrations. We will not remove any of the parish's flowers because they clash with the wedding party's gowns. The Advent wreath, Nativity, and Easter candle cannot be moved.

Bows may be attached to the pews using only elastic bands, string or ribbons. Nails, tacks, tape and metal devices are not permitted. Please arrange for someone to remove all pew markers from the church immediately following the celebration.

Pew candle stands are not permitted. Aisle runners are not permitted. The flower girl may not drop petals as she comes up the aisle.

We would greatly appreciate if you would donate your altar flowers to the church in order to share your celebration of God's love with the rest of the community. If you rent palms or larger plants, then make sure the florist knows they must remove them from the church immediately following the celebration or assign someone to remove them for you.

The time of your flower delivery should be scheduled in advance of your wedding day with the parish office.

When multiple weddings occur on a particular day, some couples have chosen to share in the expense of flowers. Consult with the parish office about coordinating this possibility.

Photographers and Videographers

Photographers and videographers are welcome to film the liturgy but may not intrude upon the liturgical action. Flash photography and external lighting are permitted during the processional and recessional, but not during the liturgy.

Please advise your photographer and videographer that neither equipment nor personnel may be in the sanctuary during the wedding liturgy. Equipment may be set up in the following locations: the center aisle, the lower floor level near the choir, and the corners near the work sacristy.

Pictures may be taken for one half-hour following the wedding. Please respect this time as there may be another wedding, Mass, or the hearing of confession following your liturgy. Sometimes with all of the excitement, the picture taking gets rather noisy. Please remember that you are still in a house of prayer and there will be people coming into the church.

After the Wedding

Receiving lines after the liturgy are not appropriate at the church, but are a function of the wedding reception. To guarantee that nothing is left at the church, please assign someone the responsibility to collect all of your belongings afterward, especially in the bride and groom's waiting areas.

Alcohol is not permitted in the church or in the church parking lots. Please be sure to save your celebrating for your reception.

Rehearsals

The rehearsal time should be scheduled with the presider at the time the wedding is scheduled. The rehearsal is usually scheduled for the evening before the wedding, however, this may not always be possible due to the conflicts of other events. You must do a "walk through" of the ceremony so that everyone is familiar with it. It is best to have your readers practice their readings *prior to the rehearsal*. Plan on an entire hour for your practice.

Reception Facility

The St. Jude Celebration Hall is available for your reception. With a seating capacity of 250 for a plated dinner, a dance floor, commercial-grade kitchen, as well as state-of-the-art technology and high-speed fiber optic Wi-Fi, this is the perfect venue for your wedding reception or your rehearsal dinner. Just two blocks from the ocean, the wedding party can take pictures on the beach while their guests enjoy a cocktail hour. Offering 400 free parking spots, the Celebration Hall is the perfect spot for all of your receptions needs.

For more information about using St. Jude Celebration Hall, please contact the Director of Community Outreach at 904-471-5364 or email admin@saccfl.org

Required Documentation

Contract for Use of the Church

We must be in receipt of the completed wedding contract, the letter of intent signed by the priest or deacon who agrees to prepare you and witness your marriage, along with a 50% deposit in order to schedule your date on the official church calendar.

Letter of Intent

The parish priest or deacon who will be preparing you for marriage and officiating at your wedding may be two different people. If the person preparing you for your wedding is NOT a member of the clergy of St. Anastasia, then at the beginning of your marriage preparation, the person who is preparing you should send a "Letter of Intent" to the pastor of St. Anastasia. In this letter, your priest or deacon should inform the pastor of St. Anastasia:

1. that he is taking pastoral responsibility for your marriage preparation.
2. that he will gather the canonical file at his own parish. This includes
    a. the "Freedom to Marry" witness forms
    b. all canonical required documents such as original baptismal certificates
    c. procure any dispensations necessary for the wedding
3. that he will officiate at your wedding, or that he has personally spoken with the priest or deacon who is officiating at your wedding.
4. that he will attend to all liturgical details of your wedding.

Permission to officiate at your wedding is contingent on receipt of this "Letter of Intent" by your (the) visiting priest or deacon.

In addition, in light of the provisions of canon 903 in the *Code of Canon Law* and canon 703 in the *Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches,* the presiding priest must procure a letter indicating that he is a cleric in good standing and able to perform all the functions in your wedding. In addition, he must procure in your home diocese, any necessary dispensations and permissions.

Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire

This is supplied by the person preparing you for marriage and is completed by him in your presence. It requests certain biographical and other information necessary for the reception of the sacrament of marriage.

Affidavits

These are supplied by the person preparing you for marriage. The affidavit is made by people who have known you well over a long period of time (at least since your fourteenth birthday) and are familiar with your understanding of marriage and your freedom to marry. Two affidavits are completed for each party, usually by the parents of the intended bride and groom. The forms are signed by those giving the testimony in the presence of a Catholic priest or deacon *or* by a notary public and are returned to the presider to include in your packet.

Certificate of Baptism

Catholics must contact the church where they were baptized and request a Certificate of Baptism, even if the baptism occurred outside of the United States of America. The certificate must be dated within six months of the wedding date. As this document is an integral part of the marriage archives, a photocopy of an original or email of the original will not suffice. Other Christians may present an original document to the person preparing you for your wedding.

Certificate of Confirmation

This document is required only when a record of confirmation is not included on the Certificate of Baptism. As with the Certificate of Baptism, Catholics may present the original to the person preparing you for your wedding.

Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana Certificate

This will be awarded to you upon your completion of a certified marriage preparation program. Schedules and details are available from the person preparing you.

Civil License

Please present the license to the presider *at the wedding rehearsal*. This is obtained from the Marriage License Bureau. It may be obtained in any county in Florida, but it must be a Florida Marriage License in order to have your wedding at St. Anastasia Catholic Church. State Law requires that the license be obtained at least 24 hours prior to the wedding ceremony, so do not wait until the day of the rehearsal to obtain your license. It is illegal to celebrate a wedding without a Florida Marriage License.

Decree of Annulment / Dispensations

An Annulment is required in the case of a previous marriage by *either* bride or groom, Catholic or non-Catholic. Please check with the presider if any special permissions or dispensations are needed from the Bishop's office.

Offerings and Fees

It is customary to offer the presiding priest or deacon a minimum of $200 as a sign of your appreciation.

In addition, St. Anastasia will provide the following services:

- an organist/pianist/accompanist at $200
- soloist at $125 each
- instrumentalist which range from $150-$300 each
- music prior to and during the ceremony

Not all instrumentation can be provided and availability is limited. Please note that the musician fees are separate from the church's offerings and fees. Upon approval of your wedding agreement by the pastor, contact the Director of Music and Liturgy to schedule an appointment to complete the "Wedding Music Planner" for your wedding.

Final music arrangements should be made with the Director of Music no later than four weeks prior to the wedding date. Payment for wedding music should be made in one inclusive check payable to the musicians no later than four weeks prior to the wedding date.

The fee structure outlined below has been approved by the Pastor and the Finance Council:

$500 _____ For registered & contributing St. Anastasia Catholic Church members of one year or more at the time of contract submittal.

$750 _____For a bride or groom having four years of residence at St. Anastasia prior to age 18 with parents who are/were members.

$1,500 _____For registered & contributing members for less than one year at the time of contract submittal, or who physically live in our parish boundaries **OR** registered members of a parish within the boundaries of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

$3,000_____Members of parishes outside of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

$500 _____ **Additional scheduling fee for non-Saturday weddings**

The offering the couple gives St. Anastasia for the wedding service is used to maintain the sacred space in order to allow for not only your wedding, but for all future weddings. **Your church usage fee is based solely on the current parishioner status of the bride or groom (not on their relatives).**