



THE SACRAMENT OF
MARRIAGE
PARISH GUIDELINES

ST THOMAS MORE PARISH

2101 POTTSTOWN PIKE
POTTSTOWN, PA 19465

610-469-9304

WWW.STTHOMASMOREPOTTSTOWN.ORG

THERE IN THE END THREE THINGS THAT LAST;
FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE, AND THE GREATEST
OF THESE IS LOVE. 1ST CORINTHINANS 13:13



WEDDING GUIDELINES

The faith family of St Thomas More Parish congratulates you and wishes you many blessings as you prepare for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony. It is with a deep awareness of the richness of a happy marriage that we encourage you to prepare yourselves as fully as possible for the celebration of this Sacrament.

With this goal in mind we present you the guidelines of Matrimony at Saint Thomas More Church. We hope that the information in this booklet will be useful to you as you prepare for this important step in your lives.

Contact Information:

Parish Office (for scheduling and general questions)
610-439-9304

Father Lawrence Kozak, Pastor
Pastor.StThomasMoreParish@gmail.com

Deacon Timothy Murphy
DeaconTMurphy@gmail.com

Romana Coccia, Music Director
Music.StThomasMoreParish@gmail.com

Corinne Murphy
Administrative Assistant
Office.StThomasMoreParish@gmail.com



PRELIMINARY PROCESS

The policy of the **Archdiocese of Philadelphia** requires that engaged couples give their parish at least six months notice of their intent to marry. This is to avoid problems of times and dates and to provide adequate time for preparation. Wedding dates are often scheduled more than a year in advance.

Once you have met with Father Kozak or Deacon Murphy and your date has been confirmed, you may begin planning.

Marriage and Family Life Preparation

Before you are married, it is required by the Archdiocese to receive pre-marital instructions. Since Catholics believe Christian marriage to be a very serious relationship of faithfulness, permanence and life-giving generosity; a decision to make this commitment requires reflection, discussion and responsible preparation.

PRE-CANA

The Family Life Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia offers Pre-Cana classes. Pre-Cana provides you with a theological approach to human sexuality, a virtue-based instruction in communication, conflict resolution and financial decision-making. Currently the certification classes are offered virtually. Visit: <https://phillycatholiclife.org/marriage-and-family/preparing-for-marriage/> to learn more.

Three to Get Married is an in-person option for engaged couples offered by Regnum Christi at the Bethesda Retreat Center in Bethesda Maryland. Visit:

<https://ourladyofbethesda.org/programs/marriage/marriage-prep>

FOCCUS Inventory

Deacon Murphy is a certified FOCCUS inventory facilitator. The FOCCUS inventory is an indispensable tool to help couples prepare for marriage. The Pre-Marriage inventory is designed to help engaged couples appreciate their unique relationship, learn more about themselves, and discuss topics important to their lifelong marriage. [Email Deacon Murphy](#) to schedule the inventory.



REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Baptismal Certificate

A Baptismal Certificate must be obtained from your baptizing church issued within six (6) months prior to the wedding for anyone not baptized at St Thomas More Parish. Original certificates issued at the time of baptism cannot be accepted for marriage preparation. Non-Catholic Christians must also contact their baptizing church and provide written proof of their Baptism.

Affidavits of Freedom to Marry

When you meet with Father Kozak or Deacon Murphy to begin planning your wedding, you will be provided two affidavits testifying to your freedom to marry and they will provide an explanation at that time.

Previous Marriages

If a person has been married before, it is necessary to provide either a **Death Certificate** of the former spouse or a **Declaration of Nullity**. To learn more about how to begin the annulment process, please contact the Tribunal at the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Visit: <https://archphila.org/archdiocesan-offices/metropolitan-tribunal/application-form/>.

Letter of Permission

If the bride or groom is not registered at Saint Thomas More Parish, they should request a letter of permission from their home parish to be married at our parish.

Pre-Nuptial Inquiry

This is an official record of statistical information and other pertinent material. This inquiry form is filled out with the help of Father Kozak or Deacon Murphy at your meeting.

Parish Registration

If you will be living in Saint Thomas More Parish boundaries, please complete a parish registration form found on our website. Visit: <https://stthomasmorepottstown.org/registration>



CIVIL REQUIREMENTS

Marriage License

A Marriage license may be obtained at any Court House in the State of Pennsylvania. The license is valid for only sixty (60) days after it has been issued.

Therefore, it is important that you apply for your marriage license approximately one (1) month prior to your wedding date.

Montgomery County Courthouse

One Montgomery Plaza, 4th Floor, Norristown, PA 19404
610-278-3414

Berks County Courthouse

633 Court Street, 2nd Floor, Reading, PA 19601
610-478-6600

Chester County Courthouse

313 W. Market Street, West Chester, PA 19380
610-344-6000

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS Document from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia: Visit: <https://phillycatholiclife.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/MarriagePrepFAQ-fr-AH-070210.pdf>



YOUR MARRIAGE AT ST THOMAS MORE PARISH

Marriage as a Sacrament

A sacrament in an encounter with Jesus Christ. Every sacrament brings us into contact with the saving activity of the Lord. In every sacrament, we encounter the dying and rising of Jesus.

The ministers of the sacrament of marriage are the bride and groom. When two baptized persons exchange wedding vows, they share in the life of Christ that they have received in baptism. The ministers of marriage extend the Lord's presence to each other and become a sign of the Lord's presence to others.

Faith Commitment

Since Christ is the center of Christian marriage, the bride and groom should seriously review their relationship with the Lord. They should show signs of a positive commitment to Christ and should regularly participate in the parish celebration of Sunday Eucharist.

Wedding Times

Saint Thomas More parish is a busy thriving community of believers in Jesus Christ. We are delighted to have you part of our community. We respectfully remind you that your wedding, although one of the most important days of your lives, is only one part of the life of our parish. The following times allow for us to give your wedding the proper attention it deserves.

Friday Evenings
Saturdays, 10 am, 12 noon and 2 pm
Sundays after 1 pm

Visiting Clergy

Visiting Priests are welcome and are asked to inform the parish office. The visiting Priest is to contact Father Kozak as a courtesy. Non-Catholic Christian Clergy may be permitted to participate in the ceremony if requested.

Rehearsals

Please do not make rehearsal dinner plans until you have secured your rehearsal time with the Parish Office and Father Kozak or Deacon Murphy.



Wedding Fees

St Thomas More does not charge for weddings, however, if you would like to make a donation for the gift of time and use of the church facilities we most gratefully will accept it. Checks should be made payable to St Thomas More Parish. Contact the parish office to make an electronic donation.

The organist fee is \$150

The Cantor/Soloist fee is \$150

Altar Servers \$20 cash each server.

Contact our Music Director, Romana Coccia, for the names of the musicians as your checks will be made payable directly to them.

Flowers and Pew Bows

Flowers are optional but certainly appropriate. We request that you leave your altar flowers in church after your wedding/ceremony for Sunday's liturgy. Flowers are NEVER placed directly on the Altar.

Flower petals, rice, birdseed, releasing of balloons, doves, butterflies, etc. is not permitted inside, outside, before, during or after the wedding. Please inform your bridal party of these rules.

Pew Bows and ribbons are permitted. Please do not use adhesive tape only 3M hooks as it does not damage the wooden pews.

Candles

The Unity or Wedding Candle has been discontinued as part of the Nuptial Mass or Wedding Ceremony. We suggest that you use the Unity or Wedding Candle as part of the rituals celebrated at the Reception. Candles or Candleabras may never be attached to the pews or placed in the sanctuary.

Photography/Videos

The use of video camera is permitted. Video equipment must be stationary and remain in the side aisle or in a discreet place. The ceremony, including the procession, is not to be interrupted or delayed. In a respectful, quiet manner, photographs may be taken following the ceremony. **For Saturday weddings, all must out by 3 pm.**

PLANNING THE LITURGY

The Liturgical Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage

All of the guidelines established for the Liturgy of the Church, as well as the Liturgical Seasons, must be respected. When you meet with Father Kozak or Deacon Murphy to help you in making selections for your wedding liturgy, they will provide you with this guidance and together you will complete a worksheet.

You will choose the readings, Universal Prayer, intercessions, etc. You will choose family members and friends to do the Scripture readings.

The readers should all be given the readings in advance to practice, old enough and capable of reading clearly, attend the rehearsal and be Catholic.

The Readings from the Bible

The readings at a Catholic wedding liturgy are a proclamation of God's Word and of the Church's faith about marriage. For this reason, they are limited to readings from the scriptures (the Bible). There are nine (9) options for the first reading from the Old Testament, thirteen (13) options for the second reading from the New Testament, and ten (10) choices for the Gospel. You choose one (1) from each of these categories.

The links below include the reading options in their entirety, as well as commentary to provide some context and highlight key themes in each reading.

Old Testament Readings: <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/old-testament-readings/>

Responsorial Psalms: <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/responsorial-psalms/>

New Testament Readings: <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/new-testament-readings/>

Gospel: <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/gospel-readings/>

Universal Prayer Guidelines



PLANNING THE LITURGY

Liturgical Music

The purpose of music at the Liturgy is to involve those present in the nature of the celebration and to enhance certain liturgical actions. All music for liturgical celebrations must follow the guidelines established by the Church.

Popular music and show tunes are never permitted in Church, before or during the Liturgy. Our Music Director, Romana Coccia, will meet with you to assist you in selecting music for your wedding. Romana can be reached at Music.StThomasMoreParish@gmail.com.

To learn more about Liturgical Music Selections for Weddings, visit: <https://www.odwphiladelphia.org/liturgical-music/weddings/>

Preparing a Worship Aid/Program Booklet

If you choose to prepare a Wedding Program Booklet please keep in mind the following:

- Texts and songs are protected by Copyright laws and may not be reprinted without the permission of the owners. Illegally reprinted texts, music may never be distributed to the guests.
- Certain spoken texts belong to particular ministers of the Liturgy, therefore it is not in the interests of good Liturgy to print these in the booklet.

Please provide a copy of your booklet to the Parish office at least two weeks before you send to your printer.

The page is framed by a decorative border of pink roses and green leaves. The roses are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The leaves are detailed with visible veins. The background is a light, neutral color, making the floral elements stand out.

10 POINTERS FOR PRAYER

The baby's crying, the dog is whining, and you need to leave for work in five minutes. Finding time for prayer can seem impossible. Amid the busyness of family life, how can one respond to God's ongoing invitation to speak with and listen to Him? Here are ten pointers to help you do just that.

1. Pray as you can, not as you can't. God calls most Christians to an active life in the world, with family, work and community responsibilities. Such a call, while holy, does not usually allow for long periods of prayer and reflection. Lay people can become discouraged when they try to pray like a cloistered contemplative. Be realistic about what's possible.

2. Take ten — or twenty. If a half hour for prayer isn't possible, how about ten minutes, or twenty? Choose a good time of day and stick with it. Designate a special site for prayer so that spot become holy. Spouses can help by minding children during respective quiet times.

3. Pray as a family. Build upon rituals such as grace before meals. In addition to the usual "Bless us, O Lord..." encourage family members to offer thanks for the blessings of the day, as well as prayers for those in need. Couples can deepen their spiritual relationship by taking a few minutes, perhaps before bedtime, to commend to God the joys and sorrows of the day.

4. Decorate your domestic church. When we enter our parish church, the statues and pictures focus our minds on Jesus, Mary and the saints. We can create an atmosphere for prayer in our home- the domestic church- by displaying a crucifix, icons, the Bible and other holy objects. Take the children to a religious goods store and let them choose a picture or statue for their rooms.

5. Short prayers count, too. When you're stopped at a long light or put on hold, consider it as God's invitation to turn your heart and mind to him, if only for a few seconds.

6. Find God at work. Connecting with God in the workplace takes effort. Try to cultivate a few simple habits. For example, offer the day to God as you turn on your computer, or pray for the person you're about to call or wait upon.



10 POINTERS FOR PRAYER

7. Jump start your prayer life. Sooner or later almost everyone experiences dryness in prayer. God seems far away and prayer becomes a burden. Praying with Scripture, perhaps the daily Mass readings, can help us focus. So, too, can an inspirational book, especially one of the spiritual classics. A good choice is St. Francis de Sales' Introduction to the Devout Life, written specifically for lay people who are striving for holiness.

8. Ask your Mother for help. The Blessed Virgin Mary, our spiritual mother, understands our needs and offers profound comfort. One family, gathered around the bedside of their dying husband and father, found peace and healing through the recitation of the rosary. The rosary is ideal for the family since children can be taught the simple prayers at an early age. Check out instructions on how to pray the rosary.

9. Read a good story. Children and adults alike enjoy an inspiring story, and few stories are more compelling than those of the saints. Whether it's the little way of Therese of Lisieux or the heroism of Maximilian Kolbe, their stories offer something for everyone. Consider the particular virtue that a saint demonstrates and pray for help to emulate it. Perhaps it's the humility of St. Francis of Assisi, the patience of St. Monica, or the courageous witness of St. Thomas More.

10. Walk with a spiritual friend. Prayer can lead to new thoughts and questions. Who better to share them with than a spiritual friend? A friend can help us to work through the concerns that inevitably arise in prayer. Good friends will hold each other accountable for their prayer life, making sure that prayer has not been neglected in the busyness of life. For married couples a spouse is often this spiritual friend, but God will also put wise and holy people in our path when we need them. They can be the answer to prayer.

The 10 Pointers for Prayer in Marriage was reproduced with permission from the USCCB at ForYourMarriage.org

<https://www.foryourmarriage.org/10-pointers-for-prayer/>



SAINT THOMAS MORE OUR MARRIED PATRON SAINT

Born: February 7, 1478

Died: July 6, 1535

Feast Day: June 22

Patronage: Attorneys, Civil Servants, Court Clerks, Lawyers, Politicians, Public Servants, Adopted Children

Marriage is both a public institution and a private relationship. St. Thomas More defended the institution with his life and lived the relationship faithfully and fruitfully.

More was born in 1478 in London. His mother died when he was young. After an excellent education, he seriously considered joining a religious order, but realized that he could not renounce marriage and family life. In 1505 he married Jane Colt, 10 years his junior. The marriage was a happy one, cut short by Jane's death at 22.

Left a widower with four small children, More quickly married Alice Middleton, a silk merchant. Known for her sharp tongue, Alice faced the tough task of raising her stepchildren—she and More had no children of their own—and running the household. One biographer observed: "In this marriage—whatever may have been lacking in beauty—there was at no time a lack of mutual respect or of a clear understanding as to the competence of each spouse." More paid close attention to the religious upbringing of his children, and well as their general education. He made sure that his three daughters received as fine an education as his son, at a time when few girls were educated.

Thomas More was a lawyer, writer ("Utopia") and statesman. He is best known for his clash with King Henry VIII over the king's decision to divorce his wife and marry Anne Boleyn. He refused to take an oath that declared the king's first marriage invalid and that recognized Henry as head of the Church of England. He was convicted of treason on the basis of perjured testimony and beheaded on July 6, 1535.

More was canonized in 1935. He shares his feast day, June 22, with another English martyr, St. John Fisher.