

St. Andrew Parish

**16300 Domain Lane
Eagle River, AK 99577
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**Marriage Preparation
and
Wedding Ceremony
Guidelines**

"A wedding is a day. A marriage is a lifetime."

So you want to get married!

Congratulations! You have begun the journey that leads to the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. It is a time of great expectation and excitement. There is much to do and many preparations to be completed. This booklet will help you to understand what is necessary for preparation for marriage in St. Andrew Parish.

Taking Time for Discernment.

Our first task is to help you discern and to prepare for a lifetime of living the Sacrament of Marriage together in the midst of the Church and in society. Good discernment takes time. A year of preparation is preferable. **Couples wishing to get married at St. Andrew Parish should contact the parish AT LEAST SIX MONTHS before the intended date of the ceremony.** If either of you has been married before, an official declaration of nullity of the previous marriage must be obtained before marriage preparation can begin.

The Initial Meeting -

At your first meeting with the priest, he will explain to you the process and begin some initial paperwork. It is a chance to ask questions and address any issues that may arise at the very beginning of the process rather than have to deal with them at the last minute. At the end of the initial meeting, you will be asked to fill out a simple form including basic biographical and contact information.

Working with your Mentor Couple

The next step is to have you work with a mentor couple who has trained in the PREPARE/ENRICH instrument and can share their experience of married life with you. The instrument will help you assess the strengths of your relationship and the areas in which it will need to grow. If there are serious issues that need to be worked out before marriage is possible, your mentor couple will help you discuss them in a constructive manner so that they will not be a problem later. Most couples meet with their mentor couple five or six times. Some choose to meet even more. For many, it is the beginning of a life-long friendship.

Fees

Church Fee (including preparation) for those registered in the parish	\$200.00
Use of Church (for those not registered at St. Andrew Parish)	\$300.00
Suggested donation for Presiding minister	\$150.00
Accompanist Cost	\$150.00
Cantor Cost	\$125.00
Suggested donation for each server (Cash works best.)	\$20.00

Please place all fees in an envelope and give to the Priest/Deacon at rehearsal

Note: In cases of financial hardship, contact the pastor for information on subsidies.

Revised 11/2016

Flowers

The use of flowers and plants can greatly enhance the liturgical celebration.

Please keep the following in mind

- Floral decoration should never impede the approach to or the encircling of the altar or any ritual movement or action.
- No arrangement in front of the altar should be higher than the altar.
- If flowers or bows are to be used to decorate the ends of the pews, they may be attached by ribbon or elastic bands only.

We welcome any floral arrangement you may wish to leave in the church after the celebration of the wedding. Your flowers would continue to enhance the parish worship.

Appropriate Attire

The attire of the wedding party should reflect the dignity of the celebration and the decorum of sacred space. Sleeveless and/or strapless dresses with plunging backs and necklines should be avoided. Shawls may provide a nice solution. Gentlemen's attire should be neat and conservative.

Other Considerations

Flowergirls and ringbearers must be at least seven years of age.

Rice, birdseed, or confetti are not permitted on church property. Aisle runners are not permitted as they present a tripping hazard.

Cleaning Up

Please leave the church as clean as you found it. Your best man is responsible to make sure that the nave, men's dressing room and men's restroom are cleaned up after the ceremony. Your maid of honor is responsible for the narthex, women's dressing room and women's restroom.

PLEASE NOTE: The use of alcoholic beverages or any other intoxicating substance by any member of the wedding party before the ceremony is strictly forbidden. Violation of this rule by any member of the wedding party will not be able to participate in the ceremony.

Quality Time - The Engaged Encounter Weekend Retreat

What could be better than to take a whole weekend away to do nothing but work on your relationship? It is required by the Archdiocese that every couple preparing for marriage attend an Engaged Encounter Weekend. This is a retreat designed specifically for the couple. It consists of a number of directed talks by a senior couple (married at least 25 years) and junior couple (married about 5-10 years), as well as a couple of talks given by clergy. The talks cover a wide range of the practical and spiritual aspects of the Sacrament of Marriage. After each talk, a series of questions help the couple discuss important issues in their relationship and how they will live various aspects of their married life together. It is an opportunity to take time to talk about important issues about their future life together. For information about schedules and registration, see the Archdiocese website www.archdioceseofanchorage.org Sometimes, because of a situation specific to the couple, it is not possible or prudent to attend an Engaged Encounter Weekend. In such cases, the pastor will propose an alternative program which fulfills this obligation.

Natural Family Planning - Good Information for Life

Married love by its very nature is open to the gift of life. Children are the natural fruit of a married relationship. It's important that you have good information about what the Church teaches about such things from people who have been there. Classes on natural family planning are offered every month at Providence Hospital. There are two evenings involved, the informational night and then a follow-up session two weeks later.

Sacramental Catechesis Sessions with the Priest

Once you have completed the PREPARE/ENRICH your mentor couple will have you contact the priest to begin the sacramental preparations in earnest. This will involve one or more sessions with the priest or deacon who will be presiding at your ceremony. During these sessions he will guide you on an exploration of the theological and spiritual realities of marriage so that you will have a good understanding of how your marriage will be a living sign of God's love in the world for all who will encounter you in married life.

Necessary Documents

Typically, there are three or four documents which you will each be required to gather during your time of discernment:

- A recent copy of your Baptismal Certificate.

This can be obtained by contacting the parish in which you were baptized and requesting that they send a copy to you. You may also have the copy sent directly to the parish if you wish.

A Marriage License

This is a legal document required by the state of all couples who wish to be married. It may be obtained from the Bureau of Vital Statistics. It is good for ninety days from the date of issue.

You must bring the marriage license to the Rehearsal. The ceremony cannot be performed without it.

- Proper Dispensation (if necessary)

One does not have to become Catholic to marry a Catholic, but for marriages between Catholics and those of other religious traditions or those of no religious tradition, a special acknowledgment from the Archbishop allowing the marriage is necessary. While this does not obligate the non-Catholic party in any way, it is important that the non-Catholic party to the marriage understand the obligations of their Catholic spouse to celebrate their faith and to raise the children in the Catholic Church.

- Declarations of Nullity (if necessary)

If a previous marriage has been declared null, please provide a copy of the official declaration.

Planning the Wedding Ceremony

Once you have spent sufficient time in discernment and have properly prepared for your sacramental life together, you can get down to the business of planning the ceremony in earnest.

No doubt you want it to be a special occasion. A wedding liturgy celebrated in the prayerful spirit of the Church reflects the dignity and holiness of marriage and emphasizes the role of the married persons to be God's servants of love to their spouse, their family, and the world. Your wedding is part of the worship life of this parish. Following these guidelines will help you prepare for the most special and holy moment of your lives, and assure you a smooth flowing and graceful celebration of the beginning of your marriage covenant. The priest will provide you with a booklet ("Together for Life") to help you plan the ceremony. Please bring the completed document to the final meeting with the presider of the ceremony

BOUQUET OF FLOWERS TO THE BLESSED MOTHER: Flowers may be presented at the statue of the Blessed Mother located on the left side of the sanctuary. For centuries, couples have asked for Mary's prayers since it was she who interceded to her Son on behalf of a newly married couple at their wedding feast (John 2:1-II). Usually this short visit takes place following the Prayers of the Faithful.

Other wedding symbols which pertain to particular cultural traditions, (i.e. chord, coins, etc.) may be used with the consent of the pastor.

Music

Your wedding is a sacred action. Therefore all music must be sacred music. The Parish Music Director will help you to make selections of music which will enhance the celebration. However, music selections and outside musicians must meet the parish criteria. Contact the Parish Music Director, Debbie Kontess, 694-4486 for more information.

Your Rehearsal

Your rehearsal will take place a day or two before the wedding and will take about an hour. Often there are other events scheduled in the church that evening so it is vitally important that everyone arrive at least 15 minutes beforehand.

Photographs

Photographers and the wedding party are to keep in mind that the church is a sacred space. All are expected to keep their voices soft and to be reverent and respectful. You are encouraged to take as many photographs before the ceremony as possible. The taking of posed photographs in the church must cease 30 minutes before the ceremony begins. During the ceremony, photographers and videographers are not permitted in front of the first pew, nor are they permitted in the sanctuary once the liturgy has begun. Photographs may be taken afterwards, but this should be as short and discreet as possible. **No sanctuary furnishings are to be moved under any circumstances.**

Guidelines for Wedding Photographers:

Be as inconspicuous as possible

Keep out of the Sanctuary

Be respectful of presider—do not approach during the ceremony

Avoid using flash

For pictures after the ceremony—keep in mind there may be time constraints