

Wedding Policy and Guidelines – August 2009

Sacred Heart Catholic Church – Broussard

I. Introduction:

II. Church Requirements

1. The couple must make contact with the priest or deacon at least six (6) months prior to the wedding. A date can be penciled in to the church calendar but is not “confirmed” until the priest confirms this with his calendar. At this initial interview, the priest will record basic family information on the couple, discuss the church’s teachings regarding marriage and also explain to the couple the different options for a Marriage Preparation Seminar which is required by the church for all couples.
2. Every couple is required to take part in a marriage preparation program. Currently there are three different programs offered. The first is called Catholic Engaged Encounter, a weekend retreat setting held in Richard, La. for couples in the area. Two married couples and a priest give this weekend. The second program is called Engaged Couples Conference and is a one-day program – usually held on Sundays – offering a more abbreviated program on the issues related to marriage and communication. A third, more comprehensive program offered here at Sacred Heart is parish-based, called *In Home Marriage Prep*. A trained married couple (parishioners) meets one-on-one with the engaged couple for 6 sessions to cover a range of topics relating to marriage. This is an excellent, informal program that can be tailored to each couple’s needs. The priest will guide the couple in choosing the right program, as well as register them for the program.
3. The couple is required to supply the church with recent copies of their baptismal certificates. Confirmation is recommended for Catholics, but not a pre-requisite for marriage. Also, a non-Catholic Christian should supply the church with some record or statement for the church noting the date of his/her baptism in that particular faith.
4. After the couple participates in the Marriage Preparation Seminar, they are to contact the priest performing the ceremony for a follow-up meeting. The details and planning of the wedding are handled at this time, such as music and ceremony. The priest can assist the couple in selecting Bible readings for the wedding. Further meetings are at the discretion of the priest or couple. Also, couples are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before entering Matrimony.
5. Choosing a date and time: Normally weddings are scheduled at Sacred Heart on Friday evening, and also Saturday morning and afternoon. Weddings are NOT permitted on Saturday evenings. Depending on several circumstances, weddings may include the “Nuptial Mass” with communion, or they may simply be a service called the “Rite of Marriage” including scripture and prayers, along with the vows and blessings. Both are valid and appropriate ceremonies of marriage. No wedding is permitted on Easter weekend or the weekend prior. Nor are weddings permitted on the weekend before Thanksgiving, as this is the Broussard Community Fair weekend. The priest can guide you in this matter.

6. The priest performing the wedding is responsible for all the necessary paperwork. If the priest is not on staff at Sacred Heart Church, the visiting priest is normally and routinely given delegation & permission to perform the ceremony. It is his responsibility to insure that all records and information are accurate and current, and the completed paperwork is given to Sacred Heart Church **two weeks prior to** the wedding. The priest is expected to perform the rehearsal. An ordained Deacon is authorized to perform weddings without Mass. Please let the pastor or deacon know if this arrangement is chosen.
7. Sacred Heart provides a Wedding Coordinator for the wedding. This person will assist the couple in final preparations, as well as assist at the rehearsal and the ceremony. Please contact Lynette Brown, Wedding Coordinator at 837-1864 or records@shbroussard.org
8. Rehearsals are usually scheduled the day before the wedding. This too needs to be cleared with the Church calendar. You are asked to have all wedding attendants ready and prompt for the rehearsal at the given time. A rehearsal normally takes 30-40 minutes.
9. Guidelines for number of attendants: no more than 8 attendants each (bridesmaids & groomsmen). Minimum age for flower girl/ring bearer is normally four. It is expected that all those in the wedding party display reverence and decency whenever in the Church. Absolutely no food, drink, gum, etc. allowed in church at any time. The church cry room serves as the “bride’s room”. It is expected that ALL the wedding party arrive already properly dressed for the ceremony.
10. Altar Servers and Ministers: The church does not normally provide altar servers and the ceremony can take place without them. However, if the couple has family or friends whom they would like to include in this service, it is certainly permitted. Normally two lectors are chosen to read the Scripture passages for the ceremony. Also, if there is a family member or friend who is a commissioned Eucharistic Minister of the church, they are permitted to assist the celebrant.
11. Guidelines for Music: sacred music only during ceremony. For instance, a “responsorial psalm” after the first reading should be a Psalm set to music. No pop songs, songs from musicals, or inappropriate literature for music during the ceremony. However, some secular music is permitted as “prelude music” before the bridal procession. A list of your music must be pre-approved by the priest or the church music director (Melanie LeCompte) at least two weeks prior to wedding. You are free to choose your own musicians. The parish office can also supply you with a list of available musicians in the area. No pre-recorded music is permitted. Melanie LeCompte 337-685-4122 or melanielecompte@gmail.com
12. Guidelines for floral and other decorations. Remember the basic axiom: beauty in simplicity. Our church already has much natural and sacred beauty. Please consider this when making d_ cor decisions.
 - a. rented candelabra are permitted – globes to protect from wax drippage are required
 - b. pew markers should be attached in a manner that does not deface the pew with adhesive residue or scratches, etc. Ribbons or rubber bands, not tape or floral wire.

- c. aisle runner is not permitted – since it is not functional on our carpet aisle
 - d. unity candle is permitted, although an option for weddings and not required.
 - e. roses to the Blessed Mother and to the mothers are permitted
 - f. no throwing of rice, flower petals, glitter allowed either inside or outside Church
 - g. the use of trellises or arches in the aisle is discouraged
 - h. normally the bride & groom are seated on chairs to the right of the altar near the priest. The kneeler for bride/groom is placed in front of altar in the case of a wedding mass. The wedding party is seated in the first pews – either side of the main aisle.
 - i. Never remove or move any furnishings or d_e_c_o_r in the sanctuary. Seasonal d_e_c_o_r especially for such times as Advent, Lent, and Easter remain in place. Couples are reminded that weddings during LENT, although permitted, are generally discouraged but should respect the special nature of this liturgical season; they should refrain from too much pomp and display.
 - j. Please arrange to have all wedding d_e_c_o_r removed immediately after the ceremony.
 - k. If the couple wishes to leave/donate flowers to the Church for weekend, in memory of someone, please communicate this with the Church office a couple weeks prior to wedding.
13. Photographers: Most couples want to remember their wedding in the form of pictures. We offer the following guidelines for picture taking here at Sacred Heart Church.
- a. Discretion is the key to a good photographer/videographer. Remember, the photographer is there to record this event for posterity, but is not part of the wedding ceremony or the wedding party.
 - b. Movement by the photographer/videographer should not distract from the religious ceremony underway. A key word here is “presence”: knowing how to do one’s job without undue attention to oneself.
 - c. Attendants walking down the aisle are to be photographed without their stopping for a pose. The photographer can capture this moment in movement & action.
 - d. There are generally two times when movement of the photographer during the ceremony is required: during the procession of bride & bridal attendants at the beginning, and then during the actual exchange of vows. Entrance & movement in the sanctuary area (altar) is rare. Do not enter sanctuary during communion time to take pictures of bride/groom.
 - e. Normally there will be only one photographer and one videographer allowed, but again, discretion and minimal movement is requested. The choir loft is available for camera.
 - f. Picture-taking of groups inside the church should be completed one hour before ceremony begins. Picture-taking is usually permitted AFTER the ceremony, limited to 15-20 minutes and to the bridal party only. In this case, instruct wedding party to exit church and immediately re-enter through side door so as not to be delayed by wedding guests.
14. Special Circumstances:
- a. Non-parishioners: Any Catholic wishing to be married at Sacred Heart is welcome to choose this church. Priority will be given to parishioners, of course. “Parishioner” means either bride or groom OR their parents have been **registered, supporting members** of Sacred Heart Church for a minimum of one year prior to their first appointment with the priest. By “supporting” we mean regular identifiable contributions to the Church. Grandparents, aunts, etc. does not constitute you being a parishioner. The “non-

- parishioner fee” for using the Church is \$700. This is to be paid at the time of the first meeting. This amount is refundable should the wedding not take place.
- b. Marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic. In this instance, a simple “dispensation for Mixed Religion” is filed with the church. It is recommended that such a ceremony take place outside Mass, out of respect for the different faiths, since the marriage is a sign of unity and the non-Catholic is not allowed to receive communion.
 - c. Marriage of young people: If either of the parties will be under 19 years of age at the time of the wedding, then at least six months must elapse after the completion of the primary Marriage Preparation Program. Also, parental consultation and completion of the canonical free-state form must take place.
 - d. Pregnancy: If the couple had not *planned* to marry, then pregnancy, of itself will not be considered sufficient reason to enter marriage or to shorten the marriage preparation process. Pastoral discretion and advice will be offered by the priest in this matter.
 - e. Previous Marriage: Any previous marriage (Catholic or non-Catholic) is an obstacle to marriage in the Catholic Church. The parties must disclose to the priest/deacon the fact of the previous marriage for resolution. If the previous marriage is viewed as “valid” in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, then an annulment is required.
15. Civil Requirements: A State of Louisiana civil marriage license is required for weddings in Sacred Heart Church. The signing of the marriage license is usually handled at the wedding rehearsal. It is not part of the liturgical ceremony. The license may be obtained from the Parish Clerk of Court Office in Louisiana. You can obtain the license 30 days prior to the wedding and must obtain it ***AT LEAST THREE*** days prior to the wedding. Official birth certificates of both parties required. It is permitted for one person to make application for the license, as long as they possess both birth certificates. Also, a priest/deacon from out of state who will perform the ceremony in Lafayette must first be registered at a Clerk of Court’s office within Louisiana. They should contact the courthouse directly for information.

Contact Information:

Church Office: 337-837-1864

Fr. Louie Richard pastor@shbroussard.org
 Fr. Keith Landry associate@shbroussard.org
 Deacon Joe Trahan deacon@shbroussard.org

Music Coordinator:

Melanie LeCompte: 337-685-4122 melanielecompte@gmail.com

Wedding Coordinator:

Lynette Brown: 337-837-1864 (Church Office) records@shbroussard.org