

# WEDDING POLICIES & GUIDELINES

## BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH

LAREDO, TEXAS 78043

1. **WEDDING DATE.** Contact the parish office **at least six months** in advance of the planned wedding date. Please do not contract for a reception, print announcements or make any other preparations before the date has been confirmed by the parish office. After a meeting with the priest, to fill out the necessary papers and go over an informational packet, you can proceed with gathering the needed certificates and signing up for the preparation programs (Pre-Cana). After you've completed the preparation programs, you will make an appointment with the priest who will be witnessing your marriage. ***It is your responsibility to schedule these appointments.*** Call the parish office at **722-1231**. Weddings at Blessed Sacrament Church are typically celebrated on **Saturday at 3:00 p.m. or 7:30 p.m.**

### 2. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

**Baptismal Certificate.** For Catholics, you will need proof of your Baptism, Confirmation and first Holy Communion. The baptismal certificate must be recent, i.e., issued by the parish where you were baptized within six months of the wedding date. Normally, information on the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation will be noted on back of the baptismal certificate Contact the parish where you made First Communion for a copy of your First Communion certificate, or bring the original First Communion certificate from home. Other Christians will also need proof of Baptism. Catholics who have not received Confirmation and/or Eucharist should call parish office (956-722-1231) to make arrangements for instructions.

**Marriage license.** Each couple must obtain a marriage license from the Webb County court house. The license cannot be issued earlier than 90 days before the date of marriage, and must be obtained no later than 3 days (72 hours) prior to the marriage.

**Freedom to Marry form.** The questions on this "affidavit of free status", provided by the parish, must be answered and the form signed by one of the parents of the bride and the groom (or by a close relative or friend) in the presence of one of the parish staff.

**Pre-nuptial Questionnaire.** These papers will be filled out with the help of the priest on the day of your appointment with him.

**Special Circumstances** In cases of special situations (one of the parties awaiting an annulment, e.g.), a definite date for the wedding will not be set until the situation is resolved.

3. **PREPARATION PROGRAMS.** Each couple is required to attend the **Pre-Cana** retreat. Each couple is also required to take part in either the **Engaged Encounter** or the **Sponsor Couple** program, and to attend a short presentation on **natural family planning**. Details of these programs will be given to you by the priest when you meet with him. Certificates of participation will be given upon completion of the programs. Please turn them in to the parish office. **All paperwork MUST be completed thirty days (30) before the date of the wedding. It may be turned in to the parish office at any time prior to the thirty-day cut-off date.**

4. **WITNESSES.** The two witnesses (traditionally "best man" and "maid of honor") who will stand with the couple are an essential part of the wedding ceremony. They should be practicing Catholics active in their home parishes and are expected to receive Holy Communion at the wedding Mass. With the pastor's permission, non-Catholics may serve as witnesses, provided they are in good standing in their own local church. Please keep in mind that the two witnesses are the only ones required for a valid Catholic marriage. All other wedding attendants are "frosting on the cake". Too many attendants distract attention from the couple and may make your wedding look like a "show," instead of a religious ceremony.

5. **MUSIC.** It is the responsibility of the couple to contact parish music ministry: Mr. Manuel Ponce (722-1231 ext. # 20) or Ms. Veronica Ramirez (763-6919). The music at the wedding Mass must be appropriate and liturgical for a Church and religious ceremony.

6. **CHURCH USE FEE.** The fee is \$300 for registered parishioners and \$500 for others, non-registered. A non-refundable deposit of \$100 is requested at time wedding date is set. The deposit will be applied toward the fee if the wedding is held. Please pay the wedding fee at the parish office or online at least 30 days prior to the wedding date.

7. **WEDDING REHEARSAL.** Wedding Coordinator: Mrs. Patsy Salinas (956-220 5478, patzy5757@aol.com) will contact you and provide you information. The purpose of the rehearsal is to familiarize all participants with the liturgy and their involvement in it. **The rehearsal will begin on time with those who are present.** Others who come late will have to find out what they are supposed to do from other members of the wedding party.

#### 8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

**Confession.** Confessions will be heard before or after the rehearsal. Please encourage all Catholics in your wedding party to go to Confession, if necessary, in order that all may receive Holy Communion at the wedding Mass.

**Altar Server.** They may be trained altar servers who are members of your families or children of friends. You may also make arrangements for altar servers from Blessed Sacrament Parish through Deacon Roger Martinez. You may choose not to have altar servers. (Note: It is customary to give the servers a small gratuity, usually \$20.00 each.)

**Readers (Lectors.)** You may wish to choose good readers at Mass from among members of your families or wedding party. Otherwise, the celebrant will do the readings.

**Flower Arrangements.** Please do not over-do the floral arrangements. Simplicity and good taste are expected. The floral arrangements should not block the congregation's view of the altar or pulpit. The flowers in the sanctuary may be left there after the wedding as an offering to the Lord on the occasion of your wedding. The floral arrangements are usually set up between noon and 3:00 p.m. on the day of the wedding.

**Pew Decoration.** No tape or thumb tacks are allowed on the pews. Use holder, wire or string. These decorations must be removed immediately after the wedding. Arches are not allowed.

**Flower petals, rice, confetti or bird seed are prohibited in and around the church building. Save them for the reception.**

**Photographers/Videographers.** Please consult with the Wedding Coordinator in this regard.

**Church etiquette.** The vestibule, bride's room and sacristies are parts of the church and should receive the same respect as the principal part of the church. **Loud talking should be avoided.** NO chewing gum in church, TURN OFF cell phone, please! ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING OR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ARE PERMITTED IN ANY PART OF THE CHURCH. *Be sure to lock the bride's room door to prevent theft.* The parish assumes no responsibility for the security of anything left in the bride's room during the wedding.

**Cultural customs:** pillows, arras, Bible, Rosary, lazo, flowers for the BVM, unity candles are optional. If you decide to incorporate one or more of these into your wedding, please let the priest and Wedding Coordinator know during the planning process so approval can be confirmed.

*If you need more information or have questions regarding your wedding plans, please feel free to contact the parish office (722-1231) between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and noon and between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. **PLEASE REMEMBER THAT IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO COMPLETE ALL DOCUMENTS A MONTH BEFORE WEDDING DATE. DO NOT EXPECT A PHONE CALL FROM THE PARISH OFFICE.***

Revised March 2023