

# Guidelines for Weddings

St. Augustine Catholic Church in Thomasville  
&  
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Cairo, GA



**Office Number: 229-226-3624**

**Parochial Administrator:**

**Father Godfred Boachie-Yiadom**

**[Staugustinethomasville@gmail.com](mailto:Staugustinethomasville@gmail.com)**

**Wedding Time – Saturdays at: 1:00 p.m. or during Sunday Masses**

## Weddings at St. Augustine Catholic Church

In planning the various facets of the celebration of your wedding, please remember that this celebration is first and foremost the Liturgy of the **Roman Catholic** Church, a celebration of worship to give praise and thanksgiving to God. Therefore, the wedding must be planned in a way that enables all the participants to actively participate in the Church's worship during the Nuptial Liturgy.

Theme weddings are not permitted at St. Augustine.

Our Director of Weddings and/or the priest who is preparing you for marriage are the appropriate persons to answer any questions concerning what is proper for Catholic worship. All questions concerning music and musicians should be addressed to the Director of Music.

Prior to setting a date for your wedding, you must meet with the Pastor. At least 6 months' notice is required.

Those who live outside of Thomasville must be registered in a Catholic parish in the city where they live and be given written permission from their pastor for the wedding to take place here. They also should have a tie to St. Augustine Church to be married here. If permission is not granted from the out-of-town pastor/priest, the wedding cannot be at our parish.

Parishioners must ask permission from the pastor of St. Augustine for priests or deacons who come from outside the Diocese of Savannah to preside at a wedding here.

You must not set a wedding date prior to consulting with the Church and the priest or deacon who will preside. You must attend the required Marriage Preparation instruction, complete the necessary paperwork and provide a newly issued Baptismal Certificate and Marriage license obtained from the State of your residence.

### TIMES FOR WEDDINGS

St. Augustine and St. Elizabeth Seton schedule weddings at 1 p.m. **ONLY**. Rehearsals are usually scheduled for the night before the wedding. Rehearsals may be scheduled at 7 p.m.

### CONTRIBUTION FOR THE CHURCH & HALL

For those who are not a registered member or have been registered for a year or less, the donation is \$1,000 for the use of the church. For those who have been registered and tithing in the parish for a few years or longer before requesting a contract, the donation is a simple Stole fee for the Priest's services. (The amount is up to you).

A \$250 deposit is required to reserve and confirm your wedding date and the balance is due no later than one month prior to the ceremony.

The Music Director – has a separate fee- she will be able to tell you the exact fee when she meets with the bride to plan music. **The cantor's check should be given to the wedding director or to the Music Director at the rehearsal and will be delivered to the cantor on the day of the wedding.**

For the use of the Social Hall for the reception please speak to the Secretary  
Email [staugustinethomasville@gmail.com](mailto:staugustinethomasville@gmail.com) phone: 229-226-3624

## MUSIC

The Music Director is responsible for planning your music with you and also plays all weddings at St. Augustine's. If she is unable to play for any reason, she will designate a qualified substitute Pianist.

Please contact the Music Director/Organist at least two months prior to your wedding to arrange a consultation to plan your wedding music. (If you are planning to use additional musicians – see next section – you will need to contact the Music Director sooner.)

All music selections and musicians must be approved by the Music Director/Organist, subject to approval by the Pastor, at least one month prior to the wedding. *If this information has not been received by two weeks before the wedding, the Music Director will make the necessary choices, based on whether your wedding is a Mass or a ceremony only, and will attempt to notify you (using available contact information) which selections have been made.*

**Music Director:** Betty Roberds tel. 229-221-2499 email: [bettyroberds@windstream.net](mailto:bettyroberds@windstream.net)

*In the rare cases in which approval is received from both the Music Director and the Pastor for the use of a Pianist other than the Music Director/ or a substitute designated by the Director, it is your responsibility to pay that person separately. If that person assists you in planning music, the music choices made still MUST be approved by the Music Director/ NO LATER THAN two weeks before the wedding. (See previous paragraph.)*

Because a wedding is an official ceremony of the Roman Catholic Church, guidelines for sacred music in the Catholic Liturgy are to be followed.

1. Music for all weddings, both within or outside of Mass, is to follow the liturgical norms for Catholic Liturgy and must enable the “active” participation of all in attendance.
2. A wedding within the Mass should include active singing participation of the following parts:
  - Responsorial Psalm
  - Gospel Acclamation
  - Holy, Holy
  - Mystery of Faith Acclamation
  - Great Amen
  
  - The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

3. The Lord's Prayer (Our Father) is an integral part of the wedding Liturgy which is to be prayed by the People. It MAY NOT be sung as a solo, whether within or outside of Mass. The solo version may ONLY be used as a part of the prelude.
4. The singing of congregational hymns is encouraged.
5. Solos may be sung ONLY as a part of the prelude to the Liturgy, during the seating of grandmothers and mothers, as processional music, during the preparation of the Gifts at the Mass, during Holy Communion, or at the presentation of a rose to the Blessed Virgin. Your cooperation in not requesting exceptions to this will be greatly appreciated.
6. Couples may wish to print a program to help facilitate the active participation of the congregation. It is also a nice keepsake for couples and their guests. The Music Director/Organist will assist you in preparing this program.
7. ONLY SACRED AND CERTAIN CLASSICAL MUSIC may be used at St. Augustine's. Music with sacred words but written in a popular style is not permitted. Pop music or music of a secular character is not appropriate. for a wedding. Please refer to the *Music Choices at St. Augustine's* and the *Music Choices Worksheet* documents (provided separately).
8. St. Augustine's guidelines for music are exactly that – St. Augustine's guidelines – and may or may not agree with the music policies of other Roman Catholic parishes. The final decision in determining the appropriateness of wedding music and/or wedding music policies for this parish belongs to the Pastor.

### Music Director AND OTHER MUSICIANS

All weddings at St. Augustine are to use the services of the parish Music Director.

In order to ensure that the quality of liturgy is maintained, only active members of St. Augustine's cantor staff will be used to sing the Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, and Mass parts (Holy, Holy etc.). Fees for cantors are NOT included in the fees paid to the church. For a ceremony only, with nothing sung but the Responsorial Psalm and the Memorial Acclamation/Alleluia, the fee is \$50. If you wish an additional solo sung (*Ave Maria*, etc.), the fee is \$75. The fee for a full Mass is \$100 and includes solos. These fees are to be paid at the wedding rehearsal and are to be given to the Music Director.

If you wish to have instrumentalists or additional vocalists for solos (see previous section), they MUST be cleared with the parish Music Director in advance, *even if they have performed at prior weddings at our parish.* **Please do not ask anyone to sing or play at your wedding prior to your consultation with the parish Music Director. Vocalists and instrumentalists are responsible for providing for the organist legal accompaniment copies (not photocopies) for music in the key in which it is to be sung or played.** It is your responsibility to contract directly with these people and to pay them no later than at the rehearsal. (Some may require payment earlier.)

The organist can suggest/recommend vocalists and instrumentalists if you need assistance. If you engage the services of a vocalist/instrumentalist, he or she must contact the parish organist to schedule a rehearsal. The parish organist will normally be present for the Friday night rehearsal and can usually schedule a short rehearsal with other musicians immediately following the wedding rehearsal. Additional rehearsal (if needed) with other musicians may be scheduled and may incur a fee of \$25/half hour. Rehearsals with all extra musicians are mandatory.

#### Additional notes about music:

1. No portable or additional sound equipment (i.e. sound systems, amplifiers, tape players and such) may be brought into the parish church.
2. Organ and classical (orchestral) instruments may be used, including classical guitars. Classical guitar literature is permitted. Standard guitars are **NOT** permitted. All singing must be accompanied. Bagpipes may be permitted outside of the church.
3. Members of the wedding party may **not** perform at the wedding.
4. All solos are to be accompanied by Piano or piano with additional instruments if required by the music.

### **GUIDELINES FOR DECORATIONS**

There is a limited amount of space available for placement of decorations and flowers. Therefore, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. Flowers, palms, ferns, etc. may be used on the main altar.
2. Flowers and plants are to remain in the church for the weekend Masses. Rental plants may be removed on Monday or the next business day. Artificial flowers or plants are forbidden.
3. The Unity Candle is not allowed at St. Augustine's Church.
4. FOR SAFETY REASONS, THE USE OF RICE, BUBBLES, BIRDSEED, etc., IS NOT ALLOWED.
5. Small arrangements of flowers or bows may be used to mark reserved pews. Such arrangements may only be attached in such a way as not to damage the pews – nails, glue or tape that will leave a mark MAY NOT BE USED.
6. The Church will provide kneelers and chairs.
7. SINCE AISLE RUNNERS ARE DIFFICULT TO USE AND CAN BE DANGEROUS, THEY ARE NOT ALLOWED.
8. Flower girls may NOT drop fresh flower petals. The oils and color stain the tiles and are slippery. They can carry arrangements in baskets or drop silk petals. Assistance with clean-up is appreciated.
9. Remembering deceased family members is allowed during the Prayers of the Faithful.
10. Decorations may be placed outside the Church on the black railings.

**It is advised that wreaths not be put on the outside Church doors. Decorations must be removed immediately following the ceremony. A clean-up fee will be assessed if not removed.**

### **TIMES FOR DECORATING**

1. If flowers are to be delivered, the florist must arrange to have someone from the Church meet them to unlock the door. No flowers may be delivered and simply dropped at the Church before the wedding. Please let the church know if you plan to have extra flowers brought to the church.
2. The Church may be decorated before the wedding only.

### **GUIDELINES FOR BRIDAL PARTY**

#### **WOMEN:**

**At the Rehearsal:** Rehearsal attire may range from dressy casual to Sunday church dress. Dressier party clothes may also be worn. In all cases remember that it is a House of God and everyone should dress with appropriate respect and modesty.

**At the Wedding Liturgy:** Garments for the bride and her attendants need not be expensive to be tasteful and becoming. Brides may choose from many styles and fabrics, but please remember that classic and timeless will always be suitable. Again, you are being married in a House of God and how you dress should reflect your respect for Him. The church is not equipped to handle make-up, hair and other preparations. The bridal party should come ready for the wedding. **The wedding party should arrive at the church no more than 1 hour prior to the wedding service.**

#### **MEN:**

**At the Rehearsal:** Business casual or dressier attire is appropriate for the rehearsal. You are asked to respect the House of God and the importance of this sacrament.

**At the Wedding Liturgy:** The Groom and groomsmen have several options in formal attire. Choice will be dictated by the time of the wedding and the formality of the Bride's attire. Black tuxedo, suit or tails are always appropriate choices. The Groom, groomsmen, and ring bearer should arrive at the church dressed in wedding attire. The men may gather in the social hall, the Wedding Director will help with any questions you may have.

**FLOWER GIRLS AND RING BEARERS:** Any children participating in the wedding ceremony must be 5 years of age and older (NO EXCEPTIONS). Children must be disciplined and able to sit and/or stand for long periods of time. We expect no disruption to the liturgy.

### **PHOTOGRAPHER**

We gladly welcome PROFESSIONAL photographers! Please follow the guidelines listed:

1. We ask that the photographer take only one photograph (if flashes are to be used) as the bride goes up the aisle and one as the couple comes down the aisle. **NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY IS ALLOWED DURING THE WEDDING CEREMONY.** If flashes are not needed, the photographer may take as many photographs as desired from the back of the Church as long as the photographer doesn't distract the congregation.

Photographers are asked to contact the Priest in order to meet and be shown where he can move about.

- **NO PHOTOGRAPHER MAY ENTER THE SANCTUARY.**
2. If the ceremony is to be videotaped, the operator of the camera must contact the Pastor prior to the wedding for instructions on camera placement. Elaborate video equipment will not be permitted in the sanctuary. **THE VIDEO CAMERA MUST BE STATIONARY AND UNMANNED.**
  3. Pictures must be completed 30 minutes prior to the start of the wedding.
  4. Pictures must be completed 45 minutes after the wedding.
  5. **Photography before or after must in no way interfere with confessions or other Liturgical functions.**
  6. Please remind the photographer the Priest can answer his questions.
  7. Only dignified and formal photographs may be taken in the Church. There are no casual or disrespectful poses in the Church, such as sitting on the floor. The sacredness of the Church building must be preserved through appropriate conduct.
  8. Please inform your wedding guests and family members that they may **NOT** take pictures at any time during the ceremony. This may be communicated via a sentence in your printed program:  
"Photography by wedding guests is prohibited during the ceremony. A professional photographer has been engaged."
  9. If you want a picture with the priest, that needs to be the first picture after the ceremony. Please reserve a receiving line for the reception and not immediately following the recessional.

### **IN-CONCLUSION**

A final word of caution: **NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES** are allowed to be consumed or be present on Church property prior to or during the rehearsal or the Nuptial Liturgy. Catholics are reminded that it is appropriate to fast prior to a religious celebration and to feast only afterwards. **Consumption of alcoholic beverages prior to the nuptial liturgy can bring about the cancellation of the wedding liturgy.**

### **NO COST, WEDDING AT SUNDAY MASS**

For two baptized Catholics who desire a simple, no frills wedding, it is possible to be married at a Sunday Mass. In this case, only two attendants are allowed. All enter the Church with the normal procession. Bride and groom sit together with their two witnesses in the front pew. No more than four pews can be reserved for guests.

After the homily, the bride and groom come forward with their two witnesses, exchange their vows and rings. The Mass continues with the collection and offertory. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the newlyweds receive the nuptial blessing. They would join the priest at the end of the Mass in the normal recessional.

All music is what is planned for the Sunday Mass. There would be no special wedding music allowed. In other words, the couple is married at a normal Sunday Mass as a normal Sunday Mass would be celebrated with congregational singing at the procession and recessional. There would be no cost for this type of wedding. Weddings of this nature may be celebrated at the 4:30 p.m. Sunday Vigil (Saturday) and 9 a.m. Sunday Mass.