***Sts. Simon & Jude***

***Catholic Parish***

***Wedding Handbook***

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***Rev. 1/29/25***

***CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AT STS. SIMON AND JUDE CATHOLIC PARISH***

*Sts. Simon & Jude congratulates you on your engagement and welcomes the opportunity to take part in your special day! Your commitment to love one another and your intention to be married in the community of the Church is a sign of faith, joy, and hope.*

*Marriage celebrates not just the union of two people, but the reality of God’s love for all people – truly, a celebration of the Christian life! It is a call and a challenge for all of us to deepen that love and to share the love of Christ throughout our entire lives.*

*Marriage is a call to a lifestyle that is grounded in the love of God and one another; a vocational call to be more than husband and wife merely for the sake of each other but also to be of service to all God’s people.*

*Since marriage will be your life’s vocation, it should be thoroughly prepared for and seriously considered. This booklet is intended to assist you on your journey toward a union of love and to help you prepare for your wedding. Sts. Simon & Jude has established some specific guidelines for weddings taking place in our parish.*

*When you decide to take the next step in arranging for your marriage at Sts. Simon & Jude, please contact the Parish Office at 281-367-9885.*

*Subsequently, you will be contacted by the parish Wedding Coordinator who can answer your questions about the Marriage Preparation process and to assign the priest and/or deacon who will be working with you.*

*We rejoice with you as you prepare to enter into Holy Matrimony.*

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***What is a Christian Marriage?***

*“Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament. The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life.”*

 *Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC 1660-1661*

The Catholic Church believes and teaches that Christian marriage is the union of a baptized man and woman who freely enter into a covenant of love with each other in Christ for the purpose of giving and receiving love and for the procreation and education of children.

Married couples live their sacrament by the way they care for one another, love one another, and are enthusiastic for one another as husband and wife. In their daily love for each other, their children, and the larger community, they become a living sign (a sacrament) for all of how much Jesus loves us and wishes to embrace us as His brothers and sisters. As they work their way through marital and family crises and struggles, they are witness to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in all our lives.

In order to live out this ideal Christian marriage, couples must have the ability to give and receive love and to sustain an intimate relationship. They must also have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church.

* *Marriage is a covenant relationship (I will love you unconditionally), not just a contractual relationship (I will love you if you love me).*
* *The principal goals of marriage are the mutual love of husband and wife and the openness to new life.*
* *Marriage enables a couple to sustain a close intimate relationship.*
* *A Catholic marriage assumes that a couple has a relationship with Christ and His Church.*

***Your Wedding at Sts. Simon & Jude***

***Wedding Dates and Times***

Weddings may be scheduled in either the Chapel (which seats up to 100 people), or in the Church (which seats 750+ people).

Weddings are typically celebrated on Saturdays at 2:00 p.m. Friday evening weddings may be scheduled if the Church is available. Special weekday wedding dates are permitted only if the parish schedule allows.

There are no weddings on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligations.

***Rehearsal Dates and Times***

Rehearsals are generally on the evening before the wedding between 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Rehearsals are conducted by one of our Sts. Simon & Jude Wedding Coordinators and last approximately 1 hour. The wedding and rehearsal dates and times will be tentatively scheduled with the Wedding Coordinator at the first meeting.

**Presiding Clergy**: Our Priests/Deacons are pleased to preside at your wedding! If you would like to request a particular Sts. Simon & Jude priest or deacon to marry you, please let the wedding coordinator know of this request. A visiting priest or deacon is also welcome to officiate at your wedding but must receive delegation from the Pastor of Sts. Simon & Jude. The visiting priest/deacon must follow the wedding liturgy guidelines of our Parish. Clergy from outside the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston must have the testimonial of suitability for ministry from his own religious superior or Bishop before he is allowed to exercise ministry at Sts. Simon & Jude.

**Readers**: Those who are given the responsibility of reading the Holy Scripture should read in a way they “proclaim” the Word to the assembly. Be sure to give the Reader(s) copies of the readings well in advance so they will be prepared. Readers are encouraged to participate in the wedding rehearsal to become familiar with the church microphones.

**Music and Musicians**: The persons chosen for this portion of the liturgy are referred to as music ministers. Pastoral musicians are familiar with the flow and rhythm of the liturgy, can suggest suitable music, and are skilled at leading and inviting the assembly to join in the sung prayer.

**Wedding Coordinators**: Sts. Simon & Jude's Wedding Coordinators will be on site for the rehearsal and on the wedding day to ensure the celebrations proceed smoothly, promptly, and according to guidelines. Wedding Coordinators hired by the couple will, at all times, defer to the Parish Wedding Coordinator, for direction.

***The Marriage Preparation Process***

***The Initial Interviews***

At least six (6) and preferably nine (9) months to a year before the tentative marriage date couples should contact the Parish office to obtain preliminary information and to inquire about the availability of their wedding date. The Pastor’s Assistant will schedule an interview with the pastor which is the required first step for all couples.

After getting acquainted with you and briefly discussing the different facets of marriage, the many areas of joy, and challenges that you can expect, he will review with you the "Marriage Preparation Programs" you will be experiencing in order to help you discern and strengthen your life-long commitment to one another. Finally, he will assist you in completing the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Prenuptial Questionnaire.

After this initial meeting with the pastor, you will receive documentation and general wedding information and will begin preparing the file for your marriage records.

At this point, you can look at the availability of the church or chapel for your wedding date if your wedding is to take place at Sts. Simon & Jude. Payment of the Wedding Fee will be required to formally reserve the wedding space.

If your wedding ceremony is to take place at another approved location, there will be a “Preparation Only” wedding fee payment required in order to enter into the Marriage Preparation Program.

Please refer to p. 11 of this Marriage Handbook for information on the applicable Wedding Fees.

***Documents Needed***

**Baptismal Certificates**

A Baptismal Certificate issued six (6) months before the wedding date is required (not the original Baptismal Certificate). Please call the Church of your Baptism and request a new Baptismal copy with all notations on the reverse side. If you are not confirmed, we strongly recommend that you be confirmed before your marriage; however, you may still be married if not yet confirmed.

**Affidavits of Freedom to Marry**

You will each be asked to name two (2) people who know you well and would be willing to testify that you are free to marry. The people you choose can be parents, other relatives, or friends who know you well.

**Marriage License**

The marriage license should be obtained 1-2 weeks prior to the ceremony. In Texas, marriage licenses are valid for 30 days and have a 72-hour dormant period (you may not use it until 72 hours after purchase). A marriage license can be obtained at any courthouse in the state of Texas. The marriage license should be given to the Wedding Coordinator at the wedding rehearsal.

In Montgomery County, the wedding couple and the witnesses do not sign the marriage license; it is signed only by the presiding Priest or Deacon. After your wedding, the Church will record your marriage in the Sacramental Register of the Parish and mail the license back to the Montgomery County Clerk’s Office for you. The County Clerk will record the information in the public records of the County and will return a certified copy to you, usually within 6 weeks after the wedding.

**Other Documents**: In particular cases, if other documents are needed, the Priest or Deacon will ask for them.***Marriage Preparation Programs***

*Preparing for marriage is truly a life-giving experience. Engaged couples often express their sincere excitement and willingness to expend whatever time and effort it takes in the interest of having a great marriage; one that will be fulfilling and last a lifetime. We invite you to take this opportunity to not only fall more deeply in love with your fiancé, but also to fall in love with marriage!*

*The following are the required programs for engaged couples to help prepare for your life-long marriage to each other; work with your priest/deacon/ wedding coordinator to select and reserve your spots. Please refer to the Wedding Fees and Honorariums Schedule (page 13) for information on additional costs associated with some of these programs.*

***1. Prepare/Enrich (required for all couples)***

It is one of the most widely used programs for dating, engaged, newlywed, and married couples with over 3,000,000 couples and 100,000 trained facilitators and marriage mentor couples.

Its customized design will help you target the topics you need and want to talk about as a couple. Begins with a customized on-line assessment that identifies a couple's strength and growth areas.

After your initial meeting with the pastor, you will be assigned a mentor couple and begin your participation in our Program which involves a combination of one-on-one sessions with your mentor couple and participation in group sessions with them and other couples.

These sessions help the couple discuss and understand their assessment results as they are taught proven relationship skills.

***2. God's Plan For a Joy-Filled Marriage Seminar (required for all couples)***

This seminar will provide you with a rich understanding of the teachings of the Church and offers you the tools to live married life as God intended. You will attend this Seminar with other Engaged Couples. The goal of this program is to present a summary of God’s plan for marriage and to offer practical suggestions for embracing it in your own lives. *God’s Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* offers a refreshing, lib­erating vision of marriage and sexuality—one that helps you fully embrace, and even celebrate, God’s glorious plan for your life.

***3. Natural Family Planning, NFP (required for all childbearing capable couples)***

You will learn the Art of Natural Family Planning; a highly effective, healthy way to plan your family that has no side effects, is environmentally sound, and can improve your marital relationship through increased communication and husband involvement.

***4. Rejoice Counseling***

This is intended to help you and your partner discuss several important issues, ranging from finances to children so that you are both on the same page. It can also help identify conflict areas and equip you and your partner with tools to navigate them successfully.

***5. United in Christ: Wedding Liturgy Preparation***

You will be given a booklet which explains the various choices you have in planning your Wedding Ceremony. Included in the book are scriptural passages from the Old and New Testament that speak about marriage. The idea is for you to tailor the Wedding Ceremony according to what is most meaningful and pertinent to you. The selected readings need to be submitted. Please submit the selected reading 6-8 weeks prior to the wedding date.

***Wedding Fees & Honorariums***

Sts. Simon & Jude is pleased to help you prepare for and celebrate your marriage ceremony at our Parish. The fees below do not cover the entire costs of having your wedding here, but they do help defray the expenses of hosting your wedding.

**Sts. Simon & Jude Basic Wedding Fee:**

*Includes facilities and some of the programs, and materials as noted below. The Wedding Fee is due in order to reserve your date and to begin Marriage Preparation Programs. See details below for additional program fees, options, exceptions, and inclusions.*

**Church**

Main Sanctuary *(seats 750+)* *$950.00*

Chapel *(seats up to 100) $350.00*

Preparation Only (wedding ceremony elsewhere) *$300.00*

Priest and/or Deacon Stipends *Suggested $150.00*

*Clergy honorarium amount to be determined by the couple and given to the Wedding Coordinator at the wedding rehearsal*

Music Ministry

* *Pianist $250.00*
* *Cantor $250.00*

Wedding Coordinator *included*

*Your primary contact and guide through the whole process including your wedding rehearsal and ceremony*

Photography & Videography *not included*

 *Please arrange on your own. See guidelines.*

Marriage Preparation Programs: (Sessions and Materials)

1. Prepare/Enrich  *all couples $35.00*

2. God's Plan Seminar a*ll couples* *Included*

3. Natural Family Planning a*ll couples\** *Fees vary*

***Celebration of the Holy Matrimony******Liturgy***

*A Catholic wedding takes place in the context of the Sacred Liturgy. The Rite of Marriage may be celebrated within a Liturgy of the Word or within the Nuptial Mass. It is preferred, but not required, that the Nuptial Mass be celebrated when both parties are practicing Catholics. During the Rite of Marriage, the Church seeks God’s blessings for the newlyweds and the couple professes their solemn vows to God and to each other.*

***Nuptial Mass (with Eucharist)***

*Introductory Rites*

*Entrance (Opening) Song*

*Greeting and Opening Prayer*

*Liturgy of the Word*

*First Reading (Old Testament)*

*Responsorial Psalm (sung)*

*Second Reading (New Testament)*

*Gospel Acclamation (sung)*

*Gospel*

*Homily*

*Rite of Marriage*

*Consent*

*Exchange of Vows*

*Blessing and Exchange of Rings*

*Prayers of the Faithful*

***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

***Preparation of the Altar***

***Eucharistic Prayer***

*Our Father*

*Nuptial Blessing*

***Reception of Holy Communion***

*Concluding Rite*

*Final Blessing and Dismissal*

***Liturgy of the Word***

*Introductory Rites*

*Entrance (Opening) Song*

*Greeting and Opening Prayer*

*Liturgy of the Word*

*First Reading (Old Testament)*

*Responsorial Psalm (sung)*

*Second Reading (New Testament)*

*Gospel Acclamation (sung)*

*Gospel*

*Homily*

*Rite of Marriage*

*Consent*

*Exchange of Vows*

*Blessing and Exchange of Rings*

*Prayers of the Faithful*

*Our Father*

*Nuptial Blessing*

*Concluding Rite*

*Final Blessing and Dismissal*

***The Liturgical Procession***

*All members of the wedding party are full participants in the worship of God; therefore, all process in the same manner as the Christian community does at a Sunday liturgy (down the Center Aisle).*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Seating of Guests** *Prelude*Seating of Grandparents*Entrance Procession*Cross Bearer and Altar ServersDeacon (with Book of the Gospels)Presider (Priest or Deacon)Groomsmen/Bridesmaids [as couples]Ring Bearer(s) and/or Flower Girl(s)Groom and Bride | **Seating of Guests** *Prelude*Seating of Grandparents*Entrance Procession*Cross Bearer and Altar ServersDeacon (with Book of the Gospels)Groomsmen/Bridal Attendants [as couples]Ring Bearer(s) and/or Flower Girl(s)Priest or Deacon with GroomBride [alone or with father and/or mother] |

The Rite of Marriage places the couple last in the procession in order to emphasize their primary role in the celebration of the sacrament. The bride and groom confer the Sacrament of Marriage on each other and as equals assume shared responsibility for this lifelong commitment. Catholics believe that the bride and groom give themselves to each other as equal partners, and as one, they give themselves and their marriage to God. That is why the rite directs the bride and groom to walk in together or to be escorted by both their parents.

This the preferred practice according to the Church’s teaching about the Sacrament of Marriage. Does this mean it would be inappropriate to go with tradition? Not necessarily. Parents play a major role in our lives, and sharing this moment with them is a gift. But there are ways to blend tradition with what the rite asks for. For example, the groom might walk in first with his mother and/or father, followed later by the bride with her father and/or mother. Discussing these options with your family and parish ministers will also give you some valuable time to reflect on the role your family has had in your relationship and maybe even help mend divisions.

***Liturgical Recessional***

Groom and Bride

Ring Bearer(s)/Flower Girl(s)

Groomsmen/Bridal Attendants [as couples]

Altar Servers [if any],

Priest and/or Deacon

Parents (as married couples, if applicable)

Guests

***Music for Your Wedding***

Your wedding is an important occasion and in such, we encourage well performed music. Music should celebrate the Christ-centered life of love you are beginning together.

It is our desire and practice to follow the official guidelines of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, and the guidelines set forth by the American Bishops. We ask for your cooperation in selecting the proper music for your wedding.

Only liturgical music should be performed during the wedding ceremony. Hence, popular love songs and ballads, which do not directly reflect and relate to the Christian-religious dimensions of marriage, are not appropriate for the wedding ceremony. These songs should be reserved for the reception.

There should be participation by the congregation where called for by the Rite of marriage (e.g. Lord’s Prayer).

It is parish policy that the arrangements for music be made two (2) months prior to the wedding. The Wedding Coordinator has a list of accomplished vocalists and organists as well as other instrumental musicians who are available for weddings. The fees vary with each person you hire. Music and visiting musicians must be approved by the Sts. Simon and Jude Music Director, Wedding Coordinator and Celebrant.

***Miscellaneous Considerations***

***The Wedding Party***

All members of the wedding party (attendants, ushers, parents, readers, etc.) are expected to attend the rehearsal.

The bride and bridal attendants are asked to please be mindful of the necessary modesty of dress that is appropriate for the reverent respect for the Church and the liturgy.

Attendants: Bridal attendants and groomsmen should be kept within a reasonable number (1 - 7).

Children in the wedding party: Please be sure that Flower Girls and Ring Bearers are of an appropriate age of maturity.

We encourage at least two additional people (male or female), separate from the groomsmen, to serve as ushers. Their primary responsibilities are to welcome and seat guests and family members.

***Use of the Church***

**Time Allowed**: The Church is reserved for your use 1-1/2 hours before the wedding and 1 hour after the wedding. This is the time available for floral decoration, picture taking, and clean up. It is imperative that weddings must begin and end at the scheduled time.

**Clothing**: No clothing may be delivered directly to the Church or Church offices.

**Guest Register**: A guest register may be placed in the Narthex (gathering area just outside the entry to the Church).

**Receiving Lines**: No receiving lines are held at the Church.

**No Smoking, Food or Drink** (other than bottled water) is allowed in the Church.

**Rice, Birdseed, Confetti, Flower Petals, etc**. may not, under any circumstance, be thrown on the Church grounds or inside the Church.

**Aisle Runners**: For your safety, aisle runners may not be used in the Church or on the Church grounds.

***Use of the Groom’s and Bride's Rooms***

We invite the wedding party to use the Bride’s and Groom’s Rooms and adjacent restrooms for dressing. The following policies are to be observed:

1. The Rooms are available for the wedding party one and one-half (1-1/2) hours before the wedding.
2. **NO SMOKING** in this area or any area of the complex.
3. **NO FOOD OR DRINK** (except bottled water) in this area or any area of the complex.
4. **Alcohol is not permitted.**
5. For safety and security, please designate a family member or friend to care for your personal belongings. Wedding parties must remove all personal belongings from the rooms immediately following the wedding ceremony. Please assign someone, other than members of the wedding party, to make sure that this is done.
6. Please leave the rooms neat and clean.

***Flowers, Candles, Décor at the Wedding Ceremony***

The Church building of Sts. Simon & Jude Catholic Church is a sacred place where we gather, pray, and celebrate. The architectural beauty of our Church and the furnishings of the celebrations of liturgy are designed to express a sense of unity and “noble simplicity.”

Decorations used at weddings should be appropriate to the space and of a quality that reflects the dignity of Christian Marriage.

The following policies are provided in order that the beauty of the Church be respected and maintained.

**POLICIES:**

1. Decorations are not required. The natural beauty of the Church and its décor already enhance the dignity of the wedding ceremony.
2. **Décor for weekend Masses including special seasonal décor (Advent, Christmas, Lent\* and Easter) may not be changed or moved.** During these times, additional décor should be appropriate to the season. Please consult with the Wedding Coordinator for this information. \*Lent: No flowers are permitted except the ones being carried by the wedding party.
3. All existing plants, flowers and pedestals in the Church are to be left in place unless specific permission has been given to remove them. Contact the Wedding Coordinator for permission. If moved, return all items to their original place after the ceremony.
4. If flowers or plants are to be left in the Church after the wedding ceremony, please inform the Wedding Coordinator at least (1) month prior to the wedding.
5. **FLOWERS:** Two (2) arrangements may be used in the sanctuary space (altar area). Sanctuary flowers should be large enough to be visible but never obstruct the Altar. One arrangement can also be placed in front of the Ambo. No plastic or artificial flowers of any sort may be used.
6. **POTTED PLANTS:** Plants used must have waterproof pot covers or be placed in saucers to protect the carpeting. Suggestion: Use potted plants instead of flowers and then use the potted plants in the couple’s first home.
7. **PEW DECORATIONS:** Pews must not be scratched. Use of plastic clips, tape, Velcro, staples, clamps, floral pins, etc., is not allowed. Bows, greenery or floral sprays may be used only if attached with a ribbon loop.
8. **FLOWER PETALS:** Flower petals (real or artificial) may not be thrown or dropped down in the aisles. Rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, etc., may not under any circumstances be thrown on the Church grounds.
9. **RUNNERS:** Aisle runners are not allowed.
10. **CANDLES:** Existing sanctuary candles are used in the wedding ceremony.
11. **Unity Candle:** The usage of the unity candle is not part of the marriage ritual and is optional. If you do wish to have a unity candle, we do have a Unity Candle Stand that will be used. You will need to supply the unity candle and the two side candles. These must be brought with you to the wedding rehearsal.

The side candles are lit before the ceremony begins by the server or the mothers of the couple, and the couple lights the pillar candle from the respective tapers following the exchange of vows. Note: A nice custom is to use the Baptismal candles of the Bride and the Groom as the side candles of your unity candle.

1. **Other Devotions:** Presenting flowers at the Statue of the Blessed Mother is a preference for some couples. It is a practice meant to express a personal devotion and is not an official part of the rite of marriage. Please discuss with Wedding Coordinator.
2. During a Wedding Liturgy the "Arras", "Lasso", or "Veil" are allowed and take place following the exchange of rings. If a couple chooses to include the tradition of the Lasso, the most appropriate place is just before or just after the grandparents and parents for those individuals with the coins, Bible and Lasso.
3. The Church is available for floral setup no earlier than one (1) hour before the wedding unless prior arrangements have been made. Florists, please respect this schedule.
	1. Florists are responsible for reclaiming any pedestals, etc., they provide immediately after the ceremony. The Church should be left in the same order as it was found. Florists are responsible for cleaning up any leftover pedals, twigs, etc.

**A COPY OF THESE POLICIES IS FOUND IN THE APPENDIX TO GIVE TO YOUR FLORIST.**

***Photography at the Wedding Liturgy***

Photographs provide lasting memories of the wedding ceremony. The taking of these photographs, however, must never distract the clergy presider, bride, groom and their guests at the wedding from the prayerful dignity of the liturgy of Christian Marriage.

Careful observance of the following policies is expected.

***POLICIES FOR WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHERS:***

1. The Church is available for photography no earlier than **ONE AND ONE-HALF (1-1/2) HOUR** before the wedding. Pictures must be completed **15 MINUTES** before the wedding.
2. Setup of photographic equipment must be completed **10 MINUTES** before the wedding begins. **THE WEDDING LITURGY MUST START ON TIME.**
3. The photographer is not allowed in the ALTAR AREA for the taking of pictures or videos during the liturgy.
4. **NO FLASH** photography **DURING THE CEREMONY.**
5. Picture taking after the ceremony is limited to **30 MINUTES** immediately following the wedding.
6. A still-photographer is allowed to move as long as he/she remains out of the view of the congregation.

***POLICIES FOR WEDDING VIDEOS:***

1. Video equipment may be set up in the Church no earlier than **ONE (1) HOUR** before the wedding.
2. Video cameras are to remain stationary.
3. **Neither professional nor guest video people are allowed in the altar area during any part of the wedding liturgy.**
4. Persons making videos using wireless microphones must check with the Facilities Manager to insure there are no frequency conflicts with the parish’s wireless microphones.
5. Bright lights on video cameras are not allowed.

**A COPY OF THESE POLICIES IS FOUND IN THE APPENDIX TO GIVE TO YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER**

***Conclusion***

The celebration of your marriage as a sacrament is one of the most important things you will ever do. The rest of your life will be affected by what you do on that day. Please pray together for the wisdom and grace you need to prepare properly. Come to the altar prepared in spirit to be blessed by your love for each other. If any of us can be of help to you before or after your marriage, please contact us.

***Prayer for Engaged Couples***

***Lord God, Heavenly Father,***

***The source of all love,***

***The wise plan of your providence has***

***brought this couple together.***

***As they prepare themselves***

***for the sacrament of marriage***

***and pray for your grace,***

***grant that, strengthened by Your blessing***

***they may grow in their respect for one another***

***and cherish each other with a sincere love.***

***Bless and guide this couple as they prepare to***

***celebrate this beautiful sacrament.***

***Give them patience during times of stress***

***Give them reassurance in times of doubt;***

***Strengthen their love for one another,***

***for their family and friends, and for You.***

***We ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord.***

