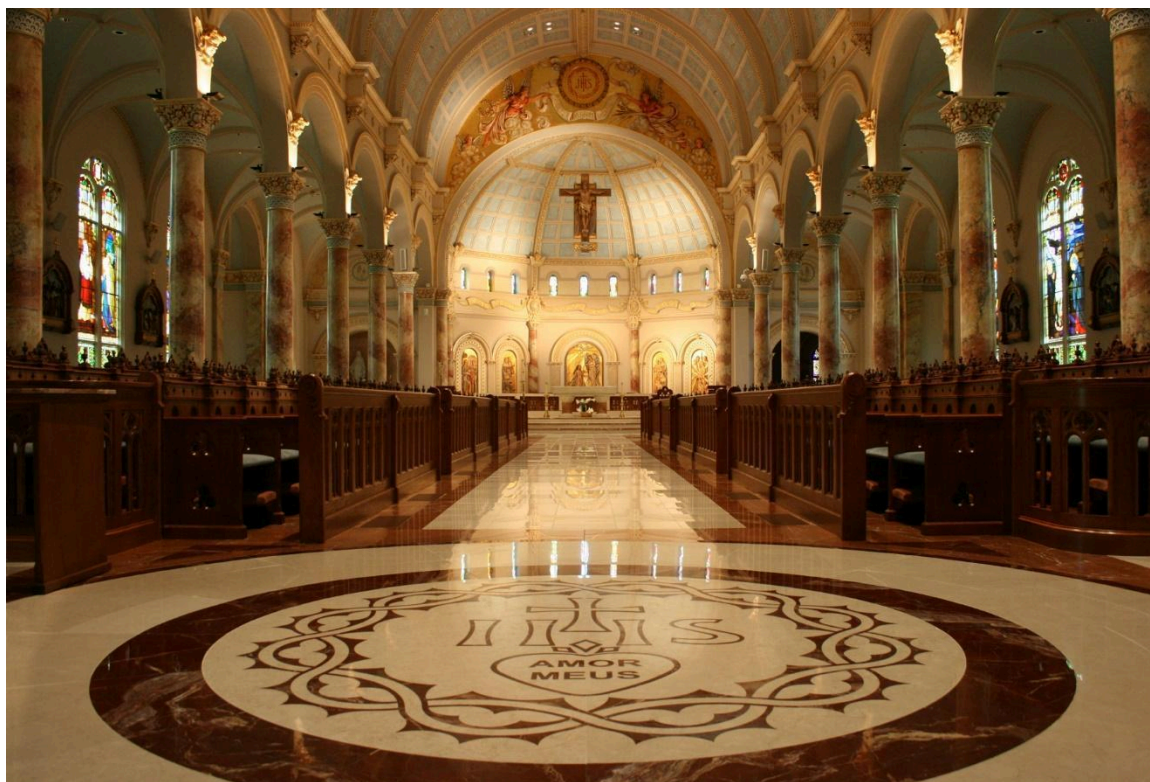


# Policies and Guidelines for Being Married in “The Motherhouse Chapel” The Chapel of the Incarnate Word



SISTERS OF CHARITY OF  
THE INCARNATE WORD

SAN ANTONIO

4503 Broadway San Antonio, Texas

***Congratulations on your engagement! We are delighted to celebrate with you as you receive the sacrament of matrimony.***

The Chapel of Incarnate Word is a sacred place for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, and as such, we ask that the Chapel be treated with respect. Marriage is a sacred vocation in the Catholic Church. The wedding ceremony, therefore, is a most sacred moment in the lives of the couple, their families and friends, and the whole Church. The wedding is first and foremost a time of prayer and everything done at a wedding must be conducive and respectful of that prayer; anything not consistent with prayer must be excluded from the ceremony and its environment.

Please read this document in its entirety, we require all couples to abide by our policies. Our policies and guidelines are in keeping with the policies of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Be assured that the wedding coordinator will assist you as you in the process of preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage and the celebration of the Wedding Liturgy.

Weddings must be scheduled at least six months in advance. The Chapel only celebrates weddings on Saturdays, pending staff availability.

Couples typically are married in their home parish, but we understand that the Chapel may be a place of significance to some couples. To be married in the Chapel of the Incarnate Word, either the bride or the groom must have a direct connection and relationship with the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, one being significant and long-term. During the application process, you will be asked to describe how you have built a relationship and community with The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. Weddings for persons who have no direct connection to the Congregation or its ministries will not be scheduled. They are encouraged to contact their home parish.

All couples wishing to be married in the Chapel of the Incarnate Word are to speak to their parish priest to determine their freedom to marry. At least one of the couple must be a practicing Catholic, registered in a Catholic parish. If both are Catholic, then they must be registered, practicing parishioners. We request a completed form from the couple's home parish(es) granting permission to marry outside of his/her registered church (Form 4).

The Chapel is not a Church with a presiding priest. Therefore, it is necessary for couples to contact a priest who will commit to preparing you for the Sacrament and presiding over the wedding. Some couples may have a different priest for marriage preparation than who is marrying them, this is allowed. A form for the presiding priest (form 5), containing detailed instructions must be completed and sent within six months of the wedding date.

We do allow weddings for couples who have been civilly married and are seeking the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage. They must meet all the criteria set by the Archdiocese of San Antonio, the Chapel of the Incarnate Word, and their presiding priest.

If a couple has already been married in the Roman Catholic Church, we will not allow a Renewal of Vows ceremony.

The Chapel capacity is limited to 500; keep in mind that parking is often limited as well.

## Fees

To be married in the Chapel of the Incarnate Word, all couples must pay \$2,000. This includes a \$500 nonrefundable deposit. A security deposit of \$300 is also required in addition to \$2,000 which is refunded provided all policies are abided by.

Payments are broken up into 3 parts:

- The first is a \$500.00 non-refundable deposit, given when the Chapel is booked.
- The second payment of \$ 750 is due within 3 months of booking when the contract is signed.
- The last payment of \$1,050 is due at the final appointment.  
This amount covers the last payment of \$750, plus the security deposit of \$300.

The above will grant you access to the building for the following time:

- An one-hour rehearsal which is held on the evening before the wedding, the Chapel being opened a half-hour before the start of the rehearsal
- Two and a half hours for the wedding which includes one hour before the ceremony, one hour for the ceremony, and a half hour to take pictures in the Chapel

### **Fees Policies:**

The date of the wedding is finalized on the Chapel calendar once the \$500 deposit is given.

The deposit is non-refundable, but the wedding date may be changed without a penalty provided the new date is available on the Chapel calendar. If a couple finds it necessary to cancel their wedding, there is no refund of the \$500 deposit.

If a couple cancels their wedding 30 days before their ceremony, a refund of the second payment will be issued. If a couple cancels their wedding within 30 days of their ceremony, no refund of the second or third payment will be issued.

If a couple cancels their wedding the day of rehearsal, or day of their wedding, no refunds of the second or third payment will be issued nor the security deposit.

The security deposit of \$300.00 will be refunded after the wedding provided all the policies are observed, there are no overages of time, and there are no damages to the Chapel. This refund will be made via direct deposit.

Any additional time than the above will be agreed upon in advance, and will be billed at \$175.00 per half-hour.

All fees must be paid before the day of the wedding

## **Chapel Policies**

### **Planning the Ceremony:**

The priest you are working with will assist you in planning your wedding liturgy. Your wedding must follow the directives and norms of the Catholic Church, though you do have options to personalize your wedding celebration. The priest will give you options for Scripture readings and petitions. If both the bride and groom are Catholic, it is most appropriate to celebrate your marriage within the context of the Eucharist. If one of the parties is of another Christian faith, it may be more appropriate to celebrate the wedding ceremony outside the Eucharist, that is, within the context of the Liturgy of the Word, which would enable all guests to fully participate. The priest who is preparing you for marriage will assist you with these decisions.

### **Practices:**

The Chapel of the Incarnate Word has specific guidelines about celebrating weddings in this space, and you will be asked to agree to these guidelines.

Number of the wedding party to no more than 7 each for the bride and groom, including the best man and maid or matron of honor. For the Bride, this means she may have up to 7, including junior bridesmaids, bridesmaids, and the maid or matron of honor. For the Groom, this means he may have up to 7, including junior groomsmen, groomsmen, and the best man.

*Remember, there are many other ways friends and family can participate in the Marriage Ceremony; for example, as: greeters, lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, readers of the Prayers of the Faithful, cross bearer, bearers of the Offertory Gifts. Please note that lectors and Eucharistic Ministers must be Catholic. Eucharistic Ministers must be trained and serve in a parish.*

The Flower Girl and/or Ring Bearer must be at least 5 years of age and able to walk down the aisle without assistance. If they are under 5, they must be accompanied by someone over the age of 16.

Everyone who participates in the procession and ceremony must abide by the dress code.

The customs of the arras, lasso (veil and cord), bible, and rosary may be observed during the wedding ceremony. The Padrinos do not walk in the procession. They will be seated before the start of the wedding. The priest will call the Padrinos to the altar at the appropriate time for the blessing and presentation of the symbols.

The lighting of the unity candle is not part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage. It is, therefore, not part of the weddings at the Chapel.

The Rite of the Sacrament of Marriage is to be strictly adhered to. Couples may not write their own vows, or deviate from the Rite in any way.

**Music:**

Music in a liturgical setting has theological and pastoral significance and must be sacred in nature. Popular music is not appropriate or allowed during the celebration of the Sacrament. *Only live music is allowed for weddings in the Chapel of the Incarnate Word and must be contracted through one of the organists from our Approved List of Organists.* No electronic instruments or sound reinforcement devices may be brought into the Chapel. Additional musicians are allowed, but must be contracted through the selected organist. If these musicians require rehearsal time other than the scheduled access time for the rehearsal and wedding, they must arrange this time with the wedding office through the organist. A vocalist is required to cantor certain parts of the Mass. The vocalist is selected and contracted through the organist.

The fee for the organists listed on our approved list is as follows:

- \$300.00 for the organist, with added fees if there is an extraordinary amount of work involved, e.g., rehearsals with soloists (other than cantor), instrumentalists, etc.
- The fee for the cantor is \$200.00, if selected and contracted through the organist

The organist you choose will guide you through the music selection process. In general, traditional, classical music is acceptable. If, however, the origin or current association of the music piece overshadows, or has the potential to distract from the liturgical and ritual focus of the sacrament, then the piece is inappropriate in a worship setting. The wedding marches written by Wagner and Mendelssohn are considered popular music because they originated in operas and were played either during bedroom scenes or in scenes which mocked the religious nature of marriage. Therefore, the Church does not consider them appropriate for a Catholic wedding.

Singing together is an essential sign of our communion with God and with each other. There will be several opportunities during your wedding for this to take place. You are encouraged to print responses and words to hymns in a worship aid (booklet). Your organist can help you with this music selection.

The Chapel Office reserves the right to review and approve the music selections.

**Photography and Videography:**

Many couples and their families desire to remember the wedding day with photographs. The following rules are meant to allow this to be done while celebrating the wedding in a dignified and religious manner.

The chapel provides a pre-approved list of professional photographers to take pictures of your wedding. The photographers on this list have signed a contract with the Chapel agreeing to be responsible for the type of pictures they take in the church and for following all the Chapel rules. The photographer and assistant are the only ones allowed to move about the Chapel taking pictures during the ceremony.

If you decide to hire a photographer off of the Chapel's pre-approved list, the photographer must sign a contract with the Chapel regarding appropriate photographer practices. If the

photographer does not sign our contract before the date of the wedding, they will not be allowed to photograph the ceremony. If the photographer breaks any of the signed rules during the wedding, they will be asked to cease taking photographs for the remainder of the time. This can lead to no pictures being taken during or after the ceremony.

Any contract negotiated between a photographer and the couple is strictly between them. The Chapel is not responsible for those contracts, other than to insist both parties follow the Chapel rules.

Videography and/or video recordings are not allowed during the wedding ceremony in the Chapel of the Incarnate Word. Content creation is not allowed during the wedding ceremony.

Guests are not allowed to take pictures or video during the wedding ceremony. This type of activity obstructs the view of others, and disrupts the prayerful participation of other guests.

The contracted professional photographer is the primary person in charge of taking the photographs during the ceremony and formal pictures after the wedding. Guests must not interfere with the formal photo session.

The formal photo session after the wedding should take 30 minutes and is limited to standing poses only on the first group of altar steps. No sitting on the altar steps is allowed by anyone, including children, and no leaning over, horizontal, or otherwise inappropriate pictures may be taken in the Chapel.

The Holy Family and the Blessed Sacrament Chapel are not backdrops for the formal session.

The photographer is not allowed to take pictures from the choir loft or stairs leading up to the choir loft. The choir loft is for musicians only.

The dress code extends to the formal photos. Wraps must be worn for all pictures inside the Chapel.

### **Flowers, Decorations, & Commemorative Items:**

You will find that the Chapel needs no decoration. The only flowers that may be brought into the Chapel are personal flowers: corsages, boutonnieres, and bouquets.

Nothing may be hung on the furniture or dropped on the floor (for example, flower petals).

No liturgical dressing already in place in the Chapel may be moved or removed.

Runners may not be used, and no banners of any kind may be carried or displayed.

Personal flowers must be delivered to the Chapel level and placed on the table near the staircase. Water must be dried from the base of bouquets, and containers of water carried out of the Chapel. The Chapel staff is not responsible for disposing of these containers.

No farewell or commemorative items (like bells, bubbles, flowers, streamers, or wands) are to be distributed inside the Chapel or used outside. Decorations are not allowed anywhere on the Chapel steps or railings, or on the Chapel grounds. No rice, birdseed, or confetti is to be thrown inside or outside. No light shows are allowed, and nothing is to be released into the air. Please consider the spirit of this rule when considering any other celebratory ideas not listed here.

### **Wedding Procession:**

The Wedding Procession is the ritual entrance of the ministers of the liturgy. The rite calls for you to either process as a couple, or you may be escorted by your parents and your witnesses.

To begin the procession, the Cross Bearer enters, followed by the liturgical ministers, followed by the Priest or Deacon (should the priest / deacon want to process in). The rest of the wedding party enters afterwards.

The “traditional” wedding marches by Wagner and Mendelssohn are not to be used. These music selections are taken from operas that do not reflect favorably on marriage as a Sacrament.

### **Dressing Areas:**

The bride’s room is available for the bride and her party as a dressing area, and the sacristy is available for the groom and his party. Neither the staff nor the Congregation is responsible for items left in either of these places.

### **Additional:**

The Chapel is a house of worship, and is to be treated with reverence.

No chewing gum, food, or drinks of any kind are allowed in the Chapel.

Cold water will be available in the bride’s room and sacristy for the couple, clergy, and wedding party and must be consumed in those areas.

No alcohol is allowed anywhere on the premises, and anyone bringing alcohol into the Chapel or onto the property will be asked to leave. Breaking this rule could cost the couple the security deposit. **If the bride or groom has consumed alcohol, the wedding will be canceled.**

Smoking is not permitted in the Chapel or on the grounds.

Cell phones are a necessary part of life, but please turn them off or on silent / vibrate for the rehearsal and the wedding. Talking on the phone while in Church is irreverent and unacceptable.

Restrooms and the water fountain are located on the first floor of the building adjoining the Chapel and can be accessed by the elevator.

We ask adults who bring children into the Chapel to be responsible for their supervision.

**Dress Code:**

First and foremost, your wedding is a Sacrament of the Church, and your attire should reflect the regard with which you hold the Sacrament of Marriage. When you and your guests enter the Chapel of the Incarnate Word, you are greeted with a quote from scripture, “My House is a House of Prayer.” The Chapel of the Incarnate Word is a place held in particular reverence by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. To respect the sanctity of marriage and the sacred space in which you are being married, we expect brides, grooms, the wedding party, and anyone participating in the ceremony to dress in modest, formal attire.

Clothing should be in keeping with the couple’s families cultural heritage, and attire should be within the cultural norm one would wear for a wedding in a sacred space. If any of the below guidelines are not in keeping with your cultural norm, please alert the wedding coordinator. The below extends to anyone who is part of the wedding party, procession, or celebration.

- The color of the bride and groom’s attire must be kept within their cultural norms for a wedding.
- Dresses and shirts must not have a plunging neckline or a bare back (below where a bra typically sits)
- Dresses and shirts must have straps over the shoulders that are wider than a “spaghetti strap”. If any dress or shirt does not comply (ie, is strapless, has thin straps, or is off-the-shoulder), a wrap, shawl, or removable sleeves etc must be worn.
- Pants, skirts, and dresses must be at least knee length.
- No sandals / flip flops / sneakers are allowed for footwear for the ceremony
- No hats are to be worn while inside the church unless culturally appropriate

Note, this extends to the rehearsal as well as the ceremony and formal pictures. If you have any questions about a particular article of clothing, please reach out to the wedding coordinator.

*We hold that the celebration of the Sacraments is Christ revealed to the People of God, “par excellence.” Therefore, the Chapel staff works directly with the bride and groom, their clergy, and other ministers to plan the details of the ceremony so that the Sacrament is worthily celebrated. Chapel staff will advise the couple regarding the order of the procession, and work with the clergy to run the rehearsal. Wedding Coordinators may attend meetings and come to the Chapel as guests of the couple, but must not interfere with the liturgical duties of the Chapel staff.*

## Process

### **Inquiry:**

After the couples send in an inquiry, the wedding coordinator will respond within one week.

If a couple is eligible, and the date is available for a wedding, there will be a temporary hold placed on the chapel calendar. This date will be held for two weeks. If the couple does not respond with the appropriate forms within two weeks of the wedding coordinator's email, the date will be released.

The wedding coordinator will respond via email to the couple directing you to officially request to be married in the Chapel of the Incarnate Word. This includes completing the **General Information Form** (Form 1). Baptism and Confirmation dates are required on your general information form (as applicable); the Chapel Office **does not** need a copy of the certificates. Additionally, you must write a letter officially requesting your desire to be married in the Chapel and explaining your direct connection to the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. Please refer to the **sample letter** (form 2) to guide you in your request.

The Wedding Coordinator and Chapel Coordinator will review both these forms, and notify you within one week of the decision.

### **Review Chapel and Policies:**

When approved, the wedding coordinator will reach out to schedule a first meeting which can be either virtual or in-person. If the meeting takes place in person, a tour of the Chapel will be given, along with all of the areas that will be available on the day of the wedding (dressing areas, etc.).

*If the first meeting takes place virtually, a couple can email the wedding coordinator to request a tour of the Chapel at a later time.*

The wedding coordinator will review and explain all policies, processes, contracts, and forms during the first meeting. This is the best time to ask questions.

Due within two weeks of the first meeting is the \$500 non-refundable deposit.

If you are confident you wish to proceed with holding the wedding at the chapel, you may bring it to the first appointment. If you wish to wait until after the meeting to further review the policies (or if the meeting is virtual), you can drop off the payment or mail your deposit along with **Payment 1 Form** within two weeks of the first meeting.

Once the deposit is received, the temporary hold will be replaced with a permanent hold on the calendar.

*Note: If another couple inquires about having a wedding on a date that is temporarily held, both couples will be notified of the inquiry and hold on the calendar. The second couple may start the process of officially requesting and touring the chapel while a temporary hold is still in place, but the date will not be given to the second couple unless the first couple does not submit their materials on time. If the first couple does not send in their forms or payment within the due date(s), the temporary hold will be released. Whichever couple officially*

*requests, is approved, has the first meeting, and sends in the deposit first will have the permanent hold on the calendar and the other couple must request a different available date.*

### **Forms Due:**

When the deposit is received, and the couple confirms the date & time of their wedding, the wedding coordinator will send the agreements and waiver through docusign. These two forms, along with the second payment, are due three months after the send date of the forms. The due date will be noted on the forms.

The second payment of \$750 may be dropped off in-person or mailed along with [Payment 2 Form](#).

The Chapel Office requires a Letter of Commitment from the presiding priest within six months of the wedding date. It is best to give the instructions (form 5) to the priest as soon as possible. This letter is due 6 months before the ceremony.

*Note: It is an Archdiocesan requirement for the priest to have at least six months of preparation time with the couple for the Sacrament of Marriage.*

All couples wishing to be married in the Chapel of the Incarnate Word are to speak to their parish priest to determine their freedom to marry. We request form 4 from the couple's home parish(es) that was written on the general information form (form 1) granting permission to marry outside the parish. Form 4 is due 6 months before the ceremony.

### **Final Appointment:**

The final appointment with the wedding coordinator is scheduled around 30 days before the wedding. This meeting can be virtual or in-person, but it is preferred that it is in person; this is a very important meeting. All the details of the ceremony will be discussed, including the order of the procession, details of the service, and names of all participants. Couples should come prepared with the following:

- Form 3 which is the information for the Chapel's official register
- Form 10 which is the day-of information for all vendors, procession and liturgy
- [Payment #3](#) which includes the security deposit. It is highly requested that this payment is brought to the meeting. However, if the meeting must be virtual, the payment is due within two weeks of the meeting.

The wedding coordinator will send a form during the third meeting allowing the security deposit to be refunded via direct deposit 1 week after the wedding.

### **Rehearsal:**

The rehearsal takes place the Friday before the wedding ceremony. The rehearsal will be led by the wedding coordinator. Though not required, a wedding planner and/or priest is welcome to attend. The doors will be opened at 5:00pm, with the rehearsal starts at 5:30pm at the latest and goes for about an hour, ending at 6:30pm at the latest.