



*Parish*

*Marriage*

*Program*

# St. Anne Catholic Church

## Sorrento, LA

# St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church

## Darrow, LA

### Parish Marriage Program

Welcome into the Parish Marriage Program! Some important decisions have led you to this point in life, and you are now entering into an important phase of your future. You are now preparing for your life together. Undoubtedly you have a number of questions about marriage preparation, and we have some facts about “how it works” to share with you.

Please feel free to ask whatever is on your mind at any point in your preparation. These pages help clarify some points of marriage preparation, but won't answer all of the questions you have. If your question is important enough to come to mind, it's important enough to ask.

**When can we set a date for the wedding?** You may have already set a temporary date with the parish priest; if not, a temporary date for the wedding can be set at the first meeting with the priest. This date is temporary, meaning that the couple or the priest can request a delay. It is not until the completion of Engaged Encounter or Life Choice that a permanent date is determined. It is suggested that invitations not be printed until the permanent date is determined.

**What is Marriage Preparation for?** Marriage preparation is designed to help a couple make a realistic decision about sharing with each other the Sacrament of Marriage in a lifelong commitment. There is a state-wide, Diocesan **Marriage Preparation Policy** (a copy enclosed) that our Parish follows carefully outlining the steps a couple need to take for marriage in the church. Marriage preparation is not magic. A couple gets out of this time what they are willing to put into it in terms of discussion, honesty, and growth in love. Special requirements are asked of a couple when there is a pregnancy. Persons under 18 years of age have special requirements also. Please read the Marriage Preparation Policy about these.

There will be some sessions with the parish priest. His task is to lead a couple to begin asking themselves (or to deepen their earlier discussions) about important questions concerning married life, dealing with issues such as communications, sexuality, children, in-laws, marriage readiness, and finances. A couple will be asked to take together a Premarital Inventory (PMI), a simple survey to help a couple explore their potential strengths and weaknesses as a couple. Time will be spent discussing where a couple finds themselves in their life of faith.

Marriage preparation concerns one's spiritual life as well as physical, and emotional. A couple will also receive reservation information concerning Engaged Encounter, and Life Choice programs created to

allow an engaged couple to learn first hand about married life from specially trained married couples and a priest.

Following the completion of this stage in preparation, the permanent date for the wedding is discussed. The couple and the priest have the option of either keeping the temporary date set earlier in the preparation or choosing to postpone the date for a later one. Postponement until later means that for important reasons the couple and/or the priest have determined that it would be in the best interest of the couple to delay the marriage. The couple and the priest would then work together to solve whatever problems have caused the delay.

**After we receive a permanent wedding date, then what?** Then, the couple and the priest begin to plan the details of the wedding ceremony. The couple is asked to make many choices concerning the wedding ceremony using a book entitled “Life Together.” This planning has as its goal the prayerful celebration of a couple’s love united in Christ in the midst of the Church. The completion of necessary paperwork is also done at this time, as well as the scheduling of the rehearsal.

**What about the music?** We realize that marriage in the Catholic tradition is a sacred event. Therefore, the music which surrounds the Sacrament of Marriage should reflect the liturgy of our Church. Popular music, cinematic theses and theater pieces are suitable more for the wedding reception than for the wedding ceremony. If your planning is done with a church musician s/he would be familiar with the guidelines of the music at weddings. If your musician is not regularly a church musician, the musician must get in touch with the parish priest for a list of appropriate musical possibilities. Please submit a typed list of wedding music to the parish priest at the last meeting with him and the couple.

**What kind of photography are we allowed?** Photography of the ceremony should be done with extreme sensitivity to the sacredness of the event. It should never intrude upon the event, not be a distraction to the assembly. There should be only one photographer (professional or amateur). Video cameras are allowed in one stationary place; bright lights are not allowed. Neither the photographer nor camera equipment should be in the sanctuary area (carpeted around the altar). You should discuss these details with your photographer, and ask that s/he speak with the celebrant before the ceremony.

**What about decorating the Church?** The decor should be simple and conform to the liturgical seasons (for example, no Christmas decorations during the Advent season). In the temple of the living God, living plants and flowers are to be preferred. The Environment Committee of this Church works hard to maintain greenery and decorating the church building for weekend liturgies. While the addition of floral arrangements are welcome, the arrangements cannot get in the way of the actions of liturgy. Nothing (flowers, plants, candles) is allowed on the altar itself. Church furnishings and decoration are not to be moved for any purpose without prior permission from the priest.

Couples should carefully consider the use of candles in the center aisle. While these candles might produce a candlelight effect, they may also block the view of your invited guests who come to witness your wedding. If candelabra are used, adequate protection against wax drippings must always be provided; if such usage results in carpet damage, the part is responsible for professional cleaning and/or replacement. If the globes explode from the flame, you are liable for the medical care of persons injured.

Couples are asked to consider the negative value of expensive and extravagant weddings. There should be sensitivity to the social responsibility concerns for the poor and the unemployed in the community. It is not necessary to spend great amounts to have a happy celebration.

**What about the rehearsal?** As mentioned, the rehearsal time will be set after the permanent date of the wedding is secured. **All major participants in the wedding party must be present at the rehearsal.** The priest alone will direct the rehearsal (paid or volunteer wedding consultants are not needed). There is not music practiced during or after the rehearsal; remember to bring your list of choices from “Life Together.” The couple is to bring the wedding license for preliminary signings.

**What about the ministers of our wedding?** Your readers must be persons who are specially trained as Readers in a church parish (not necessarily this parish). Altar servers must be chosen from boys and girls who regularly serve. If your wedding is likely to have a large number of guest, please consult the priest since he may want to select a Eucharistic Minister to help distribute Communion. All of these ministers should meet with the celebrant at least thirty minutes before the wedding time in the sacristy.

**What are the fees for the wedding?** Because of the high cost of utilities and materials used, there is a usage fee of \$200.00 for parishioners and \$500.00 for non-parishioners for the church. Fees for musicians are arranged privately with them. There are no other expected remunerations for the ceremony. You are required to pay the church usage fee to the Parish Secretary before the rehearsal. If a visiting priest is witnessing your marriage, the appropriate stipend would be \$50.00 plus travel expenses. You are responsible for this payment.

**What if we are thinking about something special?** Special requests and arrangements should be discussed and cleared with the priest in advance. Please do not bring any surprises to the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony!

**What about after the ceremony?** You are welcomed to bring YOUR floral arrangements to your reception – after all, they’re yours! If you would like to leave the arrangements in church for the weekend after your reception, we’ll gladly use them at some place in the church. Please appoint one person to make sure that the aisle cloth and pew markers are removed after the ceremony.

If at any time you would like to get together to discuss any expected or unexpected problems – or to share the joys of your marriage – after marriage, please feel welcome to meet with the parish priest. By the nature of the Sacrament of Marriage, our church community has an interest in the success of your marriage and your happiness. The parish community and the parish priest are open to assisting you in any way. May we always, whether we may be, serve the Lord in the community of His Church.