



Information for your wedding at St Thomas of Canterbury, Lewisham

Congratulations on your engagement! We at St Thomas of Canterbury Lewisham hope that you will have a happy and blessed wedding day and a long and happy marriage. All the members of our parish staff are here to assist you and want to make your wedding day a special event that you will always recall with great fondness and joy.

Couples should also understand that in choosing a Catholic wedding at St Thomas of Canterbury, Lewisham they are doing more than merely hiring a venue. A wedding celebrated at our Church must be a Catholic wedding, and therefore must be celebrated in strict accordance with the rites of the Catholic Church. All aspects of the celebration must be suited to the sacredness of the place. Below we detail for you what this means in practice, and I encourage you to read the following information very carefully.

My staff and I are here to help, and I wish you a very happy wedding day!

Father Gerard Woo Ling

Parish Administrator

Key parish staff are:

Fr Gerard Woo Ling
Parish Administrator

Mrs Mona El-khoury
Parish Secretary

Mr Tofu Mataele
Caretaker

Please be aware that the parish office is located in Summer Hill, about a mile of winding Sydney one-way streets away from the Lewisham Church and that Fr Gerard administers both the parish of Lewisham and the parish of Summer Hill. Our office hours are Tuesday to Friday 9.30am until 2.30pm or by appointment.



Making a booking

Only couples free to marry in the Catholic Church may have a confirmed booking to wed at St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Church, Lewisham. If either the bride or groom has been married previously, please speak with Fr Gerard before proceeding.

In order to book our Church for your wedding you must first have a wedding celebrant. This means a Catholic Priest or Deacon who has met with you and agreed to prepare you for marriage and to celebrate your wedding (see 'finding a celebrant' below). It is expected that couples will book at least 6 months in advance of their wedding in normal circumstances.

To facilitate your wedding

You will have a firm booking only when all of the following have occurred:

- 1) we have received a completed booking form from you, and you have had an initial meeting with Father Gerard to understand how weddings at St Thomas are arranged.
- 2) we have received notification in writing from your celebrant that he has agreed to celebrate your wedding at the date, time and place specified.
- 3) we have received a completed and signed booking contract (sent to you once you have found a Priest)
- 4) we have received your donation of \$800.

It is the responsibility of the couple making the booking to ensure that they have satisfied all relevant conditions for Catholic marriage.

Times and dates for weddings

Weddings can take place at St Thomas of Canterbury on Saturday mornings at 11.00am and Saturday afternoons at 2.00pm. Our church is a busy one with both morning and evening masses on both Saturday and Sunday as well as baptisms and other activities and is a popular wedding venue. Couples should therefore carefully note the rules and regulations around times for weddings.

Please be advised that as of 1 July 2020 we no longer take bookings for weddings on Sunday.

Donations & Costs associated with Weddings at St Thomas

Couples are asked to make a **donation of \$800** to book our church for their wedding. This donation assists in the upkeep of the church.

It is also normal to give the Priest celebrating your wedding an offering for the work he has done in preparing you and celebrating your wedding. Bear in mind the typical cost of a civil celebrant when considering a suitable offering for the Priest. You should pay the Priest directly.

The costs associated with the arrangement of Sacred Music for your ceremony will be handled independently by our Music Director. These costs typically include the cost of the organist and cantor. Please note there is an additional charge for a choir or additional musicians if you choose to have them. Please note the fees for Sacred Music should be paid directly to the Music Director.



Please make your donations for the use of the Church to the following account:

Lewisham Parish Church Account

BSB: 062 784

Acc: 100000165

Please make sure you include your full name as the reference.

Finding a Celebrant

Parish priests are obliged to celebrate the weddings of their own parishioners in their own parish church. No parish priest is obliged to celebrate the weddings of non-parishioners, nor are they obliged to travel to another church to celebrate a wedding. Fr Gerard Woo Ling is unable to agree to celebrate all the weddings at St Thomas of Canterbury, Lewisham. You should, in the first instance, seek to find your own wedding celebrant. It is recommended that you begin by asking your parish priest.

Flowers, decorations, candles and confetti

With the permission of the Parish Administrator, you are able to place flowers in the church for your wedding, but we recommend you visit the Church to view the interior if you are not a Parishioner.

St Thomas' sanctuary is particularly ornate, and not all flowers and colors suit the Church. If you choose to provide floral arrangements, they must be removed from the church immediately after the wedding. If you intend to bring floral arrangements, you must notify the Parish office when returning your contract please.

You may also place simple ribbon decorations at the ends of pews. These decorations must be designed to tie around the ends of the pews and must be removed immediately after the wedding. You may not affix any form of decoration anywhere in the church as this will cause damage to the Church fixtures.

You may not throw petals, rice or confetti or release balloons or doves inside or outside the church. These are slip hazards, leave marks and a mess to clean up afterwards. Candles used in the service will be provided by the Church. You may not add elements to the marriage ceremony which are not in the Catholic marriage ritual (eg: a candle ceremony).



Music

You must contact our St Thomas Music Director to arrange music for your wedding and discuss any selections.

You are not permitted to bring your own musicians to perform at St Thomas.

Please understand this is not a negotiable arrangement and if it does not suit your plans, then please consider whether St Thomas is the right Church for your wedding.

Music should be finalized no later than 5 months prior to your wedding date.

If the Music Director is unavailable on your chosen date, he will arrange alternative musicians for you.

St Thomas Music Director's details :

Jude Amalraj

0435 830 607

jude.amalraj@gmail.com

Our Music Director has a wealth of experience and will be able to guide you in your music selection.

Love songs, movie scores, and so forth are not prayer and therefore are not suitable for use in a Catholic wedding and may not be performed at St Thomas of Canterbury, Lewisham.

Recorded music may not be used in a wedding service. The Church is a large, resonant space and the Church organ is designed to fill this space adequately and the Parish musicians are professional musicians who are experts in providing appropriate liturgical music.

When you have a confirmed booking for the church you should contact The Music Director directly to discuss the music for your wedding. St Thomas' is a popular Church for weddings so **please make contact at least 5 months in advance** to ensure there is ample time to select and rehearse your music. Payment for music at your wedding should be made directly to The Music Director or the musician he arranges for you.

Video and photographs

Photographers and videographers should always be discrete. At no time should any photographer enter the area bound by the altar rails (the sanctuary). No extra lighting, or any sort of fixture may be installed in the church. Photographers and videographers should obey the celebrant's instructions immediately if given. The service is not to be unduly delayed for the purpose of taking photographs.

Under no circumstances can your Video team use drones on the parish site. They constitute a serious risk to public safety and the safety of your guests. If they ignore this instruction, the Video company will be banned from the church and your ceremony will not begin until they have left the parish site.

Smoking in the grounds

Please note that the church and the grounds around St Thomas of Canterbury are a smoke free zone. Please do not smoke yourself and advise your guests not to smoke in the church grounds.



Cars and parking

The wedding vehicle drop off/pick up for the church is available outside the main entrance. As it is a public street, we suggest working with your car hire/driver to arrange for parking places to be held in advance of the ceremony. There is street parking around the church for guests and the basketball court in the adjacent school (at the very end of Thomas St, beside the Church) is opened for parking on weekends.

Extended or stretch vehicles may have difficulty turning at the end of the cul-de-sac in Thomas Street. To avoid the risk of accidents we recommend not booking stretch vehicles and especially stretch Hummers.

Wedding Rehearsals

Due to the nature of the church timetable, wedding rehearsals are typically scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons between 3.00pm and 6.30pm pending calendar availability.

To book a time for a wedding rehearsal, please contact the Parish office on (02) 9798 6016.

Punctuality

Your booking for the Church is for half an hour before the start time and 90 minutes after start time if a nuptial mass and 60 minutes after start time if a service. If you are seriously late, it is possible that your wedding might not proceed. Please plan to start on time and ensure that bridal cars have plenty of time to negotiate the local traffic.

Fr Gerard Woo Ling

Parish Administrator