

St. Michael Catholic Church
Guidelines for Celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony
(Updated January 2021)

St. Michael's is so honored to be part of your wedding. This is an exciting and joyful time as you prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Begin preparations early, but remember to pay special attention to your spiritual journey. We encourage you to pray together and integrate yourselves into our parish community in a special way during this period. This will help you to build a strong foundation for your married life.

1. SETTING THE WEDDING DATE

The Sacrament of Marriage may be celebrated at St. Michael's by:

First - "Parishioner"

defined as an individual (or a son/daughter of an individual) who has been a REGISTERED, ACTIVE, and CONTRIBUTING member of St. Peter Church for at least SIX (6) MONTHS prior to the day you contact the Parish Office to request a date.

Second - "Friend of St. Michael Catholic Church"

defined as an individual (or son/daughter of an individual) who has been a registered, contributing member of this organization for at least one year prior to the day you contact the Parish Office to request a wedding date.

Third - "Ancestral Connection"

includes individuals who are former contributing parishioners (or a son/daughter of former contributing parishioner), or individuals who were baptized at St. Michael Catholic Church, or whose parent(s) were baptized or married at St. Michael's. This connection to the parish must be verifiable by our records.

- Registration for a wedding and the necessary preparation must occur at least NINE (9) months before the wedding date so that all may be completed.
- Persons previously married or in special circumstances (annulment proceedings, etc.) must be in good standing with the Church in order to schedule a wedding date. Wedding dates will not be scheduled more than 15 months in advance. The church reserves the right to restrict weddings on certain dates.
- Registration is made with the Pastor or Parochial Vicar. A final wedding date will not be reserved until the Wedding Registration form has been completed. A deposit of 50% of the church fee is due within one week of this meeting. The Pastor (or his delegate, Gwen Coffee) reserves the right to approve all outside providers (e.g. photographer, videographer, florist). Please do NOT sign a binding contract with them BEFORE this initial meeting with the clergy and/or Gwen.
- Weddings cannot interfere with the regular Mass schedule or other parish events. Due to the 4:00 PM Mass, Saturday weddings may begin no later than 1:30 PM, or may begin at 7:00 PM (or 8:00 PM depending on the seasonal Saturday Hispanic Vigil Mass) or later. Weddings are allowed on another day with the Pastor's permission.
- The Wedding Rehearsal is usually held the preceding evening, at 5:00 or 5:30 PM. If the officiating minister is not assigned to St. Michael's, he must be present for this rehearsal, which lasts approximately 45 minutes. Punctuality is essential for those involved in the rehearsal and the wedding.

2. PRE-MARRIAGE PREP, EDUCATION AND DOCUMENTS

As a bride and groom preparing to enter into a sacramental union, you must attend the pre-marriage programs approved by the Diocese of Memphis.

Registration forms for these programs are available in our Parish Office and you can get them by contacting Gwen - however it is **your responsibility to sign up** for the required diocesan program.

Within nine months before the wedding, a member of our parish staff (or officiating minister if not from St. Michael's) will administer a pre-marital inventory. The results of this instrument are shared with you by a parish minister, or your officiating minister. During your meetings, you will also discuss and plan the wedding liturgy.

A Baptismal Certificate (dated within 6 months prior to the wedding) is required of Catholics. Christians of other denominations should present a copy of a baptismal record or letter from the church of baptism.

A Marriage License is required by the State of Tennessee. This license is to be given to the officiating minister at the wedding rehearsal. It is unlawful to perform a wedding without this license being in the possession of the minister. [Please refer to www.shelbycountyttn.gov for Marriage License information.]

3. CLERGY

The officiating minister is usually the Pastor, Parochial Vicar or a Deacon of the parish. If a couple wishes to invite a family friend or relative who is a Catholic priest or deacon to preside, they are welcome to do so, **but only with the Pastor's permission.**

Please discuss this with the Pastor, Parochial Vicar, Deacon or their representative during your initial meeting.

Unless other arrangements have been made with one of the priests at St. Michael's, it is the responsibility of the officiating minister to see that the pre-marital preparation has been completed and all required forms and paperwork are filed at St. Michael's before the wedding rehearsal.

If either bride or groom is not Catholic, an ordained minister from her/his Church is welcome to participate in the liturgy, with the permission of the officiating minister. *This should also be discussed in the initial meeting between the couple and the Pastor, Associate or their representative.*

If a minister of another church does participate in the ceremony, he will be contacted by the officiating minister and is also expected to attend the wedding rehearsal.

4. PLANNING THE WEDDING LITURGY

As soon as a wedding date is set: please contact Silvia Vega at silvia.vega@stmichaelmemphis.com to schedule a meeting. As Director of Music, Silvia assists the clergy in planning your wedding liturgy, guides in the selection of music, and helps with many other details.

She is responsible for the preparation of all music in the liturgy and will advise on the hiring of other instrumentalists and vocalists, if they are desired. ***Please meet with her before contracting any other musical personnel.***

Music adds greatly to the beauty and joy of the wedding; special care is taken to ensure that it is in keeping with the ritual. Vocal music should speak of the sacramental nature of the marriage covenant. Church rules prohibit secular texts; taped music is not used in Roman Catholic worship.

Fees for musicians are separate from the church fee, and determined partly by musical and liturgical needs of each wedding. These are discussed at the first consultation, and a work sheet will be provided to assist you in estimating costs. (More details in section 8).

5. PARISH WEDDING COORDINATOR

After your initial meeting with Silvia, you will be contacted by our Parish Wedding Coordinator, Gwen Coffey (901-412-7399). She assists with the wedding rehearsal and the liturgy in conjunction with the officiating Minister and the Director of Music, and cares for the needs of the wedding party and families while they are at the church.

Her professional expertise is invaluable in the smooth execution of weddings. Her fee is separate (see section 8) and discussed beforehand. It is required that our Parish Wedding Coordinator be used unless other arrangements are made by the Pastor or his delegate.

6. WEDDING PARTY MEMBERS & LITURGICAL MINISTERS

- Children chosen as Flower girls and Ring bearers should be old enough to participate in the liturgy.
- Those serving as Lectors, Gift Bearers, trained Eucharistic Ministers, and Altar Servers (aged 10 and older) are expected to attend the wedding rehearsal to prepare for their important roles in the liturgy.
- All participants in the liturgy should be mindful of the sacredness of this occasion, not only through their behavior but also in their attire. When choosing a wedding gown and bridesmaid dresses: *please remember that the wedding is taking place in a church, in front of a Tabernacle containing the Real Presence of Jesus Christ.* Therefore, MODESTY is the key word.

7. OTHER SERVICES/OUTSIDE PROVIDERS

BEFORE signing a binding contract with a florist, photographer, or videographer: The couple must have met with one of the parish clergy.

To insure cooperation with parish staff, please inform any outside providers of the information listed below. Give them the appropriate page of directives that follow these Guidelines (pages 5, 6, 7).

FLORIST/DECORATIONS

Elaborate floral arrangements are not necessary in our beautiful sanctuary. Pew nosegays and other wedding decorations must not conflict with the regular parish Mass schedule. If flowers are placed on the Altar, they are to remain there following the wedding.

If desired, Altar flowers may be dedicated in honor or memory of loved ones and this information listed in the Parish Bulletin (indicate this on the Wedding Registration form.)

Weddings are discouraged during the penitential season of Lent; when allowed, the decor should reflect the more reserved nature of this period.

Altar flowers and other décor must be removed from the church after the wedding.

Weddings celebrated within two (2) weeks after Christmas or after Easter Sunday: the parish altar flowers and other seasonal decorations may NOT be removed. *Please remind your florist of this fact if your wedding falls during one of these periods.*

Due to potential fire hazard, lighted candles may not be used, with these exceptions:

- the two candles flanking the Front Altar
- the candles on the Altar

Note: the use of a Unity Candle is not permitted at St. Michael's.
Aisle runners are not permitted as they can cause injury when placed on tile flooring.

Tacks, nails or other invasive hardware may not be used to attach decorative items to pews or other church furnishings.

Access to pews or aisles of the church may not be blocked off with ribbon or swags as this impedes the movement of people.

The Parish Office is NOT open on Saturdays. Your florist must call Gwen several days before a wedding to confirm a specific time for delivering flowers to not conflict with other parish events.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Please remember that the church is a sacred place. Photographers must cooperate with our Wedding Party Coordinator and other church staff.

Photographs may be taken during the liturgy from the choir-loft or the back of church, but without flash. Flash may be used only as the Bride enters the Church door at the start of the liturgy and as the couple recesses at the end.

Photographs may begin no more than 2 hours prior to the stated wedding time (e.g. pictures may begin at 12:30 for a 2:30 wedding.) Photographs may be taken in church until the prelude music begins (30 minutes prior to the procession). Photographs must be completed within 30 minutes after the liturgy.

Due to the 4:00 PM Mass on Saturday, the church sanctuary is not available 3:15 - 5:00 PM. Other locations may be available during this period for photographs.

VIDEOGRAPHER

The church is a sacred space. Whether professional or amateur, anyone wishing to videotape in the church sanctuary must abide by these rules:

- Personnel and equipment must not distract from or interfere with the liturgy
- One attended camera may be set up in the choir loft, and/or next to the pillar behind front pew (on either side)
- One non-attended camera may be placed behind the Presider's Chair, but only with the prior permission of the officiating Minister.
- Equipment must be in place no less than 45 minutes before the stated time of the liturgy, before the prelude music commences and the seating of guests begins.

The following is NOT allowed:

- any personnel in the Altar area or moving about the sanctuary during the liturgy • cameras requiring outside cables or external wiring
- equipment needing connection to the church's circuit breaker boxes
- the placement of cables near traffic areas - this is dangerous and unsightly

8. FEES

To cover costs of utilities, maintenance, and the services of an outside security guard:

- Parishioners cost is \$600
- Friends of St. Michael's cost is 1,100.00
- Ancestral Connection cost is \$1,600.00

A deposit of 50% is due within a week of registration, with the balance due a minimum of two (2) weeks before the wedding. In the event of a cancellation, the deposit will be returned.

A list of fees for Musician(s) and Wedding Party Coordinator (see above, Nos. 4 and 5) will be sent to the couple no less than two (2) weeks prior to the wedding by Gwen Coffee.

Musicians' fees are partially based on repertoire chosen and preparation time required; each musician's/vocalists fees may range from \$250.00-\$400.00.

The Wedding Party Coordinator's fee is partially based on size of wedding party, type of liturgy, and if a guest Minister or guest Organist is involved; this fee may range \$250.00-\$350.00.

It is usually customary to give a stipend to the officiating Minister; an amount of \$250.00 is suggested.

9. MISCELLANEOUS

- Dropping flower petals is allowed but must be cleaned up no longer than 30 minutes after ceremony. Throwing rice, birdseed, confetti, or blowing of bubbles is **not allowed on church property** to avoid injury or damage to facilities.
- Alcoholic beverages are not allowed on church premises prior to or during a wedding liturgy.
- Smoking is not permitted inside any church facility.
- Nursery facilities are not available. However, parents are welcome to sit with their child in the narthex, if needed, during the wedding. A comfortable space can be made if your coordinator is aware. Children must be supervised at all times.
- For security reasons, do not leave any possessions visible inside cars.

It is the hope of the clergy, staff, and parish family of St. Michael's Catholic Church that you and your family have a wonderful and joyful celebration in our beautiful parish.

Important Contact Information:

Gwen Coffey, *Director of Social Ministry & Wedding Coordinator:*
(901) 412-7399 gwen.coffey@stmichaelmemphis.com

Silvia Vega, *Director of Music & Vocalist*
(901) 428-3559 silvia.vega@stmichaelmemphis.com

