



WEDDING GUIDELINES & POLICIES

St. Michael Catholic Church
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We have assembled this document to inform you of specific policies and procedures for weddings within St. Michael Church. We wish you joy as we together celebrate the power of God to take two lives and make them one in His name and by His Spirit in the Sacrament of Marriage.

1. Contact the office manager as soon as possible to schedule a meeting with the pastor and prepare for the wedding. The diocese requires that you notify the church at least 6 months prior to the desired wedding date.
2. Due to the busy weekend schedule at our parish, we can only accommodate one (1) wedding on a Saturday. Weddings can be scheduled on the hour from 10 am until 1 pm on Saturday. This will allow for ample time for the celebration and pictures and give us time to prepare for the Vigil Masses which begin at 4 pm. Friday weddings are permitted. Sunday weddings are not permitted according to Diocesan policy. No weddings will be scheduled during Lent.
3. The Catholic marriage ritual is to be used for the service; therefore a couple will not be permitted to write their own vows. The traditional language of the ritual is in keeping with the sacred atmosphere of a worship service.
4. You must present the license to the Wedding Coordinator no later than the wedding rehearsal. We recommend that you apply for the marriage license at least 2 weeks prior to the wedding date. South Carolina law requires a waiting period of 24 hours.
5. For destination weddings (non-parishioners), all necessary paperwork including dispensation and/or permissions must be completed by the Catholic party's home parish. These documents must be submitted to St. Michael (through Diocese of Charleston, 901 Orange Grove Road, Charleston, SC 29407) no later than one (1) month before the wedding date. Failure to do so could result in the wedding being cancelled at St. Michael.



FOR COUPLES ALREADY LIVING TOGETHER (COHABITATION)

Although many couples in our current society live together before marriage, it remains an unacceptable practice for a Christian. In addition, studies have shown that couples who live together before marriage have much higher rates of divorce and a poorer quality of marital relationship than those who do not.

As a recent pastoral letter explains, the Church's teaching on cohabitation is not an "arbitrary" rule. Living together before marriage is a sin because it violates God's commandments. Saint Paul lists this sin – technically called "fornication" – among the sins that can keep a person from reaching heaven (see 1 Corinthians 6:9). Since you are freely choosing to be married in Christ, it is important to actually *live* the commandments He gives us. The Church does not exist merely to provide beautiful ceremonies, but to proclaim *through her members* the full, life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Your engagement is meant to be a time of grace and growth in preparing for your marriage. Couples living together are strongly urged to separate and remain chaste. All Catholics should seek to be reconciled with God and His Church by going to Confession and by going to Mass and Holy Communion regularly. This situation can be corrected if the couple separates for at least six months and provides proof of separation.

Living chastely during your remaining months of engagement will produce bountiful spiritual fruits, helping both of you to grow in the virtues of generous love, sacrificial giving, self-restraint, and good communication. These virtues are essential for a good, lasting marriage.

If a cohabiting couple chooses not to separate, the form of their wedding will be restricted. The ceremony will be very simple. Such couples will not be permitted to invite a large gathering of guests. Also, they may have only two witnesses – a best man and a maid of honor. The liturgy will be a wedding outside of Mass. To do otherwise suggests to the world that the Catholic Church condones cohabitation.

(Many points taken from Living Together, by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, 1999.)

FOR COUPLES ALREADY MARRIED CIVILLY

If you are already married by a civil authority, your marriage will be considered a convalidation (blessed by the Catholic Church). For these marriages, a simple ceremony with two witnesses is all that is required and allowed. Of course, family and friends may attend, but it is not permitted to be a large, elaborate ceremony with attendants (other than the witnesses). It is not celebrated within a Mass, but rather vows are exchanged and rings are blessed along with prayers and a blessing for the couple. In the Diocese of Charleston, a waiting period of one (1) year from the date of the civil marriage is required for the convalidation to be approved.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION – MARRIAGE PREPARATION

1. PRE-NUPTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The Presider or his delegate will complete this form with you. It requests certain biographical and attitudinal information necessary for the valid reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony. After your wedding, this information remains in the permanent files at the church. If you are a non-parishioner, this will be completed at your local parish.

2. CURRENT CERTIFICATE OF BAPTISM

Catholics must contact the church of their Baptism and request a **current, newly issued**, Certificate of Baptism, **dated within six (6) months of the wedding date**. Neither a photocopy nor the original certificate will be acceptable. A non-Catholic should request a letter on official letterhead stationery from his/her church indicating the date and place of Baptism.

3. CERTIFICATE OF CONFIRMATION

If the record of Confirmation is not recorded on the front or back of the Catholic's newly issued baptism certificate, the Catholic must request an original certificate from the church where the Confirmation was celebrated.

4. CERTIFICATE OR PROOF OF PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING (Engaged Encounter, Pre-Cana, etc.)

5. DECREE OF NULLITY IF APPLICABLE

If the bride or groom has a Decree of Nullity from a Catholic Church Diocesan Tribunal, a copy of the Decree plus a copy of the marriage license must be included in the marriage file.

6. LETTER OF PERMISSION TO MARRY AT ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

A **non-parishioner** of St. Michael must obtain a letter from his/her pastor stating that there are no impediments to the marriage and that the pastor gives permission for the wedding to occur in this church.

7. CIVIL LICENSE

A civil license for a marriage in South Carolina can be obtained from the marriage license bureau in any county courthouse in the state. The couple must apply for the license in person; you will receive the license the next day. You will be given three (3) licenses plus a self-addressed envelope. Please bring these to the church office. Please do not sign any of them. You should apply for the license a month before your wedding date. If possible, please do not wait until the week of the wedding. ***The rehearsal for the wedding will not be done without this license, nor will the wedding be celebrated without this license.***

DECORATIONS FOR THE WEDDING

Floral and candle arrangements should be appropriate for the worship service. Below is a list of guidelines to help in selecting appropriate decorations.

1. No decorations may be placed on the Altar Table.
2. No tacks, sticky florist's clay, tape or anything else that is harmful to the surface of the wood may be used to secure decorations.
3. No decorations shall be placed so as to prevent the free movement of the wedding party or priest/deacon or so as to conflict with local fire codes.
4. Care should be taken to insure that wax does not get on the floor or furnishings. The decorators will be responsible for removing candle drippings.
5. The decorations should be in place an hour before the ceremony. Special arrangements for decorating must be made through the wedding coordinator.
6. Decorations must be removed promptly after the ceremony. The church is not responsible for decorations following the conclusion of the wedding.
7. The couple must apprise their decorators of these policies.
8. It is customary that the wedding flowers by the Tabernacle be left for the weekend services.
9. No rice or birdseed is to be used. Bubbles can be used outside only.
10. The Unity Candle is not permitted in this Diocese.



PICTURES FOR THE WEDDING

Pictures are treasured possessions and provide lasting memories of your wedding; however, the taking of pictures should not interfere with the celebration of the sacrament and the worship experience during the ceremony. This wedding is, above all, a sacred moment. Listed below are guidelines designed to facilitate capturing appropriate remembrances of the ceremony.

1. Flash photographs are permitted during the ceremony. Those taking pictures should remain in their places.
2. Time exposures and video cameras without lights can be used. The camera position and procedure should be cleared beforehand with the Celebrant.
3. The photographer will not block the aisle.
4. Ushers can greatly assist by discreetly reminding guests who arrive with cameras that flash photographs may be taken after the ceremony only.
5. If you want to include the officiant in any of the pictures, please let him know before the ceremony. It is requested that these pictures be taken first.
6. It is the couple's responsibility to inform photographers of the policies above.

MUSIC FOR THE WEDDING

In the Catholic ritual music plays an integral part in the liturgy. Normally the music director will provide music. Under special circumstance an outside musician will be allowed to participate; however, the music director must approve the musician and all music.

Wedding music in the church must be sacred music. Secular love songs are not permitted during the service. Consider use of the church hymnal and the opportunity for congregational singing. The wedding consultation form will be completed at the meeting with the music director.

CHURCH WEDDING COORDINATOR

A Wedding Coordinator from St. Michael will be appointed to assist you at your wedding. She will attend and direct the rehearsal and the wedding. You are welcome to bring your own wedding planner; however, they must work with our wedding coordinator.

WEDDING FEES

The fee at St. Michael's for a wedding is \$600 for active parishioners (registered at least six [6] months prior to scheduling the wedding and evidenced by envelope use) and \$1,000 for others. Please note that this amount is all-inclusive and covers the parish donation, the church organist/cantor, the wedding coordinator and the officiant. No further payment is necessary except for an added hourly fee of \$35 for additional rehearsals with soloists or instrumentalists. In order for you to secure the date, a deposit of 50% of the fee is due when you reserve the date. Please mail or drop off the deposit and reservation form to the church office. The remaining balance is due one month before the wedding. Thank you for your kind cooperation. Note that this fee does not cover any Pre-Cana, Engaged Encounter, or other fees associated with preparation programs outside the parish.

ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH
WEDDING CEREMONY RESERVATION/INFORMATION FORM
(an on-line form is also available at www.saintmichaelsc.net)

BRIDE _____ GROOM _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE(S) _____

EMAIL(S) _____

ARE YOU REGISTERED AT ST. MICHAEL? YES NO

If not, what parish are you a member of? _____

REHEARSAL DATE _____ TIME _____

WEDDING DATE _____ TIME _____

IS THIS A MASS? YES NO

Number of female attendants (including Maid/Matron of Honor) _____

Number of groomsmen (including Best Man) _____

Is there a flower girl? YES NO Is there a ring bearer? YES NO

(these younger attendants should be at least 3 years old)

Order of Music:

Instrumental selections before wedding:

Sung selections before the wedding:

Entrances:

Grandmothers/Mothers _____

Bridal Party _____

Bride _____

Responsorial Psalm _____

Gospel Acclamation _____

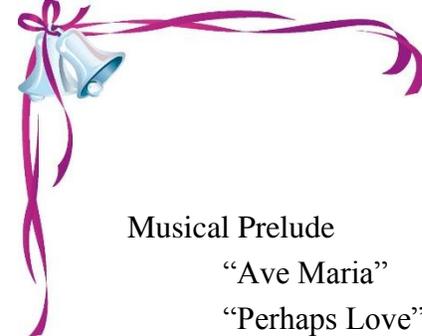
Preparation of Gifts _____

Other _____

Mass _____

Communion _____

Recessional _____



SAMPLE WEDDING PROGRAM
Rite of Marriage with Mass



Musical Prelude

“Ave Maria” Schubert
“Perhaps Love” Denver

Seating of the Mothers

“The Wedding Song” Stookey

Processional

“Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring” Bach
“The Prince of Denmark’s March” Clarke

Greeting and Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading Sirach 26:1-4,16-21 read by _____
Responsorial Psalm “The Lord is kind and merciful”
Second Reading Ephesians 5:2a,25-32 read by _____
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel Matthew 19:3-6
Homily

MARRIAGE RITUAL

Exchange of Vows
Blessing of Rings
Prayers of the Faithful read by _____
Nuptial Blessing

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Holy, Holy (#’s from hymnal)
Memorial Acclamation
Great Amen
Lamb of God
Communion Song
“On Eagle’s Wings” Joncas

Final Blessing
Recessional
“Ode to Joy” Beethoven

