Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Parish

Wedding Guidelines



You are planning to be married in the Catholic Church. Congratulations! We share your excitement and joy. Your marriage decision is surely one of the most important decisions you will make in your life. Your church wants to assist you in making certain that it is one of your best decisions. In order to assist you, the Catholic Church has certain guidelines both on the diocesan level and the parish level. This document presents those guidelines for your information.

Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

The Diocese of Birmingham requires that you contact the priest or Pastor of the parish at least six months in advance to set a date for your nuptials. Catholic weddings are to be celebrated in a church.

You are required to have your wedding on one of the Pastor's schedule prior to reserving the church.

The priest or deacon will meet with you to do some initial paperwork, including a Prenuptial Investigation and a Premarital Inventory.

Change of Alabama Marriage Law

The State of Alabama marriage law neither requires a marriage ceremony nor prohibits it. The only requirement is the submission of the correct paperwork. The parties must meet the state's requirements – namely, that applicants must be of legal age, are not already married, are not related, and are competent to enter into marriage. Once the couple has submitted the completed and notarized forms to the probate judge's office and paid the associated fees, the State accepts that they are married – even if there was no formal ceremony, whether secular or religious.

It is important that Catholics understand that the Church recognizes that it is the Sacrament of Matrimony that actually brings about their marriage before God, therefore they are still bound by the required canonical form for marriage as recognized by the Church.

When a Catholic wishes to marry another, the union must be recognized as valid before God and he or she must follow the Church's marriage laws, in addition to the civil marriage laws where he or she resides.

The following State procedures should be followed:

1. Obtain a Marriage Certificate Form from the state or county probate judge's office. This form is also available on the website of the Alabama Department of Public Health: https://dph1.adph.state.al.us/marriage/.
2. Complete the form according to its instructions and have the form witnessed by a Notary Public. The parties can sign the document separately and/or at different times, but both signatures must be notarized.
3. The notarized form must be submitted within 30 days of the latter of the two spouses' signatures to the county probate judge's office for recording, along with the filing fee from that county.
4. The effective date of the marriage will be recorded by the State as the latter of the dates of signatures of the spouses. In other words, if the spouses have their signatures notarized on separate dates, the date for the one who signed it last will determine the date of the marriage in the state records.

Our Lady of the Valley Church Policies

1. The Church is unavailable for nuptials on the following holidays: Saturday of Palm Sunday and all days during Holy Week; Easter Sunday; the Saturday following Thanksgiving, Saturday within the octave of Christmas, New Year's Eve nor New Year's Day.
2. **SMOKING, VAPING, EATING NOR DRINKING ARE NOT PERMITTED ANYWHERE WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE CHURCH.**
3. No alcoholic beverages may be served to the wedding party on the property of Our Lady of the Valley prior to the wedding rehearsal or prior to the wedding. Failure to follow this policy may result in the cancellation of the wedding.
4. If the parish facilities are used for the reception, reservations are to be made through the Church Office. Beer, wine and champagne are permitted. Hard liquor may be served, only with the assurance of the presence of a professional bartender.
5. Weddings on Saturdays will be celebrated between 10am-1pm and 6:30-7:30. Other times are at the Pastor's discretion of judgment. Weddings on other days will be scheduled after consultation with the Pastor.
6. A wedding coordinator from the parish will be present to assist with the church details of the wedding. You must contact the wedding coordinator at least 3 months prior to your wedding, Kathy Martin kmartin@olvsch.com 205-991-5488 ext 216 . Rehearsal times are between 5pm and 7pm. Please make arrangements with Kathy Martin.
7. Our Lady of the Valley does not permit the use of an aisle cloth or the throwing of birdseed or rice due to safety concerns.
8. Dress Code: **Please be conscious of modesty. Sunday best will be much appreciated at the rehearsal and at the wedding, with age-appropriate attire.**
9. Candles in the aisles are prohibited because of fire regulations. The Diocese of Birmingham does not permit the use of the unity candle, as this practice has never been part of the Order of Celebrating Holy Matrimony.
10. No furniture or appointments in the Sanctuary may be moved without the consent of the Pastor.
11. Music: Since the wedding celebration is a Sacrament and a public worship service, the musical selections must be appropriate and therefore only approved religious music may be used. Only "live" music may be used. The musicians on staff at the parish serve as cantors and accompanists; however, exceptions may be honored when there is a family member or friend who would like to participate at the liturgy. All music for weddings will be planned and coordinated with the Director of Music, Lauren Culotta at lculotta@olvsch.com 205-991-5488 ext. 4. Please contact her at least 3 months prior to the wedding date, and also please consult with her before printing any programs or worship aids. Normal rehearsal time for musicians is an hour before the wedding, and is included in the listed stipends. If there is need for extra rehearsal time over and above an hour, and/or rehearsal prior to the wedding day, an additional fee of $50 per hour, per musician will be charged.
12. The photographer may take pictures before, during and after the celebration. Informal "fun" photographs do not fit with the hallowed ambiance of the church, and should wait until you are outside the church or at the reception. For pictures during the celebration, we do not allow the use of a flash, and we require discretion in the places from which pictures are taken. Photographers must remain along the back wall of the church, and not be in any aisles. Photographers are not allowed near the altar/in the sanctuary during the wedding. We ask that you use one designated photographer. Photographs inside the church must be finished by

4:00pm, due to the Mass at 5pm on Saturday evenings. Additional photographs may be taken following the ceremony for a period not to exceed 30 minutes. All photographers' equipment must be removed from the church as soon as pictures are finished, as the church will be locked once all guests and attendants have left for the reception.

13. Flowers: (a) Please make all arrangements with your florist and remember that **only fresh flowers** are allowed in the sanctuary, and not potted plants. If your wedding date falls during one of the major liturgical seasons (Advent, Lent, Christmas and Easter) when special decorations are already in the Church, you will not be allowed to change those decorations. (b) Flowers must be in place by 3 hours before your scheduled wedding time and are to remain in the church for the weekend Masses. (c) In accordance with the approved liturgical practice, neither the Altar nor the Tabernacle table may be used for the placement of flowers. (d) Only two fresh flower arrangements are permitted, one on each side of the sanctuary. (e) Fresh petals may not be dropped by the flower girl due to the possible staining of the carpet. (f) Flowers may also be placed in the narthex. (g) Flowers are to be brought into the Church already arranged and placed in the sanctuary. NO ARRANGING OF FLOWERS IN THE SANCTUARY. ****In order to assure that fresh flower arrangements are present in the sanctuary for all weekend Masses, if you do not provide flowers for the wedding, a $100 donation to the parish flower fund is required. You will NOT be consulted for the flowers that the parish flower committee provides.**
14. Wedding Party: To maintain the Roman Catholic liturgical spirit of "noble simplicity", the number of individuals in the wedding party should reflect the dignity of the Sacrament. Please keep wedding parties at 8 attendants per side, or fewer, including the best man and maid/matron of honor. If you have a wedding party larger than 8 per side, the attendants will be allowed to process down the aisle straight into a pew, but will not be allowed to assemble in the Sanctuary. Only the Maid/Matron of Honor and Best Man will be allowed to go up into the Sanctuary area. Ring bearer and flower girl must be 4 years old or older, and only one of each. A small Bride's Room is available 4 hours prior to your wedding time. The groom and groomsmen are requested to arrive dressed for the wedding. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to remove all personal items BEFORE the commencement of your wedding ceremony, as the church will be locked once all guests and attendants have left for the reception. Your hairdresser and/or a professional makeup artist is NOT to be invited to the rooms. Please limit the number of people in the Bride's Room to the bridal party and parents only. This room only comfortably accommodates 4-6 people. The church cannot be held accountable for the damage or loss of any belongings. There is to be no food or drink brought into the Bride's Room, with the exception of bottled water. ***Note: Other events, such as baptism, may be scheduled on the same day as the wedding. The wedding party should not assume they have sole access to the church on the day of the wedding.**
15. Visiting clergy are welcome to participate and/or officiate at weddings at Our Lady of the Valley, but they must be duly delegated by the Pastor.

FEES AND STIPENDS:

Wedding Coordinator $250
Cantor $250

Accompanist $250
*Priest Stipend at the discretion of the bride and groom