Wedding Policy & Guidelines
St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church
Crowley, LA

"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish themselves a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1601)
In the Catholic Church, weddings are acts of the Church's public worship, and though the ceremony must conform to the prescribed rite of marriage, there are ample ways in which a couple can personalize the occasion. These guidelines are meant to help prepare a couple for a meaningful ceremony on that happy and holy day, and since the rite of marriage is a civil act as well as a moment of God's grace, both the Church and the State have certain requirements.

Civil Requirements:
Louisiana State Law requires that a marriage license be obtained from the Clerk of Court office no earlier than 30 days before the wedding, and at least 72 hours before the ceremony begins. The ceremony and marriage license must be witnessed and signed by the celebrant, the bride and groom, and two witnesses. The celebrant is responsible for returning the signed documents to the courthouse. Please contact the Clerk of Court office for other information on civil requirements for marriage in the state.

Diocesan Requirements:
An appointment with the Church Wedding Coordinator must be made at least six months prior to the intended wedding date. The couple should be mature and responsible enough to do this – not the bride's or the groom's parents. Any ordained Catholic priest or deacon may officiate at the wedding, especially if there is a bond of friendship or kinship shared with the couple. The parish office must still be contacted for church availability of the chosen date. Your chosen date will be 'tentative'. The official date of the wedding is not set until all fees are paid in full.

A recent copy (i.e. issued within six months) of the baptismal certificates with notations of bride and groom should be provided before the initial meeting. The certificates will have notations of first communion, Confirmation, and previous sacramental marriages. These are issued from the church where one was baptized. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to request these documents. If a person has been baptized here, we have those records on file.

Diocesan Requirements continued:
Diocesan requirements also include workshop (or "classes") of marriage retreat and preparation, and/or a brief course in Natural Family Planning. The available dates for these are provided by the priest/deacon who will be officiating at the ceremony.

Cohabiting couples:
When a couple is living together (cohabiting), a Nuptial Mass will not be celebrated. The wedding will be the celebration of the Rite of Holy Matrimony outside of Mass.

Times:
For a special reason, a wedding may be celebrated on a weekday, but weekends are the best choice. Wedding Masses are not permitted on Holy Days of obligation.
Weddings scheduled on Saturday evenings will not be a nuptial Mass, they will be the celebration of the Rite of Holy Matrimony outside of Mass.

Ideal Wedding times are: Friday, 6:00, 6:30 or 7:00 p.m., Saturday, 11:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m., 6:00 or 6:30 p.m. Weddings will not be scheduled to begin after 7:00 p.m.

Advent & Lent:
The liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent are sacred times of penance and spiritual renewal for the Church, and weddings in these seasons should be appropriately simple. Please take into consideration the "busy" aspect of these seasons, as well as the Christmas and Easter seasons, requested dates or times may not be available. Requests for these special liturgical seasons will be taken on a case-by-case basis. For weddings that are approved by the Pastor during Lent, the following must be adhered to: Flowers for the bridal party should be used at a minimum. Also, no flower arrangements or pew markers allowed. Our staff Organist/Vocalist is the only musician allowed for weddings in the Lenten Season. No horns, violins or other instruments are allowed during this season. All music must be of a solemn nature in keeping with the Season of Lent.

Decorations:
Christ is the center and the focus of all that we do in church, and the environment should reflect this. Please consider the decorations for Christmas, Easter, Advent and Lent. Any modification or movement of already established decoration will not be allowed. Ceremonies during the Lenten season should be especially simple. (see above) **The family is responsible for promptly cleaning up after any service.**

Guidelines:

Tape is never to be adhered to the pews and walls, or any other object or edifice. An aisle runner is **NOT** permitted. Nothing is to be adhered to the doors of the church. We have hooks for wreaths, season permitting. Pew markers must be attached using ribbon or cloth only and may not contain any wires or adhesive that may damage the pew. Any damage caused by pew markers or any other decorations to doors, walls, etc., will be repaired at the expense of the Bride and Groom.

The throwing of rice or birdseed is not allowed inside the church, and flower petals (fresh or silk) are not to be strewn down the main aisle for any reason. You may **not** use sparklers on the grounds of the church.

Due to space, we recommend a maximum number of 8 couples in the Bridal Party. We recommend children be at least 4 years of age. If there are more than 8 couples in the Bridal Party, only the Best Man/Maid of Honor will come forward for the vows; all other bridal party will stand in their place. Please note that if a child does not want to process down the aisle, we will not force them to do so. An adult should be with the children before the procession begins. Children are not allowed in the Sacristy before the ceremony.

Children (or any person) are not allowed to carry a banner or sign of any kind. These take away from the sacredness of the occasion and distract from the focus of Jesus Christ as the purpose of the Sacrament.

The main celebrant of the wedding ceremony, or his delegate, should be present for the wedding rehearsal. If a scheduling conflict occurs, please notify our office as soon as possible so that any necessary arrangements can be put into place.

Photography:

Photographers must check in with the sacristan before the ceremony begins for instructions All photography before or after the wedding should be done with decorum and reverence for the sacred space of the church. No photos will be permitted behind the altar, only in front of it. Photographers and videographers are not permitted into the sanctuary space (altar) during the ceremony, as this is a distraction to the sacred celebration, and they will be dismissed immediately from the ceremony. **Professionals should be used for photography/videography.**

Photographer: _____

Videographer: _____

Music:

In accord with the Catholic Church's norms for the Celebration of Holy Matrimony, all music must be of a religious nature and must be "live." No pre-recorded music of any kind may be played. All music must be approved 30 days before the wedding.

Fees:

$1,000 – Parishioners

Applies to registered parishioners and those who reside within the parish boundaries. To qualify as a registered parishioner, you must have been registered with St. Michael Church for at least six months before your initial meeting with the Wedding Coordinator.

$2,000 – Non-Parishioners

Applies to those who are not registered parishioners and do not reside within the parish boundaries.

$200 - Required Musician Fee

Applies to every wedding for the parish organist/musician. This fee is NOT reduced or waived if the couple chooses to use another musician.

Other guidelines and information:

Chewing gum or eating candy in church is strictly prohibited. Beverages of any sort are not allowed in the church, including bottled water. Alcohol consumption before or during the wedding is forbidden as it will jeopardize the validity of the sacrament. Any person, including the bride and groom, who is visibly intoxicated for the rehearsal or wedding will not be permitted to take part in the ceremony and will be asked to leave the premises.

The entire wedding party must be on time for the rehearsal and ceremony. We will begin promptly. All court documents should be brought to the rehearsal or to the parish office before the day of the rehearsal. Ushers and readers should make every effort to attend the rehearsal, and readers must be of the Catholic faith and read from Church-approved Scriptures.

There is a bridal preparation room in the church available for up to one hour before the scheduled time of the wedding. This room should be cleaned up at the end of the wedding.
The groom's party is asked to present themselves fully dressed in their proper wedding attire. (the parish hall is not an optional site for preparation).

Although a wedding planner/consultant may prove helpful to the couple in some regards (i.e. procession of groomsmen and bridesmaids), the celebrant along with the Church wedding coordinators are responsible and in charge of all liturgical procedures during the rehearsal and ceremony.

Acknowledgment & Fees

We do hereby acknowledge that we have read and understand the policy and procedures set forth by St. Michael the Archangel parish for wedding guidelines.
Our signatures below indicate our consent to abide by the aforementioned policies and procedures and the consequences which may result from our failure to do so.

$1,000.00 – All parishioners, whether registered or domiciled
$2,000.00 – All non-parishioners (outside of the domiciled area)
$200.00 – Required Musician Fee (You will write two separate checks for your fees)

As evidenced by our signatures below, we fully understand the policy requirements and do hereby agree to be responsible for the observance of the policy by all guests of the wedding and do hereby release St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church and the Diocese of Lafayette from any accidents caused by any infraction of this policy.

Groom _____

Bride _____

Parish Witness _____ Date:_____

Parishioner Fee Amount $1,000.00 Church Fee Check _____

Non-Parishioner Fee Amount $2,000.00 Non-Parishioner Fee Check _____

Musician Fee Amount $200.00 Musician Fee Check _____

Wedding Date: Day, Date and time

Rehearsal Date: Day, Date and time

Celebrant: **Fr.**

Pastor Initials _____