

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 pastor 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 rectory 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 at 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. Our office can request these documents for the couple. If a person has been baptized here, we have those records on file.

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.

Times and Seasons:

For a special reason, a wedding may be celebrated on a weekday, but weekends are the best choice. Wedding Masses are at the discretion of the celebrant of the ceremony. Wedding Masses are not permitted on Holy Days of obligation. There are no exceptions to this regulation. A wedding Mass celebrated after the 4pm Mass on Saturday (i.e. 6:00 or 6:30pm) must use the readings for that Sunday.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation begins at 3:00 p.m. on Saturdays; the latest time for the ceremony on Saturday is 1:00 p.m. Ideal 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 should be used at a minimum. No large bouquets for the bride or bridesmaids. Flowers for all females in the wedding procession must be subtle in nature. Also, no flower arrangements or pew markers allowed. All music must be approved by the Pastor. 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 and must be approved by the Pastor.

Decorations:

Decorations in the church must always be tasteful and in good form. Christ is the center and the focus of all that we do in church, and the environment should express 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 wedding couple.

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. This includes Jr. Bridesmaids and Jr. Groomsmen. We recommend children be at least 4 years of age. 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. There should not be more than 4 children included as Flower Girls/Ring Bearers.

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.

Music & Photography:

Photography and videography are permitted and should be done by professionals. Photographers must check in with the celebrant 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.

Photographer: _____

Videographer: _____

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. Traditional marches and other secular music in good taste are allowed for the processions before the wedding. If you are unsure of any piece of music, please check with the pastor for approval. Our staff organist/vocalist will oversee music for all weddings.

Fees:

\$1,000.00 – All parishioners, whether registered or domiciled (you must have registered with the parish within six months of the initial meeting with the celebrant to be considered a parishioner).

\$2,000.00 – All non-parishioners (outside of the domiciled area)

Included in either case, we provide our staff/organist for every wedding. If the couple chooses not to use this person, the fee is **NOT** reduced.

Additional Guidelines:

Cohabiting couples: when a couple is living together (cohabiting), the celebration of Mass is at the discretion of the celebrant.

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 expressly forbidden and does much to 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. **All court documents should be brought to 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. 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). This room should be cleaned up at the end of the wedding.

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.

NOTE:

At the ceremony at which Mass is not offered, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is omitted, however, Holy Communion **may be distributed to the bride and groom only.** This is at the discretion of the celebrant. The Lord's Prayer and the nuptial blessing are prayed. The ceremony ends with the closing prayer, final blessing, and dismissal. Should you have any questions at any time, please call the rectory office at (337)783-7394 or e-mail at stmichaelcrowley@gmail.com.

Acknowledgment & Deposit

We do hereby acknowledge that we have read and understood 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 (you must have registered with the parish within six months of the initial meeting with the celebrant to be considered a parishioner).

\$2,000.00 – All non-parishioners (outside of the domiciled area)

Included in either case, we provide our staff/organist for every wedding. If the couple chooses not to use this person, the fee is NOT reduced.

As evidenced by our signatures below, we fully understand the above policy requirements and do hereby agree to be responsible for observance of the policy 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 _____

(parishioner ____, non-active ____, non-parishioner __)

Wedding Date: Day, Date and time

Rehearsal Date: Day, Date and time

Celebrant: **Fr.** _____

Number of Bridesmaids/groomsmen _____

Children in ceremony _____

Ages of children _____

Groom-Bride