

Sacrament of Matrimony

The Sacrament of Matrimony

The Catholic Church believes and teaches that marriage is a sacrament, a symbol of the love that Jesus Christ has for his people, the church. As a sacrament, marriage is also a covenant by which a man and woman establish a partnership of love in Christ for the whole of their lives. Marriage is ordered towards the good of the spouse and the procreation and education of children.

As you plan your wedding, please remember that the Sacrament of Matrimony is truly unique: it is the only Sacrament that you, the couple, confer yourselves. The priest or deacon witnesses your vows and bestows the Nuptial Blessing, but you are the true celebrants of the Sacrament. And so, while your wedding is a joyous occasion for both your families, it is more importantly a sacred moment for both of you, and nothing should detract from the prayerful nature of your celebration.

Who can marry at Saint Michael's Catholic Church?

1. **Parishioners:** Registered and active members of St. Michael Church, who are free to marry in the Catholic Church, are welcome to celebrate their wedding at the Church. They must contact the Pastor or priest of their own choosing at least six months prior to the planned wedding day as well as Saint Michael's Church Office. This is true even if one party is neither a member nor a Catholic, as long as the party is also free to marry in the Catholic Church.
2. **Non-Parishioners:** Couples request to be married at Saint Michael's Catholic Church for a variety of reasons. We welcome such weddings (in accordance with the Diocese of Birmingham, AL policies and those of Saint Michael's). You are welcome to invite your pastor or a priest or deacon (relative, family friend, etc.), who is in good standing, to preside and officiate at your wedding. Note that at least one party **must** be Catholic in order for a wedding to be celebrated in a Catholic church.

It is important that you make the following arrangements:

- ❖ A visit to the parish pastor/deacon of the bride or the groom must be made a minimum of six (6) months prior to the wedding date (per Diocesan requirement). In a mixed religion marriage, visit the pastor priest of the Catholic party.
- ❖ Ask for written permission to marry outside your own parish if applicable. Ask your pastor, assistant, deacon, or other priest to officiate at your wedding if applicable. The one who agrees to officiate at the ceremony will be responsible for taking you through the marriage preparation program and fulfilling all Diocesan regulations regarding obtaining dispensation for a mixed marriage, freedom of both parties to marry in a Catholic Church, etc. unless the priest/deacon has coordinated it with another fellow priest/deacon.

Saint Michael's Wedding Guidelines

Policies of the Diocese and the Church

1. Diocesan policy requires a six-month preparation period before the wedding can take place.
2. A wedding may not be scheduled on Sundays, during the Seasons of Advent and Lent, or on Holy Days.
3. No wedding will be put on the church master calendar until the couple meets with the parish priest.
4. If one (or both) of the parties is not a member of Saint Michael Catholic Church, the first step in scheduling your wedding is to obtain a letter from your pastor verifying that you are an active and practicing Catholic in good standing.
5. The Diocese of Birmingham requires all couples to attend at an Engaged Encounter Weekend. More information on these events may be obtained through the Church Office or at the website www.birminghamcee.org
6. Should a visiting priest or deacon be the celebrant of a wedding, the couple must contact the Pastor of Saint Michael to make specific arrangements.
7. Since marriage is a sacrament, it is strongly recommended that all Catholic participants in the wedding ceremony prepare for this sacrament by receiving the sacrament of reconciliation before the Wedding.

Documents Required (*also see checklist*)

1. Baptismal Certificates and with notations of other sacraments of the Bride and Groom.
2. A Letter of Good Standing from your pastor verifying you are an active practicing Catholic in good standing. (*If not a registered member of Saint Michael Catholic Church*)
3. Pre-marriage Investigation Questionnaire. This must be filled out by either the Pastor of Saint Michael Catholic Church, or by the pastor preparing the couple for marriage. If the instruction takes place in a diocese other than Birmingham, the diocese in which the couple lives in Investigation Questionnaire may be used. In either case, it must be filled out at least six months prior to wedding date during the initial appointment with the Priest.
4. Mixed-marriages require a Dispensation from the Bishop, and the Catholic spouse must promise to practice his/her faith and raise any children in the Catholic Faith.
5. Civil marriage license: this is a civil document that must be obtained from the County Court House in Alabama. A license is valid for 30 days from the date of issue. This document should be given to the officiating minister at the rehearsal.

Scheduling a Wedding Date: A verification is needed from the priest or deacon that is responsible for your marriage preparation before a wedding date can be confirmed. The date must be at a minimum of six months in advance.

Wedding Times: Mondays through Saturdays, based on availability and the liturgical season. Weddings are not permitted on Sundays and during Lent unless special permission is granted. Weddings on Saturdays are not permitted after 2pm unless permission is granted by the parish priest. The wedding party and attendees are asked to be out of the church no later than 4pm before confession starts if the wedding is on Saturday. Our Saturday evening Mass is at 6pm with confession from 4:30-5:30pm. Wedding times are not to interfere with Saint Michael's mass schedule, confession time or any other liturgical events to avoid any potential issues

Rehearsal Times: Rehearsal dates and times must be agreeable with the church and the priest or deacon who will be officiating at the wedding. Rehearsals are usually on Friday evenings between 5:00pm and 7:00pm but can be adjusted. Please ask attendants and all who have a specific role to arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time. The rehearsal will begin promptly and will not be delayed due to absenteeism.

Fees: The fee for the use of the church is \$1,000.00 for non-parishioners (a reduced price may be granted with parish priest's approval).

Registered and active parishioners (those who attend Mass every Sunday and all Holy Days of Obligation, frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation, contribute to the financial support of the Church and attend social parish events) may use the Church at no cost.

The church facility use fee should be paid by check or cash One Month prior to the wedding date. Money may be refunded if the wedding does not take place or is called off. The fee does not include any additional costs of musicians, cantors, florists, photographers, coordinators, altar servers, security or any stipend for the priest or deacon witnessing the wedding vows.

Fee Breakdown

- Church Facility Fee (for non-parishioners)..... \$1,000.00
- Parish House for getting ready (optional)..... \$200.00
- Priest Officiant* Couples Discretion
- Music (dependent upon the personnel and instruments) consult with music director and up to couples' discretion
- Altar Servers, Lectors, and Extraordinary Minister(s) of Communion.... A small monetary gift is customary but up to couples discretion

**please note that the church facility fee goes directly to the church and not to the priest witnessing the marriage. There is no fee but a stipend for the priest is customary.*

Priest / Deacon Officiant: Saint Michael's priest and/or deacon is happy to officiate your wedding. However, you are also welcome to invite your pastor, priest or deacon who is in good standing in the Catholic Church to preside and officiate at your wedding. The visiting priest or deacon will need to write a letter asking for permission to officiate the wedding to St Michael's pastor. In addition the visiting priest or deacon will need to get written permission to perform the ceremony/mass if outside of the Diocese of Birmingham, Alabama. The couple is responsible for all travel expenses for the priest/deacon. The priest/deacon may stay the night at the parish rectory (there's a guest bedroom) with St Michael's pastor – just have the visiting priest/deacon call and confirm that it's okay with him first. Saint Michael's priest will unlock the sacristy and familiarize the visiting priest/deacon around before the ceremony or during rehearsal time as well.

Lay Ministers: Altar servers are encouraged for the wedding ceremony. You are welcome to have family or friends serve as altar servers but they must be Catholic in good standing and have experience. If you don't have any servers and would like to have some, please notify the Church Office a least two months or more in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. If you also need readers, Eucharistic ministers, gift bearers, please notify the Church Office also.

Security: Saint Michael does not have security or traffic guards. The town of Saint Florian police officers provide security for the Church for the weekend Masses at the cost of the Church. Saint Florian Police Department may provide security and stop road traffic for those crossing the street for weddings at your request with a month's notice at the individual/couple's expense. Security is normally \$30 per hour per officer. Contact Saint Florian Police Department/Town Hall for additional information and arrangements at 256-767-3690.

Church Open: The church will open at a minimum of 2 hours (or more pending the ceremony time) before your wedding to allow time for florists, musicians and guest arrival. It will remain open 2 hours from the scheduled time of your wedding ceremony. The church is normally open 30 minutes prior to the rehearsal time. One to two (1-2) hours are scheduled for the rehearsal unless more time is needed – just ask the Church Office. The Church may be open sooner than 2 hours pending the time of the wedding and rehearsal and if there is a mass earlier that day.

Wedding with or without a Mass: We highly encourage you to have your wedding with a Mass. It helps to better understand the significance and importance of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to deepen your Catholic faith. Consult the presiding priest or preparing deacon if you plan to have a wedding without Mass/Eucharist, as in the case of a mixed marriage.

Unity Candle – St Michael has a unity candle stand which you may use. Just notify the Office Staff or priest so the stand can be left out on the altar. The couple will be responsible for purchasing the candles (the office staff can help you find them through a variety of companies).

Kneelers - St Michael has two sets of kneelers – one dark brown set (they are left at the bottom of the altar and used for Communion at Mass), and a white set (typically used for weddings). Either set of kneelers may be used for the nuptial blessing and/or for the Mass. Just notify the office which ones you prefer to use and they will be left out of for the wedding rehearsal.

Seasonal Decorations and Wedding Decorations: We cannot always remove seasonal decorations to accommodate individual weddings. For weddings scheduled during Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter season, consult the Church Office staff. Aisle runners are not allowed. No rice, birdseed, bubbles, flower petals, glitter or confetti in the church, church steps or church property for safety and cleaning reasons. Flower petals are only allowed to be dropped down the center aisle by flower girls; however, they must be picked up following the ceremony. No entrances to pews or aisle ways are to be blocked or cordoned off in any way at any time. Cloth reserved pew drapings are allowed for wedding party, parents, grandparents, etc. We do not allow tape, staples, nails, screws, tacks, wire, glue, metal clips or adhesive materials to decorate for securing bows or other decorations on the pew, doors or anywhere on church property. Wax candles are not permitted unless using a unity candle. Wreaths may not be hung on the Church doors. There are screws in the brick beside the front doors where wreaths may be hung. All personal decorations, guest book and programs must be removed following the end of the ceremony.

Floral Decorations: It is not mandatory to place or leave flowers in the church; however, we would appreciate any floral arrangements placed on the main or side altars to remain there. Any pew markers and other decorations should be removed immediately following the ceremony. If you choose to leave any wedding flower arrangements on the altar for the weekend masses, please let the Church Office know so that extra flowers are not ordered. Please be aware if the

wedding date is right after Christmas or Easter, there will potentially be extra decorations, flowers and trees which are not to be removed.

Photos and Videos: Due to various time constraints, photos may be limited. Drones are not permitted. Photographers and videographers are asked to be respectful that the Church is a sacred place and not to walk up onto the sanctuary (altar) for pictures during the ceremony. No flash photography is allowed inside the Church at any time.

Punctuality: We appreciate your cooperation so as to ensure that both your rehearsal and wedding begin on time out of respect for everyone involved.

Music: The sacred nature of your wedding liturgy requires the use of approved ministers of music and the selection of appropriate music. This means no secular music is to be played at any time. Upon booking your wedding, you may contact our Music Director, Donna Peters at 256-577-1607 or by email at peterspumpkins@aol.com. She plays the organ/piano at our Sunday Masses, if you wish to meet her in person. She can also recommend singers and music song selections.

If you wish to bring in an organist/pianist/singer of your choice that is acceptable, we do require that you **must contact** our Music Director so she can familiarize the musicians where everything is. Any outside musician is responsible for any damage done to instruments and sound equipment.

Maintenance Disclaimer: Saint Michael Church is a sacred and historic building. There may be times when unforeseen circumstances force us to attend to maintenance and other repairs. In extreme instances it may involve the possibility of scaffolding or other materials which cannot be removed (especially during our ongoing stained glass window restoration project).

Alcohol is not permitted in any part of Saint Michael Church, or anywhere on the church property. Alcohol will not be tolerated. Should any be found and not put away, the police may be called.

Food: Because the Church is dedicated for worship, it is inappropriate for food or drinks to be in the Church. Babies and small toddlers are an exception.

Restrooms: There are no restrooms inside the Church building – sorry the Church was built in early 1900's. However, there are two buildings beside and across from the Church that are available for restroom use.

Pets: No animals are allowed to be a part of the wedding or inside any of the church buildings. Service dogs

Nursery: A dedicated room for babies and small children is located on the main floor of the Parish House building. We welcome little ones to use the space as need be. Parents and guardians are responsible for watching their children.

Wedding Party Getting Ready Room: The school building and Parish House building are available for the wedding party to get ready in. Please notify the Church Office if you'd like to use either facility in a timely manner so the building can be unlocked and ready. There is an

additional \$200 fee if you wish to use our newly renovated Parish House building to get ready in – it includes plenty of space and rooms for the bridal party (and groomsmen if desired) to get ready.

Modesty: Saint Michael Church is truly the “Temple of the Lord” because Christ himself is present in the Eucharist in the tabernacle. Therefore, your marriage ceremony will take place in a sacred space. Everything done for the wedding must both reflect and respect this reality. Accordingly, apparel for the bride, groom and wedding party should reflect the spirit of modest, dignity and decorum, as befits the conduct of the great Sacrament of Matrimony in the presence of the Lord. Dresses which are not acceptable for wearing during the ceremony itself, or for photographs taken inside the Church include the following:

- backless
- strapless
- plunging neckline
- does not cover the shoulder
- see through material around the bust and abdomen
- dress is shorter than knee length

If the style of dress (or dresses) for you or for your attendants is revealing; please make arrangement for a shawl or wrap to be worn for any activity taking place inside the Church. We also encourage all those attending to be dressed modestly out of respect.

Parking is included for your guests in church parking on both sides of the street (County Road 30/Church Road) during the rehearsal and wedding times. There is also a handicap parking on the west side of the Church.

Seating: The Church can seat 200-250 people which includes the nave and choir loft of the Church.

Important Info: You are also responsible for

- Meeting with the priest regularly for pre-marital counseling sessions.
- Contacting St Michael’s Music Director and engaging the musicians, vocalists, etc.
- Informing the wedding party, family and attendees and for advising them of the applicable rules.
- Fill out the attached wedding pages and return them to the church office.
- You are responsible for damage to any buildings, furniture, carpet/floor, pews and premises.
- You are responsible for leaving the facility and property in its original order.
- You are responsible for any flowers, vases, materials or lost items left on church property.

These guidelines are to serve as a means to allow us to work closely with you in this special time, while respecting the Liturgy and Sacraments of Saint Michael’s Catholic Church. We hope these guidelines assist you in your wedding planning process and answer your questions.

Please Note that the guidelines are subject to change at the Pastor’s discretion

Ceremony Details

Music / Readings	Your selection
Prelude music	
Seating of the Mothers and Bridal Party	
Bride Entrance	
1 st Reading – Old Testament	
Responsorial Psalm	
2 nd Reading – New Testament	
Alleluia	
Gospel	
Lightening of Unity Candle	
Presentation of the Gifts	
Communion Hymns	
Presentation of the Couple (exit song)	

This is to help you plan your wedding. We recommend using the “*Together for Life*” booklet by Joseph M. Champlin to better plan your wedding. A copy may be given to the couple when meeting with the priest in discuss marriage preparations. We recommend giving the priest/deacon and musicians a filled out copy of this, something similar or a program.

Any additional music or ceremony notes:

Marriage File Checklist

☐

Bride's Sacrament Certificates (with any notations)

☐

Groom's Sacrament Certificates (with any notations)

☐

Marriage Preparation Certificate (Catholic Engaged Encounter or similar)

☐

Pre-Nuptial Investigation Form / Questionnaire Form

☐

Copy of **Civil Marriage Certificate** (signed & notarized within 30 days of wedding)

If one of the parties is Non Catholic:

☐

Dispensation from Bishop citing Mixed Religion Marriage

☐

Copy of **Certified Marriage License from State** (if seeking convalidation)

If one of the parties has been previously married:

☐

Permission from Bishop for Second Marriage with Pre-Nuptial Investigation Form

☐

Copy of **Annulment**

☐

Copy of **Death Certificate** (if applicable)

If having a priest and/or deacon officiate the wedding that does not reside at St Michael's Parish:

☐

Written letter by the priest/deacon asking St Michael's pastor for permission

☐

Permission from Bishop (if outside of the Diocese of Birmingham, Alabama)

☐

Letter of Good Standing from your Parish Priest (if not a member of Saint Michael)

Information & Details

Full Name of Bride _____

Full Name of Groom _____

Maid/Matron of Honor _____

Best Man _____

Name of Bride's Parents _____

Name of Groom's Parents _____

Address and Phone Number for the Bride _____

Address and Phone Number for the Groom _____

Is Bride Catholic? Yes / No

Is Groom Catholic? Yes / No

Will the Sacrament of Matrimony be a Full Catholic Wedding Mass? Yes / No

Will Saint Michael's parish priest/deacon officiate the wedding? Yes / No

Will another priest or deacon be a part of the wedding ceremony? Yes / No

If Yes, then name and where from (Church name, City, State and Diocese):

Will you use St Michael's organist/pianist for music? Yes / No
If No, please list who it and their contact info _____

Do you need Altar Servers, Lectors, Gift Bearers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion? Yes / No
If Yes please list which ones and how many _____

Will you use a Unity Candle? Yes / No
If Yes, do you need to use our unity candle stand? Yes / No

Will you put flowers in Church? Yes / No
If Yes, Will the flowers stay on the side altars after the wedding for the weekend masses?
(so extra flowers are not ordered) Yes / No

Will you use our Parish House Building for the Wedding Party to get ready the day of?
Yes / No

Any additional information the Church should know _____



Wedding Agreement

This agreements states that Saint Michael's Catholic Church in Florence, Alabama has agreed to let _____ and _____ to use the Church as their venue for their wedding ceremony and or rehearsal. Saint Michael's agrees that no other events will be held at the respected date and times.

The wedding rehearsal will take place from _____ (time) on _____ (date).

The wedding ceremony will take place at _____ (time) on _____ (date).

The couple understands the necessary checklist and all the guidelines stated in the previous pages of this document and agrees to follow them.

The couple understands that all the proper paperwork must be filled out and returned to the church office no later than three months prior to the wedding date.

The couple understands that payment must be received no later than one month prior to the wedding date.

The couple understands and agrees all to the information, checklist, guidelines, paperwork and payment of Saint Michael Catholic Church otherwise this agreement may be declared void and the date may no longer be reserved for a wedding.

Please return Pages 8-11 to the church office. Please keep the remaining pages yourself.

Date: _____

Saint Michael Representative: _____

Bride: _____

Groom: _____

Wedding Vendor Recommendations

Here's a few recommendations – if you need any – to help with your wedding planning. You don't have to use them for your wedding.

- **Will & Dee's Florist**

Local floral shop and owned by a St Michael parishioner. They typically provide flowers most weekends, weddings, funerals and special events for the Church. They can provide flowers for the church and reception.

Frances Richardson and William Richardson (owners)

256-768-9919 - 1126 North Wood Avenue, Florence, AL 35630

- **Ava's Place**

Reception and Rehearsal Dinner Venue – conveniently 5 minutes away from the Church. It's a rustic barn venue with outdoor area.

256-415-2863 - 5131 County Road 61 Florence, AL 35634

- **Buffler House**

Reception and Rehearsal Dinner Venue – conveniently less than a mile away from the Church. It's a historic house with outdoor area.

256-767-3690 - 4317 County Road 47, Florence, AL 35630