



Steps to the Altar

St. Michael Catholic Church Memphis

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Important: It is commonly agreed upon amongst dioceses that a couple seeking marriage in the Catholic Church will follow the requirements of the diocese where THEY LIVE (or choose one of their home dioceses if they live in two different dioceses). ***It is the couple's responsibility to verify that those requirements will be acceptable in the diocese in which they are marrying, if different from the diocese where they live.*** The parish they attend where they live will prepare their file to be sent to the parish where they will get married.

Options: The couple has the option of doing Marriage Prep online, at home parish, or at local diocesan marriage prep course.

Steps Overview

STEP 1 Initial Contact with Priest, Church, & Church Wedding Coordinator

STEP 2 Assessment Process

STEP 3 Formal Marriage Preparation

STEP 4 The Wedding Liturgy

Step 1: Initial Contact with Priest & Church

- * Between **6 to 12 months** prior to your proposed wedding date, visit your home parish and contact the parish wedding coordinator.

At this point you will discuss if your wedding will be celebrated at home parish or another parish. Wedding Coordinator will facilitate all necessary communication between couple and priest/deacon.
- * **Home Parish:** Meet with your parish priest or deacon, if they will be the ones celebrating your wedding. Parish priest/deacon will take care of all necessary steps for your Marriage Prep. ***If he will not be the one celebrating your marriage,*** the parish priest will direct you to that priest for marriage prep, online prep, or diocesan class.
- * **Other Parish:** Meet with your parish wedding coordinator for all necessary steps. Coordinator will take care of getting you all necessary steps for your Marriage Prep. ***Because home parish priest will not be the one celebrating your marriage,*** couple will be directed to wedding priest for marriage prep, online prep, or diocesan class. ***Once all those steps have been met,*** all of the documentation will be sent to the home parish priest for review and approval.

All paperwork will be done at your home parish, and then your file will be sent to your wedding parish, if applicable.

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Step 2: Assessment Process

Assessment process is made at this time of your readiness for sacramental marriage, and necessary documents are gathered.

1. **PRE-MARITAL INVENTORY**, usually the [Fully Engaged](#), done at the parish with follow-up sessions, or the [Prepare and Enrich](#) Program which can also be done at the parish level.
2. **BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE**, You need a copy less than one year old, obtainable from the parish where you were baptized. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the parish where you were baptized with your full name, date of birth and parents' names. (By "baptized" the Church means baptized in any Christian tradition that baptizes in the Trinitarian formula: in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and with water.)
3. **IF YOU WERE MARRIED BEFORE**, you need to have Evidence of Death of the previous spouse, or a Declaration of Nullity.
4. **FREEDOM TO MARRY FORM**, provided by the parish.
5. **DISPENSATIONS FORMS**

In case of special circumstances, special forms will have to be filled out and permission required:

 - Catholic getting married to baptized, non-Catholic: a Request for Permission is required.
 - A Catholic person getting married to a non-Catholic, non-baptized person (Jewish, Muslim, Atheist, Mormon, etc..): a Request for Dispensation is required.
 - A Catholic person getting married outside a Catholic church (Synagogue, Temple, Christian Church, etc..): a Dispensation from the Canonical Form of Marriage is required.

If you are not sure what pertains to you, please ask parish priest.

Note: Any of these forms will take time to get approved, so *please* make sure that you address the issues with your pastor during your first meeting.

You will also be informed of the parish guidelines and of any costs or offerings involved.

In the event that the priest or the deacon believes that you are not ready to go forward, he will give you reasons for his recommendation that you delay your marriage.

If you disagree with his decision, he may refer you to another priest or deacon; or you may appeal this decision. The priest or deacon will explain the appeals process at this time.

If the marriage is temporarily delayed, you may appeal to the Bishop through his representative, the Episcopal Vicar, in any given region.

IN BRIEF

Church requirements

- Baptismal Certificates dated within six months of the wedding date
- Initial interview with officiating clergy at least six months prior to the planned marriage date
- Dispensation Forms if applicable
- Completion of Pre-Marital Inventory
- Certificate of Attendance from a formal qualified Marriage Preparation Program
- Pre-Marital Affidavits (in some cases)

Civil requirements

- Certified copies of Birth Certificates from the Bureau of Vital Statistics of the City and State of your birth.
- Marriage License

Step 3: Formal Marriage Preparation

- A Marriage Preparation course- 3 options

ONLINE: www.CatholicMarriagePrep.com, listed by the USCCB (United States Catholic Conference of Bishops)

DIOCESAN COURSE: Visit diocese's website.

HOME PARISH: St. Michael Church, offers 1 on 1 marriage prep for our parishioners, with our pastor. We also offer a 1-day group course in Spanish. Contact Wedding Coordinator for more details.

- A Natural Family Planning (NFP) Introduction class or Training, depending on your home diocese requirements (check your home diocese's website).
- Reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Step 4: The Wedding Liturgy

At least 3 months before the wedding, it is recommended to make an appointment with your parish wedding coordinator to discuss the liturgy of your wedding ceremony and choose the hymns, the readings, and the form of your ceremony.

Wedding coordinator:

Silvia Vega (901) 399-8810 - Email: silvia.vega@stmichaelmemphis.org

Visit: <https://www.stmichaelmemphis.org/marriage>

Here you will find St. Michael Parish's,

WEDDING GUIDELINES & INFORMATION

WEDDING PLANNING SHEET

WEDDING READING OPTIONS- in both Spanish and English

For more tips and ideas on how to help you plan a catholic wedding, go to [For Your Marriage.](#)



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