

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. No dates will be set by phone conversation. Before the church is reserved, all deposits and fees must be 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, and must be provided by the couple, not the parish office. Although the office can help to provide necessary addresses and phone numbers to any church parish, we will not seek these documents out 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 some 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, or once the Parish Sunday Mass schedule has begun (i.e. after 1:00 p.m. on Saturday). Weddings may be scheduled for Saturday evenings at 6:00, 6:30 p.m. or 7:00 p.m., but a Mass will not be allowed to be celebrated, and Holy communion may not be distributed for any reason. There are no exceptions to this regulation.

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, 6:30 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. Weddings will not be scheduled to begin after 7:00 p.m.

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.

Decorations:

Decorations in the church must always be tasteful and in good form. They should never be an attempt to turn the House of God into a television or show atmosphere. Christ is the center and the focus of all that we do in church and the environment should express this. Please take into account 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! **The family is responsible for promptly cleaning up after any service** (see below for deposit information).

Trellises and arches are not permitted, and “Unity Candles” (or any other such “symbolic gesture”) will not be a part of the ceremony. None of these are expressed or called for in

the Catholic Rite of Marriage, and they simply take away from the focus of the Sacrament and sacredness of the ceremony.

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 placed on or adhered to the doors of the church. Pew markers for reserved seating 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 party who provided the deposit.

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.

A maximum of seven (7) couples are allowed to serve as wedding attendants. This will be addressed on a case by case basis. However, children under the age of five (toddlers) are not allowed to serve as ring bearer/flower girl, and should never be a part of the procession. **Children (or any person) are not allowed to process up carrying 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.**

Although a wedding planner/consultant may prove helpful to the couple in some regards (i.e. procession of groomsmen and bridesmaids), the celebrant alone is responsible and in charge for all liturgical procedures during the rehearsal and ceremony. Interference from wedding coordinators during the rehearsal and ceremony will not be tolerated.

The main celebrant of the wedding ceremony, or his delegate, must be present for the wedding rehearsal. If he is not able to be present, then there will be no rehearsal. The clergy and staff of St. Michael Church are not to replace the presider for the rehearsal.

Music & Photography:

Photography and videography are permitted within reason 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.

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. The church does not provide musicians, so services and payment will come directly from the couple.

Fees and Deposits:

A donation is requested for the use of the church building for the wedding of those persons who are actively supporting parishioners. This offsets the cost of utilities for our large church. **There is a \$500.00 fee for those who reside within the parish boundaries, but do not have identifiable participation in our parish. A fee of \$1,000.00 is required for those who are not domiciled within the canonical boundaries of the parish, and non-registered persons** (you must have registered with the parish within six months of the initial meeting with the celebrant to be considered a parishioner).

For all weddings, a \$50.00 Sacristan fee is required. The Sacristan assists the priest in setting up the church for the wedding, and aids the wedding party with procession, etc. This separate fee is to be paid upfront with the deposit.

A refundable deposit of \$500.00 is required to secure the church building for the ceremony. This deposit will be returned, provided that the church is in the same condition as it was before preparations for the ceremony began. All clean up is the responsibility of the families. The deposit will not be refunded if the church is left in any sort of disarray that requires any labor to clean, or if any of these policies are not followed. **This deposit will not be refunded if the wedding is canceled or postponed within six months of the original scheduled wedding date.**

If a visiting priest or deacon presides at the wedding, he must follow all policies and guidelines set forth in this publication, and must sign a separate agreement stipulating his acceptance. **The visiting presiding priest/deacon must be present for the rehearsal. The staff of St. Michael Church is not responsible for guiding a wedding rehearsal.**

Additional Guidelines:

Cohabiting couples: when a couple is living together (cohabiting), there will be no nuptial Mass offered, and Holy Communion will not be distributed.

Chewing gum or eating candy in the church is strictly prohibited. Beverages of any sort are not allowed in the church, including bottled water. Experience has shown that too often empty containers are left behind. 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. The groom's party is asked to present themselves fully dressed in their proper wedding attire, and the St. Anne room is available for the use of the bridal party up to one hour before the scheduled time of the wedding (the parish hall is not an optional site for preparation). This room should be cleaned up at the end of the wedding.

NOTE:

At the ceremony at which Mass is not offered, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is omitted, and Holy Communion will not be distributed under any circumstances. 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.

A cash deposit of \$500.00 for alcohol, damage, and disorderly conduct will be submitted at the time the wedding date is tentatively scheduled. This refundable deposit is required if either the parties in the wedding or any guest at the rehearsal and/or wedding is found in violation of St. Michael the Archangel Church policy regarding the use of alcohol and/or drugs, damage, or any type of disorderly conduct in the church or on church premises. This deposit is non-refundable if the wedding is canceled or postponed within six months of the original wedding date.

The \$500.00 deposit will be refunded within ten (10) days after the wedding if no infraction of policies has occurred.

A \$50.00 Sacristan fee must be paid, as indicated below.

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: _____

Deposit Check # _____ Amount \$ _____

Sacristan Fee Check # _____ Amount \$ _____

Fee Check # _____ Amount \$ _____

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