

St. Joseph Catholic Church Wedding Guidelines

Married Christians, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and share in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church; they help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children; and they have their own special gift among the people of God. (Rite of Marriage, 1970)

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding. We hope we can assist you in making your wedding day very special.

Marriage is a lifelong, faithful union of a man and a woman, mutually committed to sharing life and love together. Christ enhanced the dignity of marriage by making the Christian marriage relationship a sacrament. Like the other sacraments, marriage requires that the two involved parties understand what they are about to undertake as they enter into a sacramental union. Christian marriage is more than a socially acceptable way to be in relationship with one another. Christian marriage is a covenant relationship modeled after God's love for His people. Because of the dignity of Christian marriage, St. Joseph Church provides these guidelines to assist the couple in their preparation.

Preliminary Information:

- At least one party must be Catholic.
- The pastor must approve all marriage ceremonies at St. Joseph Church as least six months in advance.
- The couple must complete all marriage preparation requirements of the Diocese of Jackson well in advance of the wedding date.
- Priests other than those of St. Joseph Church must contact the pastor of St. Joseph Church for delegation if they wish to witness a marriage here.
- All paperwork and required counseling must be completed and turned in prior to the wedding date. **This includes signed guidelines.**

Rehearsal/Wedding:

General Scheduling

- Contact the presiding priest and the parish secretary to schedule the date and hour of your rehearsal and wedding.
- Contact the parish secretary to schedule reservations, if needed, of the parish hall for a rehearsal dinner or reception.
- Rehearsals are generally held the evening before the wedding. Rehearsals are limited to one hour. Remember that a rehearsal is a rehearsal, not a time to plan. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend and be on time.

Wedding Times:

- Weddings are generally held on Saturdays. Saturday daytime weddings can occur between 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.
- Saturday evening weddings can occur at either 7:00 pm or 7:30 pm. The church must be cleared and cleaned by 10:00 pm.
- Weddings on days other than Saturday must be approved by the pastor. The time of weddings on days other than Saturdays is determined on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the pastor.

Marriage Ceremony

Music:

- At the beginning of the marriage preparation, couples should contact one of the music ministers of St. Joseph Church. When selecting an organist, St. Joseph's organists should be asked first. If none of the organists are available, another organist may be asked. However, he or she must be approved by the pastor.
- Music must be religious in nature. The use of popular/secular songs and/or music is not acceptable. Music should be appropriate to the solemnity of the occasion and be theological in content. **The "Our Father" is to be prayed or sung by the congregation. It is no longer permissible to be done as a solo.**
- The use of personal audio tapes or recorded music is not permitted. All music must be "live".

Photographs:

- Photographs may be taken in the sanctuary prior to the ceremony and 30 minutes after the ceremony. No photographs are allowed during the marriage ceremony itself. **Copies of these guidelines must be given to the photographers.**
- Videographers are allowed to film weddings. They must be unobtrusive and should stay off of the altar area during the ceremony. The pastor or presiding priest/deacon will direct them as to where they may set up cameras.

Flowers/Decorations:

- The bride or her representative must have all inside and outside decorations approved by the pastor prior to the wedding.
- The florist must contact the parish secretary to reserve parish space needed before/during the wedding, and reserve a time to decorate the church.
- Decorations must not block the view of the pulpit or the altar. Nothing is to be placed on top of the altar.
- Liturgical flowers or decorations already in place are not to be moved (i.e. - poinsettias during Advent and Christmas, lilies during Easter).
- Flower arrangements may be left for the weekend masses if the couple desires this. A notation can be made in the bulletin that the flowers are in memory of deceased members of the couple's families, etc. Otherwise, all floral arrangements must be removed from the church after the wedding.

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- **A maximum of two floral arrangements are allowed on the altar area, and must be placed behind the altar and underneath the crucifix.** All floral arrangements must have protective plastic underneath them provided by the florist.
- No flowers or any other decorative items are allowed in or on the baptismal font.
- The florist and/or the wedding party are responsible for cleaning any debris left from flowers, plants or pew markers.

Candles:

- Dripless candles are the only candles allowed in St. Joseph Church, and they are the responsibility of the wedding party. **Wax candles other than those on either side of the altar or the pulpit are strictly prohibited.** The wedding party is responsible for the clean-up of any wax drippings that may occur during the wedding. All candles must have protective plastic underneath to protect stands and cloths.
- Candles **MAY NOT** be attached to the pews or used down the aisles.

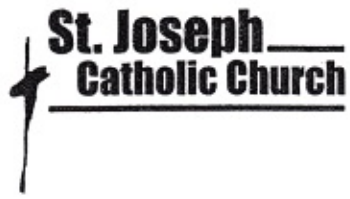
Pew Markers:

- Pew markers must not damage the pews. Markers are to be attached with pipe cleaners or ribbons. **No staples, glue, wire or tape are allowed.**
- Pew markers should be limited to six, if possible.

Other:

- Children are a beautiful sign of the fruitfulness of marriage. However, **children must be at least 5 years of age or older to participate in the ceremony.** Otherwise, the children become the focal point rather than the couple's vows, the scripture readings or the prayers.
- If ceremonial runners are to be used, they must be put down before the wedding begins. **They are not to be unrolled at the start of the wedding.**
- **The use of rice, birdseed or confetti is strictly prohibited.**
- **Flower petals are not allowed to be thrown by the flower girls.**
- **Food and drinks are not allowed anywhere in the Church.**

It is our belief that by following these guidelines, and by taking a similar approach in all aspects of the ceremony, the couple will be able to enjoy their wedding with the minimum amount of stress that some popular, secular traditions place on them. The focus will be kept on God, on our response in faith to God's love, on our unity in Christ, and on the humble request for the Holy Spirit's blessings. When the "first things" are really put first, everything else will fall into place, and the day will be one that everyone remembers. ALL who are present will have their faith, hope and love actively encouraged. We will be able to feel and say; "Surely the presence of God is in this place!"



I have read and understand the enclosed guidelines. I agree that any violation of these guidelines may result in the loss of the use of St. Joseph Church for my wedding and may result in the loss of those fees associated with the use of the Church.

Bride or Groom's Signature: _____

Date: _____