

St Elizabeth 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 have their own special gift among the people of God. (Rite of Marriage, 1970)

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding! We offer the following guidelines for use of St Elizabeth Church for your wedding to aid you in planning both a memorable and reverent wedding. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the parish office!

Preliminary Information:

- ◇ At least either the bride or the groom must be Catholic.
- ◇ The pastor must be contacted at least six (6) months prior to the intended wedding date, which must be approved by the pastor according to the local parish and liturgical calendars.
- ◇ The couple must complete all marriage preparation required by the Catholic Diocese of Jackson either under the pastor or some other Catholic priest with the pastor's knowledge.
- ◇ Any priest from another diocese must submit a letter of good standing from their own diocese before they may perform a marriage at St Elizabeth.

Wedding dates and times:

- ◇ Saturday *daytime* weddings begin no later than 4pm. The church building must be cleared and cleaned by 5pm for the sake of those arriving for confessions that evening or preparing for the evening Vigil Mass.
- ◇ Saturday *evening* weddings can begin no earlier than 7:30pm. The Church must be cleared and cleaned no later than 9pm.
- ◇ For weddings on any other day of the week, please consult the pastor.
- ◇ For the rehearsal, punctuality must be stressed with the wedding party. Anyone more than 20 minutes late to the rehearsal may not participate in the wedding.

The Wedding Ceremony:

- ◇ If a wedding party includes more than eight bridesmaids and eight groomsmen, the wedding party will stand outside of the sanctuary along the Communion Rail. Only parties smaller in size are able to stand comfortably within the sanctuary.
- ◇ The Rite of Marriage may take place with or without the Holy Mass. The Wedding ceremony without Holy Mass includes the Liturgy of the Word and the wedding itself (the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Holy Communion are omitted). Whichever option you choose must strictly follow the liturgical guidelines of the Roman Catholic Church.
- ◇ If a wedding with Holy Mass occurs on a major Solemnity or Feast day (i.e., Holy Day of Obligation, weekends during Advent or Lent, etc.), the couple is bound to the readings and prayers of the day. But if it is not a Wedding Mass, any readings from the provided booklet may be used.
- ◇ For a Mass, anyone acting as readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must be practicing Catholics and carry out those ministries at their home parishes. For a wedding ceremony without Holy Mass, anyone can read as long as they are present at the rehearsal.
- ◇ The unity candle is not a part of the Catholic ritual, no matter which form is celebrated. The Catholic wedding already includes numerous signs of unity in the bride and groom as well as the rings. In wedding Masses, the Holy Eucharist is the preeminent sign of unity.

- ◇ No children under the age of six (6) years old can have a role in the wedding. Most children under 6 years old are too young to stand still for the duration of the wedding and unfortunately become a distraction.
- ◇ It is good to have the presiding priest review your program before printing it.

Music:

- ◇ Musicians and cantors from St Elizabeth parish are preferred, though exceptions can be made on account of family and friends. Either way, the couple should expect to pay whatever fee the organist/cantor requires.
- ◇ All music must be religious in nature. No secular music may be used as the wedding is first and foremost worship of God. If you are even the least bit unsure, please ask first.
- ◇ The use of audiotapes, cd's, or other recordings is strictly prohibited.

Photography:

- ◇ Please be mindful of time constraints (listed above) and the regular parish schedule when scheduling pictures.
- ◇ While posing for pictures it should be remembered that the sanctuary is a sacred space and that our Lord Jesus is present in the Tabernacle. No one should sit on any steps inside the communion rail or on the communion rail itself.

Decorations:

- ◇ Nothing in the sanctuary can be moved to accommodate wedding decorations, including decorations particular to the current liturgical season.
- ◇ No flowers or other decorations can be placed directly on the table of the Altar or the Tabernacle. Nor should they block anyone's view of the Altar or Tabernacle.
- ◇ During Advent and Lent, decorations should be very limited if used at all. Flowers (except bouquets) are prohibited from weddings during these seasons, just as in the Holy Mass.

Other Guidelines:

- ◇ When purchasing wedding attire, please keep in mind the solemnity of the event. Especially keep in mind that you will be standing before God in His church before His minister. Therefore, a strict sense of modesty should be employed when choosing dresses and other attire to be worn.
- ◇ Food and drinks are not allowed in the church at any time.
- ◇ On the day of the wedding, absolutely no alcohol is to be consumed by the bride, groom, or anyone active in the wedding. This is in keeping with the dignity of the Sacrament.
- ◇ The nursery in the church doubles as a bridal chamber and can be used as such. But due to its small size, the parish hall can be made available at no cost the day of the wedding. Please contact St Elizabeth School to book McKenna Hall. However, all guidelines for parish facilities must be observed, namely:
 - Any facility used must be cleaned before departing for the reception.
 - Absolutely no alcohol is allowed.

By signing below I acknowledge that we have read and agree to these guidelines.

Contracting party (Bride or Groom): _____

Date: _____