

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 hope we can assist you in making your wedding day meaningful. Like any Sacrament, marriage requires both parties involved to fully understand what they are undertaking and receiving. Therefore, we offer the following guidelines to help you in your continued discernment of and preparation for this Sacrament.

Preliminary Information:

- ◇ At least one party 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:

- ◇ Weddings typically happen on Saturdays.
- ◇ Saturday daytime weddings begin anytime after 10am and no later than 3:30pm. The church building must be cleared and cleaned by 4:45pm for the sake of those arriving for confessions that evening.
- ◇ Saturday evening weddings can begin no earlier than 7:30pm. The Church must be cleared and cleaned no later than 10pm.
- ◇ Weddings occurring on any other day must be approved by the pastor. Times for them will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- ◇ A rehearsal should be held the night before and punctuality must be stressed with the wedding party. Anyone more than 20 minutes late to the rehearsal will not participate in the wedding.

The Wedding Ceremony:

- ◇ The bride being *verbally* "given away" is not part of the Catholic ritual. The bride's father may escort her down and silently give her over to the groom. But in reality it is the bride who is freely giving herself away to her husband. Therefore the priest will not ask "Who gives this bride."
- ◇ There may be no more than six (6) bridesmaids and six (6) groomsmen in the wedding party. While the sanctuary in St Elizabeth may look big, it becomes very small with more people in it.
- ◇ You have the option of a Mass (which is highly recommended when both parties are Catholic) or just a Wedding ceremony. The Wedding ceremony includes the Liturgy of the Word, the wedding itself, and then ends with a blessing. It does not include the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Holy Communion. Whichever option you choose must strictly follow the liturgical guidelines of the Roman Catholic Church.

- ◇ The couple can choose the readings and prayers for the wedding ceremony from the booklet provided by the parish, unless the wedding falls on a major Solemnity or Feast day (i.e., Holy Day of Obligation, Sundays during Advent or Lent, etc.). On those days the couple is bound to the readings and prayers of the day.
- ◇ For a Mass, all those 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 a 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. Therefore, the unity candle will not be used at St Elizabeth.
- ◇ No children under the age of seven (6) years old can have a role in the wedding. Most children under 6 years old are too young to stand still during the wedding. Also, they become the center of attention (especially in the case of infants) distracting from the focus of the wedding—the commitment of the bride and groom before Christ and His Church.
- ◇ Flower girls may not drop petals (live or fake). These become a slipping hazard when people enter the center aisle.
- ◇ It is good to have the presiding priest review your program before printing it.

Music:

- ◇ Musicians and cantors from St Elizabeth parish should be asked first. But if they are not available, or if the couple has someone else they are close to, they may be contacted instead. 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 in a wedding at St Elizabeth. If you are even the least bit unsure, ask first.
- ◇ The use of audiotapes, cd's, or other recordings is strictly prohibited.
- ◇ At a Wedding Mass, the Lord's Prayer must be recited by all. If Mass is not offered, then it may be sung as a solo by the cantor if preferred.

Photography:

- ◇ Pictures may be taken in the sanctuary prior to the wedding. If pictures are taken before a Saturday night wedding, you must be finished and out of the church by 5pm for the sake of those arriving for Confessions and the Vigil Mass.
- ◇ While posing for these 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.
- ◇ Photographers should be unobtrusive during the ceremony. They should stand beside a column or to either side of the sanctuary outside of the communion rail. They may also stand in the choir loft, but must respect the organist and cantor while up there.
- ◇ Videographers should follow the same guidelines above.

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 Altar, Tabernacle.
- ◇ Decorations cannot block the view of the Altar, Tabernacle, or pulpit.

- ◇ Any additional candles must be approved by the pastor.
- ◇ All decorations should keep in mind the current liturgical season. During Advent and Lent, decorations should be very limited if used at all.
- ◇ Only the flowers in the sanctuary may remain for the weekend Masses. No other decorations (extra candles, pew decorations, etc.) may be out during the weekend Masses.

Other Guidelines:

- ◇ When purchasing wedding attire, 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 of Marriage. It is also because those participating should be able to know and fully understand what they are doing.
- ◇ If you wish to use McKenna Hall for a rehearsal dinner, you may speak to the parish secretary about reserving it. All fees and guidelines for renting a parish facility apply. No alcohol may be distributed. However, a toast may be made with the permission of the pastor. In such cases, though, no one under 21 years of age may participate in the toast (this includes but is not limited to the bride, groom, or anyone else in the bridal party).
- ◇ 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. 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: _____