

St. Michael Catholic Church

Wedding Guidelines

Congratulations! The parish of St. Michael rejoices with you in your decision to marry in the Catholic Church. This is a special time in your lives, and a special time for the Christian community as we celebrate with you your calling to a new vocation. We are eager to collaborate with you as you prepare for your wedding, and want to help make this a meaningful celebration of your love, commitment and faith as you begin your married life together.

Our Catholic Understanding of Marriage

There are many different understandings of marriage in our culture. The Roman Catholic tradition values marriage as a sacrament – a holy, unique revelation of God’s love in our lives – a sacred event that celebrates God’s love for us and a couple’s love for one another. We hold that human love is a reflection of the love that God has for creation – so great a love that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to live and die among us and to offer the gift of eternal salvation. We believe that God continues to reveal Himself in a special way through the love of spouses for each other.

In the Gospel, where unconditional love is the norm for Christian life, the sacredness and permanence of marriage is affirmed and this bond of love becomes a sign of holiness in our world. In the sacrament of marriage, a man and a woman promise to effect and make present the love of Christ for each other. In the course of living out the mystery of their love, they become a source and sign of God’s presence for each other and for the world.

Marriage in the Church is Grounded in Faith

The parish is fundamentally a community of faith – the center of our identity and existence. Any sacramental celebration in our parish is a celebration of the faith of the community and of the individuals receiving the sacrament. Thus, for marriages celebrated in our parish, at least one partner must be a practicing Roman Catholic and a member or family member of St. Michael parish.

Our Understanding of Weddings

In choosing to come to the Catholic Church for your wedding, you have made a choice to begin and to live your marriage in a Christian manner. For Catholics a wedding is not simply a ceremony or a social event, but it is a worship service, a sacred liturgy, that has deep meaning in our Catholic faith. In the marriage liturgy we celebrate the love commitment of the couple in the context of our Christian tradition and the beginning of their vocation as husband and wife. Because of this, it should not be surprising to you that the Church has some definite expectations about how your wedding will be celebrated. A Catholic wedding is a worship service, whether or not with Mass. It is important that readings, music and actions are consistent with the liturgical practices of both the parish and the universal Church.

Preparing for Your Wedding

Our priest, deacons and wedding coordinator are here to guide you as you get ready.

Initially, our wedding coordinator will help you to request a date, determine who will preside at your wedding, guide you in your preparation and assist you with the paperwork.

Our wedding coordinator then will put you in touch with our musicians, discuss the fees, answer questions about appropriate decorations, direct the wedding rehearsal, and assist the day of your wedding. The wedding coordinator will be your main contact during this period.

The priest or deacon who presides at your wedding will wish to meet with you as a couple about one or two months before your wedding date to get better acquainted. He also will review the ceremony, explain the options for readings, vows, etc. and ensure that everything meets the requirements of the Church.

Marriage Preparation

All couples planning to be married in the Archdiocese of Seattle must receive pre-marriage assessment and twelve hours of instruction. At St. Michael, this usually is accomplished through three sessions with a licensed family relations counselor followed by a weekend Engaged Encounter.

The assessment is not a test to see if you can get married. Rather, it examines your degree of agreement or disagreement in a number of important areas of your relationship. It helps the couple to affirm areas where they are already strong and clarify potential problem areas. The assessment enhances self-understanding and helps to deepen your appreciation of your partner and how you relate together as a couple. If problem areas are identified, additional sessions are recommended. Contact Kathie Reynolds and leave a message at 425-343-8581.

An Engaged Encounter is a weekend away with an experienced married team and other engaged couples. The weekend is designed to give couples planning marriage the opportunity to dialogue, honestly and intensely, about their prospective life together: their strengths and weaknesses, desires, ambitions, goals, and their attitudes about money, sex, children, family, etc., all in a face-to-face way. Engaged Encounter weekends are offered several times a year in the Puget Sound area. Registration may be done online at www.ceeseattle.org.

Couples are responsible for fees charged for marriage preparation services.

Required Paperwork

Parish Registration

Catholics who no longer reside with their parents need to complete their own registration form, showing their current address, etc.

Baptism Certificates

Catholics need to get a certified current copy of their original baptism certificate. This can be done by phoning or emailing the parish Church of your baptism and asking for a current copy to be sent. You will need to provide your full name at the time of your baptism and the month and year. The certificate may be mailed to Wedding Coordinator, St. Michael Catholic Church, 1512 Pine Avenue, Snohomish, WA 98290. If your fiancé is not Catholic, but baptized, we will need a copy of his/her certificate also. If there was no certificate, a letter from the Church office will suffice.

Confirmation Certificates

It is the norm in the Archdiocese of Seattle that Catholics planning marriage have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Please make a copy of the certificate that you originally received. If you have not yet received this sacrament, contact our parish office right away and ask for information about the process for adults wishing the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Documentation on Prior Marriages

For any party who has been married before, the following must be provided:

If your spouse is deceased, a copy of the death certificate;

If you are Catholic and were married outside of the Church, a lack of canonical form petition;

If you were otherwise married and divorced, a copy of your annulment determination.

A wedding date cannot be set if there are any prior marriages without such documentation, so it is important to act on this right away. The wedding coordinator will direct you to the right person to get this done.

Pre-nuptial Investigation Forms

Two documents need to be completed and signed, stating that each party is free and competent to marry. The 29.1 form (front side) is completed by you. The back side is filled in by the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding. The 29.2 form is completed by a parent or other person who knows you well and can attest that you are competent and free to marry.

Marriage License

A Marriage License must be obtained and delivered to the wedding coordinator at least two weeks prior to the wedding. The earliest that you may purchase a license is 60 days prior to the wedding. You may apply at the Snohomish County Courthouse Campus, 3000 Rockefeller, Everett.

Planning for Your Wedding Day

Setting the Date and Time

The deacon will discuss with you potential dates when the Church is available. Avoid making commitments for your photographer and reception until you receive confirmation that your requested date is OK. Saturday weddings may begin between 11:00 am and 2:00 pm.

Flowers and Candles

Couples are responsible for the floral arrangements for your wedding. It is a beautiful custom to leave your wedding flowers in the Church for the weekend liturgies. Please let the wedding coordinator know two weeks in advance of the wedding day, if you decide to donate your flowers.

If you wish, you may use our liturgical candles on the stands by our altar, and you may decorate them with flower rings and/or ribbons of your choice. These candles are in use daily and usually are partially burned. If you wish to bring in any additional candles, including a 'Unity Candle', please discuss these plans with the wedding coordinator and acceptable means of protection from wax spillage. Lit candelabra in the aisles or pew candles are not permitted.

If pew bows are planned, these are held in place with pew hooks. No tape or tacks are permitted. A runner down the aisle may not be taped to the carpet flooring, and is strongly discouraged.

The Altar of Eucharist is a permanent, central symbol in our Church, and must always be respected, even during a wedding outside of Mass. It is never used as a resting place for flowers, candles or any other materials.

Music

Music at weddings should be consistent with the meaning of Christian marriage. The guiding principle for the acceptability of any wedding music is the music's relationship to the ritual of marriage and the celebration of Christ's love for His Church.

Some couples today wish to include some secular music in their wedding. Great care should be taken in selecting music of this type. Any music that refers only to the secular nature of love and neglects the sacred union of the couple – not only with each other, but also with Christ – is only appropriate at the reception, not during the wedding liturgy. Wedding music should stress the role of God in the blessing of marriage and should emphasize the theme of sacred celebration.

St. Michael parish has musicians who can both advise you in musical selection and provide the music for your wedding. The wedding coordinator will give you the name and phone number of our parish Music Director. The musicians will quote you their fees for these services.

Readings

Readings from Sacred Scripture are a part of the wedding rite. There always is a Gospel passage, and you may include 1-3 readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, Psalms and New Testament. While the ordained minister reads the Gospel, it is customary for other persons to do the other readings. Please choose from among your guests one or two persons who are experienced liturgical readers.

Poems, secular readings and other materials may not be substituted for Scripture readings. It may be appropriate to share such readings before the wedding procession begins or at the reception.

Altar Servers

Servers are needed for a Nuptial Mass. Altar Servers may be boys or girls, and must be from the parish's list of experienced servers. Since the children serve your wedding on their own time, it is proper to give them an appropriate stipend.

Eucharistic Ministers

Eucharistic Ministers are needed for a Nuptial Mass. Consult with the wedding coordinator as to the number required. They may be selected from among your guests, provided that they are trained Catholic Eucharistic Ministers.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers must be at least four years old and be responsible enough to perform their roles well. Flower Girls may carry flowers, but no petals may be dropped, real or artificial.

Gift Table and Guest Book

Your Gift Table should be at your reception. There is not space for this in the Church entrance. It also is best to have your Guest Book at your reception.

The Rehearsal

Prior to your rehearsal the wedding coordinator will consult with you and make a detailed plan for the seating of grandparents and parents, the procession, and the entire liturgy, including the names of all people with designated roles. This will make the rehearsal go smoothly.

Rehearsals for Saturday weddings usually are scheduled on Friday in the late afternoon because of other events happening on Friday evenings. Please make sure that all participants arrive on time. It is best to set an earlier gathering time so that people can talk a while before the rehearsal begins.

Decorum

Drinking is not allowed before the rehearsal or wedding or in any area of the Church facilities or parking lot. It is expected that all members of the wedding party and guests will conduct themselves with reverence and respect for the sanctity of the Church.

There is to be no smoking anywhere on the premises. St. Michael is a non-smoking facility.

The Wedding Day

The Church will be available to you and your wedding party beginning two hours before your designated wedding time. Please note that it is your responsibility to communicate this schedule to your florist, photographer and videographer. Plan to take all posed pictures in the Church during these two hours before your ceremony. No time can be provided after the ceremony because of other events happening in the Church.

We ask that no flowers, furniture, statues, banners, etc. be moved.

Only the lighting already available in the Church may be used. No additional lighting, please.

Neither rice nor confetti is permitted on the Church premises.

Photography and Videography

Photographers are not permitted to roam about the Church once the liturgy has begun. No flash pictures may be used while the wedding is in progress. Professional photographers usually know what is expected, and have learned how to capture your wedding without being intrusive. If you plan to have a video of your wedding, it probably is best for the videographer to consult with the wedding coordinator about the best locations for getting the entire ceremony.

Removal and Clean Up

It is the responsibility of the couple to ensure that all clothing, food, beverages, and non-floral decorations are removed from the dressing rooms, Church, Entrance, etc. immediately after the wedding. We recommend that you assign this responsibility to someone other than a member of the wedding party, who can take the time to complete the cleanup and check in with the wedding coordinator before leaving. Please assign these tasks in advance. It will make your transition to your reception so much easier.

Fees

Couples must submit the following amounts prior to the rehearsal:

Donation to the Church:	Supporting parish families \$300 Non-parishioners \$500
Stipend for the Presider:	\$150-250
Stipend for Musicians:	Per their quotation
Altar Servers (if needed)	\$25 per server

Receptions

While the Parish Hall sometimes is available, it is not recommended for wedding receptions due to issues with parking, traffic, loud music, noise, clean up requirements, etc. If you wish to request to use one of our halls, you must make this reservation at the time you request your wedding date. Having your wedding scheduled does not ensure the availability of these rooms. Until the room is booked and the appropriate fee is paid, the room is considered free and available for other uses. Arrangements for the use of the Hall are made with the parish administrator.