

Most Merciful Jesus Catholic Church

Wedding Policies & Guidelines

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Wedding Coordinators

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SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

Sacred Scripture begins with the creation and union of man and woman and ends with "the wedding feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7, 9). Scripture often refers to marriage, its origin and purpose, the meaning God gave to it, and its renewal in the covenant made by Jesus with his Church. Man and woman were created for each other.

By their marriage, the couple witnesses Christ's spousal love for the Church. One of the Nuptial Blessings in the liturgical celebration of marriage refers to this in saying, "Father, you have made the union of man and wife so holy a mystery that it symbolizes the marriage of Christ and his Church."

The Sacrament of Marriage is a covenant, which is more than a contract. A covenant always expresses a relationship between persons. The marriage covenant refers to the relationship between the husband and wife, a permanent union of persons capable of knowing and loving each other and God. The celebration of marriage is also a liturgical act, appropriately held in a public liturgy at church. Catholics are urged to celebrate their marriage within the Eucharistic Liturgy.

~ from the United States Catholic Catechism for Adult

THE RITE OF MARRIAGE

The Catholic Rite of Marriage takes place within the Sacred Liturgy. By its nature, Sacred Liturgy is a celebration of the universal church. The wedding liturgy reflects this aspect when a groom and bride profess their solemn vows to each other before God and His people assembled.

The Rite of Marriage may be celebrated during Mass or outside of Mass (Liturgy of the Word with no Holy Communion).

* Rite of Marriage during Mass is the norm when both the bride and the groom are practicing Catholics.

* Rite of Marriage outside of Mass (Liturgy of the Word with no Holy Communion) is the norm when a Catholic marries a baptized Christian of another faith or when a Catholic marries a non-baptized person

For a Rite of Marriage outside of Mass, practicing Catholics and/or practicing baptized Christians of another faith may read the first and second readings or a person of the Jewish faith may read the Old Testament reading.

To prepare for the Rite of Marriage outside a Mass, a book will be given which outlines options for the prayers and scripture readings. With the Rite of Marriage during Mass, couples are asked to choose two (2) practicing Catholics to present the gifts of bread and wine for consecration.

Since weddings are acts of worship and prayer, in the Diocese of Birmingham, weddings must take place in a parish church and are not allowed in private homes, gardens, or reception halls without the permission of the Bishop.

WEDDINGS

As you prepare for this holy matrimony, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- You are preparing for a lifetime commitment. The Church asks you to prepare for this major commitment by attending a preparation process that will address the theology of marriage; communication skills; etc.
- Your marriage preparation and wedding day are a holy time of prayer. Relax and pray as you attend to the preparations.
- We encourage you to attend Mass every Sunday and all holy days of obligation.
- We encourage you to take advantage of the Sacrament of Penance before your wedding day. This will help prepare you for your wedding day and all the days of your married life.

SCHEDULING WEDDINGS & REHEARSALS

The engaged couple should schedule the Priest/Deacon for the wedding at least 6 months prior to the wedding date.

The Priest/Deacon officiating the wedding should be notified well in advance of the presence of any clergy planning to be part of the wedding ceremony.

Saturdays are the traditional days to celebrate weddings and they are scheduled with the Priest/Deacon. The church building will be open 1 hour before the start of your wedding and 1 hour after your wedding. This is the time available for setup, decorating, picture taking, and clean-up. If additional time is needed before the wedding, this must be scheduled with the Wedding Coordinators at Mercy Parish.

Weekdays: Special weekday dates are permitted only if the parish schedule allows and if approved by the Priest.

Sundays: There are no weddings on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.

Weddings during Advent and Lent are discouraged.

Rehearsals

The Rehearsal should be a joyful and prayerful occasion for the engaged couple and their wedding party. Since it takes place in the sacred space of Mercy Parish, the emphasis is given to prayer and worship. Therefore, we ask all members of the wedding party and the guests to maintain reverence at all times.

Rehearsals are generally in the evening before the wedding or as scheduled with the Priest/Deacon. Rehearsals are conducted by the Priest/Deacon and should not be any longer than 1 hour. Rehearsals will begin on time.

We ask that you adhere to the proper attire by all members of the wedding party at the rehearsal. This means no shorts, short hemmed skirts/dresses, low cut tops, halter tops, tank tops or mid-drifts, baseball caps, torn, baggy, or otherwise worn jeans, flip-flops, or any clothing that bears offensive language or imagery.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS AT MERCY PARISH

Fees at Mercy Parish

The services of the Priest/Deacon are free, but it is customary to offer a stipend. Couples should consider not only the time devoted to the rehearsal and wedding but also the effort put into the marriage preparation process. Donations and stipends should be placed in clearly marked envelopes and given to the intended recipient.

Fees at Mercy Parish are:

Wedding Coordinators (2): \$50/each

Pianist: \$150

Cantor: \$100

Starting on Time

Weddings need to begin on time and the Priest/Deacon strongly encourages this. The wedding coordinators will line up the wedding party 10 minutes before the start of the wedding in the gathering area. Brides are encouraged to share this important information with the wedding party, florists, photographers, and videographers. We realize, last minute details are unavoidable but with planning and coordinating there won't be time delays. For example, brides are to instruct her helpers beforehand to make sure all corsages and boutonnieres are pinned on plenty of time before the wedding and all others are ready. We realize this is a busy and possibly a stressful time, but it's very important and respectful to the Priest/Deacon to remain on schedule.

Communication

The Wedding Coordinators at Mercy Parish are available to help in any way possible but they will not take direction from florists, photographers, videographers, etc. Communication will be between the bride and groom only. In some cases, the mother of the bride or groom but only with approval from the bride and groom.

Furniture

Moving or rearranging of the furniture is not allowed. The Wedding Coordinators will coordinate this if needed. A small table will be available in the gathering area of the parish. The bride and groom may use this table for setting out wedding programs, a guest book, pictures, etc. before the wedding.

Programs

Before printing any handouts for the wedding ceremony, please check with the Priest/Deacon for the correct order of the liturgical service.

Flowers

The use of flowers and other symbols is intended to add to the festivity of the wedding liturgy. Flowers are permitted as part of the wedding environment, as long as they do not distract from the focus of the wedding (the exchange of consent) and do not cause danger of falling, and/or damage to the building or furnishings. Church furnishings and liturgical decorations may not be changed or moved. The following policies are in place to ensure the appropriate placement and use of flowers, candles, and other symbols.

Your choice of florist may be used but they must adhere to Mercy Parish guidelines. **Tip:** Kroger's flower shop has magnets instead of straight pins to use for corsages and boutonnieres.

Flowers may be used in the sanctuary where appropriate. Flower arrangements placed directly in front of the altar may not be higher than the altar since the altar is the main focal point of any liturgy. Flowers may be placed near the tabernacle but must never cover the tabernacle.

Flowers/greenery and/or bows may be placed on the first chair on either side of the aisle. Be mindful of tape or staples so they can be remained easily after the ceremony without damaging the chairs. Please have someone in your wedding party remove these from the chairs after the wedding. We do not have a cleaning crew.

Flowers for the Blessed Virgin Mary may be presented after the wedding liturgy before the recessional by BOTH Bride and Groom.

The flower girl may toss flower petals during the procession. However, we do not have a cleaning crew so we ask that the bride have someone to pick up the petals after the wedding.

Unity Candle

The focus of your marriage ceremony is your consent and the exchange of vows and rings.

Unity candles are not a part of a Catholic ceremony; however, this symbol may be used. The Priest strongly encourages that this not be the main focus of the liturgy. There will be a small table near the altar for the placement of the unity candle.

Lectors

Suggested readings are reviewed with the couple at a pre-marriage meeting with the Priest. Couples are responsible for providing friends and or family members to be lectors for their ceremony.

Lasso Rosary & Arras

One tradition is the wedding lasso rosary, popular in Mexican, Filipino, and Spanish communities. During the religious ceremony, a large rosary is placed around the bride and groom as a symbol of unity. The “lassoing” act is a symbol of unifying the couple together in marriage for their entire lives. This custom is similar to the lighting of a unity candle used in many Catholic weddings. The couple is to share the responsibility of marriage and raising a family. The figure-eight also represents the mathematical symbol for infinity--no beginning and no end. The use of a rosary in this ritual is also significant; using a rosary reflects that the bride and groom are forever bound together in unity by God.

Couples may observe this tradition of the lasso with the arras (coins) and the bible/rosary. Only the unity candle or lasso may be used; not both, unless approved by the Priest/Deacon. The use of these symbols occurs after the exchange of rings. With the lasso tradition, those who present the arras, bible/rosary, and lasso are seated in the assembly before the wedding and will be called up when it is time to present the symbols; they do not process in with the liturgical procession.

Bride & Groom Rooms

The bride and her attendants may use the Nursery/Bride room. The bride’s room will have a full-length mirror and hooks for hanging dresses. The groom and his attendants may use the youth room at the opposite end of the hall. We ask that these rooms be clear of all trash and personal belongings after the ceremony. We are not responsible for lost or stolen items. Please leave valuables at home. Alcoholic beverages are not allowed in any of these rooms.

Wedding Reception

A wedding reception cannot be held at Mercy Parish building due to the limitation of space.

WEDDING MUSIC

An important element of any liturgy is the music. Singing is always an integral part of the Church's worship. Music is prayer. St. Augustine said that "singing is praying twice!" Therefore, couples preparing for music need to pay special attention to the music chosen for their wedding liturgy. Remember that weddings in the Catholic Church are liturgies first and foremost, and the goal of the liturgy is to give worship to God. Music must be appropriate for Catholic liturgies; secular music or even popular Christian praise and worship music is not liturgical, and therefore not permitted. Music is discussed with the Priest at one of the pre-marriage meetings. The couple chooses the musician and discusses the music with the couple.

The piano is available and arrangements must be made with the Priest/Deacon or Wedding Coordinator.

Couples preparing for marriage must consult with the Music Director at least 6 months before the wedding date. Outside musicians may not be used without prior approval from the Priest. This ensures that proper equipment and audio needs are addressed before the wedding day.

There is a set fee for the pianist of \$150 and \$100 for a cantor. Contact Ingrid Gillespie, Music Director at 256-682-1445 or joeandingrid@gmail.com for all musical directions for weddings.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO RECORDING

Since the church is a sacred place of prayer and worship, appropriate professional and reverent behavior is expected at all times on church premises. The main principle for a photographer or videographer is to be as inconspicuous and discreet as possible. Couples must provide their photographer and/or videographer.

Couples must be sure the following policies are acknowledged and will be followed:

- * All photos should be respectful of the sacredness of the church.
- * The photographer and videographer must check in with the Priest/Deacon or Wedding Coordinators before the wedding liturgy begins.
- * Pictures and videos may be taken in the church before the ceremony. The church building will be open 1 hour before the ceremony and remain open 1 hour after the ceremony.
- * The photographer and/or videographer is allowed only in designated areas. They are never allowed in the inner sanctuary, near the tabernacle, or in front of the assembly. They are encouraged to remain behind the main assembly of people. The videographer is encouraged to remain stationary throughout the ceremony.

APPROPRIATE CHURCH BEHAVIOR

There is a standard of behavior expected when you step into a place of worship. It is a sacred place and the care and respect of the church as a sacred place for prayer and worship is to be given at all times. A prayerful reverence should be reflected in speech and actions before, during, and after the wedding rehearsal and the wedding liturgy. To ensure there are no misunderstandings, the couple must inform/educate their guests and the wedding party of the expected behavior in the church/and church property.

Please adhere to the following policies concerning appropriate church behavior:

- * Couples and their wedding party and guests should come reverently and modestly attired and prepared to fully participate, be on time, and with as little distractions as possible.
- * No loud or excessive talking by anyone; and no running or playing around by children. Children must be supervised and with an adult at all times.
- * Birdseed, rice, confetti, bubbles are not permitted. Throwing of flower petals by the flower girl is permitted but we ask that you have someone pick up the petals after the ceremony. We do not have a cleaning crew available. Releasing doves or other animals is also not permitted.
- * There is to be no food (including gum) or beverages inside the church building (including bride room, gathering area, etc.)
- * There are to be no alcoholic beverages or illegal narcotics anywhere on church property, including the parking lot. Anyone found with such substances will be asked to leave the property.
- * There are to be no concealed handguns or weapons of any kind on church property, including the parking lot and other church-owned buildings.
- * Cell phones and other electronic devices are to be turned OFF or placed on mute when inside the church. Taking phone calls or texting during the liturgy is entirely inappropriate and not permitted.