

Congratulations!

We are delighted that you are planning to get married and that St. Michael's Parish is part of your plans.

This booklet is presented to you in order to help you plan your wedding celebration. Wedding arrangements are certainly necessary and important, but we hope that you never lose sight of the fact that Marriage is primarily a Sacrament - a sacred sign of your love for each other in Christ. Christ abundantly blesses your love and in this Sacrament enriches and strengthens you so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. One of the best ways to prepare for a happy marriage is to pray together for God's blessing on your marriage.

Pray alone and together for your marriage and for each other. Make time to attend Mass each weekend. Since this is a new beginning in your life, we encourage you to ask forgiveness of God for all your past sin and to open your hearts to a new life with him. Catholics are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for marriage.

Please accept our sincere best wishes and prayers for a happy married life together. The Pastoral Staff at St. Michael's wants your wedding to be filled with a sense of God's presence. In this spirit, we present to you our parish policies regarding marriages celebrated at the Church of St. Michael the Archangel.

Initial Arrangements

An appointment should be made with the priest or deacon of your choice at the parish where the wedding is to take place. At this time the date and time of the wedding and rehearsal will be scheduled, and any other details will be arranged. This appointment should be made well in advance of the proposed date of the wedding. **We recommend that you contact the parish one year before the planned wedding date.** (Six months is the minimum according to Archdiocesan policy). Enough time must be allowed for you to complete the required marriage preparation program.

Weddings are normally scheduled on Saturday between 11:00 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. A Friday evening wedding is permissible. Weddings are not normally celebrated on Sundays.

Do not reserve a hall for the wedding reception until after you have met with the priest or deacon and determined that the church is available for the date and time that you have in mind.

Place and Officiant of Your Wedding

A marriage can take place in the parish of the bride or groom if both bride and groom are of the Catholic faith. When one party is not of the Catholic faith, the parish of the Catholic party is the usual place of the ceremony. You are free to choose any priest or deacon assigned at this parish.

However, a priest or deacon who is a relative or close personal friend is always welcome to officiate at your marriage. If this is the case, please advise him that if he is in the Baltimore area he must handle all the paperwork, instructions, rehearsal, etc. and receive delegation from one of the parish priests to officiate at the wedding.

In either case, one of the priests at St. Michael's should be consulted first. **It is the couple's responsibility to inform the visiting priest or deacon of the policies of St. Michael's regarding wedding celebrations.**

When one party is not of the Catholic faith, a minister of his/her faith may certainly be invited to be present in the sanctuary and participate in the ceremony. Should there be special reasons to be married in a non-Catholic ceremony; permission to do so must be requested of the Archbishop, through the parish priest.

Required Documents

A Baptismal certificate is required for each party. A sealed certificate must be obtained from the Church of your baptism, within **six (6) months** of the date of your wedding. You may obtain a certificate by contacting the church of your Baptism. If one party is a non-Catholic Christian, a photocopy of their baptismal certificate will suffice.

A Marriage License is required from Baltimore County. This must be obtained from the License Bureau at the Courthouse in Towson, located at 401 Bosley Avenue.

NOTE: There is a 48 hour waiting period before a marriage license is issued. Your license is good for six months, so you should obtain it in advance. This license should be given to the priest no later than one week before the wedding.

Marriage Preparation Certificate. This indicates that you have either complete the Pre-Cana, Engaged Encounter, or Sponsor Couple program of marriage preparation as required by the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Other documents as required. If any other documentation is required, the priest or deacon will inform you.

Marriage Preparation Conferences

All couples who plan to be married at St. Michael's Parish are expected to attend pre-marriage conferences. These conferences are designed to provide an opportunity for each person to better understand self, intended spouse, and the obligations and responsibilities of marriage. Any of the follow programs of marriage preparation satisfy the archdiocesan requirement.

Engaged Encounter Weekend. This retreat experience is a weekend away with other engaged couples with plenty of time alone together to reflect upon issues that are common to every married couple. It is designed to give you the opportunity to talk honestly and intensively about your lives together.

Each weekend's team is normally composed of two married couples and a priest. For more information about the weekend, contact www.mdee.org.

Pre-Cana Program. This usually consist of multiple sessions held on successive Sunday evenings and are held at various times and locations. Please contact www.archbalt.org/marriage-family/preparation/index.cfm.

Sponsor Couple Program. When available, this alternative involves the engaged couple meeting several times with a married couple to complete the preparation process. Please contact Nikki Lux at (410) 665-1054 X106 or nlux@smoverlea.org.

On Line Marriage Preparation Program.

For an interactive on-line marriage preparation course contact www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com

Banns of Marriage

It is customary, when both parties are Catholic, that the announcement of your wedding be published in your respective parishes on the three Sundays preceding your marriage. Please inform your priest if you wish your banns to be announced in the case of a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic.

Official Witnesses

The witnesses (best man and maid/matron of honor) may be of any religion. However, they should be in good standing with their particular faith community.

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The Wedding Liturgy

Many options are permitted in the Marriage Rite which enable the bride and groom to make their wedding as personal as possible. For example, there are various entrance rites, choices of prayers and readings, different formats for the exchange of vows, etc.

If both the bride and groom are practicing Catholics, the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage should normally take place at a Nuptial Mass. An interfaith wedding is normally celebrated at a Marriage Ceremony; however, a Nuptial Mass may also be celebrated. The priest or deacon will gladly assist you with these arrangements.

Lector:

Both the Nuptial Mass and the Wedding Ceremony include readings from Scripture. It is ideal that a lay person proclaim one or several of these readings. A member of the family or of the wedding party or a close personal friend may fulfill this role. Please be sure that they are people who will read clearly and be loud enough to be heard by the congregation.

Wedding Music:

Music at any worship service must be in accord with the purpose of the sacred rite. Consequently, it should be chosen to express and support the religious understanding of marriage. Music in Catholic worship must express the worship of God for the mystery of love he has created in

each person and which he allows you to share with each other through this Sacrament. Couples are encouraged to personalize their wedding by selecting music according to this principle.

Arrangements for wedding music are made through **Kevin Callahan, Organist - Kevin.Callahan@smoverlea.org**. The fee and the contract between the couple and the organist should be arranged directly with the musician and is to be settled prior to the wedding.

Outside Musicians:

Occasionally, couples wish to utilize a family member or friend as an instrumentalist or vocalist for their wedding liturgy. If so, this must be approved by the Director of Music and Liturgy in advance. As part of the contract, our Director of Music is entitled to a "bench fee" for all weddings, even if permission is granted for another instrumentalist. All music still must be approved to insure that it falls within guidelines for good liturgy.

Flowers and Candles:

A couple wishing to place flowers in the sanctuary for their wedding should make arrangements with the florist of their choice. Flowers are never to be placed in front of or on the altar itself or in any way that detracts from the sacred nature of the sanctuary. When several weddings are scheduled for the same day, couples may wish to contact each other to share these expenses. All flowers are usually considered as a gift to the Church and are to remain there after the wedding.

Please have your florist deliver flowers to the Church the day of the wedding, at least one hour beforehand. If the Church is not open the flowers made be delivered to the Parish Office located at 10 Willow Avenue.

If desired, a white runner for the aisle of the Church (100 feet) may also be arranged through the florist.

If requested, candelabra will be provided by St. Michael's for the sanctuary. **On no occasion may candelabra rented from florists be used in our sanctuary.** Also the carrying of lighted candles and/or

attaching them to the pews will not be permitted since melting wax damages the carpeting. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Photography/Videography

A photograph album or videotape can be a precious reminder of the sacredness of the moment in which the couple pledged their lives to each other, and can even sustain their love through difficult periods of marriage in later years.

Any photographer or videographer engaged by the couple should be made aware of the sacred nature of the marriage ceremony and should conduct him/herself in such a manner as not to be a distraction. Photographs that are taken discretely and that do not interrupt the flow of the liturgy are not offensive. Photographers should pride themselves on their ability to be unobtrusive.

Pictures may be taken during the ceremony **provided the photographer does not enter the Sanctuary** and that flash is not used once the bride reaches the sanctuary. Please ask your photographer to consult with the priest or deacon before the ceremony begins.

If a videographer is employed, he/she must be stationary and may have their camera positioned in the choir loft. Like the photographer, he/she may not enter the sanctuary. Under no circumstances may additional lighting be employed.

Group pictures may be taken in the church after the wedding only if there is sufficient time before the next service. **Ten minutes** are generally allowed for one photographer to take group photos and photos of the bride and groom. No additional lighting set up is permitted.

Rice/Birdseed/Confetti/Rose Petals, etc.

The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. or the sprinkling of rose petals down the aisle are **not permitted** at St. Michael's.

Frequently we have two or possibly three various services scheduled which make it difficult to clean up in a timely manner. Just as we strive to have the church's

appearance to be clean and orderly for your wedding so we wish to have the same atmosphere for other services scheduled that day.

Also, rice and birdseed create a hazardous condition for those walking outside the church – especially those of advanced years. **Please inform your guests not to throw rice or other materials after the wedding.**

Receiving Lines

Unfortunately, due to time constraints and to allow the church to be prepared for the next service, we cannot permit receiving lines. The wedding party must return to the sanctuary immediately following the wedding if group pictures are to be taken. Should a couple wish to have a receiving line, we recommend that this take place at the reception hall.

Altar Servers

If you wish to have altar servers please inform the priest or deacon at least four (4) weeks prior to the wedding date. If your servers are not from St. Michael's Parish, they should attend the rehearsal. It is customary to give a donation of \$10 to each server assigned.

Punctuality

It is very important that all rehearsals and the weddings themselves start promptly at the scheduled time. Subsequent services are severely affected by the late beginning of a previous rehearsal or wedding. Couples who have scheduled a Nuptial Mass should know that if the wedding starts late they may jeopardize the possibility of the celebration of a full Mass, especially if there is another service scheduled after the wedding.

Parking

Because parking space at St. Michael's is at a premium, cars may be parked on our lot **ONLY** during the ceremony in church. If your reception is held locally, you must inform your guests that their cars cannot be parked on St. Michael's lot while the reception takes place. St. Michael's needs the parking space for other weddings as well as for afternoon confessions and Masses.

Priest/Deacon's Attendance at Receptions

Due to the heavy schedule of services at St. Michael's on weekends, our priests or deacons are not always able to attend your reception when this is requested. If you wish the officiant to attend your reception you should send him an invitation, but please know that attendance may not always be possible.

Offerings

The following are the fees associated with weddings celebrated at St. Michael's:

Church Fee	\$350 (parishioner)* \$800 (non-parishioner)*
Priest/Deacon	couple's discretion
Musicians	arranged individually

**To qualify for the parishioner rate, one must be a registered member of St. Michael's for one year prior to the wedding date or live within the geographic parish boundaries. Weddings of non-parishioners may be scheduled no sooner than eight months prior to the wedding to allow for St. Michael's parishioners to have priority.*

It is customary to offer a personal gift to the priest or deacon in addition to the offering to the church, especially if he is visiting from another parish. All offerings should be given at the time of the last appointment with the priest or at the rehearsal.



We thank you for carefully reading this booklet of wedding guidelines. Please know that as a parish community we will be keeping you in our prayers that you may have many happy years of married life together.

We hope to see you often at weekend liturgies and other parish events. Please don't be strangers. May God bless you abundantly!

A final note...

After your wedding please make sure that you take the time to update your registration at St. Michael's. Adult children will not remain under their parents' registration once they have left the family home. If you wish to continue as a parishioner, please fill out a new registration form.

If you are moving out of the area, take time to register at your local parish and make yourself known to the their Pastoral Staff.