

Wedding Guidelines

The faith community of the Basilica of St Michael is delighted that you are considering our beautiful historic minor basilica for your celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Our every aim is to assist you in preparing a prayerful and joyful celebration. This packet contains important guidelines and policies governing this blessed occasion. Please read them carefully and address all questions or requests for clarification to our **Wedding Coordinator, Mrs. Frances “Tootie” Wanek at 850-432-4744.**

Preparation: You are responsible for completing with the priest or deacon of your choice all marriage preparation in accordance with the requirements of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. All paperwork with supporting documentation must be submitted to the Basilica no later than **one month prior** to your celebration. For more complete directions, please see **Appendix A.**

Liturgy: The Rite of Marriage celebrated within the Mass or within a Liturgy of the Word are sacred celebrations. The Catholic Church directs the way in which either the Rite of Marriage within the Mass or the Rite of Marriage within the Liturgy of the Word is celebrated. The outline contained in the marriage liturgy preparation book, *Together for Life*, is the Catholic Church’s liturgy. The vow formula choices that are available for a valid and licit Sacrament of Marriage are included in *Together for Life*. The couple selects one of those choices. Personal vows are not permitted to take the place of the Church’s vow formula and cannot be added to the vow formula. Because your marriage liturgy is a sacred occasion, all celebrations in the Basilica Church will follow the Church’s directives.

Both types of liturgies include the reading of Sacred Scripture. Those chosen by the couple from among family or friends to read ought to be chosen for the clarity of their speech and their ability to project their voices. The proclamation of the Sacred Scripture is an important dimension of the Liturgy and the best possible proclaimers are to be considered for this role. Oftentimes, there are family members or friends who are liturgical readers at their parish and these are the best choices to consider over someone who has no experience, but is considered for reasons of sentimentality.

Decorations: The Basilica is an active parish church, and the sanctuary is decorated according to liturgical seasons and feasts. These decorations are part of any liturgical celebration and will normally remain in place for your wedding. For complete guidelines concerning floral and other decorations, please see **Appendix B.**

Wedding Parties: Space limitations as well as liturgical decorum limit your wedding party to no more than 18 persons total, including bride and groom. Any children participating in your wedding party should be at least 4 years of age. They are included in the 18 person total! All bridal attire must be modest; bare shoulders and backs and low cut fronts are not appropriate for the sacredness of a Church wedding liturgy.

Music: The sacred nature of your wedding liturgy requires the use of approved ministers of music and the careful selection of appropriate music. Our **Music Director** will assist you with music selection. We urge you to be in contact with him before planning any aspect of your liturgy. Please see **Appendix C**.

Photography/Videography: The sacred nature of the wedding liturgy also demands discreet and professional behavior on the part of recording professionals. Please see **Appendix D** for details.

Decorum: Proper respect and decorum are required at all times on parish premises. At no time is eating, drinking, or smoking allowed in or around the church or rectory (parish office). Alcohol and individuals under the influence are not allowed on our property. Failure to abide by these guidelines will result in the immediate **dismissal of offending wedding party members**. Failure to leave upon request will delay or cancel the wedding.

Punctuality: Out of respect for parish staff and for other scheduled events, wedding parties must be prompt for both the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. **Weddings beginning more than 20 minutes late will be restricted to a Liturgy of the Word and Exchange of Vows.**

Maintenance Disclaimer: Our church is an historic building. There may be times when unforeseen circumstances force us to attend to maintenance and other repairs, which in extreme cases may involve the possibility of scaffolding or other materials which cannot be removed.

Offering: In order to cover the costs associated with the use of our Basilica church, we request an offering of \$1,200 from couples celebrating their weddings at the Basilica. This offering covers utilities and other building costs, as well as the services of two individuals: the Wedding Coordinator and the Music Director. **Please note that an honorarium for the Priest or Deacon who officiates your wedding is not included in this offering. This honorarium is the couple's responsibility.**

For all couples, a **non-refundable \$250 deposit is required to reserve your wedding date**. The balance is due **no less than 45 days prior** to the celebration. Approximately two months before your wedding date, you will receive a letter from our rector confirming the dates and times of your wedding and rehearsal and providing instructions as to how the balance of your wedding payment is to be made.

Refunds: If it is deemed necessary for the Basilica of St Michael to cancel a wedding due to circumstances beyond its control (e.g., hurricane, unforeseeable major church repair) we will refund all payments made to the church. No other expenses incurred will be reimbursed.

Appendix A: The Marriage Preparation Process

The priest or deacon you choose to prepare you for marriage is responsible for guiding you through the process. Below we summarize for you what this will involve for the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee and the State of Florida.

If your preparation is not being conducted at the Basilica, a meeting with the Basilica Wedding Committee on site is required no less than six months prior to your potential date. Please submit your availability for said meeting with your contract agreement and deposit.

Diocesan policy states that you must begin preparing for your marriage with a priest or deacon no less than **six months prior** to your wedding, preferably with the clergyman who will officiate at your wedding, if he resides in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. A donation to your presider is not included in the offering that you make to the church.

With your clergyman you will need to complete a **Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire**. This will require you to obtain recently issued baptismal certificates within six months for both bride and groom, if they are Catholic, and perhaps the acquisition of certain permissions from the Diocese.

Your preparation will also involve the taking of the FOCCUS survey or another similar type pre-marriage survey, which is an instrument used to help couples to identify aspects of their relationship where greater communication is needed.

You will also be asked to participate in an approved **Marriage Preparation Seminar**. We recommend the **Engaged Encounter Weekend**. If you reside in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, see <http://www.ptdiocese.org/index.cfm?load=page&page=173>. If you reside outside the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, the clergyman preparing you can direct you to your Diocese's schedule for these seminars. Among the options are a day-long seminar and a weekend retreat. We suggest that you reserve a spot on your preferred date as soon as possible since these seminars tend to fill up. A certificate of participation must be included among your marriage preparation documents.

If neither the bride nor groom is a registered parishioner of the Basilica parish, the parish pastor of the party who is a Catholic (or parties if both are Catholic) will have to provide a letter granting the pastor's permission for the Catholic party to be married at the Basilica. **This letter must be brought to your initial Wedding Team meeting.**

If the clergyman who will preside at your wedding is not on staff at the Basilica parish, he must also request in writing **delegation** from our rector to witness your wedding.

If your clergyman is not currently working in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, he will have to provide a testimonial **letter of suitability for ministry from his Bishop/Religious Superior sent to the Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee.**

If you are being prepared by someone other than the clergy on the Basilica staff, your completed paperwork must arrive at our office no less than **one month** prior to your wedding. If you are being prepared outside the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, your paperwork will have to clear not only your home chancery (diocesan office), but also the Pensacola-Tallahassee Matrimonial Tribunal before it will be forwarded to us. We urge you to allow sufficient time for this processing to occur.

It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain from the State of Florida a valid **marriage license**, issued no more than 30 days before the ceremony and no fewer than 72 hours before the ceremony. The license is to be hand delivered to the Marriage Coordinator at the rehearsal. **Failure to do so will postpone the rehearsal until the license is presented.** No wedding can take place without a license. No wedding will take place if a marriage license from another state is presented.

Appendix B: Floral and Decoration Guidelines

Because of the historic significance of the Basilica of St Michael and the religious import of the wedding liturgy, it is important that all church furnishings be respected. These guidelines will assist you in knowing what is permitted in our church. **Couples are responsible for communicating these guidelines to their florists.** Our Wedding Coordinator is happy to advise couples on florists who have experience furnishing flowers to the Basilica.

Unless prior permission has been given by the Wedding Coordinator to do otherwise, florists may set up no more than one hour before the scheduled ceremony.

Any seasonal decorations placed by the Basilica of St Michael must be left in place.

Floral arrangements can be placed on the high altar, beside – but not directly on – the Mass altar, and/or at the baptismal font. Smaller arrangements may be placed on the Blessed Mother or St Joseph altars. Flowers may also be placed on the two glass counter pillar tops in the foyer of the church. All flower arrangements touching marble, glass or linen are to be placed in **plastic saucers**. We are most appreciative when flower arrangements are left after the wedding as a gift for our weekend Masses.

Floral arrangements are to be brought to the church already assembled. The florist is not to use the altar, sanctuary or vestibule to make arrangements.

Floral arrangements may be attached to the end of pews, but no staples, wire, clamps or tape may be used to do so. Pews and aisles are not to be blocked or cordoned off in any way.

Unity Candles are not permitted. Other candles or candelabra (with drip-proof globes) are permitted only if **pre-approved**. Florists must agree to remain on premises for the duration of the wedding so that candelabra can be removed immediately after the wedding. Furthermore,

they agree to pay any costs incurred by the church either for professional clean-up of wax spills or for overnight storage of materials not removed within 15 minutes after the wedding.

Rice, confetti, bubbles, seeds, petals, etc. are not allowed inside or outside the church.

Aisle runners are not allowed.

It is the responsibility of the florist and/or wedding party to remove any decorations attached to the pews immediately after the ceremony along with flower boxes and other refuse.

Professionals ignoring these guidelines risk losing permission to service future weddings at the Basilica of St. Michael.

Appendix C: Wedding Music Guidelines

Every aspect of your wedding celebration has as its **primary purpose** the engagement of those assembled in active prayer and worship. For this reason, only sacred music is appropriate to the occasion. Furthermore, all sacred music used within a wedding celebration must also be **liturgical**, that is, it must contribute to the active participation and prayer of the assembly. As a result, not all sacred music is appropriate to the celebration and not every song is appropriate to every moment. To ensure the best possible liturgical experience, therefore, all selection and placement of music must be approved by our Music Director, Mr. Mike McCracken (850-380-7760).

The Basilica requires the participation of the Basilica organist at all weddings, including those at which a Nuptial Mass is not celebrated. The Basilica organist is the only person to play the organ and keyboard. His services are included in the \$1,200 offering requested for the church. Minimally, the cantor will sing the responsorial psalm and the Gospel Alleluia. Of course, if you wish, the cantor will also lead the assembly in other singing, as well as offer meditative song. During the ceremony, cantors are located in the choir loft, next to the organist.

Subject to the review and approval of the Music Director, you are free to engage outside soloists for non-congregational singing, as well as additional musicians, to supplement the services of the Basilica organist. However, please do not contract any outside soloists or musicians without first consulting with the Basilica Music Director. Outside cantors and musicians are guests of the Basilica and as such are to follow the directions of the Basilica Music Director. Added musicians are responsible for providing, as necessary, appropriate music to the Basilica organist. Also, if the added musicians have not worked before with the Basilica organist, it may be necessary for there to be a music rehearsal, the cost of which is the responsibility of the wedding couple.

All musicians, other than the Basilica organist provided by the church, are to be considered independent contractors. Their fees are **NOT** included in the offering you make to the parish. Although the Basilica Music Director may be able to assist you with referrals, all arrangements and payments concerning outside musicians will be **your responsibility**.

In order to encourage participation at their ceremony, couples will often choose to create a **worship aid (program)** for their celebration. While the Wedding Coordinator will review a draft copy of your program, the design and printing of the program are the responsibility of the couple.

Appendix D: Photographic / Videographic Guidelines

Given the sacred nature of the marriage celebration, photographers and videographers must be careful not to disrupt or distract those in attendance. **Couples are responsible for communicating these guidelines to their photographer and/or videographer.** Failure to abide by these guidelines will lead to restrictions on the photographer for future weddings.

Professionals are to follow the directives of the **Wedding Coordinator** at all times concerning where they may stand or move.

Professionals must not be conspicuous nor obstruct any of the proceedings. At no time should they stand in the aisle or enter the sanctuary.

Flash photography may be used only during the entrance and exit processions.

No equipment is allowed in the sanctuary.

Video cameras may be stationed to the side of the sanctuary and/or the choir loft provided they remain **immobile**.

Photographers are not permitted in the sanctuary space (where the altar is located) at any time before or during the Liturgy. Once the prelude music has begun all members of the bridal party must be in their respective places in order for the liturgy to begin.

In a Nuptial Mass, once the Liturgy of the Eucharist has begun (after vows and exchange of rings) no further movement or photography is permitted until the final blessing of the couple.

Time permitting, the Wedding Coordinator may allow pictures to be taken immediately after the conclusion of the liturgy. Out of respect for church staff, photographers must complete their work within **15 minutes** of the end of the liturgy. Typically this allows for 4-5 poses.

Photographers and videographers need to be considerate of each other when positioning themselves for picture taking. They are not to obstruct each other's views.
