



MARRIAGE PREPARATION

AND

WEDDING PLANNING

CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL
PRIOR LAKE, MN
(952) 447-2491
WWW.STMICHAEL-PL.ORG

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage. We, at the Church of St. Michael, want to be helpful and supportive, both in making your wedding day a celebration of joy and in assisting you in the process of growing in your relationship as husband and wife.

Further details and explanations regarding the guidelines presented here will be provided when you meet with the priest or deacon and music director who will help you to prepare for your wedding.

**Revised September, 2011*

Who may be married at the Church of St. Michael?

Weddings, like all other sacramental celebrations, are a service we offer to the members of St. Michael Parish. Consequently, it is expected that either the bride or the groom is a registered member of the parish. Weddings may also be performed here if one of the parents of either the bride or groom is a registered member of the parish. Outside of the above situations, we would not normally celebrate a wedding here. Exceptions to this policy can be made only by the pastor and will be made only for a serious reason.

How much notice is required?

The initial contact for the scheduling of a wedding at the Church of St. Michael should be made at least six months prior to the wedding. There are many elements involved in marriage preparation and it normally takes several months to complete all of the requirements.

How do we begin?

The first step is to contact Christi Fletcher at the Parish Office (952-447-9045). She can check

available dates and record the basic information that the parish needs to begin the preparation process. Although you may have a date “penciled in” at this time, your wedding is not officially scheduled until you meet with the priest or deacon.

At least 3 months prior to your wedding, contact the Director of Music, Angie O’Brien (952-447-2491, ext. 108 or aobrien@stmichael-pl.org) to schedule a meeting. At the meeting, the Director of Music covers not only music, but programs and other liturgical information that is necessary even if you are having guest musicians provide your music. The wedding planning resources are also available on the parish website.

When can marriages be celebrated?

Marriages can be celebrated on nearly any day except Sundays, Holy Days and the Sacred Triduum. Weddings during the season of Lent are discouraged because of the penitential nature of that season. If a wedding is scheduled during Lent, no special decorations are permitted in the church. (Even during Lent, however, the bride and her attendants may carry flowers.)

Most weddings take place on Friday evening or Saturday afternoon. A Friday evening wedding can be scheduled no later than 8:00 p.m. A Saturday afternoon Wedding Mass can be scheduled no later than 2:00 p.m. A Wedding Service without a Mass can be scheduled no later than 2:30 p.m. At a Saturday afternoon wedding all photographs must be taken before 4:00 p.m. and all photographic equipment must be removed from the church by that time.

On Saturday, the church will be open by 11:30 a.m. for picture taking and decorating. This time has been set because occasionally it is necessary to be able to celebrate a funeral on a Saturday morning. If an earlier time is needed, please discuss this with the Wedding Coordinator who will determine if an earlier time is possible.

How can a date be finalized?

The engaged couple should contact the priest or deacon to set up an initial meeting. At that meeting more detailed information will be taken for our records and a determination will be made whether or not there are any obstacles to your wedding taking place at the Church of St. Michael. If there are no obstacles you will be asked to pay the wedding fee required by the church. After that, the date can be finalized.

What are the fees involved?

The parish requires a donation of \$450 for a wedding and its preparation. This is to be paid by check made out to the “Church of St. Michael.” This fee covers part of the costs of the parish pre-marriage programs, as well as the cost involved in the use of the church and the services of the Parish Staff. \$50.00 of this fee is non-refundable. If the wedding is later cancelled, an appropriate refund will be made depending on the expenses the parish may have incurred up to the point of the cancellation. If a couple is preparing for their wedding at one parish and celebrating it in another, the fee will be adjusted accordingly. Costs involved with music should be handled directly with the musicians. There is no separate fee for the presiding priest or deacon, although a small gift is common and appreciated.

How does a couple qualify for the reduction in the state's license fee?

When a couple has completed their Prepare sessions and attended a pre-marriage retreat, they should inform the Parish Office. The church will then prepare a signed statement regarding the completed preparation. This will qualify a couple for a \$50 reduction in the license fee. A Marriage License is valid for six months after being issued. The license must be given to the Wedding Coordinator at the rehearsal.

Is there a list of the main elements that are required for marriage preparation?

The required elements for a wedding at the Church of St. Michael are these:

- a personal meeting with the priest or deacon as described above
- work with a trained couple from the parish in the parish's PREPARE Program
- participation in a pre-marriage retreat
- a meeting with the Director of Music at least 3 months prior to the wedding to plan the ceremony
- a second meeting with the priest or deacon, which includes the completion of necessary marriage papers
- baptismal certificates (for Catholics these must be newly issued by the church where the baptism took place; for non-Catholics a photocopy is acceptable)
- work with the Wedding Coordinator regarding the wedding ceremony and rehearsal
- the wedding rehearsal itself

These requirements will be explained in greater detail when you meet with the priest or deacon with whom you will be working. You may also ask them for information on the PREPARE Program and pre-marriage retreats that are available in this area.

What if one party is not Catholic?

Permission from the Archbishop is required when a Catholic marries a non-Catholic or a non-Christian. The priest or deacon will arrange for completing the papers needed for this permission to be granted. Marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic normally do not include the celebration of Mass since Holy Communion cannot be offered to the non-Catholics taking part. This

fact could introduce an element of division at a time that we wish to emphasize unity. Instead, such inter-faith marriages normally take place within a special Scripture Service.

It is also possible to receive permission for a wedding to take place before a Christian minister of another denomination. (This can happen only if the bride or the groom is not a Catholic.) The priest or deacon can work with you if you wish your wedding to take place in a non-Catholic church, while still being recognized as a Sacrament by the Catholic Church. The basic elements of pre-marriage preparation listed above are still required, even if the wedding takes place in another church.

What if one party has been married before?

The Catholic Church does not recognize civil divorce as ending the sacramental bond of marriage. In certain situations the Church will grant a sacramental annulment if it can be shown

that some essential component was lacking in a marriage from its beginning. Because this can be a complex issue, it should be discussed with the priest or deacon as early as possible. If there has been a previous marriage and no Church annulment has been granted, a sacramental wedding within the Catholic Church is not possible. If a Church annulment is going to be sought, no date can be set for the wedding until an annulment has been granted.

Can a priest or deacon who is a relative or close friend be asked to preside at a wedding at the Church of St. Michael?

With the explicit permission of the pastor, another Catholic priest or deacon may be invited to preside at a wedding. He must, however, be registered as a cleric by the State of Minnesota in order to preside at a wedding in this state.

Can a non-Catholic Minister be invited to participate in the wedding?

A non-Catholic minister is welcome to participate in a Catholic wedding ceremony. While the deacon or priest must act as the official witness for the exchange of vows, there are other elements of the service that a non-Catholic minister might do. These can be discussed with the priest or deacon.

Are there any restrictions regarding attendants?

The parish has no restrictions on the number of attendants. We discourage the participation of very young (pre-school) children as flower girls or ring bearers. Because the Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor act as official witnesses for the Church as well as the state, at least one of them should be a Catholic.

Are there any restrictions regarding decorations?

Decorations that have been put up as part of the parish's observance of a liturgical feast or season may not be removed or altered. Except during Lent, flowers may be placed in the sanctuary in a location that will not obstruct anyone's view of the Liturgy. We do not allow the throwing of rice or any other material after the wedding, either inside or outside the church building.

Are there restrictions regarding photography or videotaping?

It is important that photographers or video camera operators not become a distraction during the service. They should check with the priest, deacon, or Wedding Coordinator before the Liturgy if they have any questions.

When is the wedding rehearsal and who should be there?

The rehearsal is usually scheduled for the evening before the wedding. The time must be confirmed with the parish Wedding Coordinator. Everyone who has a role in the wedding ceremony (no matter how small) should be at the rehearsal.

How does a couple prepare a wedding program?

The Director of Music will guide you in preparing your program, in addition to providing you

with sample programs. The parish's wedding planning resources will be provided to you when you meet with the Director of Music. They are also available on the parish website. The resources provide an outline and instructions for preparing a program. The program music must be approved by the Director of Music before being printed.