

PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

The Church of Saint Michael the Archangel
424 Southwest Mill Street
Portland, Oregon 97201

Non-Parishioners

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a Sacrament, a sacred sign through which Christ shares His life with us. Of what does this sign consist? It is the simplest thing imaginable: a mutual promise, and a new life together in accordance with that promise. This is the Sacrament of Marriage. It is so great a mystery that St. Paul compares it to Christ's love for the Church (cf. Ephesians 5:28-29). Since the special vows uniting you are sacred, it is important that you celebrate your marriage, and begin your married life together, in the fullest way possible. As would be expected, there are specific regulations governing such an important event--regulations from the State, from the Catholic Church, and from this parish. None are contrary to love, but rather signify the recognition and protection of the Sacrament and the bond of love.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS AND SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Because marriage is a covenant of love before God and God's people, the Church has established certain guidelines to help ensure that this Sacrament is worthily celebrated. The most obvious is the expectation that Catholics who are preparing to marry in the Church are practicing their faith.

If you have been away from the Church and for any reason are not presently attending Mass, please do not hesitate to discuss this with our pastor. We are anxious to help you live your faith, and celebrate your upcoming marriage within that context. We are not, however, willing to celebrate the Sacrament for couples just looking for "a pretty place" to have a wedding, or for baptized Catholics without a commitment to Christ and a lived faith within His Church who are planning a Catholic wedding to fulfill family expectations.

☒ Either the bride or groom must be registered in this parish or have a special relationship with this church; e.g., has grown up in this parish, has family ties here, etc.

☒ Both the bride and groom must be free to marry: of legal age; not previously married; not related by blood; entering marriage freely and without pressure; intending to live a faithful and life-long marriage; and not excluding the possibility of children.

☒ It is a serious violation to celebrate the Sacraments without proper spiritual disposition. If there is serious sin in your life, it would be most fitting to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (go to Confession) prior to the marriage, during the week preceding your wedding or immediately before the rehearsal. Your engagement should not only be a time to "plan the big day", but a period of prayer and intimacy with the Lord who will bless and sustain your love and commitment over the years ahead.

SETTING THE DATE

Schedule an appointment with the Deacon/Pastoral Associate of St. Michael Church, at least four months prior to your proposed wedding date. He will answer any questions and explain the preparatory steps with you. The wedding date can ONLY be set by personal conference with the Pastor, never over the telephone or by a member of staff. If permission

is granted for a visiting priest to witness your vows, much of your marriage preparation will be done with him, but you must still meet with the pastor.

Most weddings are Saturdays, but they may be scheduled other days (for example, Friday evenings), as well. Due to Archdiocesan regulations, we do not celebrate Sunday weddings unless the vows are exchanged during one of the regularly scheduled parochial Masses: 4:30 p.m. Saturday Vigil; 8:30 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. or 12:15 PM on Sunday. There are no weddings celebrated on Saturday evenings, Holy Days of Obligation, or during the liturgical season of Lent.

SETTING THE TIME

While weekday weddings may be any hour during the late afternoon or early evening, Saturday weddings are only scheduled for no later than a 2pm start time. Please do not plan your reception before you have secured the church; some previously scheduled parish activities may conflict with the time you have chosen. You may have access to the church and parish hall two hours prior to the ceremony, with ample time for pictures either before or after the ceremony; however, couples with 2 p.m. Saturday weddings must complete all formal pictures before the ceremony, as we begin preparation for the 4:30 Saturday Vigil Mass at 3:30pm with Confessions beginning at 3:34pm.. Usually, only one wedding is held any given day.

PREPARATION CLASSES

The Archdiocese requires that all couples being married in the Church receive marriage preparation. This is not intended to convert non-Catholics. Conversion is a personal decision which makes little impact on the kind of ceremony you plan. Preparation classes, besides the meeting with the Pastor, are listed below.

- FOCCUS compatibility inventory. Fill out, score and staff lead at least 2 follow up sessions. **Cost** - \$12 for couple materials and grading fee.
- Four 2-hour sessions under the direction of a parish mentor couple, using the engaged couple workbook and video series, "Today and All the Days of Your Life". This covers the basics of marriage preparation, the main topics and the Catholic teachings on this great sacrament of life and love.
- Optional - Engaged Encounter Week-end. This covers the basics of marriage preparation, focusing on communicating on important issues, with many other engaged couples also on the same week-end.
- Highly recommended. Take a Natural Family Planning course from either a Couple to Couple League teaching couple, or through Northwest Family Services.
- If Catholic, attending Mass regularly. Praying together, Eucharistic adoration, etc. - all to help prepare your hearts and souls for this great Sacrament of unity in Christ.

Programs fill quickly; please register as soon as possible. If you are uncertain which program to attend, we can help you select one that best suits your needs. A list with locations, telephone numbers and fees will be provided at your first meeting with the Deacon.

Marriage preparation is an important part of your engagement. It is easy to become overwhelmed with the pressures of planning for the day, and overlook preparing for the lifetime that follows.

PAPERWORK

All couples complete and sign a "Freedom to Marry" form, witnessed by a priest, deacon or delegate. This form gathers basic personal information and attests to your freedom to marry in the Church. Two witnesses, usually but not necessarily your parents, sign a similar form in the presence of a priest. If they do not live in the area, they may go to a priest in their home town and return the document by mail. The priest/deacon will have the forms.

Catholics must submit proof of Baptism by providing a certificate from the church of your baptism no older than six months. It can be sent to you or to the pastor. If you need help assistance, let us know as soon as possible. An original certificate is helpful in providing accurate information, but cannot be submitted in place of a recently issued certificate; parishes generally provide this verification without cost.

Non-Catholic Christians are also asked to provide proof of baptism, preferably in the form of a baptismal certificate or official record. In this case, a photocopy of any documentation issued at the time of Baptism is acceptable. If none is available, please let us know.

Non-Catholics must obtain a dispensation to marry in the Catholic Church. The Deacon will facilitate the paper-work, but please be aware that such dispensation is only granted with the understanding that the Catholic will continue in the Faith and, as far as possible, baptize and raise all children in the Church. The non-Catholic does not make similar promises, as it is up to the Catholic to assume this responsibility. The non-Catholic does, however, state that he or she is aware of this promise and intent.

Paperwork should be completed a month prior to the wedding. If you have permission to marry outside your parish and the pastor has agreed to celebrate it here, all paperwork should be done through your parish and sent to us at least six weeks before your wedding day.

If either of you is divorced, our Church asks us to take seriously your former union out of respect for all Christian marriages--including non-Catholic ones. This involves a process commonly called an "annulment", often taking many months to complete. A wedding date cannot be set until a decree of nullity is granted. The pastor will help you if you need one.

STATE OF OREGON

All couples must obtain an Oregon marriage license, although it may be issued by any county in the State. Check with the local county courthouse for details--their number is usually in the "blue" pages in the telephone directory. Be aware that there is a 3-day waiting period before the license is valid, after which it remains valid for 2 months. Bring

the license & certificate to the Church at least one week before the ceremony. It will be kept in your file until the wedding..

GUESTS

Built in 1901, St. Michael's is small and intimate – certainly part of its charm and appeal. However, it is not hugely spacious – it will accommodate approximately 250 guests.

MUSIC

The *Catholic Bishops' Conference* states that all texts should be “sacred, theologically sound, and scripturally-inspired”. Movie sound tracks, show tunes and pop songs are out of place within a wedding liturgy, nor do we permit pre-recorded music at St. Michael Church. Wedding music is not entertainment offered for your guests, but worship offered to God; expressing our praise, assisting our prayer, and supporting what we believe about marriage. Please save any secular or sentimental music for the reception, where it can be enjoyed in a more casual social setting.

The parish has some keyboardists and vocalists – they are familiar with our wedding liturgy, parish policies, and church organ and piano. If you wish a musician outside the parish, please discuss this with the Deacon. Make no arrangements until you have done this. All fees, etc, for musicians are your responsibility and are not part of the fees listed in this document. Please contact our parish Music Coordinator, Christina Self, 503.481.0489, for more help in this matter.

DECORATIONS

While it is a pleasant addition, it is not necessary to purchase floral arrangements for your wedding liturgy. If you do, however, there are a few guidelines concerning their placement. Arrangements may be on both sides of the altar and/or in front of the ambo, but not on the altar. Keep in mind that arrangements situated immediately in front of the altar will not be visible in photographs or during the ceremony. Bows, with or without flowers, may be attached to pews with florist clips, if desired, but please avoid tape and remove them after the ceremony. One large kneeler will be provided if you choose, but nothing should be moved or removed without prior permission of the pastor. Flower girls may carry baskets or bouquets, but may not distribute petals down the aisle. Carpet runners may be used, but we do not provide them.

Please do not decorate the church entrance inside or outside without discussing this with the Wedding Coordinator. Floral arrangements must be delivered intact, as we lack the time and space to assemble them here. Flowers may be delivered to the church after 9 a.m. Saturdays; call to schedule a time other days.

We encourage you to leave your wedding flowers for the weekend liturgies, where they add great beauty to the liturgy and remind people to pray for you. It is up to you, however.

CANDLES

We provide altar candles. Please do not place additional candles in the Sanctuary, on the pews in the aisles, or at the entrance to the church. If you plan to light a Unity Candle

during your ceremony, choose a simple white pillar with two tapers. Unity Candles are available in bridal shops and specialty stores. Don't forget to take it with you after the ceremony. Many couples renew their vows and recall their wedding day by lighting it on each anniversary.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"My house shall be called a house of prayer," Jesus said. Too often, unfortunately, photography in the Church obscures this simple and beautiful truth. The problem is usually a combination of many things; too much chatter, excessive distraction, lack of respect for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle & the protracted time it takes for pictures. Put simply, the church is NOT a studio. We would hope everyone involved – before, during and after the ceremony – would be mindful that the church is a sacred place.

Pictures may be taken during the ceremony if done with discretion; however, we do ask that all flash photography be limited to the processional and recessional. At NO time should the photographer come down the length of the aisle, or enter into the Sanctuary. Pre-wedding pictures conclude 30 minutes before the ceremony begins. It's just plain tacky to have guests arriving while the wedding party is still assembled in front of the altar for pictures.

Some couples want their wedding videotaped. We have no objection, but do not permit video personnel in the sanctuary or main aisle, nor should they intrude on the service itself. Only unmanned stationary cameras may be used, and all cords for lighting, cameras, etc. MUST be securely taped down to prevent accidents. Share our policies with your photographer or videographer in advance--it will help prevent awkwardness and misunderstanding at the wedding.

REHEARSAL

Ordinarily rehearsals are usually the morning, afternoon or evening of the day right before the wedding day, depending upon work schedules, travel plans, and other special celebrations the couple has scheduled. No matter when the rehearsal is scheduled, please be prompt--it is discourteous to be late while others wait. Of course, you will want your attendants present to help the ceremony flow smoothly, but it is also helpful if your Readers attend, as well. A typical rehearsal lasts 45 minutes to an hour.

WEDDING LITURGY AND WEDDING PARTY

All couples receive a booklet, Together for Life, to help plan the ceremony. It contains selected Scriptural texts, prayer options, forms for the exchange of vows and other helpful suggestions, as well as an outline in which to indicate your choices. Ordinarily, two family members or friends serve as Readers, with the gospel always read by the Celebrant. When you have chosen the first two readings and responsorial psalm, make sure all Readers are given a copy in advance. If you are having a Nuptial Mass and need Altar Servers, please provide your own as we do not have them here. If Communion will be distributed under the forms of bread and wine, it would be most fitting to ask a family member who is trained be a Eucharistic minister to assist at Communion. Non-Catholics may read, but may not distribute Communion.

When both bride and groom are Catholic, it is presumed they will have a Nuptial Mass. A Catholic marrying a baptized Christian may still request a Mass, but if either is not baptized it is strongly recommended that the Rite of Marriage be celebrated without Mass. Because of the sad divisions in Christianity and our firm belief in Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist, sharing the Eucharist (bread and wine) is not ordinarily permitted. Please explain this in advance to your family and friends. If you have questions or wish more information, please ask the pastor.

We do not impose a limit on the number in your wedding party, but be forewarned that, as with decorations, "less is more"! Our Sanctuary does not easily accommodate a crowd, and too many attendants often intensify rather than reduce anxiety. The decision, however, is up to you. Members of your wedding party need not be Catholic. Those who are not are welcome to come forward for a blessing at Communion by approaching the altar with both arms folded across their chest. Flower Girls and Ring Bearers under six may enter at the Processional, but are encouraged to remain seated with the family during the Rite of Marriage. Also, be aware that the Maid of Honor and Best Man must be at least 18 years of age, as they will sign the Civil Marriage License.

RICE AND THE USE OF ALCOHOL

Throwing rice, confetti or bird seed is absolutely prohibited anywhere on the parish grounds. Also, no alcohol may be consumed either inside or outside the church building; your wedding may be canceled if this policy is violated! Please communicate this to members of your family and wedding party, avoiding injured feelings or misunderstandings at the rehearsal or the wedding day.

WEDDING DAY PREPARATIONS

The bride and her attendants are welcome to use the parish hall as a dressing room. Due to limited space, we ask that the groomsmen arrive at the church already formally dressed. The bridal party may have access to the church and parish hall for two hours prior to the beginning of the ceremony; e.g., a wedding party may arrive at noon for a wedding to begin at 2:00 p.m.

Light refreshments may be brought to the parish hall for to enjoy before your ceremony, but please do not bring food or drink into the church. We ask that friends or family members be assigned to make a "clean-sweep" after the rehearsal and at the conclusion of the ceremony to ensure that personal items have not been forgotten, and that the hall and church are left in good order.

Please do not leave valuables unattended. It is a sad commentary that items are sometimes stolen from churches, with even reports of scams where people "work weddings" to go through unattended purses, steal cameras, wrapped presents, etc. Please keep track of all gifts brought to the Church.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

Envelopes with any stipends/fees for priest, organist, soloists, etc should be clearly marked and given to the Wedding Coordinator at the **rehearsal** for disbursement immediately following your wedding.

**MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU AS YOU PREPARE
FOR YOUR WEDDING DAY AND MARRIAGE,
GRANTING YOU A LONG AND JOYFUL LIFE TOGETHER IN HIS LOVE.**