

*Saint Joseph
Catholic Church*



Marriage Guidelines

Marriage Guidelines for the St. Joseph Catholic Church

phone: (803) 254-7646

Congratulations on your anticipated wedding and choosing to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in St. Joseph Catholic Church!

It has been our experience that an awareness of certain Church, Diocesan and Parish policies will assist in avoiding any misunderstanding and will help in the planning of your wedding. We recommend that the bride and groom as well as their families read these guidelines.

The policies regarding the Sacrament of Marriage at St. Joseph are not established to cause the couple and their families unnecessary hardship or stress. Rather, we would hope that you will welcome and appreciate the value of these guidelines.

St. Joseph Catholic Church rejoices with you in this choice of the vocation of marriage. Our best wishes and prayers are with you as you begin your life together.

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The use of St. Joseph Church is available to *ACTIVE MEMBERS* of the parish. Three points determine active membership: 1) registration in the parish for a sufficient period of time and use of the envelope system in support of the parish; 2) faithful attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days; 3) volunteer and participate in Parish activities with time, talent, and resources as means permit. The only exception is made for the Catholic children of our active parishioners, i.e. their children who live outside of Columbia and who are themselves active Catholics in their own parishes elsewhere.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

Whether being married at St. Joseph or another parish, the couple must contact the Pastor of St. Joseph before a time and date for the wedding are set. This contact must be **at least six (6) months prior to the planned date of marriage.**

After the couple is interviewed by the Pastor of St. Joseph and a determination is made that there are no obstacles to the proposed marriage, a date and time may be set and further instructions on the prenuptial preparations will be given.

In inter-faith weddings (i.e., one is Catholic and the other is non-Catholic) celebrated in St. Joseph Catholic Church, the non-Catholic is allowed to invite the minister of his or her faith to participate in accord with the guidelines provided by the General Law of the Church and the provisions made in the Directory of Ecumenism. If there are any questions as to the limits of participation, please do not hesitate to speak with the priest concerning your intentions.

FURTHER PREPARATIONS

The celebration of the Sacraments of the Church are public acts of worship. The guests that you invite are afforded the opportunity to actively participate in the celebration. The bride and groom are encouraged to choose the sacred Scripture readings. In preparing for the Celebration of the Word, you should include a Responsorial Psalm. Both the Psalm and Gospel Acclamation are sung. The selection of the Gospel reading may be done by the priest or the couple.

A book, entitled *Together For Life*, will be given to you. This book will assist you with the many options which are possible in your ceremony. The priest will be happy to answer any questions concerning your plans for the wedding ceremony.

The Wedding Director for St. Joseph Church is also available to meet with the lay readers one half hour prior to the rehearsal. She will instruct the readers with the procedure used in the Church regarding the Proclamation of the Word. The Wedding Director will also schedule one to three altar servers (as needed) to assist in the wedding ceremony.

There are certain liturgical seasons of the year when the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is discouraged. These two seasons are Lent and Advent. However, if circumstances require that the wedding be celebrated during these seasons, you must remember that these are the penitential seasons of the Church and plan the celebration of your wedding with the knowledge of the Church's season, and through consultation with the Priest and Wedding Director.

In St. Joseph Church, we refrain from the celebration of weddings during Holy Week. This also includes the Friday or Saturday before Palm Sunday. This is out of respect for the week made holy by the suffering of Christ. There is never the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage during the Holy Triduum.

In the normal course of the year, Nuptial Masses may not be scheduled later than 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. This allows the Church the necessary time to prepare for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation which takes place at 4:00 p.m. You must inform your photographer that pictures **must be completed efficiently (within 30 minutes)**. The Liturgy of Sunday begins with the Mass of Anticipation at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday. Therefore, no weddings are allowed on Saturday evening. Weddings may be celebrated on Friday evening or other weekdays; however, they are not celebrated on Sunday.

The priest who is witnessing the marriage is responsible for the rehearsal as well as the wedding. In all matters liturgical, the final decision must have the approval of the Pastor. Remember that he is guided by both Canonical and Liturgical Law of the Church.

On behalf of all those persons participating in the wedding, we request that all members of the wedding party be prompt and respectful. The estimated time for a rehearsal is one hour. Please make sure that everyone involved knows the location of the Church. Members of the wedding party must be respectful and adhere to all directions. The Church reserves the right to refuse wedding party members the privilege of participating in the ceremony due to inappropriate actions.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

_____ **Contract for the use of St. Joseph Catholic Church** - We must be in receipt of this completed contract with 1/2 of the church usage fee when you make your reservation (see next page for details.)

_____ **Pre-nuptial Questionnaire** - This is supplied by the priest. If affidavits are required, they are completed by people who have known you well for a long period of time, about your understanding of marriage and your freedom to marry.

_____ **Certificate of Baptism** - Catholics must contact the church where they were baptized and request a Certificate of Baptism, dated within six months of the wedding date. As this document is an integral part of the marriage archives, a photocopy will not suffice. Other Christians are requested to present an original document or copy to the priest.

_____ **Certificate of Confirmation** - If the record of Confirmation is not included on the certificate of Baptism (i.e. noted on the back), Catholics should present an original certificate to the priest.

_____ **God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage** - (Mandatory marriage preparation program offered by St. Joseph Catholic Church.) Certificate will be awarded to you upon your completion of the program. Schedules and details are available from the church office.

_____ **Letter of Intent** - If a visiting Catholic priest will officiate at your wedding, please ask him to send a letter asking for delegation and stating that he will take care of all canonical paperwork and liturgical details. The visiting priest must follow established customs.

_____ **Civil License** - This is obtained from the County Courthouse. It may be obtained in any county in South Carolina. State law requires that the license be obtained at least 24 hours prior to the wedding ceremony. It is illegal to celebrate a wedding without a proper South Carolina marriage license. **Present the license to the Wedding Director / office at least two weeks before the ceremony.** If not received by the time of the rehearsal, *the wedding will be cancelled.*

_____ **Decree of Annulment** - This is required in the case of a previous marriage by **either** party, whether Catholic or not.

THE CHURCH SANCTUARY

The sanctuary appointments are not to be moved. They must remain in their given position. St. Joseph Church will provide the candles for the altar. Extra candles - including aisle candles - are not permitted in the Church.

When there is a need for kneelers or prie dieus, the Church will provide them.

In order to insure the safety of you and your guests, St. Joseph Church will not permit flower petals, confetti, birdseed, bubbles or rice to be scattered in the aisle or on the outside grounds of the Church. Also, the use of an aisle cloth is not permitted. Previous experience shows that many accidents have occurred as a result of this practice.

USAGE FEES

1. Use of Church (minimum) \$1,000.00

The Church usage fee covers the use of the buildings — the Church for the rehearsal and wedding and use of the Parish Center for changing by the bride and attendants (unfortunately, we cannot provide a place for the groom and his attendants or guests to change.) It also defrays overhead expenses including utilities, maintenance, paperwork and staff support.

*One-half of the Church usage fee is required when you make the reservation, with the balance due **two weeks prior** to the wedding date. If the wedding is canceled, a refund will be given, less a \$100.00 office fee.*

The following fees apply to all couples:

2. Officiant \$200.00
3. Wedding Director \$175.00
4. Assistant Wedding Director \$100.00
5. St. Joseph Altar Servers (each) \$15.00
6. Organist *determined at consultation*
7. Cantors / Instrumentalists *additional*

Fees are to be paid in cash two weeks prior to the wedding date.

Please use the envelopes provided by the Church for each fee.

WEDDING DIRECTOR

In order to accommodate the many weddings celebrated each year in St. Joseph Church, and to insure that the proper procedures are followed, the Church has engaged qualified Directors. All wedding ceremonies will be directed by the parish Wedding Directors, who will assist in providing a smooth-running and tasteful ceremony. They will take care of many of the small and large details that might otherwise be overlooked. Services provided by the Directors are as follows:

- Meets with bride two to three months before the wedding
- Directs the rehearsal
- Directs the wedding
- Contacts the Altar Server(s)
- Opens and closes the bride's dressing room

Note: NO dressing rooms are provided for men of the bridal party or guests.

ATTENDANTS

Witnesses (and wedding attendants) are an integral part of both the Sacrament and ceremony of Marriage. Attendants are expected to participate actively and fully. In planning your wedding, please keep in mind that while the Nuptial Mass or Church Wedding is a celebration, it is also a most sacred and holy one. The maximum number of attendants for both the bride and groom is eight each. For the bride, this includes the Maid / Matron of Honor, bridesmaids and junior bridesmaids; for the groom this includes the Best Man, groomsmen and ushers.

In addition, a flower girl and ring bearer are allowed. The flower girl and / or ring bearer must be five (5) years old or older. The actual rings may not be carried by the ringbearer. *The church reserves the right to refuse an under aged child to participate in the ceremony.*

The attire of the bride and her attendants must reflect the sacredness of the occasion and location. **In essence, modesty must prevail.** Bare shoulders are discouraged. All tattoos must be fully covered; visible body piercings, other than moderate earrings, must be removed.

FLORIST REQUIREMENTS

Two vases of fresh flowers (no artificial flowers allowed) are permitted on the altar. **You must have your florist contact the Wedding Director for the inserts for the vases.** These flowers are considered as dedicated to God once they are placed in the Church sanctuary. They are to remain in the sanctuary.

In order to preserve and maintain our wooden pews, the use of tacks, green floral tape or anything harmful to the surface of our wooden pews is not allowed. **You must inform your florist of our policy.**

MUSIC REQUIREMENTS

Music for weddings should be planned well in advance with the Organist for St. Joseph Church. The St. Joseph Church Organists are committed to play for all weddings where organ or piano music is desired. Only sacred music is appropriate for a wedding ceremony in the Church. Popular or secular music is much more suitable for the reception. The Organist can provide a wide variety of good music for organ, piano, soloists and instrumentalists.

It is required that you engage a qualified Cantor for your wedding from the experienced cantors at St. Joseph Church. The responsibilities of the cantor are to sing the Responsorial Psalm and lead any acclamations that are sung by the congregation. The cantor can also serve as your soloist.

The fee for organ/piano music will be determined at the consultation. This fee includes one consultation with the bride and the wedding. The Organist does not ordinarily attend the rehearsal. An additional fee is required if the Organist is present at the rehearsal. If an outside soloist or instrumentalist is used there will be an additional fee due to the extra time required with the guest musicians. The Organist's fee is payable **two weeks** prior to the wedding *directly to the organist*.

The Organist can recommend highly qualified brass, string and woodwind players, as well as vocal soloists. Instrumentalists and Vocalists set their own fees. Payment should be made directly to these persons. It is the bride's responsibility to engage any additional musicians. Bagpipes are not allowed to play within the church. No taped music is allowed.

PICTURES AND VIDEOTAPING

Most brides and grooms desire photographs of the wedding ceremony. We have no objections, provided that all is done in good taste. It is important to remember that you are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which is reserved on our altar in the sanctuary. **The proper silence and respect by all must be maintained at all times.**

There are certain regulations which will foster the proper atmosphere in the Church.

- There will be **NO flash pictures** taken during the wedding ceremony by photographers, family members or guests.
- Family members or guests may use video cameras provided they are seated on an outside aisle and they do not stand up or move around during the ceremony.
- **NO** photographs are to be made from within the sanctuary.
- No one is allowed to stand on the pews for any reason and no one may sit on the backs of the pews.
- Photographs with the celebrant and altar servers must be taken immediately after the bride and groom have signed the marriage certificate.

(We do permit a flash picture as the bride enters and as the bride and groom recess, provided that the photographer enters no further than the last five pews.)

We stress that no longer than 30 minutes may be spent taking pictures after the ceremony. All informal poses of the bride, groom, or any member of the bridal party or family members must be taken outside prior to the wedding or at the reception.

It is the responsibility of the bride to inform her photographer / videographer of the Church guidelines.

Family members or guests using video or still cameras who do not respect these guidelines will be asked to cease using their cameras.

APPROPRIATE USE OF FACILITIES

Neither alcohol nor illegal drugs are permitted in or around church property. Please instruct members of your wedding party not to bring any alcohol or drugs onto church property. Alcohol or drugs found on the premises will result in CANCELLATION of the wedding. Participants under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs will be asked to leave the property. These rules will be enforced!

All St. Joseph buildings have been designated as “Smoke Free.”
Smoking is not allowed in any church facilities.

Helpful Reminders

- All weddings **will** begin on time.
- Limousine services are often late. Please plan accordingly.
- Handicap accessible entrances are provided at the front and Bonham Street side of the church.
- No dressing facilities are provided for men of the bridal party or wedding guests.
- Separate envelopes, provided by the church office, with the appropriate fees, *in cash please*, should be delivered to the Wedding Director **two weeks in advance** of the wedding date. *The usage fee for the Church may be paid by check.*

NOTES

Requirements

It is the responsibility of the couple's families to see that the Church and the dressing room are not abused and that the regulations of the Church, as to No Smoking and No Alcoholic Beverages / No Illegal Drugs are maintained.

The bride and her attendants may use the dressing room. Please **do not leave personal belongings in the dressing room** during the wedding ceremony. The Church cannot be responsible for any items left unattended.

Due to delays in the starting of the wedding, **guest books are not permitted.** It is not the custom of the area to have receiving lines at the entrance of the Church. This delays the process of taking pictures and also causes greater delays for your guests at the reception.

If special seating is required, it will be the responsibility of the bride and groom to see that an appropriate number of ushers are designated to accomplish this special request. If pews are reserved for family members, they must inform ushers that they are to be seated in the family pews.

No flower petals, rice, confetti, birdseed, bubbles, etc. may be thrown inside or outside the Church. This request is for the safety of persons and protection of property.

Bridal Party and Guests may **not leave cars in church parking lots** after the rehearsal or wedding as these spaces are needed for church services and parish functions.

If for any reason it should be necessary to cancel or reschedule your wedding, please notify the Church office as soon as possible.

*Marriage Guidelines effective September 1, 2009
for all weddings.*