



Parish of Saint Michael

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SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE POLICY & PROCEDURES

St. Michael Parish welcomes you and congratulates you on your upcoming marriage! In this document, we have put together information about policies and procedures for receiving the Sacrament of Marriage at St. Michael Parish, and to help you in your planning process.

Initial Meeting

Engaged couples planning to marry at St. Michael Parish must arrange a meeting with the priest/deacon at least one year prior to the wedding, at which a date for the wedding can be reserved. To schedule this appointment, please call our Parish Office at 781.275.6318 or email us at parishoffice@bedfordcatholic.org. Couples are advised not to make other firm commitments or to make a reception hall deposit until after the date, time and eligibility to be married at St. Michael Parish has been confirmed.

The priest must determine that both parties are free to marry before he can confirm a date. If one or both parties have been married in the Catholic Church, or have gone through any form of marriage outside of the Catholic Church, they are **not free to marry** in the Catholic Church until all previous marriages have been declared null by a Catholic Tribunal or have ended with the death of one of the spouses.

If you would like a family member or friend who is a bishop, priest, or deacon in the Catholic Church to celebrate your wedding, please inform the priest/deacon at this initial meeting. Any priest/deacon in good standing with his diocese or religious order is welcome to celebrate your wedding, though priests who are not residents of Massachusetts must apply for permission from the Secretary of State's Office of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts first.

If either party is non-Catholic, your minister is cordially invited to join us and to participate in your wedding celebration. Any visiting priest/deacon is expected to follow all of the guidelines for weddings here at St. Michael Parish. A priest/deacon from another Diocese must present, via the Pastoral Center, a letter in Good Standing from his Diocese or Religious Community.

Marriage Preparation

All couples are required to participate in a **Marriage Preparation Program** sponsored by the Archdiocese (specific information can be found at www.bostoncatholic.org on the “Family Life Ministry” page). It is your responsibility to arrange your schedule to accommodate the meeting times of the program. All documentation that substantiates the completion of the marriage preparation program must be submitted to your priest no less than 6 weeks prior to the wedding.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts also requires that you apply for a marriage license from a town or city office; this license must be presented to the priest/deacon at the rehearsal. You are not able to marry at St. Michael Parish without a license from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Music

Music is an important part of a wedding celebration and our Music Director or organist would be happy to help you choose pieces suitable for this beautiful sacrament. Any financial arrangements are to be made directly with the musician. Please note that outside musicians are subject to the approval of the music ministers and/or priest celebrating the marriage. As is customary, we do require that our organist be compensated their regular fee, should you choose to have an outside organist. A bench fee is not required if you decide to use your own singer; however, the person must be capable of singing Liturgical music.

Flowers

Flowers are beautiful decorations for your wedding and add beauty to the Church. The florist is responsible for setting up floral decorations and runners in the Church. Please note—as mentioned below—that no flower petals are to be strewn along runners or walkways.

Decorations & Environment

Selection of the arrangements will coordinate with the environment plan for the time of the Liturgical season. No additional structures, chairs, stands, columns, kneelers, candelabras, runners or other decorations that violate safety or liturgical considerations are allowed.

Photography/Videography

The activities of those providing photography must also be suitable to the church setting. Your photographer should consult with the celebrant as to any specific restrictions, and they need follow the guidelines of St. Michael Parish.

Rice, Confetti & Flower Petals

These are considered inappropriate at weddings as they are a safety hazard, especially for elderly guests who may have tentative mobility. These traditions are best reserved for the reception. Please inform the wedding party of this stipulation.

Church Donation

It is a long-standing practice that a donation be made to the parish on the occasion of a marriage. St. Michael Parish requests a donation of four hundred dollars (\$400). This is not a fee or personal gift to the priest/deacon, but rather an expression of your support for the St. Michael Parish community. If you would like to give an additional honorarium to the priest or deacon, you are welcome to do so, and it is greatly appreciated.

Scheduling

Please remember that weekend schedules at the parish incorporate many liturgies and activities that require a commitment of the priest/deacon that may prevent him from attending your wedding reception. If you would like him to participate in any way at the reception (blessing of the meal, etc.), please arrange that with him prior to the wedding.

Wedding Times

The following times are available for weddings at St. Michael Parish:

- Friday afternoon between 3 and 6 pm
- Saturday between 11 am and 2 pm and in the evening at 6:30 pm
- Sunday afternoon between 1 and 5 pm

Lent and Holy Week

Weddings are not normally celebrated during the penitential season of Lent. Weddings in the season of Lent will only be considered under particular pastoral or personal circumstances. In the event of these exceptions, the ceremony and decorations should reflect the penitential season of Lent. We do not celebrate weddings during Holy Week from the Friday before Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday.

General Information

Parish Office	781.275.6318
Parish email	ParishOffice@bedfordcatholic.org
Church Offering	\$400
Organist	\$250
Soloist	\$150
Aisle Length	100 feet

Wedding To-Do List

- Call Parish Office to set up initial meeting with priest/deacon to set wedding date
- Book wedding rehearsal date with priest/deacon
- Mail Baptismal and Confirmation records to St. Michael Parish, 90 Concord Road, Bedford, MA 01730
- Complete Marriage Prep Course and present Priest/Deacon with certificate
- Contact organist/music director to plan music selections
- Obtain Marriage License from City or Town Hall to give Priest/Deacon at wedding rehearsal

Liturgical Preparation

- Choose Reading from Old Testament pp. 15-32 (B1-B9)
- Choose Reader for Old Testament (First) Reading
- Choose Reading from the New Testament pp. 44-55 (D1-D13)
- Choose Reader for New Testament (Second) Reading
- Memorize Consent p. 88 (H1)
- Choose Prayers of the Faithful pp 91-92 (J1-J2)
- Choose Reader for Prayers of the Faithful
- Names of deceased for Prayers of the Faithful

FAQs

Do I have a simple ceremony or a Nuptial Mass?

You will work this out with the priest or deacon who will be witnessing your vows. He will assist you as you make the best decision given the circumstances.

My fiancé and I have not attended church for a long time. Can we still get married in your church?

If you would like to marry in any Catholic Church, it is important to establish a tradition of attending Mass regularly. In this way, you become reacquainted with the prayers and rituals in the Mass and get to know the priest who will not only be officiating at your wedding ceremony, but will be accompanying you in the journey through the preparation. The policy at St. Michael Parish is that the couple must be attending Mass either at St. Michael or their parish of record.

We're very concerned about coordinating the reception hall, etc. Can we book the Church now?

We ask you to consult with the priest or deacon for his availability first. It's helpful when you meet with the priest to have a few dates available as the date you want may already be reserved. Please note that we are only able to reserve wedding dates one year in advance.

My uncle is a priest but he lives out of the country. Could he preside at our wedding?

If a Catholic priest from another Diocese presides at the wedding ceremony, this is acceptable, provided he can establish he has valid ministerial faculties via his Chancery Office or his Religious Superior. The marriage prep may be done either with the visiting priest or may be overseen by the parish priest.

I was married before. Can I remarry in the Catholic Church?

This is not a simple question to answer. We recommend arranging a meeting as soon as possible to discuss your situation with the priest here at St. Michael or a priest you or your family may know.

My fiancé is not Catholic. Can we get married in the Catholic Church?

Yes, you may get married in this parish or any parish provided that you, as a couple, complete the marriage prep or Pre-Marriage Seminar and meet with the priest (he will determine the number of meetings). The Catholic participant must also be willing to sign the Dispensation for Mixed Religion Request, which is submitted to the diocese for approval of the marriage.

I still need to make my First Communion and Confirmation. Is this a problem?

The short answer is yes; however, it is recommended that you set up a meeting with the priest as soon as possible, as there are faith issues that must be discussed.

Whom should I talk to if I have more questions?

Contact the Parish Office at 781-275-6318 to set up a meeting with the priest/deacon or if you have further questions regarding your wedding at St. Michael Parish. We look forward to serving you as your wedding day approaches.