



## Saint Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church Wedding Guidelines

“The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1603) We are here to help you prepare well to enter into that vocation, body and soul. Prayer and study and asking lots of questions all help you to be better prepared for your big day.

We know that there is a lot that goes into planning a wedding and that many things hinge upon the date of the wedding. Dresses, venues, caterers, and photographers all take time to find and book. That being said, we strongly recommend that you don't book anything until you have a confirmed date on the parish calendar.

We look forward to helping you get ready for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony and for the beautiful life you will live together as husband and wife.

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist you as you begin your preparation for the wedding. Wedding preparation is a multi-step process, involving an initial meeting at the church with the Marriage Coordinator and a Wedding Preparation workshop. There are a number of customs and procedures of the Catholic Church and Saint Mark the Evangelist parish that we want to make you aware of to aid you in your planning and preparation.

### Summary Overview:

- 1.) Email [Marriage@stmarkrc.org](mailto:Marriage@stmarkrc.org) to inquire and schedule a meeting with the Marriage Coordinator, indicating your plans to discuss marriage at Saint Mark the Evangelist. This meeting can happen as soon as you get engaged and **must** happen no less than six months before the proposed wedding date. The wedding date may only be reserved after this meeting.
- 2.) Register for one of the Marriage Preparation Workshops held at Saint Mark. (Offered three times a year on a Saturday in September, January, and June).
- 3.) Take the FOCCUS test and start collecting the necessary documents. The priest/deacon will provide this information at the initial meeting and then review the results of the assessment. The Priest/Deacon or Mentor Couple will then review them with you as necessary.
- 4.) Get in touch with the Wedding Day Coordinator and the Music Director. This can happen as soon as you have a confirmed date.
- 5.) Look over all the wedding day details below and make any necessary selections. You can talk through these details with your Wedding Day Coordinator.

## Key People:

**Marriage Coordinator**-The Marriage Coordinator will guide you through the entire administrative process and is your key contact for planning your wedding at the parish. (marriage@stmarkrc.org)

**Wedding Day Coordinator**- A Wedding Day Coordinator will be assigned who will be on site the day of your rehearsal/wedding to oversee all logistical matters related to your ceremony.

**Priest/Deacon**- A member of the Saint Mark clergy will lead you through the spiritual preparation aspects for your Marriage, including the Marriage Preparation Seminar which you will attend.

**Wedding Music Director**- Will approve your musical selections and assign cantors/vocalists/organists as needed. (Francisco@stmarkrc.org)

## Parishioner Weddings:

In order to be considered an active parishioner of Saint Mark the Evangelist, you must do the following for at least 6 months:

1. Register in the parish with the registration form found online or in the narthex at least 6 months prior to requesting your wedding date.
2. Assist at Mass at Saint Mark at least 75% of all Sundays and Holy Days.
3. Contribute financially on a consistent basis.
4. Be an active part of parish life.

All Catholics aged 18 or older should register under their own name with the parish they consider their spiritual home. Simply being the child of an existing parishioner does not constitute parish membership. Catholics over the age of 18 who consider Saint Mark the Evangelist their spiritual home but are under their parents' care and are away at school, military or civil service, should register in the parish and indicate that fact for our records.

## Non-Parishioner Weddings:

Catholics who do not meet any of the qualifications above are considered non-parishioners and may not reserve a wedding date earlier than 6-months prior to your desired date, subject to availability. This policy is observed so that our parishioners are always afforded the first opportunity in what is a very busy wedding schedule.

## Step 1: Getting Started

**Please meet with us as soon as possible, but at least 6 months prior to the proposed wedding date.**

We are excited about being with you throughout the preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

At this point, we want to get the process started in making preparations for the various parts of marriage preparation. These are the things we need to start: **Please note:** All communication with our parish regarding your wedding, whether written or by telephone, must be with the partners themselves and no one else, even close family members.

- 1.) **Schedule Initial Interview with Marriage Coordinator:** You will begin the marriage preparation process by scheduling an interview with the Marriage Coordinator.
- 2.) **Baptismal Certificate:** If you were not baptized at Saint Mark the Evangelist Church, you will need to contact the parish of your baptism to request a new (issued within the last six months), annotated baptismal certificate. We need this in order to ensure your sacramental freedom to marry.
- 3.) **Reserving a Date:** Some couples, when they contact the parish, will have already chosen a wedding date. **Be advised that we cannot confirm a date and time for your wedding until your initial interview with the Marriage Coordinator.** We will work with you to make sure that nothing stands in the way of your readiness to marry before a date is confirmed.

## Step 2: Initial Interview with the Marriage Coordinator

**No less than six months before the wedding.**

Your marriage preparation will begin with a meeting with the Marriage Coordinator. They will lay out the program of marriage preparation and give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about it.

If there has been a prior marriage of any kind by either the prospective bride or groom

(meaning that either of you has formally said "I do" to anyone, anywhere) please inform them at this meeting.

**If it is determined that there is nothing standing in the way of your marriage, we will then be able to schedule the date and time of your wedding and rehearsal.**

Weddings take place on most Saturdays of the year.

Wedding times are either **1:00 pm or 6:00 pm.**

Weddings between 2 Catholics are in the context of Mass. Weddings where only 1 is Catholic are outside of Mass.

Rehearsals take place the day before the wedding at either **5:00 pm or 5:30 pm.**

### **Step 3: Marriage Preparation Process:**

All couples who wish to be married at Saint Mark the Evangelist are **REQUIRED** to participate in the Marriage Preparation process at Saint Mark as is outlined in this packet. Preparation may not be accomplished elsewhere. Guest clergy may be invited to assist or concelebrate in the marriage ceremony. Normally however, it will be one of the Saint Mark Clergy who preside at all wedding ceremonies. Any limited exceptions to this rule are granted in writing by the Pastor before marriage preparation begins.

Preparation for marriage in the Catholic Church requires a great deal of study and learning. You are preparing for a sacrament that will last as long as you both shall live! So, it only makes sense that you should know well the gift of God that you are preparing to receive, and that you should learn how to be ready to receive it.

### **The Marriage Preparation Process has the following parts:**

#### **FOCCUS Inventory:**

FOCCUS is a series of questions answered by both the bride and the groom which examines all aspects of your relationship. This instrument is not an exam, but merely a tool to help you take a look at your relationship. You will identify your strengths and your weaknesses, and, in subsequent meetings, will talk about how to improve on areas in your relationship that need growth.

#### **Marriage Preparation Workshop:**

This all-day course is offered three times a year on a Saturday in September, January, and June. The workshop will give you an opportunity to receive an in-depth treatment of certain important topics, such as:

Marriage as Sacrament and Covenant  
Families of Origin and Procreation  
Communication and Conflict Resolution  
Money and Finances

#### **Engaged Encounter Weekend**

Engaged Encounter is a marriage prep weekend retreat that works to connect couples to their parishes through formation and building relationships with mentors. Through this program, you will talk about and review the sacramental and practical aspects of a Catholic marriage alongside other couples. Engaged Encounter weekend required by Saint Mark the Evangelist Church. Registration for the available weekends can be found at

[www.birminghamcee.org](http://www.birminghamcee.org).

At this point, you will also be collecting some important paperwork:

- 1.) Baptism Certificate:** If you were not baptized at Saint Mark the Evangelist Church, you will need to contact the parish of your baptism to request a new (issued within the last six months), annotated baptismal certificate.
- 2.) Freedom to Marry Affidavit:** The Marriage Coordinator will provide more information about these.

**3.) Marriage License:** It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to obtain original copies of their marriage license prior to the ceremony and to provide a copy at the wedding rehearsal.

#### **Step 4: Liturgy and Music**

##### **Wedding Readings and Liturgy:**

Use the Together for Life booklet to choose the readings and prayers that you would like to have at your wedding. Please communicate your choice to the Marriage Coordinator by filling out the Liturgical Planning Form. Relatives and friends are invited to participate as Readers and gift bearer.

##### **Readings:**

Please choose a First Reading, Responsorial Psalm to be sung by the cantor, an optional Second Reading, and Gospel.

##### **Wedding Music:**

Regarding the ceremony for the Sacrament of Matrimony, the emphasis is not on the couple's romantic life, but a communal prayer service emphasizing the Sacred Union of man and woman to the Divine.

For this reason, we do not include secular music during the wedding ceremony or its prelude. Before the couple requests a specific song, they should consider the context in which that song is heard. Is the song more easily associated with a scene from a movie or a musical rather than a Sacrament? Is the song more easily associated with an evening of dining and dancing rather than a Sacred Moment of Prayer? These favorite songs should be included at rehearsal dinners and receptions. There are many beautiful songs appropriate for use during the Sacrament of Matrimony. All music selections are subject to the approval of the Director of Music Ministries.

#### **Step 5: Details for Your Wedding Day**

**Please be on time.** We cannot stress the importance of being on time. Due to other scheduled activities at the Church, a late start will shorten your allotted time for taking wedding pictures at the end of your ceremony.

#### **St. Mark Room and St. Patrick Room in Parish Hall are available 90 minutes prior to your wedding time.**

- ❖ All personal belongings, floral boxes, trash, and everything you brought into the room must be removed before you enter the Church for the commencement of your wedding ceremony.
- ❖ Your hairdresser, a professional make-up artist, is NOT to be invited to the rooms.
- ❖ Please limit the number of people in the rooms to Bridal Party and Parents only.
- ❖ The church cannot be held responsible for the damage or loss of any belongings.
- ❖ Common courtesy dictates that this room be left as is.

#### **Flowers & Other Décor:**

- ❖ We welcome floral arrangements that add beauty. However, this already beautiful Sacred space can be made to look ostentatious when "too much" is added. We encourage and strive for elegance brought about through simplicity.
- ❖ The Diocese of Birmingham does not permit the use of the unity candle, as this practice has never been part of the Order of Celebrating Matrimony.
- ❖ Due to our very active parish, florists should presume they will have only 60 minutes prior to the ceremony to set-up.
- ❖ **If your wedding is at 1:00 pm then the florist is allotted from 11:00 am to 12 noon to deliver flowers to church.**
- ❖ **If your wedding is at 6:00 pm then the florist is allotted from 1:00 to 2:00 pm to deliver flowers to church.**
- ❖ Flowers are to be brought into the Church already arranged and placed on the altar. **NO arranging flowers on the altar.**
- ❖ For safety reasons, outside candelabra, lamps, floral displays with candles, aisle runners, and the practice of strewing flower petals are not permitted. As a matter of aesthetics, trees, sculpture, balloons, or large pillars are not permitted. Pedestals to elevate floral arrangements are permitted and many are available

from the church already.

- ❖ No decorations may be placed on the altar. No means of attaching anything to a pew, which could damage the pew or its finish, should be used.
- ❖ As the Church strives for authenticity, natural floral arrangements/plants only. Artificial flowers are not permitted.
- ❖ Except for flowers at the altar, ambo (pulpit), and tabernacle, all pew decorations and other adornments must be removed before the wedding party leaves the church.
- ❖ Flowers and any outside vases/stands are to remain in the church after the wedding. Vases/stands can be picked up from the Church starting on Monday. The flowers, however, remain the property of the Church.

### **Photography & Videography:**

Informal “fun” photographs don’t fit with the sanctity of the church; and should wait until you are outside the church or at the reception.

- ❖ We welcome photographers and videographers to document this wonderful occasion. However, please remember that this space is sacred. All poses should bear this in mind.
- ❖ Upon arrival, the photographer should consult with the Wedding Day Coordinator to be advised about where pictures and video may be taken.
- ❖ The photographer will be given time prior to and after the ceremony to take posed pictures in the Church.
- ❖ **Pictures for the 1:00 pm wedding can be taken from 12 -12:30 pm and then 30 minutes after the ceremony.**
- ❖ **Pictures for the 6:00 pm wedding can be taken from 5 -5:30 pm and then 30 minutes after the ceremony.**
- ❖ Once the ceremony begins, the photographer should remain as unobtrusive as possible. During this time, the photographer may not go up the steps into the altar area.
- ❖ Equipment and wires should not pose any obstructions.
- ❖ Church furnishings should not be moved without first consulting the Wedding Day coordinator.
- ❖ The church cannot be held liable for the damage or loss of any equipment.
- ❖ Only formal pictures of the bride and groom and their bridal party are to be taken in the Sanctuary.

### **Church Fees & Stipends:**

- ❖ Church Fee \$1,000 (secures reservation of date & use of Church facilities)- due at time of scheduling and Stipends.
- ❖ All Stipends are to be received by the St. Mark Parish office at least one month before wedding date. Please present individuals checks/cash for the person (the Marriage Coordinator will provide specific names).
- ❖ The following stipends are due to each individual 30 days before wedding date:
  - Priest/Deacon - A suggested honorarium in the amount of \$250
  - Marriage Coordinator - \$200
  - Wedding Day Coordinator - \$200
  - Organist - \$300
  - Cantor - \$150

### **ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

- ❖ The rehearsal time will be 1 hour max.
- ❖ Modest dress is required for the rehearsal and the wedding.
- ❖ Ring bearer and flower girl must be 3 years old or older.
- ❖ Alcohol is not permitted on St. Mark the Evangelist Parish property before or during the rehearsal or wedding ceremony. Failure to comply with this rule may lead to the cancellation of the wedding.
- ❖ Illicit drugs are not permitted on St. Mark Parish property. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the authorities being contacted.
- ❖ No guest book at Church
- ❖ No smoking or vaping on Church premises. Saint Mark the Evangelist is a "Smoke Free" campus.