

*Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church*  
*Wedding Guidelines*



My Dear Friends in Christ,

In these pages you will find the guidelines for celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Birmingham, Alabama. These guidelines are an assistance for you. They are not a series of restrictions, but rather, are composed to help you celebrate the sacrament of Marriage joyfully and reverently. They are in place to help you with planning the liturgy of this most important day, and to ensure that your desire for a beautiful wedding is fulfilled. May God be with you as you approach this great day.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Robert J. Sullivan  
Pastor

## *Scheduling Your Wedding*

The first step in scheduling your wedding is to contact one of the priests at the parish, regarding possible dates. Diocesan policy demands a six-month preparation period before the wedding can take place. (Catholic Marriage Policy for the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama; 11/11/99) No wedding will be placed on the Church calendar until the couple meets with the priest. Father Bazzel can be contacted by calling the Church Office or emailing [administrator@ourladyofsorrows.com](mailto:administrator@ourladyofsorrows.com). After the first meeting with the Priest, the Wedding Date will be put on the Calendar, through the Church Office.

Weddings are normally not scheduled during the season of Lent. Catholic weddings are to be celebrated in a church, and they are not to be celebrated on Sunday. (Catholic Marriage Policy for the Diocese of Birmingham)

If your marriage preparation will be done by a priest not at Our Lady of Sorrows, then a letter must be written to the Pastor, explaining that the marriage preparation will be conducted and the completed Marriage File will be received by the Pastor at least one month prior to the wedding date. Until this letter is received the date cannot be reserved on the calendar.

If the Marriage preparation will take place outside of the Diocese of Birmingham, the same letter will be required, but the Marriage File must be sent through the local Chancery to the Birmingham Chancery.

## *Marriage Preparation*

During your six month preparation period you will:

1. Complete the prenuptial inventory and FOCCUS inventory.
2. Discuss any dispensations or permissions necessary,
3. Meet with the pastor or his delegate 3 or 4 times.
4. Attend a Marriage Preparation Workshop.

You will receive a book: *Together for Life* by Joseph M. Champlin, which contains all the readings and prayers from which you may choose, and which gives you a complete outline of the ceremony.

You will then contact the Parish Wedding Director, Lauren Ferlisi at 205-410-7876 or [weddings@ourladyofsorrows.com](mailto:weddings@ourladyofsorrows.com)

The Parish Wedding Director will help you coordinate all the details of your wedding liturgy. There is a helpful form in the back of the *Together for Life* which you should fill out with the help of the priest celebrating your Wedding Liturgy. You will review this information with the priest and then email it to your wedding director at least 2 weeks before the wedding.

## *Stipends and Fees*

- Wedding Director: \$225
- Music Fees: Jody Coombs-\$300; Cantor-\$200; Weddings that include custom music features such as additional musicians and vocalists will have the fees adjusted accordingly.
- Altar Server: \$25
- Stipend for the Priest is optional and customary for he does not receive any other fees.

## *Planning the Wedding Ceremony*

Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage involves not only the couple to be married and their families and friends, but also the priest-celebrant, the music director, the cantor, the sacristan and the Church building itself. Your wedding director will help you organize your wedding at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church. Please refer any questions from your florist, photographer, and video camera operator to your Wedding Director. The Wedding Director can also refer you to the proper authority for answering questions regarding the acceptability of any paraliturgical additions to the wedding ceremony. Should you employ a professional wedding consultant, please be aware of the fact this his/her authority does not extend to the liturgical ceremony. The Parish Wedding Coordinator has final authority in all matters related to the ceremony and the implementation of the parish wedding guidelines. Please advise your professional wedding consultant of this regulation.

## *Music*

Wedding music should meet the standard defined by the Wedding Music Directives of the Diocese of Birmingham. Please consult the Parish Minister of Music, Jody Coombs(205-529-6164). She will meet with you, and assist you in selecting music that meets these guidelines.

## *General Guidelines*

The space in the Sanctuary is limited. To maintain the Roman Catholic liturgical spirit of noble simplicity, the wedding party should be held to a reasonable number of participants. Children involved in the wedding ceremony should be at least five years old. Your marriage ceremony will take place in Sacred Space. Accordingly, dress for the bride, groom, and entire wedding party should reflect a spirit of modesty, dignity, and decorum. Strapless gowns are not permitted, and shoulders are to be covered. The Bride's Room will be available for the bride and her attendants to change clothes.

## *Photography*

To maintain the sanctity and dignity of the occasion, Photographers will follow these directives:

- Photographs may be taken before the wedding, but the Church must be cleared thirty minutes before the wedding is scheduled to begin.
- A flash picture of the bride may be taken as she comes down the aisle at the beginning of the ceremony.
- A flash picture of the bride and groom may be taken as the couple comes down the aisle at the end of the ceremony. No flash may be used during the ceremony.
- The photographer is allowed to move during the Ceremony with certain restrictions.
- No pictures may be taken in the Sanctuary (Altar area) during the ceremony.
- Pictures may be taken (without flash) from the balcony during the ceremony.
- A video camera may be set up on the balcony.
- Alternate Video Cameras need to be discussed with Wedding Director

- All picture taking schedules should be approved by the Wedding Director.
- Please note that the church schedule on Saturdays includes the Sacrament of Reconciliation from 3:00-4:00PM and a Saturday Vigil Mass at 5:00PM. Photographs in the church are not allowed during these times.
- Photograph sessions after an evening wedding must be concluded within thirty minutes.
- Videographers should check with the Wedding Director for guidelines on procedure during the ceremony.

## *Sacred Space*

The Church is sacred space. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in every Catholic Church, dedicating it to God's presence. Anything done for the wedding must reflect and respect this reality.

Therefore: All floral arrangements must be approved by the Wedding Director. The wedding flowers, placed in the church for God's greater glory, are to remain there for that purpose. Bows and flowers may be placed on the pews, but must be attached by such a method that the pews are in no way damaged. Insurance prohibits the use of lighted candles as pew markers. Flowers may be placed on either side of the Tabernacle, and under the pictures of Mary and the Divine Mercy. Please contact the Wedding Director for further regulations. Unity candles are not part of the Catholic wedding ceremony and will not be allowed. During the Easter Season (Easter Sunday to Pentecost) the base of the Paschal Candle must be decorated with a candle ring and flowers.

Potential hazards dictate that:

1. Rice and/or birdseed may not be thrown on the Church Grounds;
2. We do not allow loose flower petals anywhere in the Church or on the premises. The flower girls may have flowers in a basket. No petals are to be thrown. Loose flower petals cause a hazard on the floor.
- 3.. An aisle runner may not be used.

**ALCOHOL IS NOT PERMITTED ANYWHERE ON THE PREMISES BEFORE THE REHEARSAL OR CEREMONY. IF YOUR RECEPTION IS AT THE PARISH HALL OR FAMILY LIFE CENTER, ALCOHOL IS PERMITTED AFTER THE CEREMONY. SMOKING IS ONLY PERMITTED ON THE PATIO BY THE PARISH HALL AND IN THE PARKING LOT BEHIND THE CHURCH. PLEASE DISPOSE OF BUTTS IN PROPER PLACE.**