

Wedding Guidelines



***St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church 8151
Chimneyrock Blvd.
Cordova, TN 38016***

Welcome to Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Church!

The staff at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church is happy to help you with the preparation of your wedding. Our policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage be of the best theological, liturgical and artistic quality and that it be a memorable moment in your life. The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is an action of the entire church in whose presence you commit yourselves to one another. Because the celebration of marriage is an act of worship, it is above all, communal. And because it is communal, every effort should be made to enable the assembly to participate in a full and active manner.

General Policies and Procedures

1. Before a date can be set it must be established that both spouses are free to marry. If either party has had a prior marriage, please contact a priest.
2. Couples who wish to be married at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church should contact the parish office no less than **9** months before the proposed wedding date.
3. **Parishioners:** Registered parishioners of St. Francis (those having been registered and attending, participating, and supporting the parish for at least 6 months) need to make an appointment with a priest or deacon to discuss marriage preparation, as well as the date, time and place of the wedding. ***Please note that St. Francis is not able to schedule the wedding until the presider has agreed to the date and time of the ceremony. Please further note that a cleaning deposit of \$300 is required before the date can be placed on the calendar. (\$150 of the cleaning deposit is refundable if all policy guidelines outlined below are adhered to, and the church is left orderly and undamaged.*** It is best to bring two \$150.00 checks.
4. **Non-Parishioners with “Ancestral Connections”:** This includes individuals who are former contributing parishioners (or son/daughter of former contribution parishioner), or individuals who were baptized at St. Francis, or whose parent(s) were baptized or married at St. Francis, or whose brother/sister was married at St. Francis, or is a graduate of St. Francis of Assisi School or its predecessor, St. Benedict at Auburndale School. ***Please note that a non-refundable deposit of \$300 is required before a date can be placed on the calendar.*** The priest or deacon who will officiate at your wedding is responsible for all paperwork, obtaining the necessary documents, and all required diocesan pre-nuptial counseling.
5. As a rule, Sunday weddings are not permitted in the Diocese of Memphis.
6. The clergy officiating at your wedding or their designate will conduct the wedding rehearsal. Visiting clergy are asked to lead rehearsals to familiarize themselves with the worship space and the policies of St. Francis. Because St. Francis’ schedule is often tight, **it is imperative that rehearsals begin on time with all members of the wedding party and liturgical ministers present.** The marriage license should be brought to the rehearsal and given to the presider for its proper completion.
7. For marriages between a Catholic and a Non-Catholic the Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside the Mass is recommended so that all may comfortably participate.
8. There are no limits or restrictions on the size of the wedding party, although the staff of St. Francis strongly suggests that children participating in your wedding be of sufficient maturity to process down the aisle without fear.

9. If you have hired a wedding planner to help you, please understand that St. Francis' or visiting clergy will coordinate all liturgical preparation, the rehearsal, and the celebration of the liturgy. **PLEASE NOTE:** St. Francis requires all couples to utilize the services of our Wedding Coordinator for the wedding and rehearsal, at a cost of \$250. The Wedding Coordinator will also be available during wedding receptions held at St. Francis. An additional Wedding Coordinator fee of \$250 will be required if the wedding reception is held at St. Francis Church following the wedding **or if the wedding is on a holiday**. Outside wedding planner should not attend the rehearsal or wedding ceremony.
10. A wedding Mass will require two or three altar servers. The couple may choose to use trained family members or friends. If servers are secured by the church, the stipend is \$25.00 each, payable to the church at least one week prior to the wedding.
11. Musicians arranged by St. Francis (organist/pianist and cantor) will be provided for your wedding. Only the parish organist will play for weddings at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. If unavailable to play at your wedding, the parish has a backup list from which another organist will be selected. Requests for specific cantors or additional musicians (e.g., soloists, trumpet, violin, etc.) should be made as soon as possible. Their music selections must be approved by your presider or the organist. All music must be of a spiritual nature.

Organist Fees: \$200.00
Soloist Fees: \$100.00 (Must have cantor for a Mass.)
12. The moving of any church furnishings such as the altar, chairs, or ambo is prohibited.
13. For safety reasons, rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, balloons, glitter, Styrofoam balls, etc., are **not** allowed in St. Francis or on the St. Francis campus. Due to the possibility of staining the floor, flower girls may carry flowers, but may not drop the petals. Due to the danger of slipping, the use of an aisle runner is not permitted.
14. The "Unity Candle" is not part of the Roman Catholic wedding rite. St. Francis does not own a "Unity Candle" and its use is discouraged. There are many symbols of unity already in the marriage rite, i.e., the exchange of vows and rings. We suggest the use of the "Unity Candle" at the beginning of the wedding reception. The use of so called "Unity Sand" is prohibited.
15. If you choose to have refreshments available for the wedding party, please keep them to a minimum and provide for cleanup. Beverages and food are allowed in the bridal dressing room and the St. Francis-St. Clare room only. **No alcoholic beverages are permitted in the church building and no illegal drugs are permitted on the St. Francis campus. All St. Francis buildings are smoke free. Smoking is only permitted outside.**
16. St. Francis has a Bride's Room available. Although the room is small, it will accommodate the bride and offer her privacy as she dresses. We recommend that all hair and makeup be done before arriving at St. Francis. Valuables are not to be left unattended in the Bride's Room. After the wedding, it is the responsibility of the family to assure that all debris is collected from the bridal dressing room.
17. St. Francis will arrange for outdoor/parking lot security during nighttime weddings. Your cost for this service will be determined based on charges from the company providing security.

If all of this seems overwhelming, it may be helpful to remember that these guidelines are the result of many years of experience celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage. Be assured that these guidelines arise out of our desire to help you prepare a wedding liturgy which will be prayerful, dignified and memorable.

Marriage Preparation

Presuming you are a parishioner of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church and one of the parish priests will officiate at your wedding, you should call the priest as soon as possible to arrange the initial meeting. Following this initial meeting, the Catholic party/parties will need to send for a **newly issued Baptismal Certificate** from the church where they were baptized. The church requires a new certificate as part of the pre-nuptial investigation and must be received before a marriage can be celebrated. Those who have been baptized in another faith tradition may provide a copy of an original certificate. Any needed dispensations can be arranged by your presider.

There will be a minimum stipend of \$200.00 for the presiding priest or for the priest conducting the pre-nuptial counseling.

The Diocese of Memphis requires a priest or deacon to meet with the engaged couple for pre-nuptial counseling. The Diocese of Memphis also requires that all engaged couples participate in an approved marriage preparation program as well as a Natural Family Planning workshop. Pamphlets included in the folder you received from St. Francis describe the programs that are available in the diocese.

If you live outside the Diocese of Memphis, check with the staff at your home parish about programs provided in your area. A certificate acknowledging the successful completion of one of the programs must be supplied to the priest or deacon presiding at your wedding.

Appropriate Music

St. Francis of Assisi upholds the Roman Catholic Church's guidelines regarding appropriate music for all liturgical celebrations, including weddings. All texts must be suitable for use in the liturgy, are to be directed toward God (sacred) and be free of associations which render them inappropriate. While popular songs, film scores, and secular music have no place in the wedding liturgy, they may very appropriately be played or sung at your wedding reception. No recorded music or accompaniment tapes may be used at the wedding liturgy. The organist will work with the couple regarding appropriate music for the wedding ceremony.

If the wedding Mass is celebrated, certain parts of the liturgy are to be sung by all present: the Gloria, Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Amen and a hymn during communion. Solos and choral selections are typically best used as part of the Prelude or at the Preparation of the Gifts.

Liturgical Environment

St. Francis of Assisi is a place of dignity and prayer; it is a privilege to enter her doors to pray. We ask that you, the wedding party, and your guests respect St. Francis and all other properties.

Since the Roman Catholic Church follows a liturgical calendar, there will be certain liturgical symbols and decorations present during the course of the church year (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter). This seasonal environment is intended for all liturgical celebrations during that time of the year, including your wedding. The existing environment cannot be changed or removed for a wedding. Due to the penitential nature of Advent and Lent, weddings, while not forbidden, are highly discouraged. If you do choose to have your wedding during Advent or Lent, please note that during these seasons flowers can only be in the sanctuary (the raised platform where the Altar and Ambo reside) during the ceremony and the color purple that decorates the sanctuary walls and altar area cannot be changed.

Flowers used for the wedding celebration are not merely decorative but are offered for the further honor and glory of God. We ask that the main flower arrangement from your wedding be left in the church, unless your wedding is during Advent or Lent. You may choose to dedicate your flowers in memory, in thanksgiving, or in honor of a relative or friend. That information can be given to the church office for publication in the parish bulletin.

Policies for the Florist

- ❖ Normally, flowers for weddings may be delivered after the 8:15 a.m. Mass.
- ❖ It is expected that the main arrangement of flowers remain in the church after the wedding.
- ❖ No aisle runner is permitted due to the danger of slippage on the tile floors.
- ❖ Bows may be attached to the pews with ribbons or plastic hooks. No pins, wire, or tape may be used.
- ❖ Entrances to individual rows may not be cordoned off.
- ❖ Flowers at the rear of the altar need to be large in scale. Flowers may not be placed in front of the Altar and may not obscure the Ambo (pulpit).
- ❖ Flowers are not to be placed on the Altar.
- ❖ The Baptismal Font is reserved for the Sacrament of Baptism. Flowers may be placed on the floor in front or back of the font, but never on the font.
- ❖ The florist or the family is responsible for the removal of all boxes, paper and other debris related to the flowers.
- ❖ Decorations on the pews and all flower arrangements other than the main flower arrangement must be removed immediately after the wedding, either by the florist or the family. They may not be left overnight. The church will be locked after the photographer has finished taking pictures.
- ❖ Artificial flowers are not permitted.

Policies for the Photographer /Videographer

- ❖ Depending on availability, the church may be used for the photo shoot before the wedding. Pictures taken in the sanctuary must be finished 30 minutes prior to the start of the liturgy.
- ❖ If your wedding is on Saturday evening we ask that you please be respectful to our normal Saturday Vigil Mass. We ask that from 4:30pm to 6:00pm your wedding party refrain from excessive movement in the vestibule or in the courtyard.
- ❖ Tape is not to be used on the walls or floors.
- ❖ The liturgical environment is not to be altered in order to accommodate the photo shoot. No liturgical furnishings, e.g. candles, chairs, etc., are to be moved.
- ❖ St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church is a house of worship at all times, and is to be respected as such during the photo shoot. Dress and behavior should be respectful.
- ❖ During a Nuptial Mass the photographer is to remain outside of the sanctuary (the raised platform where the Altar and Ambo reside) during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- ❖ The use of flash photography during any liturgical celebration, including weddings, is prohibited.

Wedding Preparation Timeline

At least 9 months prior to the wedding

- Contact parish office
- Call for appointment with priest/deacon
- Pay deposit to St. Francis Catholic Church (if required)
- Set wedding date on Church calendar
- Call for Baptismal Certificate
- Complete FOCCUS Instrument (parishioners only)

3 to 6 months prior to the wedding

- Attend Pre-Marriage weekend and NFP Workshop
- Discuss musical options with St. Francis organist
- Submit request for additional musicians
- Complete diocesan paperwork with presider
- Meet with Wedding Coordinator

1 to 3 months prior to the wedding

- Finalize liturgy plan with presider
- Final appointment with presider
- Complete diocesan paperwork with presider

During final 30 days

- Obtain Marriage License from County Clerk's Office

Persons using the church or the Parish Life Center are responsible for any damage to furnishings or equipment by anyone in the wedding party, the guests, or persons hired to provide services for the wedding. Any debris left by florists, either on the floors, in the pews or in the Sanctuary or the Parish Life Center, may result in the cancellation of any future services at St. Francis of Assisi.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church assumes no responsibility for any items left in or missing from the bridal dressing room, the sacristy, the church, Parish Life Center or any part of church property.

PLEASE NOTE: This policy is subject to change. Please ask the church office for a copy of any updates.