

St. Francis Xavier Church

Wedding Guidelines



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**St. Francis Xavier
Catholic Church**

P.O. Box 130669
Birmingham, Alabama 35213
Phone (205) 871-1153

My Dear Friends in Christ,

In this booklet you will find the guidelines for celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. It will assist you in planning your upcoming celebration. The guidelines should not be viewed as a series of restrictions; they are composed to help you celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage joyfully and reverently. They are in place to help you as you plan the liturgy for this most important day. The guidelines will insure your desire for a beautiful wedding is fulfilled.

May God be with you as you approach this great day.

Hope and Joy,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Joe Culotta". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Fr. Joe Culotta
Pastor

SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING

- ♦ Diocesan policy requires a six-month preparation period before the wedding can take place.
- ♦ The first step in scheduling your wedding is to speak with one of the parish priests.
- ♦ Parish policy will be explained and you will be given the name of a contact person to help you schedule your date.
- ♦ Catholic weddings are to be celebrated in the Church, and will not be celebrated on Sunday. Weddings will normally not be scheduled during the season of Lent, weekend of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12th), or between Christmas and New Years Day.
- ♦ Please notify us when scheduling if the wedding will be celebrated by a priest outside of St. Francis Xavier Parish.

Available times for wedding celebrations are:

Friday
7:00 pm

Saturday
11:00 am; 12:00 noon;
1:30 pm; 6:30 pm; 7:00 pm

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

- ♦ Complete the FOCCUS inventory.
- ♦ Discuss any dispensations or permissions necessary.
- ♦ Attend a Marriage Preparation Workshop.
- ♦ Complete the book *Together for Life* by Joseph M. Champlain. It contains all the readings and prayers from which you may choose, and will give you a complete outline of the ceremony. The form in the back of the *Together for Life* book will be completed with the help of the priest celebrating your Wedding Liturgy. This form is to be submitted to the church at least one month before the wedding.
- ♦ If your marriage preparation will be done by a priest within the Diocese but not at Saint Francis Xavier, then a letter should 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.
- ♦ If the Marriage preparation will take place outside of the Diocese of Birmingham, the same letter will be required, but the Marriage File should be sent through the Chanceries.
- ♦ The couple should obtain a Certificate of Marriage one month before the date of wedding. A notary of the public may be scheduled to notarize your marriage license on the day of your wedding for an additional fee.

COMMUNICATION AND MARRIAGE PREPARATION

- ♦ After the initial meeting to set the date of your wedding, you are required to provide a **current phone number where you can be reached**. This number should be one that you regularly answer or check for messages.
- ♦ It is the couple's responsibility to respond promptly when the priest or parish staff attempts to contact you regarding marriage preparation and scheduling of preparation meetings. **Timely communication is essential to completing the marriage-preparation process.**
- ♦ If the priest is unable to reach you or you do not respond to attempts to schedule your marriage-preparation meetings, this may delay the preparation process and could affect the ability to proceed with the wedding as scheduled.
- ♦ Please make every effort to respond promptly to all calls and messages from the parish regarding your marriage preparation.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION DOCUMENTATION

- ♦ If your marriage preparation is being completed at a parish other than St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, all records and documentation of your marriage preparation must be submitted to the St. Francis Xavier Parish Office at least two months prior to your scheduled wedding date.
- ♦ In addition, you will need to provide the name of the priest or deacon who is working with you and your fiancé, as well as their telephone number. This will assist our office if there are unexpected delays with the mailing of your completed folder.
- ♦ This documentation must be received and reviewed by St. Francis Xavier before the wedding can be finalized. If the required marriage-preparation records have not been received at least two months before the wedding date, we cannot guarantee that the wedding will be able to take place as scheduled.
- ♦ We encourage couples to make arrangements with their marriage-preparation parish well in advance to ensure that all required documentation is completed and forwarded to St. Francis Xavier in a timely manner.
- ♦ Thank you for helping us ensure that all requirements for the celebration of your marriage are completed properly and on time.

WEDDING FEES AND STIPENDS

Church

Parishioner	\$150.00
Non-Parishioner and Parishioners of less than 1 year	\$1,000.00

Church fee is due at the time of scheduling.

Individual Fees: *(When applicable please make checks payable to the individual persons.)*

Accompanist: \$300.00 and up

Soloist / Cantor: \$200.00

Music Coordinator (sound) \$100.00

(Generally musicians will not be present at rehearsals. Other fees may be applicable.)

Wedding Coordinator: \$300.00 (effective scheduled after 9/1/2026)

Celebrant (Priest): A stipend for the priest is customary

Altar Servers \$25.00

Lectors / Extraordinary Minister of Communion: A small monetary gift is customary

Notary of the Public \$50.00

Livestream (optional) \$125.00

Due One Month In Advance of Wedding Date

Liturgy / Ceremony Outline (Planning form from “Together for Life”)

Flower / Decoration Plans for the Church

Outstanding Fees (Wedding Coordinator, Music Coordinator, etc.)

Cancellations: *May be subject to \$100 fee.*

(Should any parishioner experience a financial hardship, please meet the pastor for other arrangements.)

PLANNING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Wedding Coordinator

- ♦ The Wedding Coordinator is assigned by the church 6 months prior to your wedding and will meet with you soon after her assignment. The Wedding Coordinator will help you organize your wedding within the guidelines acceptable at St. Francis Xavier Parish. Please refer any questions from your florist, photographer, and video camera operator to your wedding coordinator.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ **A trained wedding coordinator must be at all rehearsals.**

Music

- ♦ Music is a key component of sacramental celebrations and is under the direction of the music coordinator. You should make an appointment with the music coordinator who will assist you in the selections of music *four months prior to your wedding*.
- ♦ Musicians from outside of the parish must be approved through the music coordinator, Nancy Grundhoefer.
- ♦ Cantors are to be scheduled through the Music Coordinator. Guest soloists may sing, but will audition either in person or via tape or CD. They should come prepared; that is, they are responsible for learning their music before rehearsing with the accompanist.
- ♦ The responsorial psalm, gospel acclamation, and Eucharistic acclamations are always sung, never spoken.

Music Coordinator: Nancy Grundhoefer 205-803-5415

Environment

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

Liturgical Furnishings

- ♦ The placement of the liturgical furnishings such as the celebrant's chair, the ambo and lectern, the credence table and the cantor's stand are to remain in their original position.

Unity Candle

- ♦ Unity Candles are not allowed at St. Francis Xavier Church.

Aisle Cloth

- ♦ Aisle cloths create a tripping hazard and may not be used.

Children

- ♦ Any children involved in the wedding ceremony should be mature enough to fulfill their assigned role.
- ♦ Flower girls should not throw petals or rice on the floor.

Wedding Party Attire

- ♦ Appropriate attire should be worn by those in the wedding party. Please ensure that all parties dress in a spirit of modesty and dignity.

Preparation on Wedding Day

- ♦ Saint Francis Xavier has a small Bridal Room that can be used as a dressing room for the bride and her attendants and the Joseph Room for the groom & groomsmen. These rooms will be available for use by the wedding party 2 hours prior to the wedding.

Send Off

- ♦ Due to insurance regulations; rice, birdseed, confetti, glitter, or flower petals cannot be thrown or scattered anywhere on the premises. Bubbles may be used, but **only outside the building**.

Alcoholic Beverages

- ♦ Alcoholic beverages are **strictly forbidden** on campus.

Flowers

- ♦ All weddings provide two fresh flower or greenery arrangements (no artificial flowers) for the sanctuary. A floral arrangement for the foyer is suggested, but not required. Arrangements **MUST** remain for all weekend liturgies.
- ♦ Flowers are **NOT** allowed on or around the baptismal font.
- ♦ Nothing should be taped to the pews. If bows are to be used, they may be tied to the end of the pews.
- ♦ Flowers should be in place four **(4) hours before** an evening wedding and three **(3) hours before** an afternoon wedding.
- ♦ Any special containers or vases used in the wedding should be picked up from the church by the following Wednesday. If left past that date, they will be discarded.

St. Francis Xavier Church provides the following:

Stands for the main altar (*paper-mache pots / size #7*)

Commercial cooler for storage of flowers. (24 hours prior to wedding)

Outside Decorations

- ♦ Two floral arrangements, bows or wreaths are allowed to be hung on the outside columns. (*Nails are in place in the columns to accommodate your decorations.*)
- ♦ Please do not hang anything on the church doors.

Seasonal Exceptions

- ♦ In the event a wedding is scheduled during the Lenten Season, **flowers are to be removed following the wedding.**
- ♦ During the Easter Season (*Easter Sunday to Pentecost*) the “ring” at the base of the Paschal Candle must be decorated with flowers.
- ♦ Flowers provided by the Church for the Christmas Season until the celebration of The Baptism of the Lord (trees and poinsettias) and arrangements provided at Easter (lilies) **MUST NOT BE REMOVED FROM THE SANCTUARY.** The wedding coordinator will be available to meet with the florist or answer questions on the phone in order to prevent misunderstandings regarding decorations.

Photographer

- ♦ Photographers customarily take pictures of the wedding party before the ceremony and should end thirty minutes prior. Pictures may also be taken immediately after the ceremony, not to exceed thirty minutes.
- ♦ **Pictures cannot be taken in the Church or in the vestibule on Saturdays between 3:00 pm and 5:45 pm.** *Please note the Church schedule for Saturdays include the Sacrament of Reconciliation between 3:00-4:00 pm and a Vigil Mass at 4:30 pm.*
- ♦ Photography or video equipment may not be positioned on the Altar (the raised section in the front of the Church).
- ♦ The photographer should remain stationary during the entire wedding ceremony.
- ♦ **No flash pictures** are to be made during the ceremony.

Rehearsal

- ♦ Rehearsal will be scheduled the evening before the wedding and will last approximately 1 hour.
- ♦ Please ask wedding party to arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal.
- ♦ Only those who have specific responsibilities in the wedding need to be present at the rehearsal. If you have additional guests invited to the dinner afterwards, please advise them to meet your party at the dinner.
- ♦ Music will be rehearsed at a separate time.