

Holy Spirit Catholic Parish

Wedding Guidelines



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Dear Friends in Christ,

Congratulations to both of you! Your engagement is a special time for each of you, for your families and friends, and for your entire parish community.

In this booklet, you will find the current guidelines for celebrating your wedding at Holy Spirit Parish. These guidelines are the fruit of much experience, as well as of theological and pastoral reflection on the nature of marriage and the Church's beautiful ceremonies. They are in place to ensure that your desire for a beautiful wedding is fulfilled. Please know that we are here to help you with your planning and to answer any questions you might have. We look forward to assisting you in planning a joyful and reverent wedding liturgy.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. J. Daniel Sessions
Parochial Vicar

Scheduling a Wedding

The first step in scheduling your wedding is to contact one of the priests at the parish regarding possible dates. Diocesan policy requires a six-month preparation period before the wedding can take place. No wedding will be placed on the calendar until the couple meets with one of the priests. We understand that parents and other representatives like to assist with the coordination of wedding logistics, but it is important that the couple take the initiative to begin the reservation process.

Please notify us when scheduling if the wedding will be celebrated by a priest outside of Holy Spirit Parish. Visiting presiders will need to request permission and/or delegation from the Pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in order to preside at the wedding. If your marriage preparation is to be completed by a priest not at Holy Spirit Parish, a letter must be written to the Pastor by the priest with care of the marriage preparation explaining that the marriage preparation will be conducted and that 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 to Holy Spirit Parish via the Birmingham Chancery.

Times for Wedding Ceremonies

Weddings may be scheduled at the following times:

Friday

4:00 p.m.; 5:00 p.m.; 6:00 p.m.; 7:00 p.m.

Saturday

11:00 a.m.; 12:00 p.m.; 1:30 p.m.; 7:00 p.m.

Weddings cannot be scheduled for Sundays and are normally not scheduled during the liturgical season of Lent. Weddings are not scheduled on days that conflict with church Holy Days or national holidays. All exceptions must be approved by the Pastor of Holy Spirit Parish.

Marriage Preparation

Diocesan Policy requires a six-month preparation period for the couple before the wedding can take place.

Preparation at Holy Spirit Parish typically involves individual sessions with a selected priest or deacon, Engaged Encounter Retreat, and the FOCCUS Inventory. Couples will need to contact their desired priest/deacon directly to request marriage preparation and set up their initial meeting and layout the schedule for preparation. The priest or deacon who will guide the marriage preparation will advise the couple concerning any necessary permissions or dispensations.

Required Paperwork:

- Prenuptial Investigation Form (completed with a priest or deacon)
- Baptism Certificates (Catholic brides and grooms will need a certificate issued within six months of the wedding date)
- Freedom to Marry Affidavits
- Permissions/Dispensations (if applicable)
- Certificate from Engaged Encounter
- Certificate for Completion of FOCCUS Inventory
- Alabama Certificate of Marriage

All marriage files are due to Holy Spirit Parish at least one month prior to the wedding date.

Planning the Wedding Ceremony

The Marriage ceremony will take place in a Sacred Space. Accordingly, apparel for the bride, the groom, the entire wedding party, and all participating in the liturgy should reflect a spirit of modesty, dignity, and decorum during both the rehearsal and the wedding day.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage involves not only the couple and their families and friends, but also the presider, the music director, the cantor, sacristan, and the Parish Church building itself.

Your Wedding Coordinator will assist the couple in planning the details of the wedding liturgy. The Wedding Coordinator will meet with the couple at least three months prior to the wedding date. Outside wedding consultants have no role in the liturgy or in the Parish ceremony activities.

Couples will receive the book *Together for Life* by Joseph M. Champlain, which gives a complete outline of the ceremony from which you may choose an Old Testament, New Testament and a Gospel reading for the wedding liturgy. The Director of Music and Sacred Liturgy will assist with selecting a Psalm, which will be sung by the cantor. The selection form in the back of the book should be completed and returned to the parish office at least one month before the wedding.

It is appropriate and encouraged that a Mass be celebrated when both members of the couple are Catholic. Couples who are not both Catholic usually opt for a wedding ceremony outside of Mass. The couple will discuss the options with their presider and the Pastor of Holy Spirit to decide which is appropriate for their wedding.

Space in the Holy Spirit Sanctuary is limited. Please keep wedding parties to no more than 6 attendants per side. Only the Maid/Matron of Honor and Best Man will be allowed to go into the Sanctuary.

Members of the wedding party will have access to separate meeting rooms prior to the wedding for pre-nuptial preparation. The groom and the groomsmen are requested to arrive dressed for the wedding. They will be directed to the Edenderry Room. The bride and the bridesmaids will have access to the Bridal Room beginning four hours before the wedding, but no earlier than 9 a.m.

Snacks, finger foods, and non-alcoholic beverages may be consumed in these locations. Alcohol consumption or use of illegal substances during the rehearsal or prior to the ceremony on the day of the wedding potentially jeopardizes the validity of the marriage and will not be

tolerated under any circumstances. At no time are food and beverage to be brought into any part of the church.

Holy Spirit Parish is not liable for lost or stolen items in the church or in any church area.

Music Guidelines

The Director of Music and Sacred Liturgy will assist you in selecting music that is both beautiful and in accordance with liturgical norms and will be the point of contact for all musical questions. Outside musicians are only allowed at the discretion of the Director of Music and Sacred Liturgy, and if approved, rehearsal fees will be incurred in addition to the organist fee. No later than four months before the wedding date, the Director of Music and Sacred Liturgy should be contacted to schedule a consult.

Recorded music is not permitted.

Providing the printed Order of Worship for the wedding is the responsibility of the couple.

Flowers and Décor

Flower arrangements are permitted in the Sanctuary in front of the Altar, Ambo and the Baptismal Font only. Altar arrangements must not be taller 36” in height. If you plan to leave an altar arrangement in the Church after the ceremony, you must notify the wedding coordinator one month in advance of the wedding date. If you are taking the flower arrangements from the church, they must be removed immediately following the ceremony.

Pew markers or pew sashes may be used; however, they may not be fastened to the pews with tape, staples or hooks of any kind.

If your wedding date falls during the liturgical season of Advent, all flower arrangements must be removed from the church immediately after the ceremony. During the season of Easter and Christmas, the church will be decorated, and these decorations will not be removed for wedding ceremonies.

Candelabras are not permitted.

Cultural Customs

The *Order for Celebrating Matrimony* provides for the blessing of certain customs that have a particular cultural importance. In particular, the blessing and exchange of rings and *arras* as well as the blessing and imposition of the *lazo* are welcomed customs during a wedding liturgy. Their inclusion is not required. In addition, other noble customs and traditions may be included at the discretion of the Pastor.

Safety Issues

None of the following may be used, as they propose a serious risk to safety:

- An aisle runner
- Rice and/or birdseed
- Thrown flower petals, whether real or silk, including by flower girl(s)
- No candles with open flame outside of those used as part of the liturgy.

Photography and Video

To maintain the sanctity and dignity of the occasion, all photographers will adhere to the following directives.

Photographs may be taken before the wedding, but the Church must be cleared forty-five minutes before the wedding is scheduled to begin. A flash picture may be taken of the bride 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 but may not take photos in the Sanctuary. Written guidelines for Photographers and Videographers will be provided. Pictures may be taken (without flash) from the balcony during the ceremony. A video camera may be set up in the balcony, but additional cameras should be approved by the Wedding Coordinator. Additional wireless mics are not permitted in the Sanctuary; however a recording device may be attached to the church sound board. All photographs must be concluded within forty-five minutes after the wedding.

Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal sets the tone for the ceremony the next day. Please ask parents, attendants, and all who have a specific role in the wedding to arrive fifteen minutes before the rehearsal is scheduled to begin. If you have additional guests invited to the supper afterward, please ask them to meet your party at dinner. With your cooperation, the rehearsal should last no longer than one hour.

Fees and Stipends

There is no fee for the use of the Parish Church. There is, however, a \$300.00 damage deposit for the use of the Parish Church and Bridal Suite that will be refunded after the wedding. Should damages be found or staff members required to clean up glitter or other decorative items in either space, the deposit will not be refunded.

All stipends should be received by the wedding rehearsal. Stipends include:

- Organist: \$300.00 (Rehearsals for outside musicians/cantors: \$50.00 per rehearsal)
- Cantor: \$150.00
- Wedding Coordinator: \$375.00
- Altar Server(s) \$25.00 each
- Priest – there is no set stipend, but a stipend that is proportionate to the others listed above is customary and appropriate

The Parish Life Center (PLC)

The PLC rental fee is \$400. Diocesan insurance for events generally ranges \$100-135 for a general reception. A damage deposit of \$500 that will be refunded after the event is due two months before the reception along with the room balance. The PLC has a maximum capacity of 160 people.

The link for the Diocesan Liability Insurance: [Catholic Diocese TULIP Insurance \(kandkinsurance.com\)](http://CatholicDioceseTULIPInsurance.com). After clicking on “APPLY ONLINE” select the Diocese of Birmingham, and Holy Spirit Church, 625 Airport Rd SW, Huntsville, Alabama. You will then be asked questions about the type of event you are having. Follow the prompts until the application and payment is completed, then print a copy of the Insurance and send it to the wedding coordinator.

Rental fee includes:

10 hours of access: 5 hours of pre-event; 4 hours of reception; 1 hour of clean up. Final room layouts are due one month before the event. Some items may be delivered and set up on the Friday before a Saturday reception during regular office hours if the facility is not in use and no conflicts are on the calendar.

The PLC has available 20 6' banquet tables and 20 90" diameter round tables. Table Linens may be rented from the parish at a cost of \$6.00 each. Linens must be reserved with the custodian no later than one month prior to the event date.

The client must hire the staff custodian for set-up and cleanup of the Parish Life Center and Kitchen. The Custodian's fee is determined by the length of the event and the number of guests expected. The custodian's fee is due prior to the event.

No candles with open flame may be used in the PLC.

The PLC rental fee does not include any decorations or table coverings.

The client may secure any professional caterer; however they are required to provide a copy of their health permit and proof of insurance. Beer and wine are the only forms of alcohol allowed to be served. Only trained bartenders will be allowed to tend the bar and serve alcohol (usually provided by the caterer, but if a caterer does not include this service, it will be up to the couple to hire from a properly insured company. All vendors must be licensed and insured.