

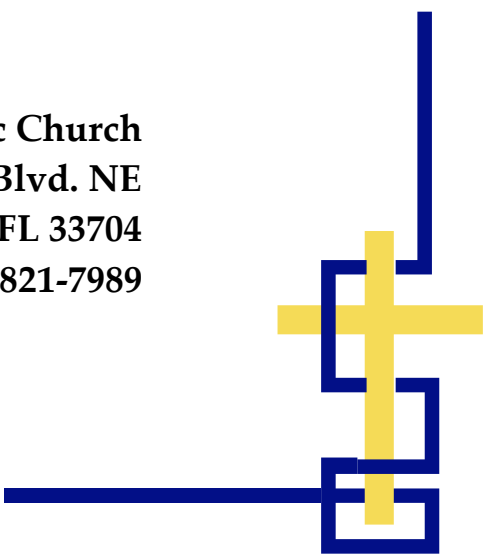


Planning Your Catholic Wedding



ST. RAPHAEL
CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Raphael Catholic Church
1376 Snell Isle Blvd. NE
St. Petersburg, FL 33704
727-821-7989



Importance and Dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony

Married Christians, by virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and share in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church; they help each other attain holiness in their married life and in safekeeping and educating their children; and they share in this Sacrament of Service to the people of God as a couple.

Marriage arises in the covenant of marriage, or irrevocable consent, which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from the other. This intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on each of them and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them. Christ the Lord raised this union to the dignity of a sacrament so that it might more clearly recall and more easily reflect his own unbreakable union with his Church.

Christian couples, therefore, nourish and develop their marriage by undivided affection, which wells up from the fountain of divine love, while, in a merging of human and divine love, they remain faithful in body and in mind, in good times as in bad.

(Taken from “Rite of Marriage”)

The Place

1. A Catholic wedding usually takes place in the parish of the bride, or if she is not a Catholic, in the parish of the groom. This is determined by the active participation of the couple in the Catholic Faith and by the residence of the bride located within the parish boundary.
2. A couple residing outside the boundaries of this parish but within the diocese must obtain a letter from the pastor of the parish in which she or he resides giving permission for the service to be performed at St. Raphael.
3. Weddings for couples outside the Diocese of St. Petersburg, with no association with the parish and who are prepared outside the parish, may not book a wedding date more than 12 months in advance. The couple must provide the Priest or Deacon who will officiate with adherence to the procedures of this diocese.

The Date

4. The Parish clergy will be most happy to help in every way. A minimum of six months is required for processing the various Church requirements and the preparation for the celebration of the sacrament of marriage.
5. Should circumstances require a decree of nullity of a former marriage, it will not be possible to set a final wedding date until this difficulty is resolved.
6. The number of weddings scheduled at St. Raphael Parish makes it advisable to notify the priest or deacon of the date you prefer as soon as possible.
7. The wedding date must be arranged by the parties with the priest or deacon. No final date can be agreed upon until the pre-nuptial investigation has been completed. (See #10)
8. Because of the many parish duties occupying the priests on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, weddings will not be

scheduled on these days. Weddings will not be scheduled during Holy Week. The parish may close other dates based on local activity.

The Time

9. The parish schedule permitting, weddings and nuptial Masses may take place between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturdays, and between 5:00pm and 7:00 p.m. on Fridays. For the convenience of all, two hours time is usually allowed between weddings scheduled on the same day.

Pre-Nuptial Instructions

10. Since marriage is a Sacrament, a new Christian vocation, and a serious life-commitment, the Church will permit the celebration of marriage only after she is satisfied that the bride and groom are sufficiently informed about the meaning of Christian marriage. Whenever possible this requirement is to be fulfilled by attending a marriage preparation session suited to your particular circumstances.

Pre-Nuptial Investigation

11. In addition to making certain that the couple is sufficiently informed about the meaning and obligations of Christian marriage, before the priest or deacon can officiate at a wedding he must carefully ascertain whether each party is free to marry; whether any impediment exists which would prevent the marriage; and whether they are approaching the marriage with the right intentions. In this investigation, the following documents are usually required.
 - A. General questionnaire for bride and groom.
 - B. The written testimony of two persons (usually relatives or close friends) to establish their freedom to marry.
 - C. For the Catholic and Non-Catholic - a recent copy of the certificate of Baptism. The copy of the certificate must not have been issued more than six months before the date of the wedding.
 - D. The marriage license and certificate issued by the state.

- E. Dispensation or Permission for the Non-Catholic
13. Form A must be completed in the presence of a priest or deacon usually in the parish preparing the couple. The B form (2 for each of the couple) must be completed and given to the priest or deacon preparing the couple.
 14. In the event that the bride or groom were previously married, one or both of the following also will be necessary.
 - F. A certified copy of the certificate of death of the former spouse.
 - G. Copy of the decree of nullity of former marriage issued by a Church Tribunal.

The Wedding Liturgy

15. The Rite of Marriage may take one of two forms. The WEDDING CEREMONY is quite noble in its simplicity. The service begins with a greeting, readings from Scripture, and a homily or instruction by the priest or deacon. This is followed by the exchange of vows, the blessing and exchanging of the rings and the Lord's prayer.
The rite concludes with a prayer and the wedding blessings.
16. The NUPTIAL MASS contains all the elements of the wedding ceremony celebrated within the context of the Eucharist. This longer celebration is the most beautiful and meaningful way in which a Catholic couple could begin their marriage. The reception of Holy Communion by the bride and groom together with their families and friends clearly expresses the union of the couple to the mystical Body of Christ and their desire to live their new vocation in the midst of the Christian community.
17. The nuptial mass may be celebrated at an inter-faith marriage; however the Wedding Ceremony is recommended. The fact that the non-Catholic party cannot fully participate, especially in the reception of the Holy Communion, might suggest the inadvisability of this type of celebration. The nuptial Mass may not be celebrated if one of the parties is un-baptized.

18. The Church allows the couple to select the prayers and readings to be used at their wedding ceremony and at the Nuptial Mass.
19. A booklet with the approved prayers and readings from which you may make your selection will be provided at the time of the Pre-nuptial instruction. Your choices for the texts should be communicated to the priest or deacon who will conduct the service, well in advance of your wedding day.
20. Selections from books other than the Bible, as well as forms of the vows not approved by the Church, may not be used in the wedding service. You may discuss this with the priest or deacon preparing you.

Visiting Priests

21. On occasion, a couple may wish to have a priest or deacon from another parish officiate at the wedding ceremony. Should this be the case, the couple should notify the parish clergy during the pre-nuptial investigation. The visiting clergy must receive permission to perform the service from the Pastor of St. Raphael well in advance of the wedding date. Visiting clergy are expected to observe all the liturgical and practical norms set out in this booklet or by the diocese.

Participation by Non-Catholic Clergy

22. In interfaith marriages, the non-Catholic party may wish his or her minister to take part in the wedding ceremony. The Church, recognizing the importance of this day in the life of the couple, is happy to extend an invitation to the minister of the non-Catholic party to be a participant.
23. If the couple desires the presence of a non-Catholic minister, it becomes their obligation to see to it that he is invited and that he contacts the priest or deacon who will conduct the service.

24. Since there are special norms for conducting the wedding service, in these circumstances the particulars of the ceremony will be arranged jointly by the two clergy.

Readers and Servers

25. Members of the bridal party or a member of the congregation may act as lector (reader) during the wedding service. Should the couple wish this, they should make arrangements with the person well in advance of the service. It is the couple's duty to provide the reader with the scripture text that will be used. No one should be chosen for this important role who has little experience in public speaking or who does not have a clear and forceful voice.
26. Servers may be assigned for the wedding Mass from the regular complement of servers familiar with the procedure of St. Raphael. Under extraordinary circumstances, the couple may request a server who is not a current parish server. This may be done by contacting the parish office.

Spiritual Preparation

27. A wedding of two baptized persons is more than a personal and social contract. It also is a Sacrament, one of seven signs of grace in which God gives Himself to us in a special way. To receive this Sacrament presupposes a life of faith, daily prayer, regular attendance at Mass, the frequent reception of the Eucharist, and of course, the state of Sanctifying Grace. Even if one is free from serious sin, it is advisable to receive the Sacrament of Penance in preparation for the marriage since it is the beginning of a new vocation in life. If the nuptial Mass is not part of the wedding, the Catholic should make provisions to receive Holy Communion at one of the parish Masses scheduled earlier in the day.

Wedding Music

28. The solemnizing of the vows through the Sacrament of Matrimony is the primary purpose of celebrating this liturgy in the House of God. For this reason, all acts, prayers, gestures,

and music should be relevant to this solemn aspect. This includes music before and after the ceremony as well as music within the Mass or within the wedding ceremony. Music for weddings must be Liturgical in nature. Music for weddings at St. Raphael forms an integral part of the rite, therefore the wedding fees include a musician and vocalist.

29. Requests for music of social or theatrical nature are not normally honored. If certain songs relate to the events of the courtship of the couple, the couple should strive to have this desired music at the parties, rehearsal dinner, or actual wedding reception rather than for the church ceremony.
30. Music chosen may involve psalms or specified religious songs that would be applicable to the reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The Sacrament of Marriage is a celebration of the Church, the whole People of God, and it is fitting that the assembled congregation join together in offering prayers and songs to God.
31. The St. Raphael music ministers are available for consultation concerning the program of wedding music available for the Liturgy or Mass. You will find them both cooperative and knowledgeable. We are sure you will be pleased with the various selections which may be used for this important event.
32. Music that is not appropriate for church may not be considered for use. Musically, therefore, anything that relates to the secular, with no identification to God or His sacrament, should be avoided.
33. The music director or those designated by the music director are the only persons authorized to conduct the musical portion of the wedding ceremony.
34. The music director should be contacted three to four months before the wedding.

The Rehearsal

35. It is important that all those directly involved in the wedding (the bride, groom, parents, attendants, ushers, readers) be on time both for the rehearsal and for the wedding itself. Although some couples may employ a professional wedding coordinator, the Parish Wedding Coordinator oversees and directs all the activity in the church during the ceremony.

Decorations

36. The Church recommends no particular florist. The beautifully appointed sanctuary does not require much additional decoration. Indeed, anything but the simplest floral pieces will detract rather than add to its beauty. Candles or candelabra other than those provided are prohibited both in the sanctuary and on the pews. If pew bows are used, please advise the florist that they must be tied on, rather than taped.
37. Safety and damage issues restrict us from allowing aisle runners or flower petals for the ceremony. Throwing of rice, seeds, or other such material outside is not permitted either.
38. If you have any questions about the church procedure, you may want to consult with the parish sacristan a month or so before the ceremony.

Photographs

39. Photographs may be taken. The photographer may not enter the sanctuary or take pictures in such a way as to disturb the congregation or the priest. Flash pictures are not allowed during the ceremony. Couples have 30 minutes after the ceremony for pictures to be taken.

Attitude & Appearance

40. Behavior and appearance are an important part of the wedding, before and after as well. Please remember that appropriate behavior must be maintained in the church during rehearsal and on the wedding day. You are in a church, please be reverent

and respectful. Alcohol, smoking, playful behavior or loud conversation is not allowed. If young children are at the rehearsal, an appropriate sitter must be provided so as not to distract from the process. Pranks or practical jokes are to be avoided.

41. The attire of those in the wedding party can be as formal or as simple as desired. However, Christian modesty and good taste will exclude low-cut dresses. For gathering and preparation, the Family/Cry room is usually available to the couple (usually the bride and bridesmaids) two hours before the wedding. Care should be taken to leave the room clean and in good order, as the room was found.

Other Observations

42. There are no reception facilities available at St. Raphael.
43. Non-Catholics are welcome to participate in the ceremony as attendants to the bride and groom; however, they must understand that they will be expected to observe the usual Catholic procedure in matters of ceremony.
44. The marriage license must be brought to the rehearsal. **The marriage cannot be celebrated without it.** The license will be signed immediately after the service by the best man and maid of honor and then the officiating clergy.
45. The bridal party should arrive prepared at least thirty minutes before the appointed time.
46. A receiving line in the Narthex is not permitted, as the bridal party must return to the sanctuary immediately in order that pictures may be taken in the allotted time.

Fees

47. The Church wedding is not only the most important part of the wedding day; it is also the least expensive. The sacrament cannot and should not be compared to the other financial burdens of a wedding. The church is not being rented. You are partaking in the Sacrament of one or both of your faiths.

48. A deposit of \$250 is required within two weeks of setting the date with the priest or deacon. The entire fee must be paid in full at least 30 days prior to the wedding.

49. The wedding fees are:

Active Parish Members

Church Fee.....\$800

Those whose immediate family has at least six months history of financial or ministerial participation at St. Raphael.

Non Parishioners

Those without previous affiliation with St. Raphael Parish.

Church Fee.....\$1,200

Simple convalidation.....\$200

Important Phone Numbers

The Parish Office.....(727) 821-7989

Wedding Coordinator:

Cherie Mainenti anthony'sarchangel@gmail.com..(727)-642-6468

Music:

Joe Master (941)-356-6385

Eric Foreman, Praise Band (727) 576-7908 or cell (727) 410-4729
The praise band members and additional musicians are available at an additional expense. You may work with them individually.

Check List

- Letter of permission (see #2)
- A Baptism Certificate issued within the last 6 months. (see # 12)
- Prenuptial Investigation “A” form completed (see #13).
- Witness for “B” form contacted (see #13)
- Permission or Dispensation Form (with non-Catholic)
- Decree of Nullity of previous spouse. (Where applicable)
- Death certificate of previous spouse. (Where applicable)
- Pre-Cana arrangements made (see #10)
- Pastor notified of name and address of visiting priest (see #19)
- Pastor notified of name/address of visiting minister (see #20)
- Parish music director notified (see #33)
- Parish Wedding Coordinator (see #36)
- Priest notified of choices for the wedding texts (see #17)
- Photographer notified of Parish procedures. (see #37)
- Florist notified of Parish procedures
- License obtained. (#12)
- Fees arranged and paid(see #49)

All pertinent papers, except the license and fees are due: _____

Date of the rehearsal: _____ Time: _____

Date of the wedding: _____ Time: _____

The Priest/Deacon in charge of your wedding ___ Mass ___ Rite is

The Parish Wedding Coordinator is:

The Music Director is:
