

WEDDING CUSTOMARY



ST. MARK'S CATHEDRAL
Shreveport, Louisiana

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We are delighted that you are considering being married at St. Mark's Cathedral. This document contains important information for your planning. Please read it carefully and keep it for reference as your planning with the Cathedral clergy and staff evolves.

Your first step is to call our office (221-3360) and speak with our Administrative Assistant Liz Montelepre . No firm date can be set prior to meeting with the Dean of the Cathedral. Ms. Montelepre will work with you to arrive at a tentative date. *No weddings will be allowed during major holiday weekends.* The Dean meets with all couples who will be married at the Cathedral and decides which member of the Cathedral clergy staff will solemnize the marriage and provide premarital instruction.

After planning the wedding liturgy with the clergy, couples will meet with our Organist Choirmaster and members of the Cathedral Wedding Committee. Use of private wedding coordinators is strongly discouraged with respect to liturgical matters, as all liturgy decisions are set by the standards of the Book of Common Prayer and the Canon Laws of our church. Private wedding coordinators may be helpful for receptions and other non-liturgical matters, but the rehearsal and wedding will be entirely under the direction of the clergy and the wedding committee.

Policies and Procedures

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and woman in the presence of God. In the Episcopal Church it is required that at least one of the parties must be baptized Christian; that the ceremony be witnessed by at least two (2) persons, 18 years of age or older; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State of Louisiana and the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

No minister of this Cathedral shall solemnize any marriage unless the following conditions are complied with:

1. The Minister shall have ascertained that both parties understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind and will, and with intent that it be lifelong.
2. The Minister shall have instructed both parties as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony, or have ascertained that they both have received such instruction from persons known by him to be competent and responsible.

No minister of the Church shall solemnize any marriage unless the following procedures are complied with:

1. The intention of the parties to contract marriage shall have been signified to the Minister at least 30 days before the service of solemnization. To facilitate pre-marital counseling, the Minister should be notified at least 90 days prior to any tentative arrangements for the marriage.
2. No announced dates will be given prior to initial conference with the Minister.

By tradition, no weddings are scheduled during the Season of Lent, a time of penitential observance (Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday).

Clergy of the Episcopal Church must abide by the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana concerning remarriage of any divorced persons in the Church. The Canons allow a pastoral influence and are not intended to be rigid. However, the Bishop's

approval must be secured before announcement or invitations are made public. The guidelines of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana encourage a year's time from the official divorce before marriage is considered. This passage of time allows for the necessary grief or estrangement adjustment. The Bishop must be allowed 30 days in which to make a pastoral decision. If after counseling, the Minister favors the proposed marriage of divorced persons, his confidential recommendation is sent to the Bishop for consideration. The divorced party or parties must furnish a copy of his or her final decree, which is a requirement of the office of the Bishop. It shall be within the discretion of the Dean of this Cathedral to decline to solemnize any marriage.

Wedding Licenses

When the clergy of the Cathedral or clergy invited by the Dean officiate at a wedding, they act as an officer of the State of Louisiana. The license, which is obtained in the office of the Parish Clerk, is valid for 30 days from the time it is issued. There is also a 72-hour waiting period that must be observed from the time of application to the time of the marriage. A notarized copy of the birth certificate of each of the applicants is required before the license can be obtained.

Under no circumstances can the service commence without a license. Therefore, it is customary here at the Cathedral for you to bring the marriage license to the church office no later than the Monday preceding the wedding. The Parish Register can then be filled out and all papers will be ready for the signatures of the parties, witnesses and the officiating clergy at the time of the ceremony. Following the service, it is the responsibility of the Cathedral to return the license to the Parish Clerk for recording.

Signing the Declaration of Intention

The Episcopal Church requires both parties to sign a statement called “A Declaration of Intention.” This document briefly outlines the Christian understanding of marriage. The couple’s signature indicates their agreement with the Church’s teaching. This is the statement:

“We _____ and _____ believe that marriage to be a lifelong union for the mutual support and companionship of both parties; the procreation, if it be, of children, and the physical and spiritual upbringing of such children to the benefit and safeguarding of society; and do engage and pledge ourselves thereto.”

The Wedding Committee

The Wedding Committee of St. Mark’s Cathedral is a subcommittee of the Altar Guild. Members of this committee assist the clergy in all of the non-liturgical arrangements for weddings. A meeting with the bride and members of the Committee will be arranged once the clergy has finalized the liturgical plans for the wedding. The Committee members will also be present at both the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony.

Wedding Decorations

St. Mark’s Cathedral is a lovely well-designed place of worship. Its architecture and symbols are statement enough, though tasteful floral arrangements on the altar do add beauty to the worship environment. St. Mark’s Cathedral values simplicity in the presentation of flowers at a wedding. The Cross is the focal point for all services. Flower arrangements should not overwhelm it.

All florists not familiar with our Cathedral guidelines will be contacted by the wedding committee.

In the Sanctuary and the Chapel

The flowers on the Altar may be arranged in one long arrangement, 2 smaller arrangements, or in the two brass urns provided by St. Mark's. (The liners and liner holders for the urns should be picked up by Wednesday prior to the wedding.) The length of the High Altar is fifteen (15) feet and the Chapel Altar is six (6) feet. Therefore, flower arrangements should be in proportion to the size of the Altar.

The flowers should not be higher than 19 inches at the center point so they will not obscure the Cross and should not extend beyond the depth of the retable which is six (6) inches on the High Altar and nine (9) inches deep on the Chapel Altar. The flowers must be placed on the retable. Silk or artificial flowers are not permitted anywhere in the Cathedral.

The appointments in the Cathedral on the High Altar include two (2) Seven Branch Candelabras that are used for the wedding ceremony.

Greenery and flowers may also be placed on the nave floor in front of the Chancel ledge but should not extend into the Chancel aisle.

In the Nave

Pew markers, either of flowers, greenery or ribbon, may be attached to the pews by rubber bands, wrapped wire or ribbon.

Due to fire codes candles may not be used in the aisles, in front of the Pulpit or Lectern or attached to the pews.

St. Mark's provides brass candlesticks and hurricane globes that may be used in the windows.

At St. Mark's guests are seated down the side aisles. Ribbon or greenery should be provided by the florist to rope off the center aisle prior to the entry of grandmothers and mothers of the bride and groom. If preferred, St. Mark's has white roping that may be used.

In other areas of the Cathedral

Flower arrangements may be placed on the two tables in the Narthex. If the families desire a guest register, we recommend they place two registers on the tables in the Narthex.

Following the Service

Rice, confetti, birdseed or any other material may not be thrown inside or outside any Church buildings.

Seating Capacity

At St. Mark's Cathedral, the Nave provides seating for approximately 700 guests. Even if your guest list is less than 100, the Cathedral is always an appropriate place to celebrate marriage vows. At St. Mark's weddings may also be scheduled in the Chapel (approximately 65 seats).

Wedding Rehearsal

Wedding rehearsals are normally scheduled at 6:15 pm on the evening before the wedding. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend and to be prompt. Rehearsals usually last no more than one hour. The officiating Priest conducts the rehearsal and is assisted by members of the Wedding Committee.

Bride's Room and Choir Lounge

Food and soft drinks are allowed in the Bride's room and Choir lounge. Ice water will also be provided. No alcoholic beverages are permitted anywhere on the Cathedral property.

Photography and video

St. Mark's recommends that photographs be taken before the wedding ceremony. After the ceremony, if photographs are desired, pictures will be limited to the wedding party. The photographer will be allowed fifteen minutes for photographs. The last flash photograph allowed prior to the service will be that of the bride and the person presenting her that will be taken in the Narthex before they enter the Nave. After the ceremony, photographs may be taken from the Narthex as the wedding party processes from the altar.

A video of the wedding may be made from the balcony. A stationary video camera may be placed in the hallway by the Sacristy or by the recessed wall on the Epistle side of the Sanctuary.

As Holy Matrimony is a sacrament of the Episcopal Church, we ask that the bridal couple inform family and friends that taking photographs during the wedding ceremony is not appropriate.

Photographers and videographers not familiar with the Cathedral should contact Paula Slack.

Wedding Music

In accordance with The Book of Common Prayer, your wedding is a sacramental rite of the church. The sacred music selected for the service should be of such quality that it reflects positively on a mood of reverence and joy. The Prayer Book provides opportunities for the use of music as follows:

1. Preludial Music - It is customary that music begin twenty minutes prior to a Cathedral wedding and ten minutes prior to a Chapel or Chancel wedding. Unless you request an organ selection, the organist will pick appropriate organ literature. Vocal soloists and instrumentalists, when requested, provide appropriate music interspersed with organ music during the Prelude. The seating of family members takes place during the Preludial Music.

2. Entrance Procession and Retiring Procession – Processional music does not need to be in march tempo, but should have a feeling of movement and a mood of dignity and joy. Appropriate music for this can be played on the organ or with instruments.

The music must be appropriate for the instruments performing the music—a trumpet cannot play a flute solo and the organist cannot play symphonic, guitar or piano music. It just doesn't work! A hymn, either sung by the congregation or choir, or played on the organ is very appropriate. The question occasionally arises concerning the use of the popular “wedding marches” of Wagner and Mendelssohn. Wagner wrote his composition as a funeral dirge and later incorporated it into the opera “Lohengrin”. In the opera, it is used at the wedding of Elsa, who very promptly thereafter proves unfaithful to her wedding vows. Mendelssohn wrote his march as ballet music for his opera, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” No one knows how these selections ever came into vogue; but neither is appropriate for a church wedding and neither is used at St. Mark’s.

Music during the Liturgy - Following the Declaration of Consent, between the scripture readings, during the procession from the chancel steps to the communion rail. Appropriate hymns either sung or played can be found in The Hymnal 1982. The text of vocal solos and anthems must be taken from Holy Scripture, or The Book of Common Prayer, or from text congruent with them. It is very important that the music enhances the service and does not turn into entertainment!

Consultation - The Organist, Donald Smith, selects all music in consultation with the bride and groom. He may be contacted at the church office (221-3360) during office hours to set up an appointment. You may e-mail him at don@stmarkscathedral.net.

Musicians - The Organist of St. Mark's is understood to be available for all weddings that are scheduled in the Cathedral. In his absence, the Assistant Organist or an organist appointed by Mr. Smith will be provided. You may wish to enhance your wedding with the addition of other instrumentalists, choir or a vocal soloist. It is very important to have a scheduled consultation with Mr. Smith before securing any other musicians for your wedding. He can suggest musicians to contact in our congregation or in the city who regularly perform here at St. Mark's. If you wish for a family friend or guest vocalist/instrumentalist to sing/play at the wedding, it is very important to make sure they are trained and comfortable performing in a large building without the use of microphones. Our cathedral is built acoustically to enhance the performance of music. Singers must have sufficient vocal training to be successful in our building. It can be embarrassing for both the singer and the family if their voice is not sufficient for the space. St. Mark's Choir is a "volunteer" choir. When they are requested to sing for extra services, such as weddings, the choirmaster sends a notice to the choristers and requires them to commit in writing to be present and sing. If a sufficient membership of the choir can be present, the choirmaster will then commit the choir to sing at the wedding.

Fees – The Dean will discuss the Fee Schedule with the couple and the Financial Office Manager will collect all fees **at least three weeks** prior to the wedding.

CONTACT PERSONS

Cathedral Office

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Monday – Friday

(318) 221-3360

Organist/Choirmaster

Donald L. Smith

(318) 221-3360

don@stmarkscathedral.net