

St. Mary Basilica

Wedding Policies

ST. MARY BASILICA
105 S. Union St.
Natchez, MS 39120
(601) 445-5616
stmarybasilica@cableone.net
www.stmarybasilica.org

Father Scott Thomas, Pastor
Father Mark Shoffner, Parochial Vicar

Updated March 11, 2020

Initial Contact

At least six months prior to your anticipated marriage date, the future bride or groom must contact St. Mary Basilica office to schedule a meeting with one of the parish priests to ensure the following:

- *Your ability to marry here at the Basilica of St. Mary;*
- *A day and time of celebrating your marriage is reserved;*
- *The type of ceremony that will be used (Rite of Celebrating Marriage During Mass or Outside of Mass);*
- *Other attending Clergy.*
- *A pre-approved program for marriage preparation.*

After this initial meeting, the necessary marriage preparation will begin. It would be good to contact the Basilica music director and the Basilica wedding director after this initial meeting.

Fees

Basilica fees:

Parishioner:

- \$100 cleaning non-refundable fee.
- \$200 for the Basilica music director/organist.
- \$100 for the Basilica Wedding Director (see pg. 6 for description)

Non parishioner: \$1,300 (1/2 due at time of reservation, non refundable)

Use of St. Therese Hall:

\$150 non-refundable fee for use of hall, which includes bridal room.

All fees for musicians other than Dr. Gurman are the responsibility of bride and groom.

Required Marriage Preparation

All couples are required to undergo a “Formal Marriage preparation”, preferably with the presiding priest or deacon. It may also be completed at the couple’s local parish if they do not live in Natchez.

Documentation of the preparation and any other necessary paperwork, according to the diocesan guidelines where the Catholic party lives, must be received by St Mary Basilica at least six (6) weeks before the wedding date in order for the wedding to occur.

Scheduling and Planning Your Wedding

Rehearsal Date and Time

The St. Mary Basilica Wedding Director or (in their absence) the presiding priest will be in charge at the rehearsal. The Wedding Rehearsal can be held anytime from 5:30 pm-7:00 pm the day before your wedding. The Wedding Director will ensure that the rehearsal starts on time and ends within one hour. If any of the wedding party is late, the rehearsal will still begin on time. Anyone more than 20 minutes late to the rehearsal may be dismissed from participating in the wedding.

The rehearsal is not a time for making decisions. Please decide who will walk together, who will attend the Bride and Groom in the Sanctuary, etc, before the Rehearsal.

It is a good practice to bring the marriage license with you to the rehearsal.

Wedding Date and Time

Wedding ceremonies at the Basilica of St. Mary may take place on

- Saturday daytime weddings must be finished by and the church vacated no later than 4pm.
- Saturday evening weddings may not start before 7pm.
- Friday evening wedding times may be discussed with the Pastor.

There can be no weddings on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Palm Sunday Weekend, Holy Week, Easter Sunday Weekend or Pentecost Weekend. We reserve the right to not schedule weddings on Solemnities, Diocesan or Parish festival weekends. Weddings during Lent may occur but decorations will be extremely limited.

Planning the ceremony

The Rite of Marriage may take place during or without the Holy Mass. The Wedding ceremony without Holy Mass includes the Liturgy of the Word and the wedding itself (the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Holy Communion are omitted). Whichever option you choose must strictly follow the liturgical guidelines of the Roman Catholic Church.

If a wedding during Holy Mass occurs on a major Solemnity or Feast day (including weekends during Advent or Lent), the couple is bound to the readings and prayers of the day's Mass. But if the wedding is not within the context of Holy Mass, any readings from the provided booklet may be used.

For a wedding during Holy Mass, anyone acting as readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must be practicing Catholics and carry out those ministries at their home parishes. For a wedding ceremony without Holy Mass, anyone can read as long as they are present at the rehearsal.

It is good to schedule a meeting with the Basilica music director, Dr Franco Gurman, in the earliest stages of planning. Only music that is sacred and liturgical in nature and origin should be used. Secular music is not to be used in a church setting. St. Mary Basilica Music Director, Dr. Franco Gurman, will have the final say on appropriate music. Dr. Gurman will be present at your rehearsal and wedding. Dr. Gurman's fee is listed on page 2. All other musicians are at your expense and must be approved by Dr. Gurman.

Because of the dignity and sacredness of the moment, children who participate as ring bearers and/or flower girls should be mature enough in age and demeanor. In the Diocese of Jackson, the minimum age for child participants is six years old.

Modesty of Dress

Brides should keep in mind that the ceremony is taking place in a sacred space. Dresses for bride and bridesmaids should reflect a sense of modesty and respect for the sacredness of the ceremony and the space as well as the sacredness of the human body. Therefore, strapless dresses are unacceptable for both the bride and bridesmaids. Wide straps and cap sleeves are certainly acceptable. It is preferred that at least the bottom half of the back is covered. Appropriate draping must cover strapless dresses, plunging necklines, and dresses exposing more than the top-half of the bride or bridesmaid's back. Remember that Marriage is a symbol of Jesus' second coming, when He will present His Bride, the Church, before God for all eternity. St Paul tells us that in marriage the husband represents our Savior Jesus and the bride represents us, the Church. How we present ourselves at our wedding day should represent this theological truth.

Flower Arrangements

It is requested that the flowers on the back altar be left for the Sunday Masses in prayerful honor of the newly married couple. All other arrangements may be taken after the service.

All flower arrangements must be appropriate to the Liturgical Season. Any Basilica decorations (including flowers) already in place may not be removed. No flowers or other decorations may be used during the penitential seasons of Advent or Lent. Any questions should be addressed to the Basilica Wedding Director or Pastor.

Pew Markers

Pew markers are allowed and should be attached in a way that will not damage the pew. No tape or wire is allowed.

Pew markers may not contain greenery or berries that could drop to the floor and damage the carpet.

Candles

The Diocese of Jackson prohibits the use of the "Unity Candle."

The Basilica will provide for candles and candleholders. The bride is to meet with the Wedding Director to determine which candleholders are available and what the placement should be. No additional candleholders may be brought in from outside.

For safety purposes, final candle placement will be done by the Wedding Director.

Other Basilica Decorations

The Basilica does not allow the use of "Aisle Runners," columns, candelabras (besides those provided by the church), hurricane lamps, trellises.

All kneelers will be provided by the Basilica. The furniture in the Basilica (including chairs in the altar area) may not be moved. No additional furniture may be brought into the Basilica.

The outside railings may be decorated with fasteners that will not scratch them; the decorations must be removed immediately after the ceremony.

The flower girl may not use real petals.

There is absolutely no throwing of rice or birdseed, no use of sparklers or any other novelties allowed when the couple exits the Church. The only exception is a Military traditional honor guard ceremony.

Photographers & Videographers

Photographers

Photographers are welcome in the Basilica to take pictures of the wedding party and families. The inside of the Church is a sacred space and should be respected as such. No suggestive poses or extra props will be allowed. If the sacredness of the space is not respected, the photographer will be asked to cease immediately.

During the ceremony, the photographer may take pictures of the bride proceeding up the aisle and of the bride and groom exiting the sanctuary. The photographer should consult with the Wedding Director regarding pictures taken during the ceremony. At no point may the photographer walk across in front of the pews during the wedding.

Videographer

Videographers are welcome to video the wedding ceremony. Check with the Wedding Director for approved placement of the camera.

The videographer is not allowed to walk around at any point of the wedding to get a better view of the bride, wedding party or congregation. If the sacredness of the sanctuary is not respected, the videographer will be asked to cease immediately.

Day of the Wedding

Bride's Room, Groom's Instructions

In order to better provide for the needs of the bride and her bridesmaids, for a fee the Basilica provides a "Bride's Room" that includes an adjacent bathroom, hanger, and mirror. See page 2 for the St Therese Hall fee.

Food and drink are allowed in St. Therese Hall.

Please discuss with the Wedding Director the arrangements for the groom and groomsmen. Groom and best man will arrive in the Sacristy 30 minutes prior to the ceremony. Groomsmen will gather in front of the cry room. Only the groom and best man are allowed in the Sacristy. Food and drink should not be brought to the Sacristy without the prior permission of the priest or wedding director.

Failure to comply with this directive will result in cancellation of the ceremony.

Alcohol on Basilica Property

ABSOLUTELY NO ALCOHOL OR ILLEGAL DRUGS OF ANY KIND WILL BE TOLERATED ON BASILICA PROPERTY. If alcohol or illegal drugs have been or are being used the individuals will be asked to leave, leading to the cancellation of the wedding. The same regulations apply to the wedding rehearsal.

Any of the wedding party arriving at the rehearsal or wedding appearing to be intoxicated will be asked to leave and may be prohibited from participating in the wedding rehearsal and/or the wedding ceremony.

Wedding Director

St. Mary Basilica tries in every way possible to make your wedding the beautiful and prayerful experience you hope it will be while at the same time keeping foremost the sacramental nature of the service. To that end, St. Mary Basilica provides as part of your Basilica fee a Wedding Director to help you plan your wedding. The St. Mary Wedding Director is familiar with the Diocesan and Parish policies governing weddings and the use of the Basilica properties. The Wedding Director will work closely with the couple to answer any questions and to be sure all details are in place prior to the wedding date.

You may expect the St. Mary Wedding Director to:

1. Meet with you after your initial meeting with Father Thomas to begin the process of planning your wedding and to answer your questions.
2. The St. Mary Wedding Director will be available by appointment to meet with you to tour the Basilica and show you kneelers, vases, etc., that are available for use. You will also decide on flower placement, candle holders, placement of wedding party participants, etc., at this meeting.
3. The St. Mary Wedding Director will have a final meeting either in person or by phone or email to insure all appropriate details (documents, license, etc) have been taken care of.
4. The St. Mary Wedding Director will direct the wedding rehearsal and the wedding. Any outside wedding consultant you have hired may consult but must follow the directions of the St Mary Wedding Director.
5. The St. Mary Wedding Director will decide if behavior before, during or after the rehearsal should be brought to the attention of the presiding priest, who will make any appropriate decision necessary. The same is true of the wedding day. Violation of any of the regulations listed in these guidelines could lead to cancellation of the wedding ceremony.

Important Contact Information

ST. MARY BASILICA WEDDING DIRECTOR

Carolyn S Eidt
15 Oakhurst Dr
Natchez, MS 39120
carolyneidt@att.net
601-431-2430 (cell)

ST. MARY MUSIC DIRECTOR

Dr Franco Gurman
107 S Union St
Natchez, MS 39120
francovsky66@aol.com
813-846-0896 (cell)

Wedding Information

BRIDE:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Cell Number _____ Alternate Phone Number _____

E-mail: _____

GROOM:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Cell Number _____ Alternate Phone Number _____

E-mail: _____

WEDDING

Rehearsal Date/Time: _____

Wedding Date/Time: _____

Presiding Priest or Deacon: _____

Choose one form of ceremony: During Mass Outside Mass

Number in Wedding Party:

Bridesmaids _____ Groomsmen _____ Children _____

Florist (Name, Phone #): _____

Photographer (Name, Phone #): _____

Videographer (Name, Phone #): _____

Outside Wedding Consultant (optional): _____

I HAVE READ AND AGREE TO THE ABOVE BASILICA "WEDDING GUIDELINES." I AGREE THAT ANY VIOLATION WILL RESULT IN THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF THE BASILICA FOR THE ABOVE WEDDING.

(Please sign, date and return to the church office.)

Bride or Groom

Date

Pastor

Date