



THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT PAUL

PARTICULAR COVID-19 POLICIES FOR WEDDING LITURGIES – AS OF AUG. 2020

Due to ongoing developments in the COVID-19 crisis and state/local responses, these policies may be updated at any time.

Number of Possible Invited Guests

With present social distancing measures (every other pew roped off, and the possibility that parties will sit six feet apart within pews), it is not possible to give a maximum guest count, due to certain unknowns: for example, the number of single people from different households versus the number of couples or families of differing sizes.

If all invited guests were singles from different households, that therefore desired to sit six feet apart, then there are room for approximately 110 in the Cathedral.

With some guests being couples, families, or other combinations of people from the same household, it may well be possible to fit more.

We recommend capping your guest list at 100 guests total, to ensure that those who wish to may space out, and also to ensure sufficient seating for the wedding party, which will use the front pews.

Wedding Party Position

We understand that wedding parties (couple and bridesmaids/groomsmen) often spend a considerable amount of time together throughout a wedding weekend. Therefore, there may not be a desire or perceived need among them to maintain social distancing.

Our wedding policy caps the number of those who may be present in the sanctuary to 8 bridesmaids and 8 groomsmen. If you have more, the additional ones will remain in the pews.

However, traditionally, only the best man and maid of honor (the official witnesses of the wedding) would be in the sanctuary with the bride and groom at the time of the vows.

Due to COVID-19 concerns and social distancing requirements, the ordinary approach at present is to observe the traditional practice of only bride, groom, maid of honor, and best man in the

sanctuary. Therefore, other groomsmen and bridesmaids may remain in the pews but may not join the couple in the sanctuary.

Exceptions to this COVID-19 policy are possible, *at the sole discretion of the priest/deacon celebrant(s)*. If the priest/deacon you invited to celebrate your wedding is comfortable with having up to 8 bridesmaids and up to 8 groomsmen in the sanctuary with you at the various times during the wedding liturgy, then you may do so. The celebrant has the final word.

Use of Masks

Under the present Alabama *Safer at Home* order, there is a statewide mask mandate. However, there are exemptions for religious/worship reasons and for health reasons. At the same time, some clergy have desired to enforce a mandatory masking rule, regardless of possible exemptions.

The Cathedral of St. Paul encourages the use of masks for all members of the wedding party and all invited guests. We encourage couples during this time of pandemic to make masks available (easily purchased online or in drug stores) for those guests who may have forgotten to bring one.

The bride and groom are ordinarily not required to use a mask, but they may choose to do so. The final word on this is with the priest/deacon celebrant(s) they have invited to preside over their wedding: if the celebrant(s) want the couple to wear masks, then they shall wear masks.

With regard to the wedding party: the couple has the initial preference on this and should take care to communicate their expectations with their bridesmaids and groomsmen on both masking and social distancing. However, the final decision remains with the priest/deacon celebrant(s): If the celebrant(s) want the wedding party to wear masks, then they shall wear masks. If the celebrant(s) want the wedding party to stand 6' apart or not be in the sanctuary at all, his/their directives shall be followed. ***It is important, as long as we remain in pandemic conditions, that each couple work out these details in advance with their invited wedding celebrant(s), to avoid any disappointments or confusion on the wedding day.***

Hand Sanitizer

Couples who wish to provide hand sanitizer for their guests may place pumps near the entrance to the church. The wedding coordinator will assist with placement. The Cathedral cannot usually leave out pumps of sanitizer or other hygiene products due to theft. Any sanitizer left after the wedding becomes the property of the Cathedral.

If the couple desires to use hand sanitizer at any point in the ceremony, a stool may be placed in a discreet place near their chairs in the sanctuary on which the pump may be placed, out of sight of those in the pews. The wedding coordinator can assist with this. Again, the couple will provide the sanitizer.

Holy Communion

When a Nuptial Mass is celebrated, Holy Communion will be distributed under one kind only (the host) to Catholic attendees.

At the discretion of the priest celebrant, the bride and groom may receive the Precious Blood also – in this case, the sacristan will place an additional chalice out before Mass, so that the couple will not drink from the same chalice as the clergy.

The ordinary practice of the Cathedral is to permit the distribution of communion both on the tongue and in the hand, according to the preference of the recipient. However, the Cathedral cannot guarantee that each invited priest/deacon will be willing to follow this guideline. If a couple that has an invited celebrant(s) has any concerns about the method of distribution of Holy Communion, they should discuss this in advance with their celebrant(s).

Photographs

It is understood that some couples may desire to take some photos with all wearing masks, as a remembrance of the particular circumstances in the time they were married. They will naturally desire to have photos without masks, also.

Couples should be sensitive to the concerns of their family members, friends, and other guests in the taking of photos, realizing that not everyone may be comfortable with standing closely together for posed photos. While poses generally are brief and do not involve vigorous breathing – thus any risk of infection is very low – yet it is up to couples and their families to handle this part of their weekend in a conscientious and sensitive way.