

Wedding Guidelines

Married Christians, in 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 to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of children; and they have their own special gift among the people of God.

- Introduction to *The Catholic Rite of Marriage*

Promoting Marriage

The parish community of St. Mary's is committed to providing a special ministry to those in our midst who are preparing to enter marriage. We regard marriage to be sacred in keeping with our Catholic Tradition, which affirms the marriage of two baptized persons to be one of the seven sacraments of the Church. We stand ready to assist you in planning a reverent and joyous celebration of the most important commitment of your lives.

Scheduling a Wedding at St. Mary's

At St. Mary's our first responsibility is to provide for the weddings of our established parishioners and their immediate families. Consequently, every person who has been registered in the parish personally or through his or her family for at least one year is entitled to schedule a wedding at St. Mary's. Be mindful that your first choice of day and time may not always be available. In order to facilitate scheduling and to provide for time to prepare, it is strongly encouraged that weddings be arranged at least 7 months in advance. The parish will try to honor all requests if the church is available and there is a priest or deacon who is able to supervise the preparation of the couple and officiate at their wedding. No weddings may be scheduled with less than six months prior to a particular date in order to allow time for the proper preparation of a couple. Any exceptions require permission from the pastor.

Steps of Preparation for a Wedding

1. Upon contacting the parish office, you will receive a wedding information form and this "Wedding Guidelines" booklet. Please review the booklet carefully in order to understand the policies and procedures involved in having your wedding at St. Mary's. Then fill out the information form and return it to the church office within 2 weeks. The information on that form is essential before scheduling a wedding. No weddings will be put on the calendar until the form is received and has been reviewed by the pastor.
2. Upon receipt of that form, the pastor or deacon will be in touch with you to discuss arrangements for your wedding. Once a wedding is scheduled, you will receive a written confirmation of the details. Please inform the person preparing you for marriage of any change of street address, e-mail address, or phone number.

3. You should contact the pastor or the deacon who will be working with you within thirty days of the receipt of your confirmation letter to schedule an appointment. He will need to meet with you early in the preparation process to familiarize you with the Church's requirements concerning the sacrament of marriage. If for some reason you have drifted away from the sacramental life of the Church, he will assist you in your return.
4. As the wedding approaches, you will meet with the pastor or the deacon to plan your wedding liturgy in accordance with the Church's Rite of Marriage. At about the same time, the music director will be in touch with you to plan the music for your celebration.
5. When a guest priest or deacon will be presiding at a wedding at St. Mary's, he should send a letter confirming his participation to the pastor and indicating what parts of the preparation might need to be done here. If a wedding is to be celebrated in a Catholic Church other than St. Mary's, the priest or deacon who will be officiating must contact the local pastor to coordinate preparation arrangements.
6. More details about personal steps of preparation.
 - a. Preparation begins with a meeting with the priest or deacon officiating at your wedding and includes an interview to determine that you clearly understand the commitment you are about to make and that there are no impediments to your marriage.
 - b. Each of you will receive forms for parents or other close relatives to fill out testifying that there are no obstacles to your marriage.
 - c. Baptized Christians will be asked to obtain a certificate of their baptism. For Catholics this should be an embossed copy issued by your church of baptism within the past 6 months.
 - d. When a Catholic is marrying a person from another religious tradition, the Catholic is informed of the Church's expectation that he/she will assume responsibility for the baptism and formation of any children in the Catholic faith.
 - e. You will be required to participate in a program of marriage preparation. These sessions are conducted at St. Mary's twice a year. Information and reservations are made by phoning the parish office at #552-1091. If for some reason you are unable to participate in this program, an alternative program must be substituted.
7. Couples are encouraged to share in the planning of their wedding ceremony especially through the selection of the scripture passages to be read and by recruiting people who will carry out special ministries during the service, e.g. cross and book bearer, readers for the Scripture lessons and intercessory prayers, Eucharistic ministers when there is a Mass, etc.

8. The entrance procession follows the guidelines set forth in the Catholic liturgy. “If there is a procession to the altar, the ministers (e.g. crossbearer, servers, etc.) go first, followed by the priest, and then by the bride and bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses.” Details for the order of the procession can be arranged with the priest or deacon who is presiding.
9. During the Liturgy of the Word, the bride and groom are seated in special chairs. Other members of the wedding party and close family members are seated in the front pews.

Civil Requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia

1. The marriage license must be obtained from the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the County or City where the bride or groom resides, if either one is from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The marriage may take place anywhere in the state. If both parties are from out of the state, the license can be obtained from any clerk authorized to issue marriage licenses.
2. Marriage licenses are not granted to parties under 18 without parental consent. With parental consent, both parties must be at least 16 years old. (Diocesan policy guards against marriages of couples under 20 years of age.)
3. Blood tests are no longer required by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Ecumenical or Interfaith Marriages

When a Catholic is marrying a person who does not share our faith tradition, the pastor or the deacon will discuss with the couple the challenges and opportunities of such a marriage. While respecting the convictions of others, the Church will expect that the convictions of the Catholic party will also be respected, especially in relation to the religious upbringing of children.

In the event of an ecumenical or interfaith marriage, the participation of clergy from another faith is welcomed. In addition, arrangements can be made for celebrating the marriage in the house of worship of the party who is not Catholic.

Celebration of the Eucharist

The liturgy of our Church provides for celebrating the wedding of two Catholics within a Eucharist: the Nuptial Mass. Central to such a wedding is the reception of Holy Communion. Since provision for intercommunion has not been made at this time in the continuing dialogue between the Catholic Church and other Christian churches, it is strongly recommended that marriages between Catholics and other Christians be celebrated with the special liturgy outside Mass which the Church provides for such weddings. This service is always used when the other party is not a baptized Christian.

Fees

All persons are expected to pay a \$250 refundable deposit and security fee. The fee will be returned after the wedding as long as nothing is damaged. The fee deposit is due with the application form.

To help defray the cost of using the facilities for celebrating a wedding at St. Mary's, you are asked for a suggested stipend of \$250 - \$500 for using the church (personnel, cleaning, electricity and wear costs).

The Roman Catholic Church does not charge to celebrate a sacrament. However, clergy are allowed to receive a stipend for their time and a suggested fee can range from \$100-\$300.

Anyone for whom these fees are a financial hardship is asked to speak to the pastor in order that an appropriate adjustment can be made.

Parish Wedding Rules

Catholic weddings are to be celebrated in a place of Catholic worship and will follow the prescribed liturgy of our Church. When permission has been granted to celebrate a wedding in the house of worship of the party who is not Catholic, the service of that faith will ordinarily be observed.

Time of Weddings

Weddings are ordinarily scheduled on Saturdays at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. with rehearsals the preceding evening. Weddings on weekdays, Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon or evening will be considered by special request.

In both Advent and Lent, the celebration of weddings is strongly discouraged. During these penitential times, the decorations of the season must remain in place in the church.

Wedding Music

All music must be appropriate to the readings chosen from the Sacred Scriptures and to the Rite of Marriage. Music that can be sung by all present is to be selected for those parts of the liturgy which call for congregational singing: i.e., gathering hymn, psalm, and for a Nuptial Mass, the service music and communion hymn.

'Bridal March' (from Wagner's *Lohengrin*) is not permitted in the wedding liturgy. Likewise, Broadway show tunes, opera arias, pop-tunes, and other secular works are not appropriate for the

celebration. Prerecorded music is also not appropriate. Please remember to adhere to copyright laws.

[The following people are available to provide music for weddings:

- Amy Hogan—Piano and cantor—amysngr@verizon.net
- Joe Ball—Organ—joball@math.vt.edu; #951-1267
- Joetta Peterson—Piano/Organ--#552-2542 or #230-8292
- John Rossi—Music—rossij@vt.edu--540-231-8272
- Beth Shaver—Cantor—shaverrod@hotmail.com; #552-1236
- Kate Bixby—Cantor—kbixby@verizon.net; #552-1788
- Gena Chadler—Cantor—gechandl@vt.edu; #540-808-5052
- Amelia Ball—Cantor—amball@vt.edu; #951-1267
- Bridgette Seidel—Violinist—mrs.seidel@videoviolinlessons.com--540-382-2812

Flowers and Decorations

It is customary for the couple to furnish flowers or greens for the decoration of the church building. These are to remain in our sanctuary for the Sunday liturgies, at which time the couple is kept in our prayers. Should more than one wedding be held in the church on a Saturday, the parish suggests that the couples share floral arrangements.

In planning with a florist, a couple should make simplicity and appropriateness the first concern. A modest floral arrangement may also be placed on the table in the Commons as welcome to the guests. Any decorations not used for the weekend Masses must be removed by 4pm following the wedding.

When the church building is decorated for a liturgical season, those decoration must remain in place. During the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, further decorations in the Church are restricted. No flowers may be placed in the sanctuary; however, arrangements of greenery are allowed. Modest pew decoration and personal flowers may be used. Candles are provided by the church for the regular sanctuary candlesticks. If a Unity Candle is desired, the couple must provide it. No other candles may be used.

No attachments may be taped to the pews. Only spring brackets may be used. Pew attachments may not restrict a safe exit.

No runners or tracking may be used in the aisle, as this can create problems for a safe and orderly exit. Flower petals, rice and birdseed are not permitted either inside or outside the church. Bubbles are allowed.

Dressing Rooms

The Haiti Conference Room is a room that is available in which the bride and bridesmaids may put on their gowns. If you wish to use this changing area, please reserve the room through the church office at the same time you reserve the church. There are also rooms available where members of the wedding party may gather before the celebration begins. All members of the wedding party should be present at least twenty minutes beforehand so that the service may begin on time.

Light refreshments for the wedding party may be brought into the building prior to the wedding. No alcohol is allowed on the premises at that time.

Photography and Video Recording

To preserve the sanctity of the wedding celebration, flash photography is not allowed during the wedding, nor should photographers move about the church building during the liturgy. If video equipment is used, it should be set up in the back or in the choir area. If desired, the church will remain lit for twenty minutes following the wedding for photographs.

Rehearsals

A one-hour period is reserved for each rehearsal on the evening before the wedding. It is important for participants to be there on time. Rehearsals for both St. Mary's and the War Memorial Chapel are scheduled for 4 or 5pm on the Friday preceding the wedding. The rehearsal is conducted by the officiating clergy. You do not need to secure the services of a wedding coordinator.

Our parish rejoices with you as you prepare to celebrate your wedding at St. Mary's Church. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the parish office at #540-552-1091, or send us an e-mail at officestaff@stmarysblacksburg.org.

May the peace of Christ be with you in your life together.

The Order of Service for the Celebration of Marriage

Length: 40-50 minutes

Music prelude

The Introductory Rites

Processional (*instrumental or sung by all*)

Greeting and Welcome

Opening Prayer

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm (*sung by all*)

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation (*sung by all*)

Gospel

Homily

The Rite of Marriage

Statement of Intentions

Exchange of Wedding Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Sign of Peace (Optional)

Prayers of the Faithful

Nuptial Blessing

The Lord's Prayer

The Concluding Rite

Final Blessing

Recessional (*instrumental*)

Postlude (*instrumental*) (optional)

The Order of Service for the Celebration of Marriage Within the Eucharist

Length: 50-60 minutes

Music prelude

The Introductory Rites

Processional (*instrumental or sung by all*)

Greeting

Opening Prayer

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm (*sung by all*)

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation (*sung by all*)

Gospel

Homily

The Rite of Marriage

Statement of Intention

Exchange of Wedding Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Sign of Peace (*optional*)

Prayers of the Faithful

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Presentation and Preparation of the Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Holy, holy, holy (*sung by all*)

Memorial acclamation (*sung by all*)

Great amen (*sung by all*)

Lord's Prayer

Nuptial Blessing

Sign of Peace

Lamb of God (*sung by all*)

Communion (*instrumental or sung by all*)

Prayer after Communion

The Concluding Rite

Final Blessing

Recessional (*instrumental*)

Postlude (*optional*)

