

St. Francis De Sales Catholic Church

Wedding Guidelines



*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.*

~ Mark 10:7-8 ~

Congratulations on your engagement!

You are about to enter upon a union which is most sacred and most serious. It is most sacred, because established by God himself. By it, he gave to man a share in the greatest work of creation, the work of the continuation of the human race. And in this way he sanctified human love and enabled man and woman to help each other live as children of God, by sharing a common life under his fatherly care.

Because God himself is thus its author, marriage is of its very nature a holy institution, requiring of those who enter into it a complete and unreserved giving of self. But Christ our Lord added to the holiness of marriage an even deeper meaning and a higher beauty. He referred to the love of marriage to describe his own love for his Church, that is, for the people of God whom he redeemed by his own blood. And so he gave to Christians a new vision of what married life ought to be, a life of self-sacrificing love like his own. It is for this reason that his apostle, St. Paul, clearly states that marriage is now and for all time to be considered a great mystery, intimately bound up with the supernatural union of Christ and the Church, which union is also to be its pattern.

This union, then, is most serious, because it will bind you together for life in a relationship so close and so intimate, that it will profoundly influence your whole future. That future, with its hopes and disappointments, its successes and its failures, its pleasures and its pains, its joys and its sorrows, is hidden from your eyes. You know that these elements are mingled in every life, and are to be expected in your own. And so not knowing what is before you, you take each other for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death...

You will belong entirely to each other; you will be one in mind, one in heart, and one in affections. And whatever sacrifices you may be required to make to preserve this mutual life, always make them generously. Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome. Only love can make it easy, and perfect love can make it a joy. We are willing to give in proportion as we love. And when love is perfect, the sacrifice is complete. God so loved the world that he gave, his only-begotten Son, and the Son so loved us that he gave himself for our salvation. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

No greater blessing can come to your married life than pure conjugal love, loyal and true to the end. May, then, this love with which you join your hands and hearts never fail, but grow deeper and stronger as the years go on. And if true love and the unselfish spirit of perfect sacrifice guide your every action, you can expect the greatest measure of earthly happiness that may be allotted to man in this vale of tears. The rest is in the hands of God.

Marriage Preparation Procedure

1. The Catholic Diocese of Arlington requires six (6) months of marriage preparation, beginning with your initial contact with your parish priest. Do not schedule your wedding until you have first met with a priest.
2. All the required documentation must be completed and turned into the parish prior to your wedding day.

3. Each couple marrying in the Diocese of Arlington is required to attend a marriage preparation conference such as a Conference for the Engaged.
4. You will be asked to take the FOCCUS premarital inventory. It is a tool designed to help engaged couples learn more about themselves and their relationship. It will also pave the way for them to discuss many of the topics that are central to ensuring that their marriage lasts a lifetime.
5. The priest may require you to attend Natural Family Planning (NFP) classes.
6. You will plan the various parts of your wedding liturgy (readings, music, etc.) in accordance with church law and liturgical norms.

Required Documentation

The Catholic Church requires several documents to be on file with the Church prior to a wedding ceremony. These documents establish your ability to enter into marriage freely and provide the Church with the necessary information to record your marriage properly.

Church Documents

- *Baptismal Certificate*: If you are a baptized Catholic, a recently issued Baptismal Certificate is needed (with the seal of the Church embossed onto it). An official copy is one issued before your wedding date, but not more than six months prior to it. If you were baptized in another Christian church, a certificate or other proof of Baptism must be provided. A photocopy of that certificate is sufficient.
- *Confirmation Certificate*: If you are Confirmed, the Baptismal certificate should have your Confirmation information marked on the back. In the case that it is not, a Confirmation Certificate should be provided. If you are not Confirmed, please inquire with the priest how you can receive Confirmation.
- *Affidavit Regarding The Free Status of Bride or Groom*: Each of you must provide two letters from your immediate family (parent or sibling) that attest that you are “free to marry.” i.e., you have not been previously married.
- *Canonical Permissions and Dispensations*: When necessary, the priest working with you will prepare permissions and dispensations required by the Church before the marriage can take place. These dispensations apply to all couples when one is not a Roman Catholic, or the couple intends to marry in a church of another faith.

Civil Documents

- You must obtain a marriage license from a local government circuit court within the State of Virginia.
- Please refer to the Loudoun County website for information how to obtain the civil marriage license. www.loudoun.gov

Conference for the Engaged

The Conference for the Engaged (CFE) program is designed to stimulate reflection and discussion on key aspects of marriage and family life.

Talks include:

- Human Images of God
- The Goodness of Marriage
- Marriage as a Sacrament and Vocation
- Compatibility and Love
- Communication
- Parenting
- Finding Our Financial Future
- Introduction to NFP
- Presentations are offered by married couples, priests/deacons, and professional counselors.

The Diocese offers two different CFE programs: One based in Vienna, VA, which is a single day program taking place on 16 Saturdays each year. The other is based in Woodbridge, VA, and is offered on three consecutive Thursday nights, twice a year. Both programs satisfy the conference requirement. Please select only one. In order to register for the Conference for the Engaged, you must already be meeting with the priest. A Certificate of Completion is given to the couple at the end of each conference.

To register: www.arlingtondiocese.org/Family-Life/Conference-for-the-Engaged/

FOCCUS Pre-marital Inventory

The FOCCUS Inventory is not a test. It is a snapshot in time of patterns of strengths and opportunities in the couple's relationship. It covers areas such as life style expectations, friends and interests, communication, problem solving, etc.

<http://www.foccusinc.com>

Natural Family Planning Class

"If therefore there are well-grounded reasons for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances, the Church teaches that married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse only during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained." – Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI

Couple to Couple League "provides Natural Family Planning (NFP) instruction that is both thorough and engaging. You'll learn the Sympto-Thermal Method, a modern, scientific and highly effective way to postpone or achieve pregnancy. With the guidance of a certified teaching couple, you and your fiancé or spouse will benefit from both their knowledge of the method and experience of using NFP in their own marriage. No matter which form of the class you select, you will receive our first-rate program and ongoing support while learning and beyond."

To register for classes, visit www.ccli.org and click on "Search/Register for Classes." If you need additional help, please contact the Chapter Coordinator, Len Rice at (703) 222-5121 or the Class Schedule Coordinator, Stan Greer at vincegreer558@gmail.com.

Planning Your Wedding Ceremony

The celebration of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, like all Catholic liturgical actions, are celebrations of the whole Church. Therefore, all weddings performed at St. Francis will be celebrated according to Roman Ritual. Any deviation or innovations will not be allowed. The wedding ceremony should not become a production or a show that turns the assembly into an audience. Rather, it is a prayer in which the whole assembly actively participates. The couple should keep this in mind when planning their ceremony.

Planning The Liturgy

Step 1 – Meet With the Priest

In your initial meeting with the priest you should discuss possible dates for your wedding. Except for an urgent reason and with the special permission of the priest, the parish does not schedule weddings during the penitential seasons of Advent or Lent.

You also will discuss the type of wedding ceremony you will have. The church celebrates the sacrament of matrimony in two forms: The wedding rite within a Eucharistic celebration (i.e. Mass with Communion) and the wedding rite with in the Liturgy of the Word (i.e. no Mass). You should decide with the priest which type of wedding ceremony is best for you.

Step 2 – Contact the Wedding Coordinator at St Francis de Sales

James Blankenship*
j.blankenship@saintfrancisparish.org
(540) 338-4497

(*email is the preferred method of communication)

In the initial meeting with the Wedding Coordinator you will discuss the *Wedding Guidelines* packet including the following:

- Church Use Agreement
- Readings for the Liturgy of the Word
- General Intercession
- Wedding Party Information Sheet – Wedding party, Lectors, gift bearers, etc
- Discuss the necessary paperwork

Choosing the Readings - The church allows you to choose the readings for the Liturgy of the Word. You are able to choose one reading from Old Testament reading, one Psalm, one New Testament reading, and one Gospel reading. For the complete list of readings to choose from, please visit:

<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/planning-a-catholic-wedding/readings/>

Lectors - The reading at Mass are an integral part of the Liturgy and the Lector who reads them performs a sacred function. Therefore, when choosing a Lector, he/she must be Catholic. The General Intercession can be read by a non-Catholic.

Gift Bearers – Up to four gift bearers are permitted. The Gift Bearers must be Catholic.

Step 3 – Choose your Music

Please contact the Music Director at least 4 months prior to your wedding day, to set up a meeting time to discuss the options for choosing your music:

Michael Galdo
m.galdo@saintfrancisparish.org
(540) 338-6381

Details regarding the music selections, readings, musicians, etc. will all be covered in your meeting.

The music director has first right of refusal as organist for weddings, and reserves the right to provide the cantor. Additional musicians including singers and instrumentalists may be hired with approval.

Your wedding is a religious ceremony of the Roman Catholic Church. As in any Liturgical ceremony, the music should be chosen with great care. You have the opportunity to choose music for the wedding that will be conducive to prayer for both yourselves and for the people you have invited to be part of your celebration.

Wedding Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is an important part of the preparation for the ceremony. All members of the wedding party, including readers, must attend the rehearsal.

For a Saturday wedding, the rehearsal is scheduled for the Friday before the wedding at 5:30pm. The rehearsal for weekday weddings will be determined on a case by case basis.

The wedding rehearsal covers the procession into and exit from the church as well as the various ceremonies of the Liturgy. In strict accordance with the Roman Ritual, there are two options for entering the church:

- 1) The entire wedding party, including all the maid of honor and best man are seated in the front pew. Then Bride and Groom are greeted in the vestibule of the church by the priest and servers and process in along with the priest and servers.

- 2) The priest, servers, and groom process to the sanctuary in a simple manner. The bridesmaids and groomsmen (including the best man and maid of honor) process down the aisle two by two. The bride processes in at the very end. If the bride chooses, she can be escorted by a person of her choice.

The procession type will be determined prior to the rehearsal. If Option #2 is chosen, the lineup must be provided to the SFDS Wedding Coordinator prior to the rehearsal.

The wedding rehearsal is not to exceed the scheduled one hour time allotment. Therefore, decisions about the liturgy must be made prior to the rehearsal. You will work with the Wedding Coordinator at St. Francis to ensure that the liturgy is properly planned so that the rehearsal runs smoothly.

Wedding Day

Use of the Church

Weddings can be scheduled with a start time of 11am – 2pm. You may begin to use the church one hour before the start time. This is true for all activities related to your wedding, such as arrival of family, flowers, pew decoration, photographer, etc.

Due to other scheduled activities in the church, we expect that all weddings to begin promptly at the designated time and not exceed the allotted time allowance.

Dressing/Waiting Area

At this time, St. Francis does not have the facilities to accommodate dressing and preparations of the bridal party. There is a small chapel off to the side of the church that can be used as a waiting area for the bride and bridal party. Because the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the chapel, we ask that you maintain a reverential and prayerful silence while in the room.

Dress Code

Your wedding gown, and the gowns of all attendants, must be in conformity with the following policies:

- Dresses must have sleeves that cover the shoulders (by sleeves is meant a fabric extension of the bodice that at least “caps” the shoulder). Halter-tops, straps of any kind, and sleeveless dresses are not considered appropriate. If you do not wish to wear a gown with sleeves, please obtain a shawl or other shoulder covering for the Bride and bridesmaids that can be worn in church and removed for the reception and wedding pictures, if you wish. The parish owns one white shawl for use by a Bride, but any shawls needed for the attendants are your responsibility. Dresses must also not show excessive amounts of cleavage and not come lower than four fingers width below the collar bone.

The wedding ceremony is a sacred celebration which takes place in the house of God. Such an occasion requires a corresponding dignity and modesty of dress in all members of the wedding party. We leave it to your discretion to apply these policies to your choice of apparel, but if you or one of your attendants appears in what is a clear violation of St. Francis’s dress code, that person will not be allowed to participate in the wedding ceremony. There are no exceptions made to this policy. If you are unsure about your dress, you may send a clear picture of it to the Parish Office for review.

Photography/Videography Guidelines

To provide a meaningful remembrance of the liturgy and sacred vows, we do allow photographs to be taken in the church. To make sure your marriage liturgy will be a prayerful experience for you and your guests, we ask the following in regard to taking photographs and videography:

- **Photographers/Videographers must keep a quiet reverence in church**
- Photographer/Videographer should keep his/her equipment in an area of the Church where it will not be in the way of guests.
- Except during the procession, absolutely no flash photography is allowed during the ceremony. Only available light photography is allowed.
- Photographers are not allowed within the sanctuary at any time. We ask that all movement be discreet so as not to intrude on or draw attention away from the experience or mood of the ceremony.
- Photographers should be careful not to impede the procession.
- It is the responsibility of the photographer to help the wedding party keep a sense of reverence during picture taking that is in keeping with the respectful atmosphere desired at all times within the church.
- No umbrellas or other extraordinary lighting equipment or backdrops may be set up for the photographic session.
- Video equipment must be unobtrusive and must remain stationary, with the exception of the processional and recessional
- All equipment must remain out of the aisles and kept well out of the way of traffic patterns. Nothing should be placed in or on the pews.
- All photographs must be concluded and photography/videography equipment must be cleared out of the church no later than 3:20pm.
- All photos must be respectful of the sacred space, therefore no photos like groom carrying the bride will be allowed.

Florist and Wedding Decoration Guidelines

Floral arrangements that are furnished by the bridal couple and are to be kept simple. Those used in the sanctuary should allow for free movement around the altar. Floral arrangements are not to be placed on the altar. At the conclusion of the wedding, floral arrangements may be removed by the wedding party or left to adorn the sanctuary.

If you do plan your wedding during a special liturgical season such as Christmas and Easter, the church sanctuary may already be enhanced with seasonal arrangements which cannot be altered or removed. Also, placing floral arrangements in front of the altar is prohibited.

Pew decorations are permitted but nothing may be taped or pinned to the pews. Your florist will be able to suggest an alternate method. Pew decorations must be removed by the bridal party after the conclusion of the wedding.

Placement of candelabra in the church sanctuary is prohibited. Unity candles are not part of the wedding ritual and therefore not permitted. Other modern innovations like the mixing of sands is also not part of the wedding ritual and not permitted.

It is our experience that aisle runners can cause several problems at the wedding ceremony, one of which is falls. Therefore, aisle runners are not permitted.

Throwing rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals (real or silk) as well as guests blowing bubbles, is strictly prohibited on Church property.

Wedding Programs/Booklets

St. Francis De Sales does not provide wedding programs or booklets. If you wish to have some printed for your wedding guests, it will be your responsibility to put it together and have them printed. If you decide to have a program, please submit one copy to the Wedding Coordinator one month prior to the wedding, for approval.

If your wedding will be celebrated within a Mass, the following guidelines from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCBC) is to be included in the :

FOR CATHOLICS

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession.

FOR OUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS

We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Because of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are not admitted to Holy Communion. All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

FOR NON-CHRISTIANS

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.

Please note that it is not necessary to include the complete texts of the readings and prayers. It is preferable to include the major headings for the order of the ceremony. Please remember that your wedding is a sacred occasion which takes place in the House of God, therefore, secular symbols, trite references, and anything that might take away from the profound dignity of marriage should be avoided at all costs. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to collect all wedding programs after the Mass. Please make sure that they are removed from the pews/hymnal holders.

Miscellaneous

Day of Coordinator/Professional Consultant

DOC's and Professional consultants who you may retain to assist you with your wedding celebration have no proper role in the wedding liturgy ceremony itself. Although, they may assist Wedding Coordinator with the procession into the church, once the wedding liturgy begins, they should be respectful of the religious nature of the ceremony and abide by direction the St. Francis Wedding Coordinator.

Restrooms

Restrooms are located in the hallway off to the side of the parish church next to the chapel. A full length mirror is available in the women's room. Infant changing tables are available in both men's and women's restroom.

Parking

Saint Francis de Sales has parking available on site.

Alcohol and Illegal Drugs

These are prohibited in the Church facilities. If anyone in the wedding party appears to be intoxicated or in possession of alcohol or illegal drugs, they will be asked to leave immediately. If the Bride or Groom appears to be intoxicated, the wedding will be immediately cancelled, since intoxication prevents the valid exchange of wedding vows.

Fees:

Parishioners:

- Church Use Fee*: \$500
- Music Director: \$300
- Cantor Fee: \$175
- Parish Wedding Coordinator Fee: Free
- Altar Boy – suggested stipend \$25

* A \$250 non-refundable deposit is required to reserve the date of your wedding.

Non-Parishioner

- Church Use Fee: \$2,000
- Music Director: \$300
- Cantor Fee: \$175
- Parish Wedding Coordinator Fee: \$150
- Altar Boy Stipend: \$25

Weddings for non-parishioners are accepted on a case by case basis. Non-registered couples must be prepared by their local priest . No date can be set until the priest preparing you sends his approval.

Additional Resources

The engagement period is an exciting time and wedding day preparations are fun, albeit a little stressful at times. It is important to remember that even though you are planning a wedding day, you are preparing for a lifelong marriage commitment. To help you prepare for the sacramental aspects of the marriage, the following resources are recommended for your own personal study and reflection.

Three to Get Married

By Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

For Better Forever: A Catholic Guide to Lifelong Marriage

By Dr. Gregory K. Popcak

For Men Only: A Straightforward Guide to the Inner Lives of Women

By Shaunti and Jeff Feldhan

For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men

By Shaunti Feldhan

The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts

By Gary Chapman