



The Wedding Ceremony

Often couples will look to their wedding with expectations from various sources. The Rite of Marriage itself requires very little – the couple, two witnesses and the officiant priest or deacon. Most other details that the couple may assume are often costly and not necessary for the sacramental bond. Simplicity is encouraged as to the details.

An online resource about planning your wedding (sponsored by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops):

<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/dating-engaged/planning-a-catholic-wedding/>

Wedding Ceremony or Nuptial Mass?

Two forms of the Marriage Rite are available. The Nuptial Mass and the Wedding Ceremony. The structure of both forms are similar, with the Wedding Ceremony not including the Rite of Communion. The Wedding Ceremony can be officiated by a deacon as well as a priest.

When two practicing Catholics are married it is assumed that they will be married in a Nuptial Mass. A Wedding Ceremony (without Communion) is also an option.

When one of the parties is not Catholic, it is presumed that they will be married in a Wedding Ceremony (i.e. without celebrating Communion).

The couple can direct any questions concerning these options to the person preparing them for marriage.

The Place of the Wedding

Since the wedding is a liturgical event and celebrates and forms a sacramental bond it should take place in a church.

For certain situations, a wedding can be permitted in another Catholic church or chapel, or a church of a Christian denomination. Only weddings performed in a Catholic Church can have a Nuptial Mass.

Outdoor weddings or weddings in secular places are discouraged.



The Officiant

A Catholic priest or deacon generally are the only ones qualified to witness a wedding. In certain cases, weddings can be witnessed by Protestant clergy.

Concelebrants at the wedding, either Catholic or Protestant, should be discussed during the preparation process.

If a couple has a priest or deacon from outside the diocese who they wish to officiate at their wedding, they should make that known from the outset of preparation. That priest or deacon has to provide proof that they are in good standing from their diocese or religious order.

If the priest or deacon is from outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia they will need to be registered through the Circuit Court before they officiate. If you are requesting clergy from outside the Commonwealth to officiate, please let your preparer know.

The Wedding Party

The only persons required by the Church for a wedding are the bride and groom, two official witnesses (best man and maid or matron of honor) and the officiant. Couples are encouraged to show moderation as to the number of any other attendants. A list should be given to the person preparing the couple when the wedding party is decided.

Including young children in the wedding party is risky. Not all children are comfortable in front of strangers and can make it known in ways that will distract from the wedding. From experience, children younger than 5 years old are too young to serve in the wedding party. No items, such as flower petals or rice, are permitted to be dropped or thrown in or outside the church.

Usually persons from the wedding party are assigned to pass out programs and assist people in finding seating for the wedding.



Liturgical Roles

The couple may ask friends or family to assist in roles in the liturgy.

People are needed to read the Old Testament and Epistle readings, and the Prayers of the Faithful.

In Nuptial Masses, persons can be selected to carry in the bread and wine at the offertory procession.

If the couple know persons who are trained Eucharistic ministers, they may serve that role at the wedding, at the discretion of the officiant. This is true for altar servers as well.

If a program is produced (by the couple) there should be persons appointed to pass out the program and assist the guests in finding seating.

Scripture Readings

A resource will be provided to assist the couple in choosing readings for their wedding. A wedding requires three readings from Scripture (Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel). These cannot be replaced by secular readings.

<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/dating-engaged/planning-a-catholic-wedding/>



Music

Music is often a significant part of the wedding.

Because a wedding is a liturgical event, it requires that the musician for the wedding be familiar with music for the parts of the liturgy. As such we require that couples use the parish's Director of Liturgy and Music, or her appointee, to play at the wedding.

The Director of Liturgy and Music is available to help guide you in the selection of the music for your wedding. The director will also have approval of the selections provided. Special requests will be at the discretion of the Director of Liturgy and Music.

A cantor is also required for the liturgy. Since the liturgy requires music to accompany the liturgical action as well as processions, etc., it is necessary that a cantor familiar with liturgical music, preferably from the parish, be used for the wedding. A request of a cantor from outside the parish is at the discretion of the Director of Liturgy and Music, and will require an additional fee.

Due to space constraints, outside ensembles, such as string quartets, are not permitted at weddings in the parish. The use of additional individual musicians is at the discretion of the Director of Liturgy and Music.

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[Link to: Approved list of music for weddings.](#)

The Liturgy Coordinator

A Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator will be assigned, at a fee, to each wedding. The coordinator will assist in the details of the ceremony, be present at the rehearsal, open the church and set up when there is a nuptial Mass. The fee is the responsibility of the couple.

This role is not to be confused with a wedding planner that is separately hired by the couple for all the details of the day.



Decorations

Any decorations for the wedding should be discussed during the wedding planning sessions. Decorations should never impede the flow of the liturgy, including access to the ambo and altar and the congregation to communion.

The decorations should be simple, since all decorating will need to be accomplished in the one hour before the wedding. There should be no tape, nails, tacks or any fastenings to surfaces in the church.

If a wedding is to take place during Lent, simplicity should be exercised on any decoration due to the solemnity of the season.

Persons requesting weddings near Easter or Christmas should know that the church is usually highly decorated and no outside flowers will be allowed.

Wedding Fees

For participating, registered families of St. Olaf or their children, no fee for the church is required. Fees are charged for personnel involved in the wedding (i.e. Accompanist, cantor, wedding coordinator). Any gratuities to clergy or altar servers are at the discretion of the couple.

For unregistered persons requesting a wedding, an additional use fee is assessed.

All parish fees must be paid before the wedding rehearsal.

[Link to: Current fee schedule](#)

The Rehearsal

The rehearsal is usually scheduled the night before the wedding, generally starting between 5:00-6:00 pm.

In the case of a large wedding party, the procession can often be the most complicated part of the wedding. The procession will include the servers and priest, groom, bride, their witnesses and other attendants. Although the father of the bride has traditionally had an important place, other parents can be included. Groomsmen may process singularly or escort a bridesmaid. Special seatings, which occur before the procession, are often requested for grandparents or special guests. It is helpful if the couple would set this with the officiant before the rehearsal to avoid any confusion.



The Marriage License – Commonwealth of Virginia

For most couples not already civilly married, a marriage license needs to be obtained from a Commonwealth of Virginia Circuit Court up to 60 days prior to the wedding. Couples who are already civilly married must supply a certified copy of their marriage license from wherever they were married. The marriage license must be presented before or at the rehearsal.

Having this document is essential to the wedding going forward.

More information about the marriage license requirements can be found at:

<https://www.usmarriagelaws.com/marriage-license/virginia/circuit-court-clerks/office-requirements.shtml>

Alcohol

Persons impaired under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not be tolerated at the rehearsal or at the wedding. If it is suspected that a bride or groom is impaired the wedding will not proceed.

The Day of the Wedding

The wedding party should arrive dressed at the Church at least fifteen (15) minutes, but no more than one hour, before the ceremony. A separate place is available for the bride to wait before the ceremony. No food and drink (besides water) is allowed during that time.

Non-flash photographs are permitted during the ceremony. If the couple hires a professional photographer to document the wedding, they should talk to the wedding coordinator prior to the service for direction. For safety reasons, guest taking photographs should not leave their seats.

The church is equipped with a hearing aid loop system, where persons wearing hearing aids can set the hearing aids to connect to the church's sound system. This could be included in the program should the couple know guests to whom this information will be helpful.

The church also has spaces at the front or the back where wheelchairs can be accommodated.