



# St. John the Evangelist

Roman Catholic Church • Severna Park, MD

## Wedding Procedures and Guidelines

### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

We are delighted that you are planning to get married and that St. John the Evangelist Parish is part of your plans.

This booklet is presented to you to help you plan both your marriage preparation and your wedding ceremony. Wedding arrangements are certainly necessary and important, but we hope that you never lose sight of the fact that Marriage is a Sacrament – a sacred sign of your love for each other in Christ. Christ abundantly blesses this love and in this Sacrament he enriches and strengthens you so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity.

The best preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage comes from your daily relationship with the Lord, both individually and as a couple. Even now we encourage you to pray together as a couple for God's blessing on your marriage. Make time to attend Mass each Sunday. Since this is a new beginning in your life, we encourage you to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for marriage.

Please accept our sincere best wishes and prayers for a happy marriage. The Pastoral Staff of St. John wants your wedding to be filled with a sense of God's presence. In this spirit, we present to you our parish policies regarding marriages celebrated at St. John the Evangelist Church.

### **1. OFFICIAL MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSES**

Marriage preparation is required for all couples who plan to be married at our parish. Couples normally take part in the *Witness To Love* pre-Cana program at St. John. In this program, the engaged couple connects with a mentor couple for a more personalized experience of marriage preparation. In cases where distance or military service prevent a couple from taking part in the *Witness To Love* program, other online or remote options can be used. Please speak with the priest or deacon assisting you for more details.

### **2. PLACE AND OFFICIANT OF YOUR MARRIAGE**

Traditionally, the wedding ceremony takes place in the parish of the bride, if both bride and groom are Catholic. In marriages where one of the parties is not of the Catholic faith, the parish church of the Catholic party is the usual place for the ceremony. (Note:

a Catholic may receive permission to be married in the church of a non-Catholic fiancé. Please speak with your priest or deacon for more information.)

You are free to choose any priest or deacon assigned to the parish to officiate at your wedding. A priest relative or friend of either party is always welcome to officiate at your marriage if they are in good standing with the Church and have provided the necessary documents from their diocese. In all situations, consultation with one of the priests at the parish (St. John) where the marriage is to take place must occur at the beginning of the arrangements.

If one of the parties is of a faith other than the Catholic faith, a minister of their faith may certainly be invited to be present in the sanctuary and, to some extent, participate in the ceremony. The Catholic priest or deacon must be the principal celebrant—who receives the vows. If there are significant reasons, you may apply for a dispensation to the Archbishop to have the marriage ceremony performed in a church other than a Catholic church. However, all other preparations must be made with the Catholic parish and the necessary requirements must be fulfilled.

### 3. **TO RESERVE THE CHURCH**

No date can be set or reserved until the couple has met with a priest or deacon from St. John. This is to ensure that there are no impediments or circumstances that would cause delay or postponement of the ceremony.

When the date is set, we ask a \$100 non-refundable deposit. The deposit is part of, and not in addition to, the church fees below. (See #15 below.)

### 4. **WEDDING LITURGY**

If both the bride and groom are of the Catholic faith, the Sacrament of Matrimony should normally take place in the context of the Holy Mass. It is permissible for the marriage to take place at Mass when one of the parties is Christian but not Catholic. However, it is more suitable for the couple of different faiths to be married in a ceremony outside of Mass. The normal structure of a wedding is as follows:

#### **Opening Rites**

Entrance Procession  
Opening Hymn or Entrance Chant  
Greeting by the Celebrant  
Gloria  
Opening Prayer

#### **Liturgy of the Word**

1st Reading (Old Testament, by a lector)  
Responsorial Psalm (recited or sung)  
2nd Reading (New Testament, by a lector)

Alleluia and Verse  
3rd Reading (Gospel, by a priest or deacon)  
Homily

**Rite of Marriage**

Questions before consent  
Exchange of Consent (Vows)  
Blessing and Exchange of Rings  
Prayer of the Faithful (Universal Prayer)

IF THE WEDDING IS PERFORMED AS A NUPTIAL MASS:  
The celebration continues with the **Liturgy of the Eucharist:**

Offertory Procession  
Rite of the Preparation of Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer  
The Lord's Prayer  
Nuptial Blessing  
Communion  
Closing Prayer and Blessing  
Dedication of Flowers (optional)  
Closing Hymn  
Instrumental Recessional (optional)

IF THE WEDDING IS A CEREMONY (NON-MASS):

The celebration continues as follows:  
The Lord's Prayer  
Nuptial Blessing  
Dedication of Flowers (optional)  
Final Blessing  
Instrumental Recessional (optional)

5. **CONCERNING FLOWER GIRLS AND RING BEARERS**

In order for the marriage ceremony to retain its dignity and sense of the sacred, only children 5 years or older are permitted to serve as flower girls or ring bearers. No flowers may be scattered on the floor of the Church.

6. **IF SOMEONE HAS BEEN AWAY FROM THE SACRAMENTS FOR ANY PERIOD OF TIME**

It is recommended that he or she participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation before participating in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

7. **OFFICIAL WITNESSES**

The witnesses (best man and maid/matron of honor) may be of any faith.

8. **READERS FOR THE CEREMONY**

It is proper for a lay person to proclaim one or several of the Scripture readings. You may wish to arrange for two lectors as there are usually two readings. If qualified to do so, it is recommended that members of the families or of the wedding party fulfill this role. The final reading, which is always the Gospel, must be proclaimed by a priest or a deacon. Whoever proclaims a reading should be present for the rehearsal and have a copy of the reading to rehearse with.

9. **ALTAR SERVERS**

The priest or deacon will make arrangements altar servers if needed. If the bride and groom request to have a relative or close friend fulfill these roles please speak with the priest. If they are not of the parish, they must be present for the rehearsal.

10. **WEDDING MUSIC**

The Music Director (Helen Kirby: 410.647.4884 or [hkirby@stjohnsp.org](mailto:hkirby@stjohnsp.org) ) should be contacted immediately after the wedding date and time are set. This is the responsibility of the couple. All music for any wedding ceremony must be liturgical music and must be arranged and approved of by our Director of Music. She will assist you with the choices of music and a soloist, if you request one. She would need to give permission for either a guest organist or a guest soloist. If you wish to use a soloist/cantor other than a parish soloist/cantor there will be an additional rehearsal fee. It is the Director of Music's responsibility to determine if the music selected is suitable for a church wedding. The Director's decision in these matters is final.

11. **START TIME OF THE WEDDING**

Weddings being planned for a Saturday should be scheduled to begin between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. All ceremonies must be finished by 3:00p.m. to allow time for photographs and for the parish to prepare for 3:30p.m. Confessions. Wedding arrangements for any other day will have to be discussed with the priest as there are sometimes other parish scheduled events (i.e., Baptism, etc.). Weddings are to be scheduled two hours apart in order that everyone has the necessary time to properly celebrate their wedding.

SPECIAL NOTE: No weddings are permitted on Sundays due to the limitation of time and already scheduled Masses.

12. **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

(1) For Catholics, a baptismal certificate is required and must be of recent issue, i.e. issued six months prior to the date of the marriage.

(2) For Non-Catholic Christians a photocopy copy of a baptismal certificate or other proof of baptism is required.

(3) A valid civil marriage license issued by Anne Arundel County. Circuit Court in Annapolis. Please direct any additional questions you may have by calling (410) 222-1434. A blood test is not required in Maryland. You should apply for the license about a

month in advance.

(4) Certification that you have completed the marriage preparation program as required by the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

(5) Additional documentation may be required for mixed-religion marriages. Your priest or deacon will share any additional necessary documents needed.

13. **FLOWERS**

Any family who wishes to have flowers placed in the sanctuary for their wedding should make their own arrangements through a florist of their choice. You may wish to have two arrangements placed on each side of the altar. If desired, arrangements for a white runner for the aisle of the church can be made through the florist. The length of the aisle is 75 feet. You are asked to consult with the priest as to the appropriate time for the flowers to be delivered. At no time are flowers permitted to be set on the altar itself. If you choose silk flowers for the altar, these may be taken home with you.

14. **WEDDING REHEARSALS**

The exact time and date are to be scheduled with the priest or deacon. All who are participating in any manner in the wedding should be present.

15. **PUNCTUALITY**

It is very important that the rehearsal and wedding start promptly at the appointed time.

16. **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Any photographer or videographer should be aware of the sacred nature of the marriage ceremony and should conduct him/herself in such a manner as not to be a distraction. Pictures/video may be taken during the ceremony. The following rules are to be strictly obeyed in order to preserve the sacredness and dignity of the marriage service:

- a) The photographer/videographer should never delay the start of the ceremony.
- b) The use of flashbulbs or auxiliary spotlights during the marriage service is never permitted.
- c) The photographer/videographer is never permitted in the sanctuary area during the marriage service.
- d) The photographer/videographer should never dash in and out of the wedding procession to take individual pictures. Such pictures can be taken after the wedding service.
- e) There is usually a limited time allowed for formal pictures after the wedding service or receiving line. During this time, respect for the church as a sacred place should be observed.
- f) The formal taking of pictures inside the church must be completed a half hour before the scheduled event in the church. On Saturdays the church must be cleared by 3:30 p.m.

- g) The photographer or videographer should check with the priest or deacon officiating at the wedding before the service to review these regulations. The couple being married should make sure the photographer or videographer is well aware of the regulations when arrangements are being made.

17. **ADDITIONAL ACCOUTERMENTS**

No rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals or any other item may be thrown inside any building or on the parish grounds. Insurance regulations prohibit this type of activity.

18. **OFFERINGS**

It is customary to present an offering to the parish on the occasion of your marriage. This assists with such costs as, electricity, heating, air conditioning, maintenance, etc.

- a. The ordinary offering for a wedding of a family registered in the parish and supporting the parish through the envelope system/electronic giving is \$250.00.
- b. Anyone who is not a registered parishioner, not supporting the parish through the envelope system, or is not a member of the parish, is asked to present an offering of \$500.00.
- c. It is a time-honored custom to present an offering to each of the altar servers.
- d. The Director of Music/Organist receives a fee of \$200.00. If a guest soloist is engaged, you would make your own financial arrangements with that person, and additional church rehearsal fee of \$25.00 is incurred.
- e. The Sacristan receives a fee of \$50.
- f. You may make a personal gift to the priest or deacon, particularly if he is not from St. John the Evangelist. Gifts to clergy are strictly optional.

All of the required offerings must be presented to the priest or deacon at the time of the wedding rehearsal. They should be in separate envelopes marked accordingly. If there is any financial hardship, you should consult with the priest or deacon and adjustments will certainly be made. No one will ever be denied any of our services due to financial difficulties.

**SUMMARY OF FEES:**

**CHURCH:**

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Registered and supporting parishioners | \$250.00 |
| Non-registered, non-parishioners       | \$500.00 |

**SACRISTAN: \$50.00**

MUSICIANS:

Organist                    \$200.00

Cantor/Soloist            \$150.00

ALTAR SERVERS:

Suggested fee per each server        \$20

CELEBRANT:    Couple's Discretion

19.    **REMINDER**

It is essential that the marriage license and return envelope be presented to the priest or deacon at the time of the rehearsal. The priest/deacon cannot officiate your marriage without a valid marriage license.