

# MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

St. Jane Frances Church  
Pasadena, Maryland

As your parish family, we congratulate you on your engagement. We look forward to planning and preparing for your wedding day. If you are like most engaged couples, you may have discovered by now that the joy, excitement and anticipation that accompanied the announcement of your engagement can quickly give way to anxiety, worry and tension as you prepare for the big day. There may seem to be a million details - guest lists, the bridal party, the reception, dresses, invitations and so much more. It is easy to get caught up in the planning and lose sight of the reason for the celebration. Marriage is a sacrament, a lifelong covenant of love made between a woman and a man before God and the Church community. Our Church teaches that the Sacrament of Marriage is administered by the couple as they are brought together in the presence of Christ and this community. In a very real sense then, the bride and groom are the ministers of this sacrament, one to another. The officiating Presider's (Priest or Deacon) role is to assist and guide you in the preparation of the sacrament. We are hopeful that you take this responsibility seriously and spend time in prayer and thorough preparation.

## CHAPTER 1: WHERE TO BEGIN?

The first thing most couples call to ask is whether the Church is available on the date they have in mind. While we can tell you in advance whether the calendar is open, **no date can be assigned for your wedding until you have met with the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding. So make this your first stop.** Please do not complicate matters by making any reservations prior to your first meeting. Before we can set the date, we need to talk face to face.

St. Jane Frances Church guidelines for marriage follow those established for all Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

1. **At least six (6) months before the anticipated date of marriage, the couple is expected to meet with the priest or deacon who will perform the wedding.**
2. **The couple is expected to participate in and complete a Marriage Preparation Program offered by the Archdiocese of Baltimore.** At your first meeting, you will receive a schedule and discuss the kinds of programs available.

3. **Because marriage is a witness and a commitment, Catholics preparing for marriage at St. Jane's are expected to participate in the life of the Church as responsible adults.** This means that you have evidenced a commitment to the faith community through your willing involvement in parish life. All Catholics must be registered, participating members of St. Jane Frances Parish (or their home parish) before and during marriage preparation.
  
4. **The couple is expected to meet with the priest and deacon, as required.** During the period of preparation, it is the responsibility of the couple to provide the necessary documentation for marriage, as follows:
  - (a) **Certificate of Baptism.** Each Catholic individual must provide a Baptismal Certificate from the Church where you were baptized. This certificate must be current, that is, issued no more than six (6) months prior to the date of your wedding. Request Baptismal Certificates at once by calling the parish office of the Church where you were baptized. You will need to advise the priest or deacon of the date and Church of your Baptism at your first appointment.

- (b) **Anne Arundel County Marriage License.** Your marriage license must be obtained from the County in which the marriage is to be performed, in this case, Anne Arundel County. The license is valid for six (6) months from the date issued, and requires forty-eight (48) hours to complete. Please do not wait until the last minute. In any case, you must present the license to the priest or deacon at your wedding rehearsal. You can obtain your Marriage License at the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County, 7 Church Circle, Annapolis, Maryland.
- (c) **Pre-Nuptial Investigation.** This document begins the permanent record of your marriage. A series of questions detail your personal background and assist the priest or deacon in planning your preparation. This document will be completed during the interview process.

## **CHAPTER 2: YOUR WEDDING AT ST. JANE'S**

Here are some answers to the most commonly asked questions about marriage at St. Jane Frances. These issues will be covered in greater detail during your interviews with the priest or deacon.

**When can I get married?** No date can be scheduled prior to your first meeting with the priest or deacon. No weddings are performed on Sunday. On Saturdays, weddings are scheduled at 10:00 a.m., 12:00 Noon and 2:00 p.m. We do not schedule weddings on Saturday evenings or Sundays. Depending upon the availability of the priest or deacon presiding at your wedding, Friday evenings may be possible. To allow sufficient time between services to clean up and set up, weddings are scheduled two hours apart. While you are thinking about dates, also choose a date and time for your rehearsal. Remember a date can only be set by a priest or deacon.

**What facilities are available?** Our Church can accommodate approximately 600 people. For small weddings, we have a separate chapel that seats 27 people. The sacrament of Marriage always takes place in Church. A Catholic wedding may not be celebrated in a hall, outdoors or in some other location. In the case of an interfaith couple, the Archbishop may give permission for the marriage to be celebrated in a non-Catholic church or synagogue when special circumstances are involved.

**How do we plan our wedding?** Most importantly, we allow and we expect that your wedding will be a prayer, faith-filled expression of your commitment to each other. All that encourages the full participation of you and your guests in the liturgy is appropriate. **You will help plan the liturgy by choosing readings, prayers and other elements of the service.** When meeting your priest or deacon, you will be given a book, *Together for Life*, that describes all the options to assist you in planning.

**What is the difference between a Nuptial Mass and a wedding service?** Both include the wedding ritual of the Church during which you express your consent and exchange vows. Both services also include readings from Scripture and a homily. Catholic couples are encouraged to celebrate a Nuptial Mass as a full expression of faith, including sharing of Eucharist as part of your celebration. Some couples worry that a full Mass will take too long. Our experience is that the difference in time is minimal and most families find the complete wedding liturgy a richer and more meaningful experience.

**How can we involve our friends and family in the wedding?** Your friends and family are encouraged to fully participate in the marriage ritual. We encourage you to plan music that everyone can join in singing. Many couples produce a wedding program to assist friends with prayers and responses. As many as three Readers may proclaim the First and Second Reading and lead the Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful). Above all, you should encourage your guests to feel welcome and to participate in your wedding ceremony.

**My fiancé's family is not Catholic. Can their minister be involved in the wedding?** For interfaith and interdenominational couples, ministers and priests of other traditions are welcome to participate in the wedding ceremony. In preparing for your wedding service, the priest or deacon will be especially sensitive to the needs of the non-Catholic members of your family.

**Can we light a wedding unity candle?** We provide a wedding unity candle ensemble, if you choose. The lighting of the unity candle is not part of the wedding ceremony, itself, but may, if you desire, be included. We supply the two side candles. You can purchase a center candle (white, plain or decorated, 3" diameter, 10 to 14 inches tall) or we can provide one for you. The center candle is yours to keep as a remembrance, if you purchased it.

**How many people can I have in the wedding party?** The Church requires a bride, groom and two adult witnesses. In inviting individuals to participate in your wedding, you are honoring those who have been an important part of your lives and who will be with you to support you throughout your marriage. This is true for all your invited guests and especially those in the wedding party. The bride, groom, maid of honor and best man will be seated in the sanctuary. The other members of the wedding party will remain in the first pew.

**Can we have a flower girl or ring bearer?** Certainly, so long as they are old enough to understand and participate in the ceremony. Because of difficulties in the past, we expect children to be at least five years old. Younger children do not react well when caught up in the excitement of the wedding ceremony. If you wish to honor a younger child, we suggest that they be seated in place before the ceremony and specially recognized during your reception celebration. Also, flower girls cannot throw flower petals coming down the aisle.

**We have some things that we would like to do as part of the service.** Remember, the wedding ceremony itself is intended to be simple and prayerful. The various practices that have grown up around the ceremony are always optional (for example, dedicating a flower to the Blessed Mother, roses given to parents or grandparents, special songs, prayers or poems of a religious nature). Select only those practices that are part of your family's traditions and are meaningful for you. A wedding is not the time to put on a show. Do only what is genuine for you. If you are undecided, a simpler service is usually the best understood and appreciated by everyone.



**What about music?** Together with our organist, you will choose wedding music. The marriage ceremony, whether celebrated within Mass or alone, is a divine sacrament of the Church. Music chosen must be appropriate in dignity to the serious, yet joyful, covenant proclaimed. Popular music or music of a questionable nature is best saved for the reception. *Please contact our organist, Mctkppg''*

*I tgi qt{'t'v'b o lli tgi B cqrlqo 0'*The cost for the organist is \$200.00 and the cost for the cantor is \$100.00. (If you plan to have another organist playing for the Nuptial Mass (or ceremony) other than the parish organist, the list of the music selection must be submitted to the parish music director as soon as possible during the planning period with the consultation fee \$50 paid to the music director).

**What kind of flowers and decorations are appropriate?** If you wish flowers at the altar, you purchase them directly yourself. A single arrangement in front of the altar or two arrangements on either side looks best. You may also place two arrangements behind the altar flanking the presider chairs, if you choose. Flowers are a donation to the Church, therefore, the flowers will remain for weekend Masses. **Because of damage in the past, we ask that you do not use tape or glue on the pews when using wreaths, bows and flowers.** Please direct the florist to use u-shaped hooks for this purpose.

**What else should we keep in mind when planning our wedding?** For safety, no rice, bird seed, flower petals or anything else may be thrown inside or outside of Church. County ordinance and church policy prohibit the release of balloons. For the safety of you and your guests, we do not allow the use of a white runner down the center aisle. On our terrazzo tile floor, they are too slippery for safety.

**Can we take photos and video during the wedding?** We permit video and photographs during the ceremony only and when they do not intrude on the service. Photographers may not use flash nor enter the center aisle or sanctuary during the service. Photographers may pose photos after the ceremony when time permits. As a courtesy, direct your photographer and videographer to see the priest or deacon before the ceremony. It is your responsibility to make these individuals aware of parish guidelines.

**What if we are late for the wedding or rehearsal?** Problems with weddings are often caused by trying to do too much in too short a time. We urge you to plan your time carefully. Delays are often caused by those you have hired to assist you - a photographer who must get one more picture or a limousine driver who cannot find the church. When someone in the bridal party is late, the wedding always suffers. This is a busy parish. We usually have several rehearsals, weddings and other services scheduled each week. Even if things get off to a late start, you cannot disrupt other scheduled activities. Plan your time carefully, and make certain that everyone knows and keeps the schedule you have set so that what you have planned for your wedding will not be cut short.

**How much does it cost to get married at St. Jane Frances?** As a Church, we do not charge a fee. In thanksgiving to God for your marriage and out of appreciation to the parish, we ask for a donation of \$250.00 from parishioners and \$500.00 from non-parishioners to assist with the expense of preparing and maintaining the Church for wedding ceremonies and rehearsals. Compensation for others involved with the wedding (musicians, soloists, altar servers) is paid by you directly to the individuals. Any contribution to the parish is not given to the priest or deacon. As an appreciation for the time spent with you while preparing and celebrating your wedding, it is customary to give a monetary gift directly to the priest or deacon. The customary stipend for the priest or deacon is \$100.00.

*We look forward to planning and celebrating your wedding with you.*

*Revised 10/15/13*