Marriage Policies and Procedures

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 this important event in your lives.

Your wedding day is when you will gather with loved ones and publicly declare your decision to live out your lives with each other. That public declaration becomes a sacrament: the way God works among us. Your love reveals the greatness of God’s love for both of you and for the whole world. By your example, you remind us that His love is permanent, faithful, gentle, forgiving, and creative.

Very often, the significance of what is truly the most important aspect of your wedding day is lost among details like dresses, tuxedos, flowers, and seating arrangements. How the wedding “looks” is not nearly as important as what actually happens there, the wedding liturgy.

You may have already heard that you, the couple, are the ministers of the sacrament; but the celebration does not belong to you alone. It belongs to all of us as an expression of faith in a loving God. Your wedding day and your marriage can be gifts that belong to and bless all of us.

The community, in one way or another, has been with each of you at the important turning points in your lives. Now the community gathers, again, as you come to express your love for each other. It is your responsibility to make your celebration of the wedding liturgy reflective of these important concepts to all present.

We at Saint Anthony Shrine and Our Lady of Mount Carmel hope to help you create a day that is a meaningful expression of faith for the two of you as well as your loved ones, whom you have called together to witness your love for one another and God’s love for all of us.

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1. **Arranging Your Wedding**

INITIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Initial arrangements for your wedding are made by calling the Parish Office (301) 447-2367 at least six (6) months prior to your wedding date. At that time, you can tentatively reserve a date and time in the church calendar. This date and time will be secured upon receipt of your security deposit. Please make sure that the times for both your wedding and your rehearsal are communicated to the parish secretary. The wedding and rehearsal times are determined by the regularly scheduled parish liturgical celebrations and the availability of the clergy person who will be witnessing your wedding.

The date and time of your wedding and rehearsal must be confirmed by the priest or deacon who will be officiating at your wedding. If you have made arrangements for a priest or deacon from outside the parish to officiate at your wedding, this must be cleared with the parish office in advance.

SCHEDULING

In order to schedule a wedding at Saint Anthony Shrine or Our Lady of Mount Carmel, one or both parties must be a Roman Catholic. It is recommended that you schedule your wedding with the church before making any commitments to a reception venue.

Weddings may be scheduled for Friday evenings or on Saturdays. Check with the priest or deacon witnessing your marriage in regards to scheduling a wedding during the season of Lent.

Saturday weddings can be scheduled to begin no later than 12 noon, due to the weekend schedules for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Mass. A Saturday evening wedding may be scheduled no earlier than 6 pm. Sunday weddings are not permitted.

PRIEST OR DEACON OFFICIANT

A couple may choose to have a priest or deacon other than those serving at Saint Anthony Shrine or Our Lady of Mount Carmel serve as the official witness at their marriage. In this case, the priest or deacon who will be serving as official witness will need to obtain written delegation (permission) from the pastor or his delegate of Saint Anthony Shrine or Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

A letter will be sent to the priest or deacon whom you designate as the official witness listing all the paperwork necessary for the marriage to take place. He may ask you to provide or obtain some of the documents.

The process includes the following documents:

1. The completed Prenuptial Investigation Form for both the bride and groom.
2. The Baptismal Certificate (dated within six months of the proposed marriage) of each Catholic party.
3. Dispensations (when applicable).
4. Marriage Preparation Certificate attesting that the couple has completed an appropriate marriage preparation program.
5. Letters from the parish of each Catholic party permitting the marriage to be held at a place other than the home parish.
6. Any documentation regarding annulments, lack of form cases, or written parent’s consent (when necessary).
7. If the priest of deacon does not have faculties in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, a letter from his bishop or religious superior stating that he is a priest or deacon in good standing.

After the wedding has been celebrated, the priest or deacon who serves as witness to the marriage is to take care of properly distributing the three copies of the marriage license. That distribution includes the following:

1. One copy is given to the couple.
2. One copy is sent to the Clerk of the Court of Frederick County.
3. One copy is for our parish records.

Please note that the parish office staff will notify the church of baptism for any Catholic party once the marriage has been celebrated and marriage license received.

PARISH REGISTRATION

As you are celebrating your marriage vows, it is important for you to register in a parish where you will be participating. Registration invites you to be included in parish activities and ministries. Full participation in parish life and sacraments will be an important support of your marriage and family as it grows.

DOCUMENTS OBTAINED BY THE COUPLE

*BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE*: A Baptismal certificate is required of all Catholic parties involved in a marriage. This certificate must be of recent issue, (dated within six (6) months of the day of your wedding) to ensure that neither party has been previously married and/or that an annulment has been obtained if necessary. The priest or deacon who will witness your marriage will further explain this to you. If you were baptized at Saint Anthony Shrine or Our Lady of Mount Carmel, simply notify the priest or deacon with whom you are working of that.

*LETTER OF PERMISSION:* Each Catholic party will need to obtain a letter from their home parish where he/she is currently registered granting permission for the marriage to be held at a parish other than the home parish.

*MARRIAGE PREPARATION CERTIFICATE*: This will be given to the couple upon completion of their instruction.

*MARRIAGE LICENSE*: A marriage license can be obtained from the Clerk of the Court for Frederick County. You must obtain a Frederick County marriage license in order to be married at Saint Anthony Shrine or Our Lady of Mount Carmel. There is a cost for the license determined by the courts. The license will be valid for six (6) months from the date it was obtained, and therefore, should not be obtained any sooner than six (6) months prior to the wedding date.

Please make sure that the priest or deacon who is witnessing your marriage has the license no later than a week before the wedding ceremony. We cannot proceed with the wedding without the marriage license in hand.

1. Marriage Preparation

In view of the many stresses which affect marriage in today’s society, the Catholic Church will help engaged couples think and communicate more fully about areas of married life which may or may not have been discussed before. Matrimony is a sacrament, and in the Catholic Church all sacraments, with the exception of the Anointing of the Sick, require some form of preparation on the part of the adult, parents, or child. Attending a marriage preparation process or program prior to the celebration of the Marriage is a requirement of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Each program has a cost for materials and services provided. See the website on the following pages for specifics.

FOCCUS

As a preliminary step to a Marriage Preparation program, couples may be asked to take the FOCCUS instrument. FOCCUS is a tool used to help couples come to a deeper understanding of their attitudes and opinions on matters that are important in marriage.

The options for marriage preparation include the following:

PRE-CANA SESSIONS

Pre-Cana sessions are generally scheduled as a series of sessions with a number of couples meeting together with a Leader Couple to discuss various aspects of marriage.

SPONSOR COUPLE

The Sponsor-Couple program is an individual and in-depth preparation that is available to couples. The engaged couple meets with a sponsor couple or a leader couple, typically for five sessions. These are scheduled at the convenience of the engaged couple and sponsor couple.

ENGAGED ENCOUNTER

Engaged Encounter is a weekend process based on listening, writing, and dialogue. It extends from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. The engaged couple has the opportunity to concentrate exclusively on each other, while examining the essential issues they will encounter within the marriage relationship.

RE-MARRIAGE PREPARATION

In the case of a couple where one or both member(s) has been previously married, we strongly suggest Re-Marriage Preparation. This can be done on an individual or small group basis, similar to the Sponsor Couple process previously described. Typically couples meet for six sessions.

Further information on any of the preparation programs is available by contacting the:

**Archdiocese of Baltimore**

**Office of Marriage Preparation and Enrichment**

**(410) 547-5420**

Website: [www.archbalt.org](http://www.archbalt.org)

*click Family Life then click Marriage & Family*

1. The Wedding Liturgy

The ceremony is planned largely by the couple. The priest or deacon will give you materials to assist you in planning your wedding liturgy and answer any questions you may have.

OFFICIAL WITNESSES

The official witnesses at the wedding are the Maid or Matron of Honor and the Best Man. They do not need to be Catholic.

DRESSING AREA

A dressing area for the bride and her attendants can be arranged at Saint Anthony Shrine or Our Lady of Mount Carmel. If dressing space is needed, the parish halls of either church can be made available if they are not already reserved. Since this service requires that someone be asked to open up, clean up, and close up after the wedding, we ask that you add an extra $50.00 to the church fee for this service. *(See schedule of fees at the end of booklet.)*

GUEST REGISTER

We recommend that the Guest Register be placed at the place of your reception. Placement of the register in the church causes many weddings to begin late due to late arrival of guests and the added time it takes for these guests to be seated.

PUNCTUALITY

Please keep in mind that there may be other regularly scheduled functions happening in the church, or even possibly another wedding. It is a matter of courtesy to your own guests to be on time for both the rehearsal and the wedding. To ensure you have ample time for your rehearsal and wedding, we ask in addition to making every effort to be on time, that you request this of those in your wedding party, also.

REHEARSAL

You will have one hour from your scheduled time to conduct your rehearsal. Please ensure that all parties involved arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled time of your rehearsal. With the exception of circumstances beyond your control, if your rehearsal exceeds the allotted one (1) hour time, a portion of your security deposit may not be refunded.

ATTIRE AND BEHAVIOR

Your wedding and rehearsal are being conducted in a church. Please ensure that members of your bridal party are dressed and behave appropriately for both events. They should set the example for your guests.

FLOWERS

Flowers are at the expense of the bride and groom. Although it is rare, there may be an occasion when two couples have a wedding on the same day. In this case, the couples may wish to explore the option of sharing the expense of the flowers. The parish secretary can tell you if there is another wedding and facilitate contacting the other couple.

It is presumed that the flowers that are placed in the church for your wedding liturgy will remain there for the weekend. If you are taking the flowers after your wedding, please inform the parish secretary so that we can order flowers for our regular weekend liturgies.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO

Photographs and videotaping are permitted during the ceremony if the priest or deacon permits it. Photographers should not enter the sanctuary at any time during the wedding liturgy. We ask that all photographers be discreet and presentable during the ceremony. The photographer should clear his/her program with the priest or deacon who presides at your wedding. Photographers cannot interfere with any ministers of the wedding, including the priest/deacon, wedding party, musicians, lectors, or Eucharistic Ministers.

LECTORS

Lectors (persons who read the scriptures) are to be people of your own choice. There are usually two readings at your wedding liturgy that may be read by lectors. When choosing someone to proclaim a reading, please be sure this person is comfortable with reading publicly.

ALTAR SERVERS

The use of altar servers is the option of the priest or deacon. Altar servers should be of your choosing. If necessary, the parish may be able to suggest someone.

RICE, BIRDSEED, OR FLOWER PETALS

Rice, birdseed, flower petals, etc. are not permitted at Saint Anthony Shrine or Our Lady of Mount Carmel for insurance reasons. These could be slippery and cause injury. Out of concern and respect for all our parishioners, especially our elderly parishioners, who come to our churches to worship, we ask that you refrain from throwing anything inside or outside the church.

1. Music for the Wedding Liturgy

Your wedding is an experience of God’s love in our midst, and is a reflection of His loving relationship with His people. As a religious celebration, it should reflect your faith and the faith of those who gather to witness the sharing of your love for each other.

When being married in the context of the Christian faith, the wedding becomes a religious celebration of the community. It is not only between the bride and the groom, but also an experience which is sustained by the presence of God in the worshipping community. Since marriage is one of the sacraments of the Church, the musical selection should be based on Sacred Scripture or be Christian in nature. The appropriate time for music without religious themes would be during the reception.

If you desire vocal solos written in either traditional or contemporary styles, the organist and/or cantor for your wedding can suggest pieces which are based on Sacred Scripture or religious themes.

Church musicians depend on their work with the church for their income. It is a matter of justice to pay musicians for their time, talent, and service. For this reason, we recommend our parish organist, **Marie Seymore.**

Mrs. Seymore has the right of first refusal for all functions held in our parish churches. All details for the music should be worked out directly with Mrs. Seymore. She can be reached at (**717) 630-9396**. Should you choose to use an outside organist, you will still need to notify her of this, as outside organists will need to be pre-approved and may result in a “bench fee” for Mrs. Seymore. If she is unable to provide music for your wedding, she will provide you with information for another organist in our area.

Please be sure to contact the organist soon after your initial meeting with the priest or deacon who will be officiating at your wedding (approximately 6 months prior to the wedding date).

Please note that organists, instrumentalists, singers and soloists (including Mrs. Seymore) will have their own fee policies. Those fees are above and beyond any mentioned in this booklet. You will need to consult with these musicians to determine what fees they charge for their services.

Please consider the following when planning music for your wedding:

* 1. Prelude Music

 To be played or sung while guests are being seated.

* 1. Processional Music
	2. Opening Hymn (if desired)
	3. Parts of the mass that are to be sung:

Responsorial Psalm

Gospel Acclamation

Holy, Holy, Holy

Memorial Acclamation

Amen

* 1. Communion hymn or other music
	2. Music to accompany a dedication of flowers at the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary (if applicable)
	3. Recessional music

In accord with liturgical guidelines, **pre-recorded music is not permitted**. You are asked to plan music for your wedding in a way which supports the religious nature of the wedding liturgy and respects liturgical integrity.

1. Schedule of Fees

Many churches follow the practice of assigning fees for the services provided by a parish church to the couple getting married. The parish itself incurs some cost for the use of its facilities, liturgical supplies, staff, and custodial care. The fees charged help to defray such costs.

SECURITY DEPOSIT

We require a security deposit of **$100.00** due at the time you reserve the church for your wedding date. This is fully refundable following the celebration of your wedding, providing that all policies and procedures are adhered to and all other fees are paid in full. Refunds will be issued within one month following the wedding date.

CHURCH STIPEND

$350\* For registered active parishioners

$500 For non-registered persons

\*Parishioners who volunteer in our parishes

will receive a $100 discount.

PRIEST OR DEACON STIPEND

$100 Suggested minimum, arranged with and paid directly to priest or deacon.

MUSICIAN’S FEES

Organist Fees are arranged with and paid directly to the organist and/or musicians.

Cantor / Soloist Fees are arranged with and paid directly to the cantor or soloist

OTHER

$50.00 Fee for use of the parish hall areas for dressing and preparation – in either parish – paid to the parish.

$50.00 Fee for wedding coordinator paid by separate check directly to Cathy Yoder unless otherwise instructed.

CHURCH FEES

Payment of Church Stipend for the wedding and church wedding coordinator may be sent to the Parish Office and should be made no later than **ONE MONTH IN ADVANCE OF YOUR WEDDING.**

The chart on the following page is designed to help you see at a glance what fees are due, and when they are due to assist you in planning for your wedding.

**After receipt and review of these policies and procedures, if the fees mentioned pose a hardship, please promptly contact the Pastor at (301) 447-2367 to discuss alternative arrangements.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Amount of Fee | Payable to: | Date Due |
| Security Deposit | $100.00 | Parish where wedding is scheduled | To be paid immediately after reserving date for wedding |
| Church Fee | $  see fees on page 12 | Parish where wedding is scheduled | To be paid in full no later than 1 month prior to wedding |
| Priest / Deacon | $100.00 (suggested minimum) | Directly to Priest/ Deacon | Arranged with Priest/ Deacon |
| Church Wedding Coordinator Fee | $50.00 | Cathy Yoder | To be paid in full no later than 1 month prior to wedding |
| Parish Hall(if applicable) | $50.00 | Parish where wedding is scheduled | To be paid in full no later than 1 month prior to wedding |
| Organist | $ TBD | Marie Seymore | Arranged with Mrs. Seymore |
| Cantor / Soloist | $TBD | Directly to cantor / soloist | Arranged with cantor / soloist |
| Other Musician | $TBD | Directly to musician | Arranged with musician |
| Altar Server | $10.00 | Directly to altar server | Wedding Day |