

April 2018

Peninsula Cluster of Catholic Parishes St. Mary Star of the Sea, Fort Monroe

Guidelines for Marriage

We rejoice with you on your coming marriage and hope the following information will be helpful as you prepare to receive the sacrament of Matrimony.

1. **Advance Notice:** At least six months' notice is required for a marriage. Please refrain from setting a precise date for your marriage until you have a confirmed date from the Pastor. Your first choice of a date and time may not always be available.
2. **Marriage Preparation:** All couples must meet with the Pastor as soon as possible. Father will inform them of all the steps that are involved in a wedding for our cluster parishes. This includes the necessary paperwork, times for the Pre-Marital sessions, planning books to help the couple in developing their Marriage Ceremony, and other questions the couple is concerned with.
3. **Premarital Program:** Couples are required to attend Pre-Marital Conferences which are held in this area. A fee is required to cover the cost of these sessions. If for any reason you are not able to attend the sessions in this area, you may with the pastor's permission, make arrangements to attend them elsewhere. You will be given the time schedule for these local sessions, when you meet with Father.
4. **Prenuptial Investigation:** The Catholic Church uses a questionnaire to be assured that each person who marries in the Church knows what is expected of them. The Pastor will explain this and will interview each person separately.
5. **Records Required:**
 - **Baptismal Certificates:** Each of you must obtain your own baptismal certificates (dated within six months of marriage). Catholics may obtain baptismal certificates from their church of baptism. A person

baptized in another Christian tradition would bring his or her baptismal certificate or letter giving the complete baptism information.

- **Decree of Nullity:** If one or both of the parties have been married before and the spouse/s is not deceased, a church annulment is required. The Marriage cannot take place nor can the date for the marriage be assigned until both parties are free to marry.
- **Ecumenical (interfaith) Marriages:** This is a marriage between a Catholic and a person baptized in another tradition or a non-baptized person. The Bishop's permission is required.
 1. In ecumenical marriages, the priest discusses the expectation of the Church that the Catholic party will seek to hand on his/her Catholic faith to any children, providing for their baptism and Christian upbringing.
 2. Church norms do not currently allow for the distribution of communion to those present who are not Catholic. The Church's Rite of Marriage provides for a beautiful and meaningful service even when the Eucharist is not included. The priest will discuss your options with you further.
 3. When the marriage takes place in the church of the Roman Catholic, the involvement of the other partner's minister or rabbi is welcomed, in celebrating the liturgy. When a minister of the other church is involved, the priest will communicate with the minister about preparations.
- **Affidavit Regarding Free Status:** You will be asked to have two people who know you well, preferably your parents or other relatives, fill out a form which states that to the best of their knowledge there is no reason why you cannot be married.
- **Non-parishioner:** If both parties are non-parishioners at the time of their request to conduct their service at SMSS, the Catholic party/parties must present a letter from their pastor stating that they are registered members of his parish and have his permission for the ceremony to be celebrated at one of the three Cluster Parishes. Under these circumstances it is preferable that the marriage couple arrange for a priest or deacon to witness the wedding ceremony.

6. Civil Requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia:

- The marriage license must be obtained from the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the county or city where the man or woman resides if either one is from the state. The marriage may then take place anywhere in the state. If both parties are from out of state, the license can be obtained from any Virginia clerk authorized to issue marriage licenses. **The officiating priest will not celebrate the marriage without the license in his possession.**
- Marriage Licenses are not granted to parties less than 18 without parental consent. With parental consent, both parties must be at least 16 years old
- Officiating priests from out-of-state must be registered with the Clerk of a Circuit Court in the Commonwealth of Virginia in order to be able to preside at a wedding here. Contact any circuit court in Virginia for further information.

7. Place of Marriage:

- According to Church law (can. 118), the normal place of Catholic marriage is inside a Catholic Church. If a couple wishes to have their wedding take place in a church of some other denomination, permission must, and can, be obtained from the bishop. The priest will help you make the arrangements. If a dispensation (permission) is granted for the wedding to take place in another house of worship, a priest need not be present. Weddings MAY NOT be celebrated in places other than houses of worship.

8. Celebration of the Sacrament:

- The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is a sacred occasion. It is here that God's love is made manifest in the commitment you make to each other. The bride and groom are the ministers of the sacrament. You prepare the liturgy with the priest and the Minister of Music. Various parts of the service (Scripture readings, prayers, etc.) are chosen by the couple. You also choose lectors for the Scripture readings.

9. Music:

- Religious music is chosen which is appropriate to the Scripture readings and the meaning of Christian marriage. Music that can be sung by all present is chosen for those parts of the liturgy which call for communal singing. All music you choose must be approved by the music minister.
- The Peninsula Cluster Parishes can provide music ministers and cantors for the ceremony. Please contact the parish office for a list of all Peninsula Cluster Parish music ministers and cantors who are available. If you decide to use one of the parish music ministers or cantors you will need to coordinate with them directly.

- If you have a family member or friend who would like to participate in the music at your wedding, please coordinate this participation with the music minister or cantor you choose to work with.

10. Marriage Rite Coordinator: Each parish will assign a Marriage Rite Coordinator for weddings at their respective church. The name and contact information of this person will be included in a confirmation letter to the couple. The Marriage Rite Coordinator is a parishioner trained to assist with questions and arrangements regarding the church, its facilities, and common questions about the ceremony and rehearsal. The coordinator directly assists the priest or deacon in conducting the rehearsal. (To be clear, however, the Marriage Rite coordinator is not a wedding planner.)

11. In General:

- The latest start time for a Saturday wedding will be 2:00 PM.
- For both aesthetic and safety reasons, we do not allow dropping or throwing flower petals, bird seed, rice, confetti, bubbles or any other items inside or outside the building. The use of a runner is also prohibited.
- The **rehearsal** is directed by the priest and/or marriage rite coordinator. The rehearsal date and time should be set when the wedding is placed on the calendar. We allow precisely one hour for rehearsal. It is very important that members of the wedding party be on time for the rehearsal. The couple should give preliminary instructions to participants in advance of the rehearsal concerning their roles in the liturgy, e.g., lectors should know what they are going to read.
- **Flowers** from a wedding should be taken by the couple to the reception. After the wedding, all supplies (ribbons on pews, flower boxes, worship bulletins, etc.) are to be removed from the church by the wedding party or someone designated by the couple. You are permitted to leave a flower arrangement for the altar if you wish.
- **Photographers and videographers** are welcome at the wedding and may take additional pictures before or after the wedding if the church schedule permits. They are expected to observe those generally accepted professional standards which assure that the religious nature of the celebration is respected. Therefore no flash will be used during the service and the photographers will station themselves at the back of the church. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to have the photographer and videographer talk to the pastor before the wedding.

- **Parking on Fort Monroe** is available behind the post theater and along the curbs. Parking is not allowed along those curbs painted yellow nor in reserved spaces, which include those in front of the rectory and in front of our next-door neighbors. Those parking in the no-parking zones or in reserved spaces are subject to a parking ticket from the police.
- **Visiting Priest:** Our pastor is glad to grant faculties to any priest or deacon to preside at a wedding here. If he is from outside the Commonwealth of Virginia, he must be authorized by the civil authorities as stated earlier.
- **Alcoholic Beverages:** Parish specific policies on the consumption of alcohol should be followed.
- **Food and Drink:** Under no circumstances are food and drink allowed in the Church.
- **Smoking:** All church facilities are non-smoking.

12. Fees:

- **Church Facility**

Registered Active Parishioner	\$100.00
Registered Cluster Parish Parishioner	\$300.00
Non-parishioner	\$2,500.00

(Make these checks payable to the individual church. One half of the Church fee is due in the Parish Office at the time the wedding date is reserved and is non-refundable).

- **Music Minister/Organist** \$200.00 (St Mary Star of the Sea)
- **Cantor** \$150.00 (St Mary Star of the Sea)

(Make these checks payable to the parish. These checks are due in the Parish Office one month prior to the wedding and are non-refundable.)

- **Marriage Rite Coordinator** Donation
- **Priest/Deacon** Donation
- **Housekeeping/Facility Cleanup** \$100.00

