
MARRIAGE INSTRUCTIONS



**Saints Peter & Paul
4309 Thomas Jefferson Parkway
Palmyra, VA 22093**

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Engaged Couple,

Congratulations to you both for responding to the Lord's call to Holy Matrimony. We as a parish rejoice and share in your joy. Commitment to marry should reflect a mature attitude. This is a time for planning, not only your wedding day, but also preparing for your married life.

This booklet is written to assist you. The priests, deacons and staff will be a valuable resource to help you.

Throughout history God has revealed the special role that marriage has in the divine plan. In the Old Testament it came to be seen as a living sign, an image of the covenant relationship between God and His people. With Jesus Christ, this revelation of the meaning, marriage reaches its culmination. Jesus raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament as a sign and reflection of His undying love and unbreakable union with His Church. Marriage is the great mystery that reveals the relationship of Christ to the Church as His Bride.

A faithful Catholic marriage is the principal way in which you as a couple grow in holiness! Know that you are prayed for by me and the people of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish. You are an important symbol of Christ's permanent, life-giving, exclusive love for all of us. I encourage you to make your time of engagement one where you strengthen your relationship with God and His Church through prayer, instruction and commitment.

May God bless you both.

Fr David

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	page 1
Who may marry in our parish Church?	page 2
Scheduling the time of celebration	page 2
Ministers for the celebration	page 3
Bride and groom	page 3
Priest or deacon.....	page 3
Music ministers.....	page 3
Lectors	page 3
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.....	page 3
Ministers of hospitality	page 4
Official Witnesses.....	page 4
Altar servers.....	page 4
Attendants	page 4
Preparing the liturgy	page 4
The environment of the worship space	page 5
Flowers	page 6
Roping.....	page 6
Candles	page 6
Aisle runner	page 7
Reception (receiving) line.....	page 7
Photography and videotaping	page 7
The ministries of the parish	page 8
In Response to Particular Questions	page 8
Do we need to hire a wedding coordinator?	page 8
Do we need a rehearsal?	page 8
What is a “unity candle?” Where should it be lit?	page 9
What music may be played at our wedding?	page 9
What paperwork must be done?.....	page 11
Baptismal certificate	page 11
Marriage license.....	page 11
Other forms and dispensations.....	page 11
What is the offering for the church? For the musicians?	page 11
Preparing a Worship folder (Program) for a Wedding?.....	page 13
Appendix A: Checklist.....	page 14
Appendix B: Affidavit – Freedom to Marry	page 15
Appendix C: Useful Phone Numbers.....	page 17
Appendix D: Fees	page 17
Notes	page 18

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AT STS. PETER AND PAUL PARISH

Introduction

Weddings are special and joyful times for the Christian community, family and friends, to celebrate the power of the Lord's love manifest among His people in the love of the bride and groom. Each couple will make a life-long commitment to the Lord and to each other before the assembled parish community, and those assembled will express their support in the marriage. The new beginning, the love, the promise and hope inherent in weddings make of their celebration a special and grace-filled time in our lives. The church welcomes its members to celebrate and solemnize their weddings in the context of our prayer as Christians. Indeed, so important is marriage in Christian life that it is a sacrament. This means that, like the other Sacraments, the Sacrament of Matrimony bestows a special grace on those who receive it.

Great care is taken to see that the prayer for this special moment is reverent, graceful, beautiful and open to the movement of the Holy Spirit among us. Our celebrations of the sacraments, marriage included, are always rooted in listening to the scriptures so that we can be nourished and strengthened by God's word. Always we celebrate the sacraments as a community. We gather our brothers and sisters in faith and ask for their prayerful support. These celebrations are incomplete unless they are filled with music, with prayerful gestures, and with the silence in which we hear the voice of God in our lives.

In this spirit, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish provides the following guidelines for celebrating weddings in the building which shelters the prayer of our community so that your celebration can clearly proclaim God's love to each other and to the community assembled to celebrate with you. We hope that they will assist you in attending to those many details that concern the celebration that will commence your marriage.

Who may marry in our parish church?

The answer to this question is governed, in part, by the Code of Canon Law of the Roman Catholic church. Generally speaking, *members of our parish* may celebrate their weddings at Sts. Peter and Paul's church. Roman Catholics who live within the bounds of the parish but who have no formal relationship with the parish community may speak to the pastor about establishing a relationship with the parish -- with an eye towards celebrating a wedding in the future. Former members of the parish need to speak both to their present pastor and to the pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish if they wish to solemnize their marriage in this church.

Both the bride and the groom must be free to marry. That is to say, they must not have been married before (unless widowed). If one has been married previously, whether Catholic or not, that person must possess a decree of annulment issued by the Catholic Church. (Sometimes people think that if you're Protestant or Jewish you can get divorced and remarried. Protestants and Jews and all human beings are called to a life-long fidelity to their marriage vows. If they divorce, they may not, according to the Catholic Church, remarry without an annulment.)

Scheduling the time of the celebration

Weddings are scheduled with respect to the couple's wishes and the availability of the church building and the presiding priest or deacon. They are usually scheduled on Saturdays, from 10:00 AM through 2:00 PM. On occasion, a wedding may be celebrated on a Friday evening or other weeknight.

There are sometimes in the church year when weddings, as well as other ritual Masses are prohibited:

- on Sundays
- on all solemnities, including the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29)
- on All Souls (November 2)
- on Ash Wednesday
- during Holy Week and Easter Week

The Pastor will immediately notify any couple whose request is in conflict with the liturgical calendar so that another date may be chosen.

The ministers for the celebration

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the *bride and groom* minister the sacrament of marriage to one another; a priest or a deacon (if Mass is not celebrated) and at least two witnesses are also required to be present.

Ordinarily the *Pastor or deacon* will preside at weddings celebrated in the parish. On occasion, a couple may have a priest friend or priest relative whom they want to invite to preside at the wedding. In this case, the couple should mention this early in the process. Once the appropriate civil and ecclesial delegation has been secured, the Pastor will communicate to the visiting clergy with regard to parish policy on the celebration of liturgy in general and of weddings in particular. Visiting clergy will be expected to observe church law and parish customs regarding the celebration of the sacraments.

Normally, the organist and other *music ministers* of Sts. Peter and Paul Church will provide the music for weddings celebrated within the parish. The parish policy on wedding music will be discussed later in this booklet. If the couple requests that a music minister other than those who serve the parish provide the music for the wedding, the Director of Music will meet with that musician to explain parish policy on liturgical music in general and wedding music in particular.

Those who serve in the parish as *lectors* are available to serve in this ministry at wedding celebrations. They may be contacted through the parish office. If the couple wishes to ask friends or family members to serve in this ministry, they will be asked to invite members of the Catholic Church who have the necessary gifts for proclaiming God's word effectively and reverently. These same persons are required to be at the wedding rehearsal so that they may practice in the worship space with the sound system.

If a wedding is to be celebrated during Mass, there may be need for the service of *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*

to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. Those who already serve in this ministry in the parish will be available to serve at weddings. If friends or family members of the bride and groom are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion here or in their home parishes, they may be invited to serve provided they attend the rehearsal so that they are familiar with the procedures used in our parish

The groom's attendants usually function as *ushers* and thus fulfill part of the *ministry of hospitality* familiar to members of the Sts. Peter and Paul parish. The bride's attendants, and indeed, the bride and groom and their families may also act as ministers of hospitality. It is a mature, gracious gesture for all members of the wedding party to greet members of the assembly as they gather to celebrate.

Official witnesses are usually the Best Man and the Maid (Matron) of Honor. As long as they understand what is happening, the witnesses may be of any gender or faith and must be of sufficient age to understand their role as witnesses.

The ministry of *altar server*, when required, may be filled from among the servers in the parish. If others are asked to serve in this ministry, they are required to be present at the wedding rehearsal. Please limit the *attendants* to no more than four bridesmaids and four groomsmen, a flower girl (optional) and a ring bearer (optional), in addition to the Official Witnesses. Ring bearers and flower girls are not ministers nor are their services required for the celebration of marriage. Couples will be asked to consider the age of children involved in these roles and whether their presence will add to or detract from the joyful solemnity of the celebration.

Preparing for the liturgy

When both the Bride and the Groom are Catholics, their marriage will be celebrated with the Mass. Normally, if either party is not a Catholic, their marriage will be celebrated as part of the Liturgy of the Word. However, even in a “mixed marriage” the couple could still choose to have a Nuptial Mass.

The couple will be provided with copies of those *scripture readings* most appropriate for use at weddings. The engaged

couple will select two or three of these passages. Non-scriptural passages are never used in place of the scriptures.

The Pastor or deacon will be able to respond to *particular requests* the couple might make regarding the celebration of their wedding. In general, and in particular, weddings celebrated at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish are celebrated according to the worship books of the Roman Catholic church: The Sacramentary, the Lectionary and the *Rite of Marriage*. In the case of weddings where ministers of other Christian denominations or other faiths are taking part, the appropriate adaptations will be made after consultation with that minister, the engaged couple, and the parish priest or deacon.

Engaged couples are urged to avail themselves of all the parish has to offer in helping to make the wedding celebration joyous. We invite your questions and comments on this policy and we pledge an honest and open hearing for any request you make. In return, we ask your openness to the ritual of the church and the customs of our parish.

The text for the *consent* (“the vows”) is taken from one of the options provided in the Rite of Marriage. The consent may take the form of statements memorized by the couple (or read from small cards), or by repeating after the priest or deacon.

In preparing the wedding liturgy, couples will be urged to incorporate elements which will encourage the *active participation* of those who gather for the celebration. This will include participation through sung and spoken prayer. Assistance will be provided by the Parish Office so that the couple may prepare an appropriate worship aid (program) to help wedding guests in their participation. (See the Page 13 for guidelines on preparing worship folders.)

The environment of the worship space

The couple should contact the Chair of the Environment Committee to consult on *flowers and other decorations* for the worship space. In addition to corsages, boutonnieres and bouquets, many couples desire to place floral arrangements in the church. Please observe the following when working with your florist:

1. “Flowers, plants and trees – genuine, of course – are particularly apt for the decoration of liturgical space, since they are of nature, always discreet in their message, never cheap or tawdry or ill-made.” (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* #102)

2. Floral “decoration should never impede the approach to or the encircling of the altar or any of the ritual movement and action, but there are places in most liturgical spaces where it is appropriate and where it can be enhancing.” (EACW, #102)

Floral arrangements may be placed at the corners of the steps to (**but never upon**) the altar. Arrangements may also be placed in front of the ambo (lectern), at the tabernacle and in front of the Holy Family. The setting up of stands and vases elsewhere in the area near the altar and ambo is not permitted.

3. “The whole space is to be considered the arena of decoration, not merely the sanctuary.” (EACW, #102). A floral arrangement may be placed on a table in the gathering space at the front doors of the church. These flowers, especially if they are fragrant, would be a gracious sign of welcome. If flowers are to be used to decorate the ends of pews, they should be used at regular intervals along the entire length of the aisles, enhancing the whole worship space and the assembly which fills it. Such arrangements should not be limited to the first several pews, serving as floral “reserved” signs. Similarly, no **roping** should impede the entrance to or exit from any pew or row of chairs.

4. We welcome any floral arrangements you may wish to leave in the church after the celebration of the wedding. Your flowers would continue to enhance parish worship during subsequent liturgical celebrations and would be a fine gift to Sts. Peter and Paul Church. We also respect your plans to bring these arrangements to your reception hall.

5. For safety reasons, the setting up of stands for **candles** in the aisle and near the altar (other than those provided by the church) is not permitted.

6. In the event there are other weddings on the same day, it would seem appropriate that the couples arrange together for flowers and share their cost.

Banners or hangings are used by way of exception and only after consultation with the priest or deacon. The use of an **aisle runner** is discouraged because “rolling out a white carpet” gives the appearance of separating the procession of ministers and attendants as an elite group apart from the assembly.

To avoid any hazard to safety and to minimize custodial work, the throwing of rice, birdseed or confetti is not allowed. In the interest of time, it is strongly suggested that **the reception (receiving) line** take place at the reception, not at the door of the church.

Photography and videotaping -The liturgy during which you celebrate your marriage is a sacred moment of rejoicing in prayer, song and gesture. While we understand your desire to record this moment, we ask you to observe the following so that the sacred joy of this day will not be marred by photo and taping equipment and those who operate it. We suggest that you hand on to your professional photographers a copy of this statement.

1. We have studied carefully the different locations from which pictures might be taken, and the resulting impact on the assembly's prayer. Please abide by the requests of the priest, deacon, or Director of Music.
2. Photographers and videographers are not permitted to roam about the church once the procession has begun. There will be no photographer or videographer in the Sanctuary.
3. Only the lighting already available in the church may be used. No additional lighting may be brought into the church.
4. After the wedding, provided there is no conflict with other scheduled liturgies, the church will be open for thirty minutes for the taking of pictures (flash allowed).

Weddings and the ministries of the parish

Overall, engaged couples should find in our parish a wealth of assistance, encouragement and talent to help in preparing for the celebration of their weddings. All parish guidelines are intended to insure a reverent and joyful celebration of marriage within the context of the church's prayer. Carrying out these policies will require patience, pastoral sensitivity, and no small amount of time. It is our conviction that none of this is wasted effort when spent on behalf of those who come to celebrate their share in God's love in the company and prayer of the church community.

In Response to Particular Questions

Do we need to hire a Wedding Coordinator?

The hiring of a Wedding Coordinator is entirely optional. There may be occasions when such a person may be a help in making arrangements and contacts with caterers, florists, etc., especially if the couple is busy and the families are at a distance. It should be noted, however, that the wedding coordinator has no jurisdiction within the liturgy and should remain in the background at both the rehearsal and the ceremony. Note: the Wedding Coordinator also will **NOT** attend the meeting of the couple with the Director of Music.

Do we need a rehearsal?

A rehearsal is usually helpful. It allows the members of the immediate wedding party to become familiar with the environment of the church building and with the public roles they will assume as part of the liturgy. The person directing the rehearsal will give a brief overview of the liturgy to help all concerned understand the prayerful nature of the celebration. To this end, the rehearsal will begin and end with a short prayer.

We ask that you make sure that all members of the wedding party be present for the rehearsal and that they arrive *on time*. Their presence will ensure that the couple, the attendants and ministers, including the lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, will feel poised and secure throughout the day of the wedding.

The form on which you have indicated your selections of readings, prayers, songs, etc., should be left at the rectory no later than one week prior to the date of the rehearsal. The rehearsal itself is not a time for discussion and decision making.

What is a “unity candle?” Where should it be lit?

The so-called "unity candle" is a commercial product of which no mention is made in the liturgical books of our church. Therefore, couples desiring to use a unity candle are encouraged to do so at their reception. We also encourage you to prepare carefully the many signs and symbols of unity already available in the rite of marriage: worship aids (programs) carefully designed to encourage participation; musical selections that invite the participation of all present; careful preparation and rehearsal of the exchange of vows and rings, the celebration of the Eucharist itself.

What music may be played at our wedding?

You must contact the Director of Music of the parish at least four months prior to your wedding (phone number). At that time, the Director will make an appointment with you to discuss the details of your wedding music and to help you select music which will reflect your love for one another in Christ and the community of faith. It is not necessary that you have chosen music before meeting with the Director; Director of Music is prepared to play a number of pieces for your approval and can assist you in making appropriate selections. Should you desire vocal or instrumental soloists please confer first with the Director of Music, who must also meet with all guest organists.

As you plan your wedding, keep in mind this quote from *Music in Catholic Worship*: “Great care should be taken, especially at marriages, that all the people are involved at the important moments of the celebration, that the same general principles of planning worship and judging music are employed as at other liturgies, and above all, that the liturgy is a prayer for all present – not a theatrical production.” (Music in Catholic Worship, N.84)

The Music Director will discuss the following areas with you:

Prelude – The Liturgy begins with the gathering of the people. Music played or sung at this time is to be considered preparatory

liturgical music that prepares the attitude of the worshipers toward gathering and prayer.

Processional – The processional may be instrumental (organ alone or with a solo instrument) or vocal. If vocal, it should be a hymn in which the whole assembly will participate. If instrumental, theater music such as “Here Comes the Bride” from the opera Lohengrin, by Wagner should not be used. There are many other choices in many styles that can be played for you.

A Gathering Song/Hymn – if one is desired and if the processional music was instrumental.

Psalm – The psalms are songs and should be sung. Singing adds to the meditative and reflective nature of this response to the Word of God. Normally, the cantor (or choir) sings the verses and the assembly sings the refrain.

Gospel Acclamation – This should be sung by the cantor and the assembly.

After the Exchange of Vows an appropriate song may be used if you wish, but the rite does not call for any music. If a song is sung it should not unduly prolong the rite.

Preparation of Gifts – This may be vocal or instrumental or silence. If musical, it should end immediately when the action at the altar is completed.

Eucharistic Acclamations, Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Amen – A setting familiar to the community and suitable to the season of the liturgical year should be used so that all may easily join in the sung prayers.

The Lord's Prayer – It may be sung, but all should be able to pray it together, whether sung or spoken. This is **NOT** the time for a solo.

Lamb of God – This litany may be sung by cantor and the assembly. The music should end with the action at the altar.

Communion Procession – A song in antiphonal style between the cantor (or choir) and the assembly which unites all in the Body of Christ should be sung.

Communion Meditation – After communion, a solo or hymn may be sung if you wish, but the rite does not call for music at this point. If there is music, it should not be so long as to be burdensome.

Recessional – It is recommended that this be instrumental.

What paperwork must be done?

Each engaged couple must meet with the priest/deacon to fill out various papers. This is part of the process of determining your freedom to marry in the church and of recording your marriage in the parish archives.

The paperwork consists mostly of the gathering of biographical information and your testimony, under oath, of your intentions to enter into a Christian marriage according to the teaching of our church.

A *baptismal certificate*, dated within six months before the wedding, is required of all Catholics. The priest or deacon will further explain this to you when you meet with him.

A *Virginia marriage license* must be obtained in any county (i.e., Fluvanna) of Virginia, before the wedding can take place. Please be sure the license is in the church office **no later than one week** before the rehearsal. We **cannot** proceed with the wedding until the license is in hand.

If one party to the marriage is not a member of our faith and/or church, **other forms and dispensations** will be required (for example, a letter of freedom), see Appendix B. Any and all questions in this regard can be answered by the priest or the deacon when you first meet with him.

What is the offering for the church and other ministers?

It is customary to make an offering to the church on the occasion of the celebration of a marriage. This offering is used to cover expenses incurred by the parish when the building is used for a

wedding (heat, A/C, lights, janitorial services, etc.) and for the ongoing work of the parish. Though a donation of \$300.00 is a suitable amount, smaller and larger amounts will be warmly and gratefully received. A stipend for the celebrant is up to the couple.

Just a note: can we as Christians justify spending a large sum of money on a single day's celebration in view of the large numbers of people who are unemployed, homeless, and hungry? A suggestion: if you spend a lot, donate a little to charity. The parish office can direct your donation to an agency that helps the needy.

Altar servers, if supplied by the church, may receive a stipend (\$25 per altar server), if you so desire. This should be given directly to them.

If the parish Organist/ Director of Music, serves as the organist for your wedding, his fee is \$150.00. This includes the interview to plan the music for your wedding, attendance at the rehearsal, practice with the cantor or other soloist, either vocal or instrumental, as well as playing for the wedding itself.

In the case of a guest organist, the Director of Music must approve all music that is played, in addition to helping the couple plan the music for the wedding. For these services he will be paid \$75.00.

The cantor, if supplied by the church, receives \$125.00 which should be paid directly to him/her.

Instrumentalists and singers (other than the above mentioned organist and cantor), will have their own fee policies. Those fees are above and beyond any mentioned in this booklet. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to consult with these musicians individually to determine their fees.

No couple will be denied music at their wedding because of the lack of ability to pay. If there are questions or problems with regard to the fees mentioned above, a satisfactory arrangement can be worked out between the couple, the music minister, and the priest or deacon to ensure that your wedding is a positive and joyful experience.

Preparing a Worship Folder (Program) for a Wedding

You may want to have a worship folder printed for your wedding. This folder will enable everyone to participate in the singing and it will help anyone unfamiliar with Catholic liturgy to understand its basic structure. Also, a worship folder is a fine remembrance of the day.

The Parish Office can prepare the worship folder for your wedding if you so desire. If you wish to prepare the folder yourself, the following guidelines should be observed.

If the wedding liturgy includes Mass, there are three major headings. If Mass is not included, there are two major headings. The layout and typeface should reflect this, perhaps by centering these major headings and using a large or decorative typeface. Do not print the texts of prayers, readings or vows. These things should be heard, not read.

To enable everyone to sing, print both the words and music of songs, refrains and acclamations. These should be large and clean. Music publishers designate how copyright information is to be printed. Work on these requirements with the Parish Office.

Your program can be made more beautiful with a few well-placed pieces of graphic art. A handsome size for a wedding folder is 8 ½ x 14, folded. Unfortunately, most worship folders which are sold commercially, use excessively sentimental photography and are expensive. The parish office can offer tastefully designed folder, if advance notice is given.

Always add a note asking the assembled guests to refrain from taking pictures during prayer.

APPENDIX A

Checklist for Those Preparing to Marry at Sts. Peter and Paul Church

- **Initial Interview with priest or deacon** (at least six months before the wedding)
- Pre-nuptial investigation
- Attend Parish Marriage Preparation Program
- Dispensation forms signed (if needed)
- **Call the Director of Music** to arrange a meeting (as soon as the date is set)
 - Couple only
 - Bring selected readings
- **Call the Chair of the Environment Committee** to arrange a meeting
- **Schedule a Rehearsal** (with the presider, for the night before the wedding)

Documents needed:

- Baptismal Certificates
- Letters of Freedom to Marry
- Annulment Documents, if needed
- Dispensation Form (if Mixed Marriage)
- Marriage License

APPENDIX B



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RICHMOND AFFIDAVIT REGARDING THE FREE STATUS OF BRIDE OR GROOM

WITNESS(ES) FOR _____ who wishes
to marry _____.

1. Your full name(s) _____.
2. What is your relationship to the person for whom you're acting as witness (e.g., parent(s), cousin, friend, etc.)?
_____.
3. How long have you known him/her? _____.
4. As far as you are aware has he/she ever been married to anyone else prior to this upcoming wedding? _____.
5. If you answered "yes" to #4, please answer the following:
 - a. How many times has he/she been married? _____.
 - b. Please indicate in the space below the name(s) of any former spouse(s); the place and date of each marriage; whether the wedding was civil or religious; how the marriage ended, i.e. by death or divorce: _____.
6. As far as you know, does the person for whom you're acting as witness intend to marry until death? _____.
7. Are you aware of any reason why these two people should not marry? _____ If you answered "yes", please explain: _____.

OATH: I/We attest the information I/we have provided is the truth.

_____ (signature of Witness #1)

_____ (signature of Witness #2)

[For diocesan chancery only]

Visum est:

Cancellarius

Date/place

_____ (signature of priest, delegate or notary public)

_____ (date)

_____ (Parish)

_____ (City & State)

(Parish seal or Notary's seal)

RETURN THIS FORM TO: _____

(Will be Provided)

(Page intentionally left blank)

APPENDIX C

Useful Phone Numbers

Parish Office:.....434-589-5201
Pastor: Fr. David Ssentamu434-589-5201
Director of Music: Sid D'Amico.....434-589-6973
Chair Environment Committee: Mary Ann Mason434-589-6141

APPENDIX D

Fees

Contribution to Sts. Peter and Paul..... \$300.00
Contribution to celebrant..... Free will
Altar Server \$25.00 each

Musicians

Director of Music/Organist..... \$150.00
Cantor (supplied by Sts. Peter and Paul) \$125.00

NOTES

NOTES

