

Planning Your Wedding At Holy Trinity Church

Congratulations! The Staff of Holy Trinity wishes to help you make the best preparations for your marriage. In order for your wedding day to be fully integrated into the rich traditions of the Catholic Church, we ask you to consider the following *before* you make your definite plans. Please keep this brochure with your wedding papers so you can refer to it in the future. Please share this information with your family, florist, photographer and others who may need it.

Preliminary Considerations

Weddings at Holy Trinity Church are primarily for *active, participating parishioners*. If you are not currently an active and participating member because you have just moved to the area or established residency here, you should register in the parish and attend Mass each week. Active participation is expected during the marriage preparation period and after the wedding. Every Catholic has his or her own parish by virtue of residence, and the proper minister of the Sacrament of Marriage is the pastor of the bride, and if the bride is not a Catholic, then the pastor of the groom. Individuals who are not members of this parish may request having their marriage here, but priority is given first to parishioners. A non-member fee is required at the time the church is booked (see fees).

The Preparation Period

Canon Law requires at least four (4) months notice of a proposed marriage. The Diocese of Richmond has a customary six (6) months notice as our norm. No wedding may be scheduled if there was a previous marriage until an annulment is granted (see "Affidavits of Freedom," below). During that time you will need to meet with the pastor regularly.

Requirements for Marriage Preparation at Holy Trinity fulfill the requirements of the Diocese of Richmond marriage preparation. The requirements are as follows:

- _____ Meeting with the Pastor prior to setting a wedding date.
- _____ Dave Ramsey's *Financial Peace* program or another Christian finances seminar
- _____ Pre Nuptial Investigation
- _____ FOCCUS Inventory and Review
- _____ Natural Family Planning Instruction
- _____ Catholic Charities Pre-Cana Course OR Engaged Encounter OR God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage OR Private Instruction*

* The pastor will meet with the couple to determine the best way to satisfy this particular requirement. The pastor will also work with the couple to determine how best to satisfy the requirements. They should not be burdensome on the couple and the pastor will work with you to satisfy their intended goals.

Active Duty Military

Holy Trinity recognizes the unique needs and situation for those members of our parish who are actively serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. For those underway or deployed, or those facing an upcoming deployment, we are more than flexible in arrangement for meetings and marriage formation. We will also be flexible with securing dates and times for meetings and for the wedding. By diocesan policy, we cannot change the mandatory 6 month preparation period, but we may be able to satisfy the requirements for preparation in other ways. Often we can

coordinate with a chaplain of the Archdiocese for Military Services for preparation. Speak with the pastor regarding this as soon as possible. It *is* expected that our active duty, deployed military do their best to attend Holy Mass whenever it is available to them.

The colors (including the US flag and the flag of the Vatican) may be posted for a wedding liturgy at the request of the couple. Grooms and wedding party active in military service are invited to wear dress uniform(s). The Arch of Swords (Sabers) is welcomed on the steps of the Church, and the honor guard may carry their sword/saber on their person during the ceremony.

Plans for the Day

Plans for the wedding must be made directly between the couple and the Priest; we will make no arrangements and schedule no times through third parties, even with members of the couple's families. At the initial meeting mentioned above, the following things will take place:

1. **Pre-nuptial Investigation:** The priest will interview each party separately in completing this brief questionnaire;
2. **Baptismal Certificate:** Each Catholic party needs to bring a copy of his and/or her baptismal certificate **issued within the last six months.** Catholic parishes are used to receiving this request; inform the parish that this certificate is "needed for a wedding, so please **include all notations.**" Other Christians are asked to bring a copy of his or her baptismal record or a letter from the appropriate church indicating the place and date of baptism;
3. **Affidavits of Freedom to Marry:** The priest will furnish the parties each with two forms which is administered by the person's pastor. These are to be completed and returned to the Parish by two people who have known you all your lives, preferably your parents. The form is an attestation that you have not been previously married. A wedding date may not be set if a couple / individual has a pending annulment. There is no guarantee that an affirmative decision will be given by a diocesan tribunal, so no date may be set. There are no exceptions to this rule;
4. **Dates & Times:** At the meeting, the priest will check the Parish and his personal calendar regarding the availability of dates and times for the rehearsal and liturgy. Rehearsals generally take place the evening before the wedding at 4:30, 5:00, 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. (***be sure to allow for Friday afternoon & evening traffic when planning the rehearsal; the tunnel backups affect this area.***) Weddings are on Friday evenings anytime, or on Saturdays between 10:00am and 2:00pm. *Sunday weddings will not be held at Holy Trinity Church.* Occasionally, a couple may prefer to be married at the Sunday Mass with the community. This is allowed in some circumstances. In the event that two weddings will occur on the same day, the time will be set on a "first come, first served" basis.
5. **Wedding With or Without Holy Mass?** When two Catholics are married, the wedding always takes place within the context of Holy Mass. When a Catholic marries a member of another Christian community, a Wedding Service takes place without the celebration of the Eucharist.
6. **Music.** The choice of music should be made in consultation with our Pastoral Musician. Only Church music is used during the Rite of Marriage. The Pastoral Musician will assist you with appropriate selections. You are asked to speak to the Pastoral Musician as soon as possible after the initial meeting so that the calendar can be marked. You will also be informed of appropriate fees. (**In no case can prerecorded or secular music be used.**);

7. **Readings:** You will be given a book with the options available for the readings to be done at the wedding. It is customary to choose a reading from the Old Testament, the New Testament and one of the Gospels. You will need to choose two readers; the priest or deacon will read the Gospel. Please inform the priest of your choice in readings at least two weeks prior to the wedding.
8. **Visiting Clergy:** If you would like a family priest or deacon to preside or assist at the Rite of Marriage, you will need to discuss this immediately with the pastor. Typically this is not a problem, but it needs to be arranged as far in advance as possible. The priest will need to comply with diocesan guidelines for visiting clergy.
9. **Non-Catholic Clergy:** If one of the party is a non-Catholic Christian, his or her clergy may be involved in the service. The clergyman would be invited to sit “in choir” and assist with prayers/readings as allowed by the regulations of the Roman Catholic Church.

Other Matters

1. **Fees:** Fees for the use of the church vary. Please see the fee schedule to determine the rates. A minimum deposit of ½ of the church fee is due when the church is booked. Fees for the organist and cantor (which should be discussed at your initial meeting) should be presented to the musician directly, at least one week prior to the wedding. A gratuity for the **Wedding Coordinator and Server(s)** is expected, and it is also customary to give an offering to the priest.
2. **Civil License:** The license to marry may be obtained at any courthouse in Virginia no more than sixty days before the wedding. *No wedding will take place without this license;* therefore, please **bring the license to the office at least one week prior to the wedding;**
3. **Decorations:** Floral decorations are welcome within the following limits: (a) one large arrangement no taller than the altar may be placed on the floor in front of the altar; (b) two smaller arrangements may be placed in front of the ambo and the cantor's stand. No decorations of any kind can be placed on the altar itself or in such a way as to block the celebrant's chair or the pulpit; **Bows**, if affixed to the pews, should be attached with some sort of hanger that will leave no mark nor remove the finish; **Runners** are not typically used. **Flower Petals** are not typically used, but may be if they are silk (fresh petals stain the carpet and cement). A member of the wedding party will be responsible to pick up every petal after the wedding.
4. **Cleanup:** You must designate someone in advance to clean up after the wedding liturgy. This includes disposal of clothes hangers, flower boxes, ribbons, wrappings, programs, etc.
5. **Printed Programs** are not furnished by the parish. If you wish to have a printed program you must prepare it and reproduce it yourself;
6. **Unity Candle** is not part of the Rite of Marriage and is not used at Holy Trinity.
7. **Candelabra** or any other sort of candles (not already on the altar) are not to be used;
8. **Photographs & Video Recordings:**
 - The photographer must meet with the priest or Wedding Coordinator before the liturgy starts. The photographer and assistants must obey the directions of the church staff and pastor at all times.
 - The photographer should be unobtrusive as possible. At no time should the photographer stand in anyone's view and prevent anyone from participating fully in the service. The photographer should be familiar with Catholic ritual

and not move during moments of scripture reading, liturgical silence, singing, homily, etc.

- The photographer or videographer will be expected to kneel when the congregation kneels in reverence and to take no photos during the consecration of the Holy Eucharist.
- NO flash photography is allowed during the wedding. Posed pictures are allowed either before or after the service.
- The photographer must not enter the sanctuary at any time during the service.
- If a video camera is to be used, it must be set in a stationary location, well out of the way of the liturgical flow of the service.
- The position of church furnishings is to be respected.
- During all photography, a dignified atmosphere must be maintained. “Gag” shots must be reserved for outside the church.
- Information of these regulations to the photographer is the responsibility of the bride and/or groom. Photographers not adhering to any or all will be asked to leave. If the photographer is disruptive, he may be asked to leave the church during the ceremony.

9. **Rice, Birdseed or Confetti** must be cleaned up if used.

10. **Validations or “Blessings”**: Parties who have been civilly married to one another and are otherwise free to marry in the Church will need to meet with the priest. All other rules regarding weddings at Holy Trinity Church apply as above except where it is otherwise obvious. Usually, such “blessings” or convalidations occur in a much less public liturgy than is usual for weddings. This should be borne in mind when planning;

11. **Permissions & Dispensations**: The priest will make all the necessary arrangements for the requisite permissions and dispensations should the Catholic party be marrying someone who is not Catholic. Additionally, if the couple wishes to be married before the non-Catholic party's minister, rabbi, or by a civil magistrate, the priest will prepare the appeal for this dispensation. Permission to marry anywhere other than a church building is not readily granted by bishops; a statement from the parties regarding the extenuating circumstance in question must be sent to the bishop at the time the request is made.