

*St. John the Apostle
Catholic Church*



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Wedding Information & Policy Booklet

Saint John the Apostle Catholic Church

We are happy to extend our congratulations to you on your upcoming marriage. It is our hope that your marriage will bring you blessings throughout your lives. The staff at St. John's is pleased to share in the preparations for your wedding and for your married life.

This booklet is presented to you in order to guide you through the process of marriage preparation required by the Catholic Church. Wedding arrangements are certainly necessary and important but we hope that you will not lose sight of the fact that Marriage is a Sacrament - - a sacred sign of your love for each other in Christ. Christ abundantly blesses your love. He enriches and strengthens you to undertake the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity.

Please accept our prayers and sincere best wishes for a happy wedding and a joyous married life.



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MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The Church's central concern is that the engaged couple be prepared for married life. The Catholic Church believes its pastoral responsibility is to assist couples to know the Catholic understanding of marriage and be ready to embrace a marriage which is permanent, faithful and open to children. At no point does the Church or priest preparing the couple presume to decide whether a couple should marry or not. The Church's hope in this process is that these discussions will lead the couple to a more fruitful and joyous relationship as husband and wife.

Like most Catholic parishes, St. John's requests that a couple allow a minimum of six to nine months for the preparation process. This process includes meetings with the priest or deacon, a premarital program and the collection of certain documents for a marriage file. It is essential that the couple be together during this process. If the bride and groom do not live in the same area, this may take some coordination.

Generally, the preparation process takes place where the Catholic party or one of the Catholic parties resides and practices the faith. If the wedding is to take place at a parish different from the one where the couple is being prepared, the priest preparing the couple will need to be told so that the process can be coordinated with the parish where the wedding will be taking place. In such cases ***more than six months may be required*** so that the process can not only be completed, but the marriage file received and reviewed by the parish where the wedding will be celebrated. Where there are different requirements of this process, the couple is always held to the requirements for the parish where the preparation takes place.

If either party has been married before, even if not in the Catholic Church, please inform the priest/deacon conducting the preparation as early as possible in the process. It is the responsibility of the couple to provide certain documents to the parish preparing them during the preparation process.

STEPS TO THE ALTAR

Diocese of Richmond Guidelines for Marriage Preparation

9 to 12 Months Prior to Your Proposed Wedding Date

Step One: Couple Submits a Wedding Application and Has Initial Meeting with Priest or Deacon.

The marriage preparation process begins with your first call to the parish inquiring about being married in the Church. *Call as soon as you get engaged! At least one party must be a registered parishioner for six months prior to requesting a wedding date.*

The parish office manager will provide you with a wedding application and facilitate arrangements for you to meet with the priest or a deacon of the parish as soon as possible. ***A date for your wedding may not be entered into the parish calendar until your application is received and related documents are signed and submitted to the office manager.***

At the time of your first meeting with the priest or deacon, he will explain the marriage preparation process and provide information about the available marriage preparation programs you are required to attend. You have the option of selecting the program best suited to your needs. The priest or deacon will begin to fill out the necessary canonical forms and advise you as to what Church and civil documents are needed.

Helpful hint: bring your calendar(s).

Regarding your sacramental records that will be required for your file:

You cannot use your original baptismal certificate. You may obtain a recently dated certificate by contacting the church of your baptism. When asking for the certificate, be certain to tell them you are getting married and need all “notations” included. These notations are the subsequent sacraments that the Catholic party has received since baptism.

A baptism certificate for the party who was baptized in another denomination is also requested. If no certificate is available, please let the priest or deacon know. These documents should be given to the priest or deacon by your second meeting.

Step Two: Complete a Marriage Prepare/Enrich Couple Assessment (Inventory), which identifies a couple's strength and growth areas. The Inventory assesses various aspects of the relationship, including but not limited to communication, conflict resolution, roles, sexuality, finances, and spiritual beliefs.

A nominal fee is payable by credit card at the time of on-line registration for Prepare/Enrich.

Discuss with the priest or deacon when the *Inventory* will be administered and how the post-assessment discussion/facilitation process will take place. It is recommended that *Prepare/Enrich* be taken **prior** to attending a marriage preparation program.

Step Three: Couple Registers and Attends an Approved Pre-Marriage Educational Program

Working with your priest or deacon, identify the marriage preparation program that best fits your needs. It is important to schedule and complete your marriage preparation program early in the process. There are two options approved by the Richmond Diocese: *Unveiled* (PreCana) or Catholic Engaged Encounter.

Step Four: Couple Completes Natural Family Planning (NFP) Instruction

NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife.

Classes with certified NFP instructors are held in our parish. Contact Chris and Stephanie Finocchio at 757-430-1493 or finoc@msn.com.

When classes are not currently available, it is recommended that you attend a comprehensive introductory session. NFP is introduced in the Pre-Marriage Educational Program offered through Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia.

Step Five: Couple Has Meeting with Priest or Deacon

This meeting is to discuss your marriage preparation progress as well as any issues that have surfaced or remain from your marriage preparation activities. This is also a time to begin discussing and planning the celebration of your wedding liturgy.

Step Six: Catholic Couples are Encouraged to Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation

It is important to make time for personal prayer and reflection throughout this preparation time. The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are valuable sources of grace and healing. Individuals preparing for Catholic marriages are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Step Seven: Couple Has Final Meeting with Priest or Deacon

Within the two months before your wedding date, meet with your priest or deacon. This meeting is to finalize the plans for your wedding liturgy.

Before the wedding, (generally at the church rehearsal) the couple must provide a **Marriage License** issued by the state *in which the wedding is taking place*. In Virginia this can be obtained at the local courthouse and is valid for use within 60 days.

PREPARATION FOR “OUT OF PARISH” WEDDINGS

When a couple lives outside of the parish where they wish the wedding to occur, the preparation process should be initiated in the parish where the Catholic party or one of the Catholic parties resides. **All marriage preparation will be done through the parish where the couple resides, not through St. John’s.** The couple should also provide their own priest or deacon to officiate their Mass or ceremony. The couple must also leave time so that the marriage file can be prepared in time for the church where the wedding will take place to receive and review it. If you are being prepared elsewhere to be married at St. John’s, please have the priest overseeing the preparation contact the pastor of St. John’s to coordinate this process. ***St. John’s cannot put a date on our books until we have permission from the preparing priest.***

CHURCH & CEREMONY PREPARATION

PLACE, DATE & CELEBRANT OF YOUR WEDDING

Marriage is a Sacrament; therefore, the normal place for a Catholic wedding to be celebrated is ***in a Catholic Church***. If the bride and groom are both Catholic, the wedding can be at the parish church of either party. If only one member of the couple is Catholic, the marriage is usually at the parish of the Catholic party. A couple can,

for good reason, request that their wedding be at another Catholic parish. In certain circumstances, the wedding may take place in a Protestant church, in which case the minister presides at the service and the priest witnesses it. The Diocesan Marriage Tribunal must approve this in advance, in writing.

Any couple can call to see if St. John's church is available for a certain date. Ordinarily, the expectation is that Catholic parties have been **actively practicing the faith** at St. John's for at least six months prior to requesting a wedding date.



For non-parishioners, we can only reserve the date upon receipt of a 50% deposit of the \$2,000 non-refundable facility use fee.

Be aware that it is possible another wedding may be scheduled the same day your wedding is planned. The pastor at St. John's will make the decisions about scheduling weddings. There will always be sufficient time for all events to occur.

Saturday weddings may be scheduled at 11:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m. on a first-come basis. Other times may be negotiated depending on whether there are other weddings and events on this date.

Wedding rehearsals will usually be scheduled the evening before the wedding takes place, based on the parish schedule for the church.

Why do Catholic weddings need to take place in a church?

Technically, there is a clause in Church law that could allow for weddings to take place outside of a Catholic church, in a suitable space under special circumstances, but it requires the rare permission of the bishop. Prior to the bishop's permission, a couple should first obtain consent from the pastor within whose jurisdiction they wish to be married. But the meaning of marriage goes very, very deep, and the Church has a vested interest in protecting that meaning. As Catholics, we don't see a wedding as an event that needs a pleasing backdrop.

Marriage is a sacrament, both an occasion of joyful promise and symbolic solemnity. It is a spiritual event. The loving bond of marriage symbolizes the mystical union between Christ and his Church. The man and woman profess lifelong vows of fidelity, and they receive supernatural grace from God to keep their promises.

Receiving the sacrament of Marriage in a church has broader symbolic meaning for the couple as well. Marriage isn't simply two people in isolation from the world around them. Marriage is the joining of families and the beginning of a new, holy mission in the life of the couple. Weddings are sacred occasions, and it's fitting that they occur in a sacred space, AKA a Catholic church.

Visiting Catholic Clergy: When a couple requests that a visiting Catholic priest or deacon preside at their wedding at St. John's, it is important that the parish be notified so arrangements can be coordinated. Requirements for weddings outlined in this booklet must be observed. **Be aware that Virginia requires all clergy officiating at weddings be authorized to do so by the state. If the clergy you choose lives outside of Virginia, he may need to file a request with the state before being able to officiate at your wedding. If the priest or deacon is not from the Diocese of Richmond, he must provide the pastor with his Faculties in order for the pastor to delegate authority to witness the marriage.**

Non-Catholic Clergy: When one party of the couple being married is of another faith or denomination, their minister may participate in the ceremony with the priest or deacon. There are some restrictions as to how that minister can participate in the ceremony. You may discuss any questions or concerns with the priest or deacon in the preparation process. Should there be special reasons to be married in a Church of another denomination, a dispensation to do so is required for the Catholic party.

NUPTIAL MASS OR CEREMONY



The priest or deacon will gladly assist you in planning your wedding liturgy. Normally this process should take place in the parish where the wedding will occur. Options are permitted in the Marriage Rite which enable the bride and groom to make their wedding personally meaningful. The couple is invited to choose readings and write the general intercessions for the wedding that will make the ceremony more meaningful to them and the gathered community. A sourcebook to assist you will be provided during this preparation process.

If both the bride and groom are practicing Catholics, the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony must take place within a Nuptial

Mass. An interfaith wedding can be celebrated at either a full Nuptial Mass **or** a Nuptial Ceremony, which does not include communion, but is basically the Liturgy of Word and exchanging of vows.

LECTORS

Both the Nuptial Mass and the Wedding Ceremony include readings from Scripture and intercessory prayers. Up to three people should be chosen by the couple to proclaim the readings and Intercessions. Please choose persons who are Christian, good public readers, and who practice their faith. It is most helpful if the readers are familiar with scripture and the Catholic Mass.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

When there is a wedding Mass, the couple can choose Extraordinary Ministers trained in the Catholic Church to serve at the Mass. These can also be assigned by the priest. **If the ministers are from a Catholic church other than SJA, they must have a letter from their pastor stating that they are commissioned in the distribution of Holy Communion.**

ALTAR SERVER

An altar server is required only for Nuptial Masses, not ceremonies, and will be provided by the church. The fee for the altar server is covered by the facility use fee.



WEDDING MUSIC

Director of Music
Amy Reineberg
areineberg@sjavb.org
757-426-2180



Music is essential to the Catholic Rite of Marriage. It is important that any music selected supports the Rite and conveys the sacred nature of marriage. Sacred music is most appropriate during the Rite. Secular music, for the most part, is better suited for the other celebrations that surround the wedding (i.e. the reception).

Hymns and service music are an integral part of a Church wedding. It is important that any musician at a Catholic wedding be familiar with the Catholic Rite.

Please contact the Director of Music at least **six weeks** before the wedding. The Director is here to assist you in planning your nuptial music and to perform the selected music at your ceremony. The parish Director of Music must approve all wedding music and will provide a cantor/soloist for you. Please contact the Director to schedule a planning meeting. **The music fee of \$250.00 is payable directly to SJA Church** and it is due no later than the evening of your rehearsal. The music fee is separate and distinct from the facility fee and does not include a payment for our cantor.

Outside Cantors & Additional Musicians:

If you wish to bring in an outside cantor of your choice, he/she must be vetted by the pastor and music director prior to your contracting with them. No outside cantors or vocalists may perform without our permission. Outside cantors are paid directly by whomever engages them.

WEDDING PROCESSION

The Church teaches that the bride and groom are the proper ministers of the Sacrament of Matrimony. As such both parties should participate in the opening procession.

PUNCTUALITY

It is very important that all rehearsals and weddings start **promptly**. Subsequent services can be seriously affected by a late beginning of a previous rehearsal or wedding. If for a good reason it is necessary to start late, the ceremony may have to be shortened. **Please ensure every effort to be on time by arriving at least 1/2 hour before the Mass or Ceremony time.**

WEDDING PROGRAMS

The parish provides a program *template* for either a ceremony or Nuptial Mass; however, it is your responsibility to print and distribute them.

LENGTH OF REHEARSAL & WEDDING

As you plan your rehearsal dinner and reception party, use the following timetable for the purpose of coordinating these events.

Rehearsal –	30 minutes
Wedding Ceremony without Mass –	30 minutes
Nuptial Mass –	45 minutes

Be sure to allow sufficient “drive time” to your rehearsal dinner or reception party from the church. Keep beach traffic in mind during the summer months.

OTHER REGULATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

UNITY CANDLES

The display and/or lighting of a unity candle is not permitted before, during, or after the Mass or Ceremony.

RICE, BIRDSEED, ETC.

Due to insurance regulations and maintenance concerns, we must prohibit the dispersion of rice, birdseed, rose petals, confetti or any other substance in the church or on church grounds. The bride and groom will be held personally responsible to see that this regulation is observed. There is to be no use of runners. Bubbles used out of doors are acceptable.

WEDDING INVITATIONS

When preparing and ordering your wedding invitations, please note that the church address is 1968 Sandbridge Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456.

There have been times when, due to situations beyond our control, we have had to alter arrangements concerning the wedding. Although this happens rarely, we request you do not print invitations before beginning the preparation process with the priest or deacon.

USE OF ALCOHOL OR DRUGS

Alcohol and drugs are not permitted on church property at any time, either before or after the Nuptial Mass/Ceremony. Anyone suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be asked to leave the church and church grounds. If the bride or groom is suspected of being under the influence of these substances the rehearsal or wedding will not take place.

OUTSIDE WEDDING PLANNERS

Wedding planners are not to overstep their boundaries and are expected to work with our parish wedding coordinator. All decisions regarding the ceremony are up to the priest or deacon.

DRESSING AT CHURCH

Dressing at the church is not permitted. Wedding party members must arrive already dressed.

RECEIVING LINE

Due to time constraints, receiving lines are not permitted in the church or commons after the Mass or ceremony. Receiving lines should be held at the reception venue.

FLOWERS & DECORATIONS

The size of our sanctuary tends to overpower most flower arrangements; however, a basket or arrangement placed in front of the ambo and/or on either side of the altar is permissible. The view of the Pascal Lamb on the Altar of Repose may not be blocked.

Modest bows may be used to reserve the bridal party and immediate family pews. Please see the wedding coordinator for the proper hooks. No organic pew decorations are permitted. Tape or other adhesives are not permitted.



The church will be open for flower deliveries and decorations one hour prior to the scheduled wedding. You must advise your florist of this time constraint.

All decisions about flowers and photography in the church are at the sole discretion of the celebrant of the wedding. He alone will make all decisions, and those decisions are final.

Candelabras are not permitted in the Sanctuary.

Any items brought to the church must be removed from the church immediately after the celebration. The church will not be held responsible for any items left behind. You are expected to clean up the activity rooms and take any boxes or other refuse with you.



PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

Any photographer or videographer hired by the couple should be aware of the sacred nature of the marriage ceremony and should conduct him/herself in such a manner as not to be a distraction.

Photographs can be taken during the ceremony as long as there is **no flash** and the photographer stays outside the perimeter of the congregation.

Handheld video cameras can be used from the pews or a discrete location. Larger cameras, especially those mounted to a tripod, should be behind or to the side of the congregation and should not impede the progress of the bridal party.

Depending on the timing of the wedding and scheduling of the church, time for photographs taken before or after the ceremony *may be limited*. Please discuss this with the wedding coordinator.

Please advise your photographer to check in with the wedding coordinator before your wedding and to discuss any special requests then.

MILITARY RITES

Diocesan regulations prohibit swords or any other weapons, even if only ceremonial, being worn or used in the church. Under certain circumstances, ceremonial swords may be worn or used on church grounds outside the church.

CHURCH FEES

For Active SJA Parishioners: \$600.00

This fee is due in full one month prior to the wedding. Weekly Mass contributions, using your envelopes or electronic transfers, will be deducted from this fee from the time the wedding application is approved until one month before the wedding date. It is possible to

defray the entire fee by making contributions to the Operating through regular Mass attendance using parish envelopes.

For Non-Parishioners: \$2,000.00

Payment of the facility-use deposit (\$1,000.00) for those outside of the parish must be received when the date is reserved. Balance of the fee is due 30 days before the wedding date. It is not refundable.

The fee for parishioners and non-parishioners includes \$25 for an altar server for a nuptial Mass and a fee for a church-appointed Wedding Coordinator who will attend both the rehearsal and the wedding to assist and act as a liaison between the couple and the priest/deacon. Additionally, the fee provides for the priest, and utilities, cleaning, and other preparation costs for the rehearsal and wedding. These can be negotiated if they present a great hardship to any couple.

Any additional donation to the priest or parish is at your discretion.

Church Location

St. John the Apostle Catholic Church
1968 Sandbridge Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

Office Information

Tel. 757-426-2180
Email: parish@sjavb.org

Office Hours:

Monday through Thursday	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Friday	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm.

The office is closed on weekends.

