



**Guide to Planning a Wedding  
at  
Saint Luke Catholic Church  
McLean, Virginia**

Revised September 2022

## **Your Wedding**

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage! Marriage is a sacrament, between two baptized persons, and an indissoluble union. During the six-month preparation period you will work with a clergy member who will help the engaged couple to enter whole-heartedly into this sacrament through a free choice of the will. While the couple will be working on the preparations for the day of the wedding, the clergy member assists the couple in entering into an intimate union of life and love for the lifetime of the couple.

At least the bride or the groom, or their parents must be registered and active members of Saint Luke Parish for three months prior to begin marriage preparation. A church is not merely a building for ceremonies; rather, a church is a faith community committed to our Savior Jesus Christ.

## **Marriage Preparation Procedure and Timeline**

Step 1: Fill out the Marriage Preparation Request Form. Please mention if you are planning to complete marriage preparation at Saint Luke and if our priest will preside at the ceremony. If you would like a visiting priest to celebrate the wedding please discuss the protocol with our pastor. The Arlington Diocese stipulates you must allow 6 months for marriage preparation.

Step 2: Your first meeting will take place during normal business hours, Monday – Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.. Your wedding date will not be finalized until you meet with the priest. At this meeting bride and groom will complete the Prenuptial Investigation, discern with the priest the correct Rite of Marriage for your ceremony and the priest will discuss additional requirements such as baptismal certificates, Pre-Cana instruction, the FOCCUS profile and Dispensation requests, if applicable.

Step 3: Gather required documents (See Appendix A for more details):

- Newly issued baptismal certificates (copies will not suffice)
- Affidavits of Free Status (Two for the Bride and Two for the Groom)
- If one of the parties is not Catholic, review the Promised of Mixed Marriage and apply for a dispensation with the clergy member.

Step 4: Register for Natural Family Planning (NFP) Classes and Pre-Cana classes  
<http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/familylife/marriage.aspx>

Step 5: Complete the FOCCUS Profile online – your clergy member will give you registration instructions.

Step 6: Once the FOCCUS Profile is completed, you have registered for the classes and conference, and you have your paperwork in hand, then schedule your second meeting with the clergy member.

Step 7: Contact the Music Director and introduce yourself (See Appendix B for Contact Information).

Step 8: Before the third meeting with the clergy member, both the NFP classes and the Engaged Encounter should be completed. Once the couple has completed both, contact the clergy member to schedule the third meeting.

Step 9: During your final meeting with the priest, you will discuss the day of the ceremony to include notes on guests, rehearsals, music, and the liturgy.

Step 10: Obtain a Civil Marriage License – this should be in hand for your final meeting with the clergy member and can be obtained up to sixty days prior to the ceremony.

## **Consolidated Timeline**

6 months prior:

- Arrange the first meeting with the clergy member
- Submit requested date to clergy member, complete the Prenuptial Investigation

After first Meeting:

- Gather required documents
- Register for NFP classes
- Register for Pre-Cana Conference
- Complete FOCCUS Profile
- Contact the Director of Music & Liturgy

60 days prior: Obtain a Civil Marriage License

## **Marriage Preparation Notes**

\*The couple will meet at least four times with the clergy member to discuss the future marriage union. These sessions will cover not only the teachings of the Church and the theology of marriage, but also address issues of a more practical nature, like communication and finance.

\*Marriage preparation meetings take place during normal business hours, Monday – Friday, 9:30AM – 4:00PM. The couple will need to coordinate their work or school obligations in order to attend the meetings. The clergy member will be willing to provide a letter if necessary.

\*Couples who may live outside the parish may be prepared at one of their own home parishes. Paperwork should be forwarded to the Pastor a month prior to the wedding. Priests or deacons preparing couples outside the Arlington Diocese should forward all the paperwork through their chancery so that it will be received at St. Luke parish. A letter from the preparing priest is required to secure a date for the marriage at Saint Luke Church.

\*Couples who are cohabiting will be asked to separate prior to marriage.

\*For couples married civilly and seeking a validation, or for couples not married, but still living in the same domicile, the Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass is conducted.

\*For couples already married civilly, our priests are happy to discuss Marriage Convalidation. A marriage convalidation is a “simple ceremony” – since the couple is already married.

## The Wedding Ceremony

**The Ceremony:** At your first meeting, your clergy member will help you discern the correct Rite of Marriage for your union:

Marriage During Mass – this Rite is used for the union between two baptized and practicing Catholics, where the marriage is a sacramental bond. Both the bride and groom will receive communion during Mass, as well as the Catholic faithful in attendance.

Marriage Outside of Mass – this Rite is normally used when the union takes place between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic. The marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament. This is otherwise known as a Simple Ceremony.

Marriage Between a Catholic and a Non-Baptized Person – this Rite is used when one of the spouses is not baptized. This non-sacramental marriage recognizes the indissolubility of the marriage union between the contracting parties.

**Visiting Clergy:** Occasionally, the couple to be married may have a relative or a friend who is a priest or deacon. In order for a visiting clergy member to witness marriage vows at Saint Luke:

-they must be bonded by the Commonwealth of Virginia. This should be completed well ahead of the ceremony to allow time for paperwork with the Clerk of the Court.

-they must supply the pastor of Saint Luke with a letter of good standing from his diocese in order to receive delegation to witness the marriage.

-they must abide by the standard practices of witnessing a marriage at Saint Luke and in accordance with the rubrics of the Roman Missal and the Rite of Marriage.

-if the visiting clergy is a priest of the Diocese of Arlington only the pastor's permission is required for him to celebrate the marriage.

**Lectors:** Couples may have individuals serve as lectors. At a Marriage During Mass, the lectors must be practicing Catholics who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. They should be comfortable with public speaking.

**Ring-Bearers:** If a child ring-bearer is used during the ceremony, the rings held by the child will be only for show. The actual rings for the ceremony will be held by the best man or another adult. This will prevent droppage or loss of the rings.

**The Rehearsal:** A rehearsal time, usually the day before the wedding will be arranged with the priest.

**Wedding Times:** Weddings are scheduled between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays and weekday arrangements are possible depending upon the overall parish schedule.

Once ceremony date is approved by the Pastor and Marriage Preparation underway, details for the Rehearsal and day of Ceremony will be coordinated with the priest and the Director of Liturgy and Music.

**Invitations:** When sending invitations to the wedding, the address of the Church is 7001 Georgetown Pike, McLean, VA 22101.

**Music:** All music, instrumental and vocal, must be approved by the celebrant and must comply with the regulations of the Diocese of Arlington. Only sacred music should be selected; no secular music is permitted.

Director of Music Contact Information

Michael Cedrone

703.356.0670

mcedrone@saintlukemclean.org

Music selections for the wedding ceremony or Mass will be coordinated our Director of Music, who will in turn coordinate with additional instrumentalists and vocalists as appropriate. Music selections are subject to approval by the clergy and should be finalized no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled event. The Director of Music will discuss all fees with you for altar servers, organist, soloist, and additional instrumentation, if requested.

Musicians will provide prelude music beginning 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the ceremony, and will continue until the start of the selected processions. Postlude music will be provided for 5 minutes following the recession of the wedding party, enough to cover the exit of the guests.

**Programs:** If the couple chooses to produce a program or liturgical aid for the ceremony, the Director of Music will work with them to produce the program. For a Nuptial Mass, the Director of Music will provide the couple with the diocesan approved text concerning the reception of holy communion.

**Dressing:** The couple and wedding party are asked to be properly attired upon arrival at the Church. While the bride may wait in a small room off the vestibule before the ceremony, there is no dressing room at the Church.

**Note:** All wedding attire must reflect the virtue of modesty and be appropriate to the respect due to God's house. Please be sure that the bride's and bridesmaids' dresses reflect "that sense of modesty which should be the most beautiful adornment of the Christian woman." (Pope Benedict XV).

**Flowers and Decorations:** Flower arrangements, one for either side of the altar should be provided. The arrangements should be left in the church after the wedding.

The following restrictions to decorations apply:

1. Candelabra other than those provided by the Church are not permitted.
2. Pew bows are permitted for use in the church; however, they may not be taped to the pews.
3. The "wedding candle" or "unity candle" is not part of the Marriage Rite and thereby is not permitted.

4. The use of flowers, petals, seed, or confetti to be thrown in or outside of the church is not permitted.
5. It is never permitted to rearrange church furnishings under any circumstance.

**Photography:** All couples want to have pictures to remember this very important day in their lives. Pictures may be taken throughout the ceremony; however, the photographer is not permitted to enter into the sanctuary area or to become a distraction to the ceremony.

The photographer will meet with the Director of Music before the ceremony begins to discuss these regulations, as only the professional photographer is allowed to take pictures during the ceremony. Other friends and relatives should not be taking pictures during the ceremony. It is not possible to use a flash during the ceremony.

**Videotaping:** Videotaping of the ceremony is permitted. However, the person doing the videotaping should be discrete and as inconspicuous as possible, setting up the video equipment in a suitable place, determined by the Director of Music. The video equipment may not enter into the sanctuary area, and the use of a floodlight is not permitted.

The videographer will meet with the Director of Music before the ceremony begins to discuss these regulations as only the professional videographer is allowed to take videotape during the ceremony. Other friends and relatives should not be videotaping during the ceremony.

## **Appendix A: Required Church Documents**

1. **A Baptismal Certificate** For Catholics, the Baptismal Certificate must be issued from the Church of Baptism no earlier than the date of the initial meeting with the priest. Baptized non-Catholics should request a letter from the church in which they were baptized.
  2. **A Confirmation Certificate** For Catholics: A copy of the original certificate is acceptable. A copy will be made and the original returned to you.
  3. **The Prenuptial Investigation:** The priest will complete with the couple a short questionnaire, entitled The Prenuptial Investigation. This questionnaire elicits basic background information from the couple, but also asks questions to make sure there is no impediment to enter into marriage. This will be completed during one of your meetings.
  4. **The Certificate of Attendance from a Pre-Cana Conference:** Arlington Diocese offers multiple *Conferences for Engaged* throughout the year. A complete listing and registration information can be found at <https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/family-life/marriage/conferences-for-the-engaged/>
- Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat Center offers the *Three to Get Married* program for engaged couples. They offer both virtual and in-person weekend retreats. Information can be found at <https://ourladyofbethesda.org/programs/marriage/virtual-marriage-prep>.
5. **FOCCUS:** The couple will answer a 156 (or more) question survey entitled, “Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study.” This survey instrument is not a compatibility test; rather, it raises issues concerning a broad range of areas, like religion, finance, communication, sexuality, and parenting. Information will be provided so that the couple may register online and take the Inventory separately. Results of the Inventory will be sent to the priest who will meet to review the results of the survey during your subsequent meeting.
  6. **Affidavits of Free Status:** The bride and the groom must each submit two Affidavits of Free Status. These forms should be completed preferably by relatives (especially parents) or others who have known the bride or groom for a long period of time. These affidavits attest that no impediment exists that would prevent the marriage from taking place. The Church requires these affidavits for the couple’s own protection. The witnesses must sign the affidavits in the presence of a priest, deacon, or notary public. The Affidavits may be downloaded or printed from our website: [www.saintlukemclean.org](http://www.saintlukemclean.org).
  7. If either party has been previously married, proof of a **Declaration of Nullity** or a certified death certificate must be supplied.
  8. If either party is not Catholic, a **Dispensation for Mixed Marriage** will be required from the Arlington Diocese Office of Canonical Affairs. **The priest working with you on marriage preparation will submit the application for a Dispensation.**



9. **Wedding License:** The couple must obtain a wedding license from a Circuit Court in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The license is valid for 60 days. The couple should present the license to the priest at their last meeting.

Fairfax County Circuit Court:  
703.691.7320

Effective March 2020 Marriage Licenses will be prepared and issued online by virtual appointment with the Circuit Court. Go to the Fairfax County Circuit Court website and click on Marriage License. You will be directed to submit a Pre-Application after which you can set up your virtual appointment.

## **Appendix B: Directions to Saint Luke Catholic Church**

From Virginia and Maryland:

Exit the Virginia branch of Route I-495, the Capital Beltway, at Georgetown Pike (Route 193). Go east (toward Washington, DC) for approximately one-half mile to the church at 7001 Georgetown Pike.

From Washington, D.C.:

Cross the Chain Bridge into Virginia. Right onto Chain Bridge Road (Rte. 123) which evolves into to Dolley Madison Boulevard (Rte. 123). Right onto Georgetown Pike. Go approximately two miles to Saint Luke Catholic Church on your left. (You will pass Saint Luke Orthodox Church on the way.)