

# Wedding Guidelines

Married Christians, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and share in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church; they help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of children; and they have their own special gift among the people of God.

- Introduction to *The Catholic Rite of Marriage*

## **Weddings at Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

The parish community of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is committed to providing a special ministry to those in our midst who are preparing to enter marriage. We regard marriage to be sacred in keeping with our Catholic Tradition, which affirms the marriage of two baptized persons to be one of the seven sacraments of the Church. We stand ready to assist you in planning a reverent and joyous celebration of the most important commitment of your lives.

## **Scheduling a Wedding at OLPH**

At OLPH our first responsibility is to provide for the weddings of our established parishioners and their immediate families. Consequently, every person who has been registered in the parish personally or through his or her family for at least one year is entitled to schedule a wedding at OLPH. Be mindful, please, that your first choice of day and time may not always be available. In order to facilitate scheduling and to provide for time to prepare in a leisurely fashion, it is strongly encouraged that weddings be arranged at least 7 months in advance. Within 7 months of a particular date, the parish will begin to receive applications from those who are not established members of the parish. The parish will try to honor other requests if the church is available and there is a priest or deacon who is able to supervise the preparation of the couple and officiate at their wedding. No weddings may be scheduled less than six months prior to a particular date in order to allow time for the proper preparation of a couple. Any exceptions require permission from the pastor.

## **Steps of Preparation for a Wedding**

1. OLPH has a wedding team, which consists of the pastor, deacons of the parish, the director of music and liturgy, and a “wedding host”. The team is dedicated to assisting you throughout your preparation, your celebration, and the beginnings of your marriage.
2. Upon contacting the parish office, you will receive a wedding information form and this “Wedding Guidelines” booklet. Please review the booklet carefully in order to understand the policies and procedures involved in having your wedding at OLPH. Then fill out the information form and return it to the church office. The

information on that form is essential before scheduling a wedding. No weddings will be put on the calendar until the form is received and has been reviewed by the pastor.

3. Upon receipt of that form, the pastor or one of the deacons will be in touch with you to discuss arrangements for your wedding. Once a wedding is scheduled, you will receive a written confirmation of the details. Please inform the person preparing you for marriage of any change of street address, e-mail address, or phone number.
4. You should contact the pastor or the deacon who will be working with you within thirty days of the receipt of your confirmation letter to schedule an appointment. He will need to meet with you early in the preparation process to familiarize you with the Church's requirements concerning the sacrament of marriage. If for some reason you have drifted away from the sacramental life of the Church, he will assist you in your return.
5. As the wedding approaches, you will meet with the pastor or the deacon to plan your wedding liturgy in accordance with the Church's Rite of Marriage. At about the same time, the music director will be in touch with you to plan the music for your celebration.
6. When a guest priest or deacon will be presiding at a wedding at OLPH, he should send a letter confirming his participation to the pastor and indicating what parts of the preparation might need to be done here. If a wedding is to be celebrated in a Catholic Church other than OLPH, the priest or deacon who will be presiding must contact the local pastor to coordinate preparation arrangements.
7. More details about personal steps of preparation.
  - a. Preparation begins with a meeting with the priest or deacon presiding at your wedding and includes an interview to determine that you clearly understand the commitment you are about to make and that there are no impediments to your marriage.
  - b. Each of you will receive forms for parents or other close relatives to fill out testifying that there are no obstacles to your marriage.
  - c. Baptized Christians will be asked to obtain a certificate of their baptism. For Catholics this should be a copy recently issued by your church of baptism.
  - d. When a Catholic is marrying a person from another religious tradition, the Catholic is informed of the Church's expectation that he/she will assume responsibility for the baptism and formation of any children in the Catholic faith.
  - e. You will be required to participate in a program of marriage preparation. These sessions are conducted in conjunction with our neighboring parishes and are held at Our Lady of Nazareth Church. Information and reservations are made by phoning their parish office at 774-0066. If for some reason you are unable to participate in this program, an alternative program must be substituted.

8. Couples are encouraged to share in the planning of their wedding ceremony especially through the selection of the scripture passages to be read and by recruiting those persons who will carry out special ministries during the service, e.g. cross and book bearer, readers for the Scripture lessons and intercessory prayers, Eucharistic ministers when there is a Mass, etc.
9. The entrance procession follows the guidelines set forth in the Catholic liturgy. “If there is a procession to the altar, the ministers (e.g. crossbearer, servers, etc.) go first, followed by the priest, and then by the bride and bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses.” Details for the order of the procession can be arranged with the priest or deacon who is presiding.
10. During the Liturgy of the Word, the bride and groom are seated in special chairs. Other members of the wedding party and close family members are seated in the front pews.

### **Civil Requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia**

1. The marriage license must be obtained from the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the County or City where the bride or groom resides, if either one is from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The marriage may take place anywhere in the state. If both parties are from out of the state, the license can be obtained from any clerk authorized to issue marriage licenses.
2. Marriage licenses are not granted to parties under 18 without parental consent. With parental consent, both parties must be at least 16 years old. (Diocesan policy guards against marriages of couples under 20 years of age.)
3. Blood tests are no longer required by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### **Ecumenical or Interfaith Marriages**

When a Catholic is marrying a person who does not share our faith tradition, the pastor or the deacon will discuss with the couple the challenges and opportunities of such a marriage. While respecting the convictions of others, the Church will expect that the convictions of the Catholic party will also be respected, especially in relation to the religious upbringing of children.

In the event of an ecumenical or interfaith marriage, the participation of clergy from another faith is welcomed. In addition, arrangements can be made for celebrating the marriage in the house of worship of the party who is not Catholic.

### **Celebration of the Eucharist**

The liturgy of our Church provides for celebrating the wedding of two Catholics within a Eucharist: the Nuptial Mass. Central to such a wedding is the reception of Holy Communion. Since provision for intercommunion has not been made at this time in the continuing dialogue

between the Catholic Church and other Christian churches, it is strongly recommended that marriages between Catholics and other Christians be celebrated with the special liturgy outside Mass which the Church provides for such weddings. This service is always used when the other party is not a baptized Christian.

### **Fees**

To help defray the cost of using OLPH facilities for celebrating a wedding at OLPH, established and contributing parishioners (those registered for at least one year before a wedding date is scheduled) are asked for a reasonable donation to the church for using the church (cleaning, electricity and wear costs). All other persons are asked to pay \$375. All persons are expected to pay a \$250 refundable deposit and security fee. The fee will be returned after the wedding as long as the facilities are left clean and nothing is damaged. If the services of the OLPH music director and/or cantor are requested, fees of \$250 and \$50 respectively are required. Fee deposit is due with the application form. The remaining fee within 30 days after confirmation letter is sent. If you would like to use our social hall please call the parish for information.

Anyone for whom these fees are a financial hardship is asked to speak to the pastor in order that an appropriate adjustment can be made.

### **Parish Wedding Rules**

Catholic weddings are to be celebrated in a place of Catholic worship and will follow the prescribed liturgy of our Church. When permission has been granted to celebrate a wedding in the house of worship of the party who is not Catholic, the service of that faith will ordinarily be observed.

From many years of experience in celebrating weddings in OLPH, we offer the following norms so that each wedding can be fittingly celebrated and so that problems which other couples have encountered can be avoided.

### **Time of Weddings**

Weddings are ordinarily scheduled on Saturdays at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. with rehearsals the preceding evening. Weddings on weekdays, Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon or evening will be considered by special request.

In both Advent and Lent, the celebration of weddings is strongly discouraged. During these penitential times, the decorations of the season must remain in place in the church.

## **Music Issues**

Music appropriate to the scripture readings and to the meaning of Christian marriage is selected by the couple to be married. The Assembly is encouraged to participate in the liturgy, so congregational hymns and psalms are chosen for those parts of the mass which permit congregational participation.

To assist you, arrangements for music are made with a meeting with the Music Director. This meeting, usually lasting about an hour, is scheduled at least six (6) weeks prior to the wedding date. The bride and groom should attend this meeting. If only one of you can attend then one other person may attend. Involving too many people will complicate decision-making. The following information is submitted to the Minister of Music at this meeting:

1. Scripture selections
2. Names of the scripture readers (lectors)/prayers of the faithful reader
3. Names (spelling verified) of all wedding party personnel

If you desire the church to print your wedding leaflet, you must provide the readings and names of the wedding participants to the Minister of Music no later than three weeks prior to the wedding date—the sooner the better. This information must be typed or e-mailed (not hand written). This correspondence is to be sent to: [music@olphsaalem.org](mailto:music@olphsaalem.org). After a draft is completed you will be contacted to come and approve the leaflet before the final copies are printed.

If you wish to ask a family member or friend to sing or play an instrument at your wedding, please inform the minister of music FIRST. Outside performers must be highly experienced and competent enough to learn their own music. Should the wedding party request another organist or cantor, permission must be granted from OLPH. In addition, the music chosen must also be approved by the Minister of Music. These musicians must demonstrate a level of skill and competency acceptable for a liturgical setting. These musicians may be asked to audition before permission to assist in the wedding is granted.

‘Bridal March’ (from Wagner’s *Lohengrin*) is not permitted in the wedding liturgy. Likewise, Broadway show tunes, opera arias, pop-tunes, and other secular works are not appropriate for the celebration. Prerecorded music is also not appropriate.

## **Flowers and Decorations**

When the church building is decorated for a liturgical season, those decorations must remain in place. During the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, further decorations in the Church are restricted. However, during the rest of the year, if the couple desires, they may furnish flowers or greens for the decoration of the church building. These are to remain in our sanctuary for the Sunday liturgies, at which time the couple is kept in our prayers. Should more than one wedding be held in the church on a Saturday, the parish suggests that the couples share floral arrangements.

In planning with a florist, a couple should make simplicity and appropriateness the first concern. A modest floral arrangement may also be placed on the table in the Commons as welcome to the guests. Any decorations not used for the weekend Masses must be removed in one hour following the wedding.

Candles are provided by the church for the regular sanctuary candlesticks. If a Unity Candle is desired, the couple must provide it. No other candles may be used.

No attachments may be taped to the pews. Only spring brackets may be used. Pew attachments may not restrict a safe exit.

No runners or tracking may be used in the aisle, as this causes problems for a safe and orderly exit, nor may flower petals or other items (e.g., rice or birdseed) be dropped or thrown either inside or outside the church.

No furnishings in the church, sanctuary or choir area may be moved from their places.

### **Dressing Rooms**

Although the church does not have a specific room for the bride and the groom and the attendants to dress, there are classrooms and our choir room that could be used for that purpose. If you plan to use any rooms, you will need to reserve them in advance.

### **Photography and Video Recording**

Photographers should not move about the church building during the liturgy. If video equipment is used, it should be set up in the back or in the choir area. If desired, the church will remain lighted for twenty minutes following the wedding for photographs.

### **Rehearsals**

A one-hour period is reserved for each rehearsal on the evening before the wedding. It is important for participants to be there on time. The rehearsal is conducted by the officiating clergy. It is not necessary to secure the services of a wedding coordinator.

Our parish rejoices with you as you prepare to celebrate your wedding at OLPH. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the parish office at 540-387-0491, or send us an e-mail at [office@olphsaalem.org](mailto:office@olphsaalem.org). May the peace of Christ be with you in your life together.

# **The Order of Service for the Celebration of Marriage**

*Length: 40-50 minutes*

Music prelude

## **The Introductory Rites**

Processional (*instrumental or sung by all*)

Greeting and Welcome

Opening Prayer

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm (*sung by all*)

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation (*sung by all*)

Gospel

Homily

## **The Rite of Marriage**

Statement of Intentions

Exchange of Wedding Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Sign of Peace (Optional)

Prayers of the Faithful

Nuptial Blessing

The Lord's Prayer

## **The Concluding Rite**

Final Blessing

Recessional (*instrumental*)

Postlude (*instrumental*) (optional)

# **The Order of Service for the Celebration of Marriage Within the Eucharist**

*Length: 50-60 minutes*

Music prelude

## **The Introductory Rites**

Processional (*instrumental or sung by all*)

Greeting

Opening Prayer

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm (*sung by all*)

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation (*sung by all*)

Gospel

Homily

## **The Rite of Marriage**

Statement of Intention

Exchange of Wedding Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Sign of Peace (*optional*)

Prayers of the Faithful

## **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

The Presentation and Preparation of the Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Holy, holy, holy (*sung by all*)

Memorial acclamation (*sung by all*)

Great amen (*sung by all*)

Lord's Prayer

Nuptial Blessing

Sign of Peace

Lamb of God (*sung by all*)

Communion (*instrumental or sung by all*)

Prayer after Communion

## **The Concluding Rite**

Final Blessing

Recessional (*instrumental*)

Postlude (*optional*)

