

*Congratulations on your decision to seek the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony! We are most pleased that you will be celebrating your wedding rites here at St. Andrew's. In order to assist you with your preparation, and to help answer the most common questions that inevitably arise, we have prepared this booklet for you. Hopefully it will clarify many relevant points. In the event you still have any questions, please do not hesitate to call upon one of the priests or parish secretaries for further assistance.*

*May God who has begun this good work in you bring it to fulfillment!*



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# **POLICIES REGARDING MARRIAGES AT ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH CLIFTON, VIRGINIA**

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## **REGISTRATION**

### ***1) Who may be married at St. Andrew's?***

- a) Any Catholic, not otherwise impeded by Divine law or Church law, who lives within the territorial boundaries of St. Andrew's and is registered here as a parishioner, may be married at this church.
- b) Any Catholic, whose parents are presently registered members of St. Andrew's, **IF** the Pastor of the parish in which they reside will give his written permission\* prior to any wedding arrangements.
- c) Any Catholic, not actually living within our boundaries, but who has been a registered parishioner for at least six (6) months, **IF** the Pastor of the parish in which he/she actually resides gives his written permission\* prior to any arrangements being made.
- d) Any Catholic whose non-Catholic fiancé resides in the territorial boundaries, presuming he/she has the written permission\* of their proper pastor.

\* Such written permission **MUST** accompany the "marriage application form" before any date may be set for the wedding.

## **CELEBRANT**

### ***2) Whom should I contact about getting married at St. Andrew's?***

Please call or email ([parish.office@st-andrew.org](mailto:parish.office@st-andrew.org)) the Parish Office for an application packet. Once the bride and groom complete the Application for Marriage, with all relevant documentation attached, it may be mailed to the Parish Office or delivered in person.

### ***3) May I invite some other priest to officiate at our wedding at St. Andrew's?***

Ordinarily, one of the parish priests will officiate at your wedding. You may choose to invite any relative or close friend who is a Catholic priest in good standing to officiate, in which case he is to request permission in writing from the Pastor St. Andrew's as soon as a date has been set. Should the priest you choose be a resident of the Diocese of Arlington, he must assume full responsibility for all marriage preparation and submit the completed wedding folder to St. Andrew's at least one month prior to your wedding. It is expected that any visiting priest will abide by universal liturgical law, as well as local parish custom.

**If your visiting priest is not a priest of the Diocese of Arlington**, please note that any priest performing a wedding ceremony in the Commonwealth of Virginia **must** be properly “bonded” by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia does not have a reciprocity agreement with any other State in this matter, and this “bonding” is **never automatic**. Please check with your visiting priest to make sure he can and does comply with this law – **do not assume** that he will comply on his own. **Failure to comply with this STATE LAW will render your ceremony void and invalid and you will not be legally married.**

## **LOCATION OF THE WEDDING**

### ***4) May I be married at a Catholic Church other than St. Andrew’s?***

Any Catholic living within our parish boundaries who wishes to be married at another Catholic church or military chapel will be given a letter of permission. However, in such cases, it usually becomes the responsibility of the priest in that parish, who will officiate at the wedding, to see that all requirements for preparation and documentation are fulfilled unless he resides at too great a distance from you. **The priests of the parish are not able to officiate at marriages outside of St. Andrew’s.**

### ***5) May I be married in a non-Catholic church, a synagogue, a mosque, etc.?***

Every Roman Catholic is bound by Church law to be married in a Catholic Church before a priest or deacon and two witnesses. The Bishop may, for grave and serious reasons, in very specific circumstances dispense from this obligation, **PROVIDED** that all other requirements for marriage in the Catholic Church are met including the solemn promise to have all their children baptized and raised as Catholics. This permission is to be sought by the priest who prepares the couple only after exceptional reasons for seeking this dispensation are evident.

### ***6) May our wedding be celebrated in a private home, a garden, a hall, etc.?***

**Canon law requires that marriages are normally to be celebrated within a Catholic Church.**

## **SCHEDULING A DATE**

### ***7) On what days and at what times can I get married at St. Andrew’s?***

Weddings are normally scheduled on Saturdays at the following times:

- 10:30 am (Ceremony only)
- 12 Noon (Nuptial Mass or Ceremony)
- 2:00 pm (Nuptial Mass or Ceremony)

**The church MUST be cleared by 3:30 pm.**

Because the first Saturday in May is the date scheduled for First Holy Communion at St. Andrew the Apostle, there will be **NO** weddings scheduled on that date.

**Rehearsals** for Saturday weddings take place on the preceding Friday evening at the following times: 5:00 pm, 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm (**except for** First Fridays of the month, when rehearsals are scheduled for 4:30 pm and 5:30 pm in order that Mass can begin promptly at 7:00 pm.

**Please Note:** Weddings and rehearsals must always start on time, since the church may be scheduled for other events and the priest, coordinator, musicians, etc. may have other time commitments to meet. Thus, the wedding party should arrive at the church well before the time scheduled for the beginning of the rehearsal or ceremony. **When a wedding is delayed for any reason, the priest, to “make up” for the delay, will modify the planned ceremony.** For example, depending on the length of the delay, certain songs or Scripture readings may be eliminated, or in some cases a wedding Mass might have to be replaced with a wedding ceremony outside of Mass.

Weddings are never celebrated at St. Andrew’s on SUNDAYS or HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION.

Weddings on weekdays may be permitted **IF** they do not conflict with other parish activities, and if a priest is available.

**Please Note:** For weddings that are to take place during the penitential seasons of ADVENT (4 weeks before Christmas) and LENT (6 weeks before Easter), the solemn nature of these seasons is to be observed in the externals (e.g., flowers, music, decorations, etc.) by stark simplicity reflecting the penitential mood of these days. Thus, you may prefer to celebrate your wedding outside of these liturgical seasons.

## **MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS**

### ***8) When should I begin making arrangements for a wedding at St. Andrew’s?***

Try to begin making arrangements as soon as the decision to marry has been made.

The Diocese of Arlington requires a **MINIMUM** of six (6) months of preparation for marriage; these arrangements are to begin at least six (6) months in advance.

**Please Note:** *While* an unofficial date for the wedding may be tentatively set at the first meeting with the priest, it is not official or binding until the priest has determined that the couple is free to marry, as well as capable of and ready for marriage. This is generally not possible until after the FOCCUS Test (see 11) has been reviewed and the baptismal certificates and the affidavits are provided to him. Therefore, **arrangements for a reception hall should not be finalized, until the priest confirms the official date.** Couples should therefore seek to fulfill all these requirements as soon as possible.

9) *What does the six-month Marriage Preparation process required by the Diocese actually involve?*

The Diocese requires that the couple to be married must:

- a) Meet with the priest with whom arrangements are being made **at least** four times. We urge you to please be punctual for your sessions with the priest. Due to subsequent appointments being scheduled, we cannot assure you a priest will be able to meet with you if you are late. Please call if you foresee any difficulty or if you need to reschedule.
- b) Attend an additional weekend program sponsored by the Diocese; you may chose between either:
  - **Engaged Encounter** or
  - **Conferences for the Engaged**
- c) These options will be explained in brochures you will receive at your first session with the priest.
- d) You must also enroll in a course in **Natural Family Planning** (NFP), the only method of birth regulation compatible with the Catholic Faith, as all practice of artificial methods of birth control (chemical or physical) is viewed as gravely illicit, and thereby seriously sinful. A schedule of dates for these classes is provided in a brochure you will receive at your first session with the priest.
- e) The non-Catholic party in an inter-faith marriage should be aware of his/her spouse's obligation to refrain from all artificial means of birth control, and be willing to be supportive and cooperative in this resolve!

10) *At what hours of the day are the sessions with the priest scheduled?*

Generally speaking, the priests are eager to cooperate with the busy schedules of couples by meeting, when necessary, in the evenings and even on weekends. But please remember that priests also have busy schedules, with many parish liturgies, meetings and functions scheduled in the evenings. Just as you are willing to meet with florists, dressmakers, caterers, etc., during their regular "9 to 5" business hours, you should also be willing to try to meet with the priest during his regular "office" hours.

11) *What do the sessions with the priest involve?*

The sessions with the priest will deal with:

- The required paperwork and documentation which will help the priest determine that the couple is free to marry and capable of marriage
- The administration and evaluation of the FOCCUS test (a measure of compatibility)
- The Church's understanding and appreciation of marriage
- The actual planning of the wedding ceremony.

***12) What if my fiancé is not a Catholic, or not baptized; how will this affect our preparation?***

While in *no way* intending to deny or degrade the marriage of a Catholic to a non-Catholic, it must be recognized that marriage between individuals of different religious belief will involve unique difficulties. Therefore, to help the couple prepare to address these problems, this issue will be discussed directly during the meetings with the priest.

In addition, because of the importance of this issue, the priest must apply to obtain special permission or dispensation from the Bishop of Arlington for the wedding to take place. This application is very seldom denied. In order to obtain this permission or dispensation, the **Catholic party** must make two promises (and the non-Catholic party must be informed of these promises):

- That he/she is prepared to remove dangers of falling away from the practice of the Catholic faith, and
- Will do all in his/her power to have all the children born of the marriage baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church.

Finally, certain restrictions are placed on the ceremonial/liturgical celebration of these weddings (see 20).

***13) What if we are already “married” according to civil law—how will this affect our preparation?***

We are very happy to assist couples who come to us to have their civil marriages “blessed by the Church”—or what we call a “**convalidation**”. It must be understood, however, that a merely “civil marriage” involving a Catholic party is not recognized by the Catholic Church as a marriage in the eyes of God. Thus, when such a couple comes to us their Catholic ceremony will be considered truly a new marriage and the preparation involved will largely parallel the preparation of other unmarried couples. However, since many of these couples will come to us with long term “natural bonds” between them we can often allow some flexibility in both the time and process of preparation, based on the particular situation of the couple involved.

Nevertheless, since a couple in this type of marriage is, objectively speaking, *publicly* living in a relationship which is directly contrary to the teachings of Christ and His Church, the *public* celebration of marriage for such couples *must* be of a more subdued nature; that is, their Catholic wedding may involve only a “simple ceremony” (see 15).

***14) What if my fiancé and I are living together—what effect will that have on our wedding preparation?***

Living together before marriage, “cohabiting”, is one of the worst ways to prepare for marriage. Not only does it involve the morally grave sin of fornication and directly mislead others to think that it is acceptable behavior (the sin of “scandal”), but the social sciences clearly show that it also seriously damages their relationship emotionally, psychologically and practically. In addition, in many cases the ability to clearly discern and freely choose to give themselves in marriage is severely impaired. Out of sincere love and concern for the cohabiting couple, the priest preparing them for marriage will try to help them to understand the seriousness of this problem and encourage them to find alternative living arrangements during the engagement. This may require additional time and effort on the part of the couple and the priest, and may result in a delay of their wedding.

**Nevertheless, the priest will not deny them the benefit of a wedding in the Catholic Church.** However, in order to avoid additional scandal it is the policy of the priests of St. Andrew’s to celebrate such a wedding in a way similar to “convalidations” of civil marriages; that is, the wedding will be a “simple ceremony” (see 15), with only witnesses and immediate family members in attendance.

Unfortunately, some cohabiting couples try to avoid facing this issue by misleading the priest, e.g., giving a false address. Since any such deception seriously undermines the whole preparation and evaluation process, if it is discovered **the wedding in question will be postponed, or even cancelled.** (see 19).

***15) What is meant by a “simple ceremony”?***

A “simple ceremony” refers to a special manner of conducting a Catholic wedding ceremony in the case of couples who are already civilly married or cohabiting. It is in no way intended as some sort of “punishment”, but rather it is applied in order to reduce the possible risk of “scandal”. Practically speaking, a simple ceremony is generally *less* solemn and elaborate and *more* subdued in tone and appearance than the usual wedding ceremony. For example, it takes place in the small chapel of the church, without a Nuptial Mass. Appropriate dress for a simple ceremony is semi-formal, and *a white wedding dress is never worn.* Only a very few flowers are allowed and no music is played.

## **REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION**

### ***16) What paperwork does the Church require?***

A Catholic party must provide a **recent copy** (not more than 6 months old) of his/her Baptismal Certificate that has been issued by the church in which he/she was baptized. Write to or call the church of baptism, tell them you are planning to marry, give them your name and the date of your baptism, and ask for a “notated” copy of your Baptismal Certificate. Then attach the certificate you receive (NOT a photocopy of it) to the Application for Marriage, which you are submitting. The recent copy from the church of baptism is required because it is a proof of freedom to marry. A Catholic party is also required to provide copies of his/her Confirmation Certificate, unless noted on back of the Baptismal Certificate.

A baptized non-Catholic is to provide a photocopy of his/her Baptismal Certificate, or a letter from his/her church indicating that the baptism has taken place.

The priest will give both parties forms (i.e., two copies each (a total of four) of an Affidavit of Freedom) for their parents to fill out in the presence of a priest or notary (in the case of non-Catholics); these serve as proof of the parties' freedom to marry. Another close relative may fill out the forms in place of a parent who is deceased or unavailable.

The priest with whom arrangements are being made will fill out a questionnaire (i.e., Pre-Nuptial Investigation) by asking the parties to testify, under oath, that there are no impediments to their proposed marriage.

The priest will ask the parties to fill out a pre-marital inventory (i.e., FOCCUS test), the purpose of which is to assist the couple to evaluate their relationship.

When you attend the weekend Engaged Encounter or Conference for the Engaged you will be given a certificate, which must be given to the priest.

When you finish attending the required course in Natural Family Planning you will be given a certificate that must be given to the priest.

If either the bride or groom (whether they are Catholic or not) has *ever* been married before in *any* type of ceremony (civil, Protestant, Jewish, etc.) or under “common law”, proof must be submitted regarding the nullity of that prior bond (i.e., a decree from the competent Catholic tribunal) or the death of the prior spouse (i.e., a death certificate). A copy of the original divorce decree and marriage license/certificate must also be provided.

If the couple has previously entered into a merely civil marriage and now wish to enter a marriage before God by “having their marriage blessed by the Church” (convalidation) they must also provide a certified copy of their marriage certificate.

The parties must provide to the priest who will officiate at their wedding a Civil License and a blank certificate issued by the Circuit Court of the Commonwealth of Virginia; this is to be done **prior to the wedding rehearsal. No wedding can take place unless the Civil License has been secured, and been given to the priest who will officiate!**

***17) What should I know about obtaining a Civil License?***

Residents of Virginia may obtain a Civil License from the Clerk of the Circuit Court at any county courthouse in the Commonwealth. Non-residents of Virginia **MUST** obtain a Civil License from the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the courthouse of the county in which the marriage is to take place (for St. Andrew's Parish, this means the FAIRFAX COUNTY COURTHOUSE). Also, please note:

- County courthouses are not open on Saturdays or Sundays.
- The Civil License is good for only sixty (60) days; therefore, do not get it too soon.
- A blood test is no longer required in the Commonwealth of Virginia; therefore, the license may be obtained upon application.
- There is a fee for the Civil License.

***18) Are "Wedding Banns" still to be observed?***

The public announcement of a forthcoming marriage between two **Catholics** for 3 successive Sundays may still be observed in some places, but is no longer customary in our parish. This announcement is published in the parish of the bride and the groom. The "Banns" (i.e., announcements) are never made when one of the parties is not a Catholic, not even in the parish of the Catholic.

***19) What other requirements should the couple be concerned about during this process?***

Perhaps the most important requirements of this preparation process are **honesty and candidness**. Unfortunately, occasionally a couple will feel it necessary to hide important information from the priest. Such untruthfulness, however, can cast doubt on all the documents and statements given by the couple, and in general seriously undermine the whole preparation and evaluation process. Since it is the priest's obligation to assure that this wedding be conducted with due regard to the spiritual well being of the couple as well as the laws of God, the Church and the Commonwealth of Virginia, any discovery of deception, etc., in any important matter may result in **postponement of your wedding** (see 14).

## **THE WEDDING CEREMONY**

### ***20) Should our wedding ceremony take place during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?***

**If both parties are Catholic**, the wedding should normally be celebrated within the context of the Holy Mass so that the couple may worship together the God Who made them and unites them in Holy Matrimony and may receive Holy Communion together as their first married act.

**If one of the parties is not baptized**, it is **NEVER** permitted that the wedding be celebrated within the context of Holy Mass.

**If one of the parties is baptized**, but not a Catholic, the wedding is normally celebrated without Mass. This choice reflects sensitivity to each of the parties, and to their families and guests. For a just cause, however, the bishop may grant special permission for the Wedding Mass. In this case the non-Catholic party may not receive communion (see “Guidelines for Receiving Holy Communion” below).

### ***21) If our wedding takes place at Mass, may those who are not Catholic receive Holy Communion?***

Non-Catholics (including members of the wedding party) may **NOT** receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church at a wedding, due to our very different beliefs and convictions about the Eucharist. The only exceptions to this norm are members of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Catholic Church.

Catholics may receive **IF** they are in the state of grace, properly disposed, and desirous of receiving. An announcement briefly summarizing these requirements will be made prior to Holy Communion and if a program is to be printed for a Nuptial Mass, the following “Guidelines for Receiving Holy Communion” **MUST** be printed in the program.

## **GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING COMMUNION**

### **FOR CATHOLICS**

Catholics fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when they receive Holy Communion in fulfillment of Christ's command to eat His Body and drink His Blood. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, communicants should not be conscious of grave sin, have fasted for an hour, and seek to live in charity and love with their neighbors. Person's conscience of grave sin MUST first be reconciled with GOD and the Church through the sacrament of Penance. A frequent reception of the sacrament of penance is encouraged for all.

### **FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS**

We welcome to this celebration of the Eucharist those Christians who are not fully united with us. It is a consequence of the sad division in Christianity that we cannot admit them to a reception of Holy Communion. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness in faith, life, and worship of the community. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we must all pray. (Members of the Eastern Orthodox Churches should follow the discipline of their own canon law regarding coming to Communion).

### **FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING COMMUNION**

Those not receiving sacramental Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

### **FOR NON-CHRISTIANS**

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus. While we cannot extend to them an invitation to receive Communion, we do invite them to be united with us in prayer.

## **PARTICIPANTS IN THE CEREMONY**

### ***22) Who will help us plan our wedding ceremony?***

While the priest is certainly happy to help you with your plans, the detailed planning for your wedding ceremony must be coordinated with St. Andrew's Wedding Coordinator, who is familiar with all of our policies and preferences and can answer all of your questions regarding the ceremony. Furthermore, she will be present at the rehearsal and at the wedding itself to make sure everything runs smoothly. You should contact her as soon as possible.

In addition, you will work with our parish Music Director in planning the music for the wedding. He also is completely familiar with the policies and preferences of the parish with regard to music and can give you sound advice and direction.

**Please Note:** The generous and professional contributions of our Wedding Coordinator, Music Director and other parish staff and volunteers at St. Andrew's have proven to be invaluable time and again. In recognition of this, and in the spirit of simple Christian charity, we ask you to always show due courtesy and cooperation when working with them.

**23) *How many people may I have in my wedding party?***

At least 2 witnesses (Best Man and Maid of Honor) must be present in the wedding party to witness your vows. There is, however, no set maximum size of the wedding party.

**24) *How many people will I need to serve in "liturgical functions" at the wedding?***

You may invite different individuals to fulfill the following liturgical functions:

- A reader for the 1<sup>st</sup> reading
- A reader for the psalm
- A reader for the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading
- A reader for the General Intercessions
- 3 presenters of the offertory gifts (only at a Mass)

Altar Servers (at least two for a Mass and one for a ceremony outside of Mass) are normally taken from St. Andrew's regular crew of Servers. **You must** contact our Altar Server Coordinator two weeks prior to the wedding to schedule the Servers. If for some good reason you would like to supply your own Servers the priest must approve this.

**25) *May I invite a non-Catholic minister to participate in my wedding ceremony?***

In a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, where a Nuptial Mass is **NOT** celebrated, a non-Catholic Christian minister may be invited to participate in the wedding ceremony to the extent allowed by Church law. These arrangements must be made with the officiating priest, and approved by the pastor of St. Andrew's.

**26) *May I invite non-Catholic lay people to fulfill liturgical functions in my wedding ceremony?***

Anyone invited to fulfill the liturgical functions of readers/lectors, altar servers, and gift-bearers (at the offertory of Mass) **must be a practicing Catholic** (or Eastern Orthodox Christian) whose good qualities of Christian life, faith, and morals recommend them to this function.

For a good reason, however, at a wedding between a Catholic and a **non-baptized person** (which never takes place at Mass—see 20), a baptized non-Catholic (i.e., a Protestant) whose good qualities of Christian life, faith, and morals recommend them may be allowed to read at the ceremony.

Anyone asked to read at the wedding (i.e., Scripture and intercessions) should preferably also have some experience at public reading/speaking.

**27) *May I invite non-Catholics to stand in my wedding party (bridesmaids, etc.)?***

**Absolutely!** The Best Man, Maid of Honor, bridesmaids, groomsmen, ushers, flower girls, ring bearers, etc., need not be Catholic.

**28) *May children be included in our wedding party?***

You are strongly discouraged from allowing children below the age of reason (i.e. 6 or 7 years old) to serve as ring bearers, flower girls, junior bridesmaids, etc., since very young children often disrupt and distract rather than enhance the ceremony, especially during the wedding procession. Children under the age of 3 may not serve in these capacities.

**29) *Are there any rules about what the wedding party may wear?***

The only rules are common sense rules:

- It is customary for the bride to wear white, but white is not appropriate in certain situations, e.g., brides who are mothers, convalidations, “second marriages”, etc. (One simple alternative is “off-white”).
- The apparel should be fitting to both the solemn and religious character of the day.
- The apparel, while being appropriately fashionable, must always be **modest** and **chaste**. Unfortunately many of today’s fashions for women often ignore these attributes!

These rules must also be observed by all those who serve in liturgical functions (i.e., readers, gift-bearers).

Appropriately modest dress should also be **observed at the rehearsal**.

**30) *Where does the wedding party get dressed at the church?***

Since **there are NO dressing facilities** at the church **the BRIDE and the entire wedding party must always dress at home.**

The “rear sacristy” of the church (by the main doors) is reserved as a waiting area for the bride and her bridesmaids before the wedding. This room has a small mirror and a restroom so that they may “put the finishing touches” to their ensemble--but they may not get dressed here. The groom and his groomsmen are asked to wait in the “main sacristy” (located behind the sanctuary), where there is also a small mirror and a restroom, but again, they may not get dressed here.

**PLEASE NOTE: St. Andrew’s Church is not responsible for any personal items left in these two sacristies (or anywhere else in the church) by the wedding party, which might be lost, stolen or misplaced.**

## **THE RITUAL OF THE CEREMONY**

### ***31) How much liberty do I have in planning the ceremony?***

In coming to the Catholic Church for your wedding you have recognized that the liturgical celebration of Marriage is not something that belongs simply to any one person, couple or family: it is primarily the action of the whole Church—the *Bride of Christ*. It is a solemn and holy occasion, and the Church has a certain way of performing this action—certain customs and symbols and words—that very eloquently express unity with the whole Church, past and present, on earth and in heaven.

Because of this, while you are free to choose between many and various options in the Rite (e.g., Scripture passages, blessings, etc.), we will also very carefully respect all the Church's liturgical norms, customs and teachings in every respect. In addition, since there are practical limitations to what our resources of space, time and personnel can accommodate we ask that you respect the specific policies that apply at St. Andrew’s. As of September 14, 2007, the “extraordinary” rite of marriage, in Latin, is also an option.

At your first meeting the priest will give you a book containing the options for the readings and prayers of the wedding ceremony; this will also contain a form on which you may indicate your choices.

### ***32) May I incorporate pious customs into the ceremony, such as laying flowers at the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary?***

It is perfectly legitimate to incorporate well-established pious customs into the wedding, such as a devotion to Mary (which is *always* encouraged at St. Andrew’s), as long as they are situated in the appropriate place in the ceremony and do not tend to dominate or distract from the liturgy. Practices, however, which are not part of the Catholic tradition of piety or which are overly distracting will not be permitted.

### ***33) May the Unity Candle be used during the ceremony?***

The origins of the “Unity Candle” seem to have originated in the secular “wedding industry” (*Hallmark*) rather than the pious custom of Christians. In any case, it is not part of the Catholic tradition of piety. For example, the three lighted candles associated with the “Unity Candle” are usually understood to represent the bride and groom becoming one in marriage, but in the Catholic liturgy the symbol of the lighted candle *always* represents Jesus Christ who is “the light of the world”.

Thus, the Unity Candle may not be used at St. Andrew's. Please do not request an exception to this policy! Whenever a couple desires to preserve this symbol, they are encouraged to use it at the reception, in conjunction with grace before dinner, as a way of carrying the spiritual dimension of their wedding event to their celebration.

### ***34) May I prepare and distribute a “program” at my wedding?***

A wedding program is often helpful for wedding guests and can make a beautiful keepsake. The content of the program, however, must be consistent with the Catholic nature of this ceremony, that is, it may not contain strictly secular or non-Christian art, poetry, etc. It should generally include a schedule showing the order of the ceremony/Mass, and often lists the names of the wedding party, family members, those taking liturgical functions, the priest, musicians, vocalists, etc. It may also contain a simple sentiment of appreciation or mutual love or a prayer composed by the bride and groom. Whenever there is a Wedding Mass, the “Guidelines for Receiving Holy Communion” **must always** be printed in the program (see 21).

In order to avoid confusion or error, **all programs must be submitted to the priest** for his review **at least 1 week before** they are scheduled to be printed, and may not be printed without his approval.

## **MUSIC**

### ***35) May we choose our favorite songs for our wedding?***

A wedding (whether within the context of Holy Mass or not) is a sacred rite; therefore, only sacred music – that is, music composed for the specific purpose of the worship of God – may be played or sung during the Mass or ceremony. Please do not request an exception to this law of the Church!

All arrangements relating to music and to musicians (organists, singers, etc.) must be made with the Parish Music Director (see list of Wedding Contacts).

During the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, the music is to be compatible with the solemn penitential spirit of these days. The Music Director will advise you on what is appropriate and allowed!

**36) Whom may I choose as a vocalist?**

Please consult our Music Director, who is able to suggest vocalists to you who are known to us here at St. Andrew's. Those desiring someone from outside our parish to serve as a vocalist (or instrumentalist) must notify our Music Director and obtain his/her approval in advance.

**37) Is there a fee for the music?**

The organist's fee is separate from any offering made to the priest or church, and varies from organist to organist. Please contact the organist for an exact quote. The fee is given directly to the organist who accompanies your wedding. If a cantor or other musicians are hired, you must also arrange to pay them directly.

## **WEDDING DECORATIONS**

**38) Are there any norms regarding flowers and decorations?**

In planning all your wedding flowers and decorations, please consult with our Wedding Coordinator who can answer any specific questions. This consultation should take place BEFORE any final arrangements are made regarding flowers or decorations.

Generally, flowers may be of any style or color you wish, as long as they are consistent with the solemn and religious nature of the celebration and the season. Flowers in the sanctuary should be arranged so as not to restrict the movement or visibility of the priest, ministers or the wedding party, or to disrupt the lines for Holy Communion. No flowers are to be placed on the altar, and no arrangements may be higher than the top of the altar. Considering these limitations, flowers would normally be placed on the floor and on pedestals or stands.

Any flowers placed at or near the altar are considered your gifts to Our Lord, and are not to be removed after the ceremony. Please take this into account when making floral arrangements.

Ribbons and flowers may be attached to pews using special varnish-friendly adhesive or plastic slips. A white cloth covering may be placed over the priedieu of the bride and groom. Aisle runners are permitted but discouraged. Because of the decorations and candles already in place in the church, additional *candelabra* may not be used.

If there is more than one wedding on the same day, couples may wish to coordinate their decorations and flowers. You may contact the Wedding Coordinator to help you in this regard.

Any other special decorations not mentioned here must be specifically approved the Wedding Coordinator.

***39) When may the flowers and other decorations be delivered and set up in the Church?***

Flowers may be delivered to the church one hour before the wedding. Any boxes with flowers should be properly marked (e.g., “bride”, “bridesmaid”, etc.). Decorations and flowers may also be set up in the church one-hour before the ceremony.

***40) May we use rice, birdseed, flower petals, etc.?***

As St. Andrew's does not have a full time maintenance person on staff to clean up immediately, throwing rice or any other substance which may be customary is strictly prohibited since **ALL** of these present some degree of hazard on the walkway outside of church. We certainly don't want your celebration marred by anyone accidentally slipping and injuring himself or herself, so please inform your family and friends to refrain from such practices.

For this same reason no flower petals, etc., may be dropped in the aisle in front of the bride by flower girls in the entrance procession.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

***41) Are there any norms regarding photographs at the wedding?***

Unlike many other churches, we **do** allow photographs during the wedding Mass or ceremony. It is also permitted to have your wedding videotaped. We urge that photographers exercise good judgment and common sense, in accord with the solemnity of the occasion, and at all times accept direction from the Wedding Coordinator and the priest.

Once the ceremony has begun the following rules must be followed:

- Flash photography (or strobe/movie lighting) is strongly discouraged!;
- The photographer/videographer is asked to keep his/her visible movement to a minimum;
- He/she may never walk in the area in front of the sanctuary or enter into the sanctuary;
- He/she may never take a position during the ceremony which would distract the assembly or obstruct anyone's view of the couple, the readers or the priest; and
- He/she may take candid shots from upstairs, from the back of the church or from either side of the sanctuary.

**All photographers and/or videographers must be aware of this policy.**

*42) May we take pictures in the church after the wedding?*

Out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament, posing for pictures at the altar after the ceremony is discouraged. Where a couple finds it necessary to pose at the altar, we remind them that they are still in the presence of Our Lord, truly present in the Tabernacle. In these cases only the couple may pose (no other family members or members of the wedding party) and only after a screen has been placed in front of the Tabernacle to conceal it in order to diminish any disrespect which may result at such times when people, in their excitement, tend to forget where they are!

*It may sometimes be possible to arrange to take pictures for a few minutes in Monsignor Hannan Hall after the ceremony. Please call the office for more information.*

*43) Are there any rules for guests with cameras?*

Guests are usually much less likely than professional photographers to be bold in their picture taking etiquette. Nevertheless, they are also asked to observe the above rules for photography.

## **OTHER CONCERNS AFTER THE WEDDING**

*44) How long may we stay in the church after the wedding?*

**Should you choose the 2:00 time slot, please be aware that the church must be cleared no later than 3:30 p.m. due to the beginning of Confessions.** For the 10:30 and 12:00 slots the Church must be cleared no later than **11:30** and **1:30** respectively since the Church is often scheduled to be used for several other functions on Saturday (e.g., another wedding). Thank you for your cooperation in this regard!

*45) Where may we have the “receiving line” after the wedding?*

Because of the limited space and time constraints **no receiving line is allowed at the Church**. Some couples handle this by taking a few pictures at the church while their guests are encouraged to go on to the reception. The receiving line then forms **at the reception** when the couple arrives there.

*46) Who is responsible for cleaning up after the wedding?*

**The couple is responsible** for arranging for the removal of all the decorations that they have set up for the wedding, as well as all the trash that is directly related to the wedding (loose programs, boxes, bows, etc.). **Any flowers placed at or near the altar are considered your gifts to Our Lord, and are not to be removed after the ceremony.**

## **WEDDING FEE**

### ***47) Is there a fee for our wedding?***

Since marriage is a sacrament, no fee is ever charged by the parish or the priests of St. Andrew's. Many couples, however, wish to make a customary donation to the parish and/or the priest celebrant, and such a voluntary donation is greatly appreciated. Though no amount of a donation is specified, one might prayerfully consider the gift to the church and/or priest in the light of what is being spent overall on non-essential aspects of the wedding! Our gratitude to God at such a momentous time of life should certainly be manifest!

It is Diocesan policy, however, that a priest may personally keep only those gifts clearly designated as intended for him; for example, a check specifically made payable to him (by name), or a cash gift in an envelope bearing his name. All other amounts he receives are donated to the Church.

- The only required stipends are the following (no later than the evening of the rehearsal):
  - A \$75 gratuity for the Wedding Coordinator for her assistance,
  - A \$10 gratuity for each altar boy.

The fee for musicians is discussed above (see 36).

### ***48) If the priest at St. Andrew's prepares us, but the ceremony is in another city or state, is there a fee for his assistance?***

Again, there is no fee for this pastoral service. Some couples, however, do choose to give a gift to the priest in appreciation for his efforts.