

*Blessing from the Rite of Marriage*

**“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 holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children; and they have their own special gift among the people of God.”** *Introduction to the Rite of Marriage, #1*



**Welcome**

We welcome you to St. Athanasius for your wedding, and we congratulate you on your decision to marry. When lived with respect and fidelity and with faith in Christ's sustaining presence, marriage can be an extraordinary blessing throughout all of life's moments. To make possible the best beginning for your married life, the staff St. Athanasius is happy to share in this time of preparation. This preparation will be spiritual and personal, but practical as well. With that in mind we offer this brochure containing important policies and procedures, which will help direct your planning. We will make every effort to consider your personal wishes but we ask you to respect our guidelines.

**Scheduling your Wedding**

Set a firm date at least six months in advance of your wedding by meeting with the priest or deacon who is to officiate at the marriage. A wedding is not officially scheduled at St. Athanasius, until you have met with the priest or deacon. So please do not make any other arrangements until the meeting takes place, since it is only then that the date is officially yours.

The times for weddings at St. Athanasius are Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. A Friday evening wedding can be negotiated based on availability.

### **Photography/Videography**

Photographs and/or video may be taken during the marriage ceremony, but always inconspicuously and from outside the sanctuary area. Only the official photographer and/or videographer may take pictures at the ceremony. The photographer/videographer must always keep in mind that this is a Sacrament and a Sacred Moment in the life of the couple.

### **Flowers**

All floral arrangements should be delivered to the Church at least two hours prior to the start of the ceremony. Flowers should be given as memorials on the occasion of a wedding, and remain in place in the sanctuary for the entire weekend of your wedding.

Our property insurance policy prohibits the use of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals, *etc.*, inside and outside the Churches. The re-arrangement of the sanctuary furnishings is not permitted. Aisle runners are not permitted because they pose a safety hazard.

The seasonal church decorations may not be moved or re-arranged. Please keep this in mind when talking to your florist. Pew candles, or candles in the aisles are not allowed because of the possibility for accidents.

### **Wedding Coordinators**

Some couples choose to hire a wedding coordinator to assist with planning the wedding. While such persons may be helpful in organizing some aspects of a wedding, wedding coordinators are not permitted to assume any role or authority in the planning or execution of the wedding ceremony/liturgy.

### **Punctuality**

Out of consideration for other weddings and the various parish services, it is very important that all weddings begin on time. If a wedding starts late, the opportunity for photos will be forfeited.

### **Lectors**

It is proper for a lay person to proclaim the First and Second Readings from scripture and to announce the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. Couples should invite members of the family or the bridal party or other close friends to serve in this capacity. The nature of the Word of God requires that such persons be persons of faith and effective public speakers. They should be given copies of the readings in advance and be present at the rehearsal. The responsorial psalm after the First Reading is always sung by the cantor.

### **Alcohol**

Since this is a Sacrament taking place in a Sacred Place, use of any alcoholic

beverages before, or during the wedding rehearsal or wedding are prohibited. Please make sure everyone understands and is in compliance with this requirement

### **Altar Servers**

Couples are encouraged to seek altar servers from their own family and friends who will be at the wedding. If the couple desires altar servers, please speak to the priest who is arranging the wedding, because of the limited number of altar servers at the parish this is not always possible.

### **Official Witnesses**

The official witnesses (best man and maid or matron of honor) may be of any faith. Their names must be given to the officiating priest or deacon for inclusion in the marriage records.

### **Ring Bearers and Flower Girls**

In order for the marriage ceremony to retain its dignity and sense of the sacred, we recommend that only children five (5) years and older are permitted to serve as ring bearers or flower girls.

### **Music for the Wedding**

Couples should contact our Director of Music, Wally Ford, as soon as possible. The Director of Music may be contacted at 410-355-5740. **The Director of Music is the only organist permitted to provide music for your wedding. Please do not make any arrangements for outside musicians until you have discussed this with him.**

The Director of Music will assist you in selecting music that reflects your personal preferences and conforms to liturgical guidelines.

You will need a cantor/soloist to lead the liturgical portions of your wedding. Since St. Athanasius Parish has employees who are cantors for weekly liturgies, those cantors have the right of first refusal for weddings. A list of parish cantors will be given to you at your first meeting with the priest and/or deacon. It is your responsibility to contact the cantors on the list and inform the Director of Music of the cantor who will sing at the wedding. If those cantors are unavailable, then the Director of Music can assist in suggesting a suitable cantor. If you have a family member or friend that you would like to cantor, a rehearsal with that particular person is required. A fee of \$50.00 will be charged by the Director of Music for that rehearsal.

Fees for the organist and cantor are in addition to the fee for the church. Fees should be paid one month prior to the wedding date:

Fee for Organist is negotiated separately

Fee for Cantor is negotiated separately

### **Other Officiating Clergy**

Couples whose wedding is to be witnessed by a priest or deacon who is not on staff at St. Athanasius must request permission from the pastor.

No reservation for a wedding will be considered final until the officiating priest or deacon has had a first meeting with the couple and has confirmed with St. Athanasius the time and the date proposed by the couple and that there are no impediments to marriage.

After the above has been completed, all remaining paperwork and other requirements are the responsibility of the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage, unless other arrangements have been made.

### **Fees**

The fee for weddings at St. Athanasius is \$500 for parishioners and \$700 for non-parishioners. This fee includes an offering for the church. A deposit of \$100 is to be given to the priest or deacon at the time of the first meeting. This fee does not include any offering you should make for the officiating priest or deacon. The couple should make a personal offering to the priest or deacon in light of the large amount of time and effort that planning a wedding requires on the part of the priest or deacon.

### **Who is a parishioner?**

For purposes here, a person is considered to be a parishioner if he/she or their parents have been registered for at least six (6) months prior to the initial meeting with the priest or deacon and have been active users of offertory envelopes for at least six (6) months prior to scheduling the wedding.

### **Marriage Preparation Program**

All couples preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church are required to participate in a church-sponsored Marriage Preparation Program. The *Engaged Encounter* retreat weekend and a *Pre-Cana Program* are both sponsored by the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Information about these programs is available from the priest or deacon. Marriage preparation should be completed at least three (3) months prior to the wedding date.

## **Required Documentation and Paperwork**

Baptismal Certificate for both parties must be obtained. For Catholics, new copies(issued from their church of baptism) are necessary and must be issued within six (6) months of the wedding date.

## **Marriage License**

A civil marriage license must be obtained for **Baltimore City** from the Clarence Mitchell Courthouse, Room 628, 100 N. Calvert Street. At the time of printing, the license fee is \$85 and must be paid in cash. One of the parties must appear in person to apply for the license. The license is good from 2 days after the application is made until six months from the date of issue. For more information please call the Marriage License Bureau at (410) 333–3780.

## **Planning the Wedding Ceremony**

Since the bride and the groom are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage, they should have a prominent role in the planning of their wedding liturgy. The officiating priest or deacon will work with the couple to prepare the wedding liturgy. Copies of the marriage planning workbook, *Together for Life*, are available from the officiating priest or deacon. When both parties are of the Catholic faith, the celebration of the marriage should take place within a Mass. If one of the parties is not Catholic, the celebration usually takes place at a ceremony outside Mass. The normal structure of the wedding is as follows:

Entrance Procession of ministers and bridal party

Gathering Hymn (*optional*)

Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word:

–Old Testament Reading

–Responsorial Psalm (*sung*)

–New Testament Reading

–Gospel Acclamation (*sung*)

–Gospel Reading

–Homily

–Rite of Marriage:

–Introductory Address and Statement of Intentions

–Exchange of Consent (vows)

–Blessing and Exchange of Rings

–Unity Candle (*optional*)

If the wedding is celebrated at a Nuptial Mass, then it continues as follows:

Prayer of the Faithful

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

–Presentation of the Gifts

- Eucharistic Prayer (*with sung acclamations*)
- Lord's Prayer
- Nuptial Blessing
- Communion
- Prayer after Communion
- Dedication to Mary (*optional*)
- Final Blessing
- Recessional

*If the wedding is celebrated outside Mass, then it continues as follows:*

- Prayer of the Faithful
- Nuptial Blessing
- The Lord's Prayer
- Final Blessing
- Recessional