

Parish Wedding Packet

Preparing for Marriage (minimum of 6-9 months prior to the desired wedding date)

Step 1: Turn in all required documentation to our parish office.

Step 2: Initial meeting with the Priest.

Step 3: Wedding date coordinated with priest and parish wedding coordinator.

Step 4: The couple begins a marriage preparation program approved by the diocese.

Step 5: Marriage License.

Step 6: The couple meets with the priest or deacon for the final time.

Step 7: The wedding rehearsal and wedding.

STEP 1: All required documentation for the Sacrament of Matrimony

The couple is responsible for acquiring/turning in a ***dated*** copy of their baptismal certificate (whether they were baptized catholic or into another religion). If your fiancé was baptized into another religion and no baptismal certificate was given or is not on record at the church, then a certified letter from parent/legal guardian will do. If you were baptized at our parish, we will still need a copy of your baptismal certificate. *(If you have lost/misplaced your certificate: please provide our office with your date of baptism, birthdate, parents full name/s, and godparents name/s, for us to issue a copy of your certificate.)*

If you were baptized outside of our parish (parishioner or not) then please do the following:

1. Contact the Church/Parish in which you were baptized.
2. Request a **new & sealed** copy of your baptismal certificate **with notations**.

“With notations” means that all Sacraments will be notated on the baptismal certificate that you are requesting. *(If you have completed all your Sacraments, but none are notated on the baptismal certificate, you will need to contact the parish where you were confirmed and ask for a copy of your confirmation certificate.)* If the parish where you were baptized has closed or no longer exists, please contact the diocese of which the parish pertained to. The parish/diocese can then send the baptismal certificate, *with notations*, directly to our office’s mailing address:

ATTN: Liz Prieto (Wedding Coordinator)
Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
154 N. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Documents should only be sent in to our office, if you are being prepared at Blessed Sacrament.

If you are preparing at another parish, you do not need to provide us with any documents. Once you have finished your marriage preparation; the priest/deacon, whom you are preparing with, will need to mail out all requested documents to the Diocese of Richmond. If an outside priest (from another parish) is officiating your wedding, he will need to send a letter of good standing from his diocese with your files, along with verification that he is certified to officiate within the state of Virginia.

If you belong to another parish, we will need a letter from your Pastor, granting you permission to be married at our church.

If your fiancé is not Catholic and has not been baptized, then please be sure to address this to the parish office and priest at your first initial meeting. A petition for permission/dispensation for the marriage will need to be requested from the Diocese of Richmond. If one party was married before (civilly or within the Catholic church), the priest will have to start an annulment process. Please be sure to bring

in court documents that will verify that the former marriage has ended. The priest can explain further details at your first meeting. *These two things are very time sensitive and have to be requested a few weeks/months before the wedding date.* We highly recommend that no firm date for a wedding be set until the end of the couple's first meeting with the priest.

All documentation must be turned in to our Parish office (if preparing here), before the initial meeting with the priest.

STEP 2: Initial meeting with the priest

The priest who will witness the marriage will meet to develop a relationship with the bride and groom. In this initial meeting, the priest will introduce the couple to the whole marriage preparation process.

Even if, an outside priest (from another parish) is officiating the wedding, the couple will need to meet with our pastor, to be granted permission to marry at Blessed Sacrament.

- **Annulment, Dispensation or Permission:** In special cases, an Annulment, Dispensation or Permission will be needed from the diocese, if one party was previously married, is non-Catholic or non-baptized. Annulment/Dispensation/Permission will be prepared by the priest to send to the diocese, during this initial meeting. The priest will need a copy of your divorce documents, if filing for Annulment.
- **Prepare-Enrich or FOCCUS:** The priest will Introduce the couple to the premarital inventory that will be used. The premarital inventory is not a test. It is an instrument designed to measure the strengths and weaknesses of a couple according to several core scales (communication, conflict resolution, financial management, style and habits, leisure activities, sexuality and intimacy, family and friends, spiritual beliefs, relationship roles, etc.). The results provide a snapshot of where this couple falls within each core scale at this point in their relationship. It is not a predictor of marital success or failure. The premarital inventory tool is best used early in the process, since it highly personalized toward the couple and will enhance their experiences in subsequent steps.

The priest will need to schedule a minimum of three meetings with the couple in order to review the results of the inventory, as required by the inventories themselves. This series of meetings provides an excellent opportunity for the priest to help the bride and groom assess the strengths of their relationship, and to identify where they can improve their relationship. It should be used in such a way as to give the best possible aid and formation for the couple preparing for their marriage. If necessary, additional meetings or adaptations may be appropriate depending on the needs of the couple (e.g., the inventory needs to be taken orally, significant issues arise that require meetings beyond the ordinary scope of the inventory, etc.).

- **Additional documents:** At the conclusion of this meeting or in a follow-up meeting, the priest will complete a **Prenuptial Investigation** to determine if there are any potential obstacles to the marriage (this involves individual interviews with both the bride and the groom). There will also be a form filled out by two witnesses from each party (in most cases it is the parents or siblings). The form is called the **Witness Affidavit/Freedom to Marry form**. The Affidavit form is usually filled out at a later time, closer to the wedding date.
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STEP 3: Wedding date coordinated with priest & parish wedding coordinator

The couple should have had their initial meeting with the priest and all baptismal and sealed documentation turned into the parish at this point, if not under special circumstances. At this point, your wedding date can be coordinated with the priest and the parish wedding coordinator. **A \$100 non-refundable deposit** is to be placed once you book your wedding date. **This deposit is deducted from your overall balance.** *The deposit can be paid in card, cash or check.* If you are providing a check, it can either be dropped off at the parish office or mailed to the following:

ATTN: Liz Prieto (Wedding Coordinator)
Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
154 N. Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Please make deposit check out to Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church.

Wedding Fees

A formal invoice will be created to reflect your balance. We ask that a valid email address be provided so that an electronic receipt can be provided to you. ***The full balance is due 30 days prior to your wedding date.*** *Failure to pay, could result in postponement or cancelation of your wedding.*

- **Preparation Fee**

(This fee can be paid using card, check, or cash.)

If you are being prepared through one of our priests but are getting married outside of the Diocese of Richmond, this fee pertains to you. This is to cover all postage fees that are included in mailing your marriage files.

\$50

- **Use of Sanctuary Fee**

(This fee can be paid using card, check, or cash.)

\$450 for Non-Parishioners

Voluntary Offering for Parishioners

If for any reason, other than emergency, the couple decides to reschedule their wedding date, a rescheduling fee of \$50 will be added to your invoice.

- **Parish Wedding Coordinator's Assistant Fee**

(cash only)

Required by our parish. This individual is only responsible for the procession, recession, the gathering of Liturgical materials for the ceremony and security of the church building. A wedding coordinator hired by the couple does not take the place of the assistant. The responsibilities of each are mutually exclusive. However, your personal wedding coordinator must abide by any decisions made by the priest, in which the wedding assistant will communicate to the party.

Onsite for rehearsal & ceremony only. No contact information is provided for this individual.

\$120

You may wish to make a personal gift to the officiating priest/deacon and altar servers (if applicable). The amount of the gift is at your discretion.

Keep in mind that each item listed on your invoice, will have to be paid separately (i.e. Sanctuary Use, wedding coordinator, musician, etc.)

Couples are encouraged to take an active role in planning their wedding. Planning the wedding is an opportunity for the bride and groom to express their faith. During this time, you can begin communication with our Parish Wedding Coordinator to solidify your ceremonial aspects of the wedding (from scriptures, to questions and walk throughs of the ceremonial space) for the day of. You can reach our Parish Wedding Coordinator at lprieto@bsccva.com.

STEP 4: The couple begins a marriage formation program approved by the diocese **Premarital Inventory:**

When a couple reaches the point in their marriage preparation when they are ready to begin a formal preparation session, there are two main options available to them in the Diocese of Richmond, however option #1 is at the discretion of the priest/pastor.

Option #1: Couple is prepared one-on-one by the priest

The couple may always be prepared by a priest at their local parish. This preparation is to be done one-on-one and not in a group setting.

Option #2: Couple participates in a marriage preparation program approved by the diocese

To ensure consistency in marriage preparation, there are currently two programs that the diocese approves:

- **UNVEILED** is the Diocesan of Richmond's Marriage Formation program. Couples attend a one-day, 12-hour Saturday session that blends video-based content with the testimony of married couples. The program is focused on presenting the Catholic vision of married love in a way that allows each couple to process the material and have discussions throughout the day.
 - Register for UNVEILED session <https://www.cdrcmfl.org/marriage-preparation-classes/classes-unveiled/>
- **ENGAGED ENCOUNTER** is an overnight retreat option that allows couples to spend a weekend together to focus more deeply on their relationship and communication as they prepare for marriage.
 - Register for an Engaged Encounter weekend <https://www.cdrcmfl.org/marriage-preparation-classes/engaged-encounter/>

Any other programs that may have previously been active in the diocese, parishes, or LPAs no longer fulfill this step.

For couples unable to be prepared using any of these methods (for instance, where there is a language barrier, military service interruptions, significant geographic distance between the bride and groom, or some other special circumstance), please contact the Center for Marriage, Family, and Life directly for further assistance and other available alternatives.

STEP 5: Marriage License

You are to acquire the marriage license from the County's District Clerks Office and are able to acquire the license up to 60 days prior to the actual date of your wedding. You will need the following to acquire the marriage license:

- Bride & Groom must both have valid ID (Driver's License or Passport)
- \$30 to pay for the marriage license.

Marriage license valid for only 60 days after getting the license.

Make sure to bring in your marriage license to the parish office, at least a week before the ceremony. The office will then fill out and send the marriage license back to the courthouse, after your wedding has taken place. If you would like a copy for your records, you will need to request one at the courthouse.

STEP 6: The couple meets with the priest or deacon for the final time

This meeting ideally may take place early enough that the couple will have at least one month to focus on their upcoming wedding with the peace of mind knowing that everything has been arranged. However, under special circumstances and by the direction of the Pastor/Priest, this timeframe may change. It is also a good time to address any questions the couple may have from their marriage preparation program, premarital inventory, or natural family planning class. If needed, time can be devoted to more specific planning of the wedding ceremony.

If not already received digitally, a ***book of readings (Together for Life)*** will be lent to the couple along with a ***ceremony information form*** to be filled out. These two things should be turned in ***a month before the wedding date*** to ensure documentation/readings/programs be finished on a timely manner. If this information is not received at least 2 weeks before the wedding, programs will not be printed off for the couple and scriptures will be handpicked by the wedding coordinator. *Also, it is the couple's responsibility to ensure that someone, from their party, will read the first and second readings, along with the universal prayers, at the ceremony.*

***Music must have been coordinated and set for the ceremony, by this time.*

STEP 7: The wedding rehearsal and wedding

Rehearsal:

- ***Scheduled at 5pm, the day before the wedding.***
- All members of the bridal party that are involved in the ceremony must be present for the rehearsal (*This includes: Readers, bridesmaids, groomsmen, parents, etc.*). ***If these individuals are not present at the time of rehearsal, they will not be able to participate in the ceremony. Anyone participating (whether Catholic or not) must be respectful to our customs and beliefs.***
- The Parish Wedding Coordinator's Assistant (*onsite for rehearsal/ceremony only*), alongside the priest, will lead the rehearsal together.

Wedding Day:

- **Arrival:**
 - ***All wedding ceremonies are scheduled at 1pm at Blessed Sacrament.***
 - The Parish Wedding Coordinator's Assistant will arrive at 12:00pm, to prepare the church.
 - Couples must arrive at least 30-45 minutes before 1:00pm. *Due to flexibility/schedule of the Parish Wedding Coordinator's Assistant and the priest, we cannot provide an earlier entrance into the church.*
 - **No Food or gum please.**

- Photography/Videography:
 - Must be discreet.
 - No flash photography during the ceremony.
 - **Sanctuary and aisle are off limits.** A permanent station is preferred.
(Photographers/Videographers should speak to the Parish Wedding Coordinator's Assistant before the ceremony begins, to determine where it is appropriate for them to stand/walk.)
 - **Time is limited to 20 minutes after the ceremony ends to take pictures.** *(This is due to the priest and Parish Wedding Coordinator's Assistant's flexibility/schedules and the need to clean/reorganize the church before Confessions begin.)*

- Decorations:
 - **Are Not Allowed** except for one or two **Altar Floral Arrangements**, which can be brought in at 12:00pm *(wedding day)*.

- Alcohol/Smoking:
 - Smoking is not permitted indoors or near any church entrances.
 - NO alcohol is permitted on the property.
 - The priest/deacon reserves the right to cancel the wedding in the event that alcohol is found on the premises, or if any member of the wedding party has been drinking prior to the wedding. **Use of alcohol prior to a wedding may invalidate the marriage.**

Musicians Available for Weddings (optional)

You can bring your own musician(s) or contact the following:

- Jessica Rodriguez (Cantor/Accompanist)**
\$200 *(cash or personal check)*
915-249-9541

- Janet Edmondson (Cantor/Accompanist)**
\$220 jedmondson@bsccva.com | 540-434-4341 x 111

Additional Musician(s)

**Booked through Janet Edmondson, Music Director of Blessed Sacrament.*

Maria Lorcas (Violinist) - **\$175** *(cash or personal check)*

****Please contact either musician as soon as you schedule your wedding date with the parish. Unless you chose Jessica Rodriguez to play at your parish wedding, music must be coordinated/approved by Janet Edmondson, Music Director of Blessed Sacrament, whether or not you have your own musicians.***

Parish Wedding Checklist

6-9 months before wedding:

- Groom's Baptismal Certificate "With Notations" provided to the parish office.
- Bride's Baptismal Certificate "With Notations" provided to the parish office.
- Scheduled an initial meeting with the priest.
- Wedding date coordinated with priest & parish wedding coordinator.
- Non-refundable deposit of \$100 provided.

3 months before wedding:

- Completed the pre-marital inventory program
(FOCCUS or PREPARE-ENRICH)
- Completed a marriage preparation program approved by the diocese
(UNVEILED or ENGAGE ENCOUNTER)
- Completed coordinating music with Janet Edmondson, Music Director. (*Even if you are providing your own musicians.*) jedmondson@bsccva.com or 540-434-4341 x 111
- Began or completed annulment process (*if applicable*)
**This is for individuals who have had a former marriage (civilly or with in the Catholic church)*

2 months before wedding:

- Acquired Marriage License from the County's District Clerks Office (60 days prior to the actual wedding date)
- Completed (Groom) Prenuptial Inquiry form with the priest.
- Completed (Bride) Prenuptial Inquiry form with the priest.
- Completed (Groom (2 witnesses)) Witness Affidavit/Freedom to Marry forms with the priest.
- Completed (Bride (2 witnesses)) Witness Affidavit/Freedom to Marry forms with the priest.
- Completed dispensation/permission form (*if applicable*)
**This is for individuals who are from a different religion or non-baptized*

1 month before wedding:

- Paid remainder of "Use of Sanctuary Fee" with cash, card or check made out to Blessed Sacrament.
See invoice.
- Paid "Parish Wedding Coordinator's Assistant Fee" with cash.
See invoice.
- Paid "Music Fees" with cash or check made out to each individual involved.
See invoice.
- Completed Wedding Information form and returned to the parish office. Can be scanned and emailed to lprieto@bsccva.com