

ST. VERONICA CATHOLIC CHURCH

3460 CENTREVILLE ROAD
CHANTILLY, VIRGINIA 20151

703-773-2000

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WWW.STVERONICA.NET

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Dear Friend in Christ,

Congratulations on your engagement!

I am very happy that St. Veronica parish will have a role in the beginning of your married life. Your life will be a beacon of hope to those who wonder if love is real. The love you share with each other every day will be the expression of your vocation and the manifestation of the love God has for each of us. Marriage is the way God will make you a saint.

In order to assist you with your marriage and wedding preparation, this booklet has been prepared for you. Hopefully it will answer many of your questions. I would ask you to read the entire packet and see that the following forms are completed and returned to the Parish Office prior to your first meeting:

Adherence to Wedding Guidelines

Marriage Preparation Questionnaire

Format for the Simple Ceremony (only if your wedding will be a Simple Ceremony)

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to call the Parish Office for further assistance.

May God who has begun this good work in you bring it to fulfillment. Mary, Our Hope, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us!

In Christ,

Father Kleinmann, Pastor

*Attachments: Adherence to Wedding Guidelines
Marriage Preparation Questionnaire
Wedding Preparation Booklet*

St. Veronica Catholic Church
ADHERENCE TO WEDDING GUIDELINES

This signed form and the Marriage Preparation Questionnaire that follows must be returned to the Parish Office before you can schedule your initial marriage preparation meeting.
Additionally, if the Simple Ceremony is required in your case, the Format for the Simple Ceremony form must also be signed and returned at the same time.

We have read the wedding guidelines for St. Veronica Catholic Church and will honor them. In particular, we understand:

- The commitment we will make to all phases of marriage preparation;
- The importance of honesty and candor;
- That the wedding date cannot be set immediately because the priest must first establish that we are free to marry, understand the wedding vows, and are ready to make them;
- The necessity of providing new Baptismal Certificates, Affidavits of Freedom, and other documentation for the wedding file;
- That a visiting priest needs the permission of the pastor of St. Veronica and authorization from the Commonwealth of Virginia in order to officiate at a valid and legal wedding;
- The spirit of cooperation that is required in order to prepare for a sacred ritual of the Church;
- That modest dress is required by the entire wedding party;
- That we may not remove the altar flowers after our wedding;
- That the musicians are selected and scheduled by the Music Director;
- That we must maintain a spirit of reverence in the church during the rehearsal and before and after the wedding.

Bride _____ Groom _____

Date _____ Date _____

Gina McCue, Wedding Coordinator _____

Date _____

CATHOLIC CHURCH
ST. VERONICA 

Marriage Preparation Questionnaire *(please print)*

Today's Date: _____

Bride's Name: (first, middle, last) _____

Are you registered at St Veronica? _____ Parish ID # _____

Or are your parents registered here? _____ Parish ID # _____

Bride's Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Email: _____ Bride's Birth Date: _____ Age: _____

Bride's Religion: _____ Baptized: _____ Confirmed: _____

Groom's Name (first, middle, last) _____

Are you registered at St. Veronica? _____ Parish ID # _____

Are your parents registered here? _____ Parish ID # _____

Groom's Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Email: _____ Groom's Birth Date: _____ Age: _____

Groom's Religion: _____ Baptized: _____ Confirmed: _____

Is this the Bride's First Marriage? _____ Is this the Groom's first Marriage? _____

**** (If the answer is "no" for either Bride or Groom, please answer the questions on Page 4)**

Wedding Information

Will the wedding take place at St. Veronica Church? _____ Date desired? _____

Do you desire a Mass? _____ Simple Ceremony? _____

If the Wedding will not be at St. Veronica, when and where will it be?

Date: _____

Name of Church, City, State: _____

Marriage Preparation Questionnaire (please print)

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1. Where did the first Marriage take place? (Location, City, State)

2. Did a priest or deacon witness the wedding? _____

3. How did the Marriage end? _____

4. Was an annulment received? _____

5. If so, in which Diocese? _____

6. Remarks, Special Requests, etc. _____

***Please return completed form(s) to:
St. Veronica Parish Office
3460 Centreville Road
Chantilly, VA 20151***

St. Veronica Catholic Church Wedding Preparation Booklet



The Betrothal of the Virgin, Pietro Perugino

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MARRIAGE

1. What's the difference between a Catholic marriage and other marriages?

A Catholic marriage encompasses everything involved in any marriage: the irrevocable union of a man and a woman in exclusive, intimate love. Jesus restored the original nature of marriage, and the Church alone continues to hold the same standard for all marriages, that they be permanent and naturally ordered to the procreation of children.

Our Lord also raised the marriages of Christians to the dignity of a sacrament. As a sacrament, marriage communicates sanctifying grace and the indwelling of the Holy Trinity. Whereas in a natural marriage the husband and wife contract a marriage with each other, in a sacramental marriage the husband and wife are the ministers of the sacrament of marriage to each other.

2. What's the difference between a sacramental marriage and a natural marriage?

A marriage between two baptized Christians is a sacrament. Otherwise, when two non-Christians marry each other or when a Christian marries a non-Christian it is a natural marriage.

3. Why does the Church have rules about marriage and weddings?

Marriage is a vocation, the most important lifework for those who embark upon it. For Christians, it is the manner in which their public life of belonging to the Lord is made specific and concrete. It is the primary way they will care for the sick and evangelize the world.

At first, since only Christians insist on the permanence of marriage and believe that marriage is a path to heaven, Christians were allowed only to marry Christians. Originally that's about all the Church insisted upon. Weddings took place in private or publicly, at Mass and outside of Mass. Marrying a non-Christian did require the special permission of the Church. As long as both husband and wife exchanged vows with each other, that's all that mattered.

By the end of the first millennium, the Church faced the problem of secret marriages that would later be abandoned. Over the objection of family and Church, the spouse who was abandoning the marriage could claim that if nobody witnessed the exchange of vows, nobody could hold them accountable. Over the course of the next few centuries the Church made it mandatory for members of the Church to be married in a manner that was witnessed by the Church. Even though that law makes life a little difficult sometimes, you can understand why it exists.

4. What does it mean to be “married in the Church”?

It simply means that the Catholic(s) is (are) married with the permission of the Church. It doesn't refer to the fact that the wedding physically took place inside a Catholic Church.

REGISTRATION

5. How can I sign up to get married?

Contact the Parish Office once you are sure that you are free to marry and well-suited for marriage *and* after you have found someone of the opposite sex who is so similarly disposed *and* when you both are ready to marry each other.

6. Who may be married at St. Veronica?

- 1) **Parishioners:** any Catholic not otherwise impeded by Divine law or Church law, who lives within the territorial boundaries of St. Veronica is a parishioner and may be married at this church. It is not necessary that both the bride and the groom be parishioners, but at least one of them must be. A parishioner who does not actually live within the parish boundaries, but who is a registered parishioner still needs the permission of the pastor of the parish in which he/she actually resides. That pastor's written permission needs to be submitted **prior to any arrangements being made.**
- 2) **Children of parishioners:** any Catholic, whose parents are actively participating members of St. Veronica, **IF** the pastor of the parish in which they reside will give his **written permission prior to any wedding arrangements being made.**

7. May I marry a non-Catholic?

Yes, if you make a firm commitment to continue to practice your faith, which includes baptizing your children and doing your best to raise them Catholic, presuming there is good reason to believe that the other party will not interfere with your exercise of religious freedom.

8. May a member of an Eastern Catholic Church marry here?

Only with explicit written permission from their proper Church authority.

9. Must one be in full communion with the current Pope in order to be married here?

Yes. However, a Catholic in good standing may marry a schismatic or apostate with written permission from the Bishop.

CELEBRANT

10. Who will be the celebrant of my wedding?

Technically, you and your fiancé will be the celebrants of the wedding (see No.1) since your exchange of vows brings the marriage into existence. Your vows will be witnessed by one of the clerics of the parish. You may ask one of the priests to prepare you for marriage and officiate at your wedding. If you will have a Nuptial Mass (wedding Mass) the same priest or another priest of your choosing will offer the Mass.

For the sake of simplicity, let it be clear that any further reference to “priest” or “celebrant” applies equally to a deacon except for contexts that refer to the offering of Holy Mass.

11. May I invite another priest to officiate at our wedding at St. Veronica?

Ordinarily, one of the parish priests would 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 from the pastor of St. Veronica as soon as a date has been set. Should the priest you choose be stationed in the Diocese of Arlington, he must assume full responsibility for all marriage preparation and submit the completed wedding folder to St. Veronica parish 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 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 wedding void and you will not be legally married.**

LOCATION OF THE WEDDING

12. May I be married at a Catholic church other than St. Veronica?

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 usually do not officiate at marriages outside of St. Veronica.**

13. May I be married in a non-Catholic church, a synagogue, a mosque, etc.?

Since marriage begins with a promise to God and before God, Church law requires that marriages are normally celebrated within a Catholic church in the presence of a priest or deacon, and two witnesses. When a Catholic has permission to marry a non-Catholic (see No. 7), the Bishop may dispense from the obligation to marry according to the Catholic ritual, especially if the couple’s wedding would be conducted according to the religious custom of the non-Catholic. The priest who prepares the couple requests this permission.

It is never allowed to perform two wedding ceremonies (e.g. Catholic and non-Catholic) since it is the exchange of vows that marks the definite beginning of the marriage. When permission is granted for a non-Catholic wedding ceremony, your deacon or priest is not allowed to perform a Catholic wedding ceremony.

14. May our wedding ceremony be celebrated in a home, a garden, a hall, etc.?

Not typically, for the reasons stated above. Permission to do so has to come from the Bishop

of the Diocese where the wedding will take place. Even when a Catholic marries a non-Christian it is not common that permission is granted for the wedding not to take place in a sacred space.

SCHEDULING A DATE

15. When can I schedule a date, and why does it seem to take so long?

As soon as the priest preparing you knows that you are free to marry and is convinced that you understand the wedding vows and are ready to commit to them, you can set a wedding date. That sometimes takes a little bit of time. (See No. 18).

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 made his determination. This is generally not possible until after the FOCCUS Test (see No. 21) has been reviewed and the Pre-Nuptial Investigation is completed. Therefore, **arrangements for a reception hall must not be finalized until the priest confirms the official date.** Couples should therefore seek to fulfill all these requirements as soon as possible.

16. On what days and at what times can I get married at St. Veronica?

Start times for weddings are normally scheduled for Saturdays at 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. so as to fit comfortably between morning confessions and afternoon confessions.

Rehearsals for Saturday weddings take place on the preceding Friday evening at the 5:00 p.m.

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

Wedding Masses are **not** celebrated at St. Veronica **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.

For weddings that are to take place during the penitential seasons of ADVENT (four weeks before Christmas) and LENT (six 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

17. What is marriage preparation, and why do we have to do it?

Marriage preparation is less like counseling and more like spiritual direction. Someone once said that marriage will either break you or make you a saint. Since nobody ever became a saint by accident, it would be good to have some guidance.

18. When should I begin making arrangements for a wedding at St. Veronica?

Try to begin making arrangements as soon as you get engaged. The Diocese of Arlington requires a **MINIMUM** of six months of preparation for marriage.

19. What does the six-month marriage preparation process required by the Diocese actually involve?

- 1) Meet with the priest with whom arrangements are being made **AT LEAST** four times. We urge you to 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.
- 2) Attend an additional weekend program sponsored by the Diocese; you may choose from:
 - i) **Conferences for the Engaged** (these options will be explained in brochures you will receive at your first session with the priest),
 - ii) **Engaged Encounter**
- 3) 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 contraception is gravely sinful. A schedule of dates for these classes is provided in a brochure you should receive at your first session with the priest. Be sure to ask for it in case the priest forgets. You also can look online for a schedule of classes at www.ccli.org.

The non-Catholic party in an inter-faith marriage should be aware of the Catholic spouse's obligation to refrain from all contraception and be willing to be supportive and cooperative in this resolve.

20. 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. However, please remember that priests also have busy schedules with confessions, Mass, meetings and classes scheduled in the evenings. Just as you are willing to meet with florists, dressmakers, caterers, etc., during their regular, "9 to 5" business hours, please be willing to try to meet with the priest during his regular office hours. Marriage preparation appointments are scheduled between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm Monday through Friday. A limited number of Saturday morning appointments may be available.

21. What do the sessions with the priest involve?

The sessions with the priest will deal with:

- 1) the required paperwork and documentation which will help the priest determine that the couple is free to marry and capable of marriage,
- 2) the administration of the FOCCUS test (an indicator of the depth of your communication) and point-by-point consideration of the areas of disagreement,
- 3) the Church's understanding and appreciation of marriage as a vocation along with its challenges and blessings, and
- 4) the actual planning of the wedding ritual.

22. What if my fiancé is not a Catholic, or not baptized; how will this affect our preparation?

Many happy marriages begin with one spouse who is not Catholic. It can't be denied, though, that there are some particular struggles that accompany differences of religion. There may be another meeting and some additional reading to address the matter.

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 (see No. 7). 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):

- 1) That he/she is prepared to remove dangers of falling away from the practice of the Catholic faith, and
- 2) 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 adaptations are made to the wedding ritual (see No. 31) so as to reflect the religious faith that the two do have in common.

23. 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 is not recognized by the Catholic Church as a marriage in the eyes of God (see No. 3). Thus, when such a couple comes to us, their Catholic ceremony will be considered as though it is 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 will involve only a “simple ceremony” (see No. 25).

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

Out of sincere love and concern for the cohabiting couple, as there are some serious issues involved with such a situation, 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.

Nevertheless, the priest will not deny you 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. Veronica to celebrate such a wedding in a way similar to a “convalidation” of a civil marriage: as a “simple ceremony” (see No. 25).

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 may be postponed or even cancelled.** (see No. 29).

25. What is meant by a “simple ceremony”?

A “simple ceremony” refers to a special manner of conducting a Catholic wedding ritual in the case of couples who already are civilly married or cohabiting. Some couples have had a wedding ceremony already but without permission of the Church (see No. 3, 13). The simple ceremony provides for a simple and dignified exchange of vows in a manner that allows everyone to avoid any awkwardness. Nobody is put in the position of celebrating the purported beginning of something that for all intents and purposes has already begun. Practically speaking, a simple ceremony is generally *less* elaborate and *more* subdued in tone and appearance than the usual wedding ceremony. It could take place in the priest’s office, but it may be celebrated in the church as a ceremony, not as a Mass. Appropriate dress for a simple ceremony is semi-formal. Modest flowers, music, and decorations are permitted. If a your wedding will be a simple ceremony, please take a moment now to find the Format for the Simple Ceremony in the back of this booklet, because the guidelines for a simple ceremony differ from the guidelines that follow. Please read through the policy, sign it, and submit it to the Wedding Coordinator prior to your first meeting with the priest.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

26. What paperwork does the Church require?

- 1) 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 copy of your **Baptismal Certificate “with notations”**. A recent copy is required because the notations include records of any sacrament (with the exception of Confession) having been received since Baptism. Our first step in establishing your freedom to marry is making sure that there is no record in the Catholic Church of your having been married. Then submit the original certificate you receive (NOT a photocopy of it) to your priest. A Catholic party is also required to provide copies of his/her Confirmation Certificate, unless noted on back of the Baptismal Certificate.

- 2) 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.
- 3) Each party will be given two copies (a total of four) of an **Affidavit of Freedom**. These also serve as proof of each party's freedom to marry. They roughly equate to a minister's request at the wedding: "If anyone knows why these two should not marry, speak now or forever hold your peace." The forms may be completed by your parents, other close relatives, or those who can vouch for your readiness as well as your parents' approval. In order to be an official document for your marriage file, **each affidavit must be signed in front of a notary, whether it be a notary public or a Catholic priest or deacon.**
- 4) The priest with whom arrangements are being made will fill out a questionnaire (**Pre-Nuptial Investigation**) by asking the parties to testify, under oath, that there are no impediments to their proposed marriage.
- 5) The priest will ask the parties to fill out a pre-marital inventory (**FOCCUS test**), the purpose of which is to assist the couple to evaluate their communication.
- 6) When you attend the **Conference for the Engaged or equivalent program**, you will be given a certificate that your priest will add to your file.
- 7) When you finish attending the required course in **Natural Family Planning**, you will be given a certificate that your priest will add to your file.
- 8) If either the bride or groom (whether they are Catholic or not) has *ever* been married before in *any* type of ceremony (Protestant, Jewish, civil, etc.) or under "common law", proof must be submitted regarding the annulment of that prior bond (i.e., a **decree of nullity** 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.
- 9) 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**.
- 10) The parties must provide to the priest who will officiate at their wedding a Civil License 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.**

27. 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. Veronica Parish, this means the FAIRFAX COUNTY COURTHOUSE. Also, please note:

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

28. Do you still do the "Wedding Banns"?

The public announcement of a forthcoming marriage between two **Catholics** for three successive Sundays may still be observed. This announcement could be published in the parish bulletin of the bride and the groom.

29. What other requirements should we be concerned about during this process?

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of **honesty and candor**. Unfortunately, occasionally a couple will feel it necessary to hide important information from the priest or from each other. Such untruthfulness not only casts doubt on all the documents and statements given by the couple, it also seriously undermines the whole process of discernment and preparation. Since it is the priest's obligation to assure that the marriage begins in justice and freedom, any discovery of deception in any important matter may result in **postponement of your wedding** (see No. 24).

Perhaps the most important aspect of this preparation process is your **openness to becoming not just a good person, but a saint**. Your future happiness depends on the joy you have in obediently serving the well being of others. Now is the best time to renew your commitment to daily prayer, Sunday Mass, and monthly confession.

THE NUPTIAL MASS

30. Who will help us plan our wedding at St. Veronica?

While the priest is certainly happy to help you with your plans, the Wedding Coordinator is the one who will help you with the detailed planning of your wedding ceremony or Nuptial Mass. She is familiar with all of our policies and preferences and can answer all of your questions regarding the wedding. Furthermore, the Wedding Coordinator will be present at the rehearsal and at the wedding itself to make sure everything runs smoothly. You may reach the Wedding Coordinator at 703-773-2000.

In addition, you will work with our parish Music Director, Miss Emily Mason (703-773-2009), in planning the music for the wedding. Please contact her as soon as you have set a date with the priest. She also is familiar with the policies and preferences of the parish with regard to music and can give you sound advice and direction.

The generous and professional contributions of our Wedding Coordinator, Music Director, and other parish staff have proven to be invaluable. 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.

31. Should our wedding 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, together, may worship the God Who made them and unites them in Holy Matrimony and so that they 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, since the non-Catholic spouse may not receive Holy Communion (see “Invitation to Holy Communion” below). A wedding ceremony without Mass focuses on what the newly married couple shares in faith, rather than highlighting their differences.

32. 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 Invitation to Holy Communion **MUST** be printed in the program:

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

FOR CATHOLICS

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (Code of Canon Law, 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

FOR OUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS

We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (John 17:21).

Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are not ordinarily admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (Code of Canon Law, 844 § 4). Members of the Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Catholic Church are urged to respect the discipline of their own Churches. According to Roman Catholic discipline, the Code of Canon Law does not object to the reception of Communion by Christians of these Churches (Code of Canon Law, 844 § 3).

FOR NON-CHRISTIANS

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.

FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

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

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33. Do we still need to go to Mass the next day?

Yes, if your wedding takes place on a Saturday morning or early afternoon, you still must attend Holy Mass the next Sunday. Only when a Mass on Saturday begins in the evening could it satisfy the obligation to observe the Lord's Day.

THE WEDDING RITUALS

34. How can I personalize my wedding?

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. The Church has its own Rituals that allow the faith of both bride and groom to be expressed while ensuring that those gathered will be drawn towards the Lord. A

Catholic wedding is not about you as much as it is about what God is doing through you and for you.

Consequently, while you are free to make decisions regarding various options in the Rite (e.g., Scripture passages, blessings, etc.), we will also very carefully adhere to 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. Veronica.

At your first meeting the priest will give you a book containing the options for the readings and prayers of the wedding; this will also contain a form on which you may indicate your choices. Most importantly, try to get to know your priest and let him get to know you so that it will be a friend who is preaching at your wedding.

With the help of the Music Director, you will also be able to select the music for your wedding. Please coordinate your decorations and flowers with the Wedding Coordinator.

35. May I incorporate pious customs into the wedding, 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. Veronica), as long as they are situated in the appropriate place in the wedding and do not tend to dominate or distract from the liturgy. Practices, however, which are not parts of the Catholic tradition of piety or which are overly distracting will not be permitted.

36. May the Unity Candle be used during the wedding?

The origins of the Unity Candle seem to be found in the secular wedding industry (e.g. Hallmark) rather than the pious custom of Christians. In any case, it is not part of the Catholic tradition. 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.”

In the Catholic Church, candles in the sanctuary are used to represent the presence of God. The tabernacle lamp and the altar candles correspond to the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. You will notice that candles representing individuals' prayers are located on the votive stands outside the sanctuary.

Thus, the Unity Candle may not be used at St. Veronica. 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.

37. What are some of the Catholic wedding customs that I might not have seen before?

You should ask the priest about a betrothal ceremony. Also, the entrance procession recommended by the Church for weddings is different from current popular practice. If you

are interested in learning more about this, please ask the priest preparing you or the Music Director. Some Catholic cultures also maintain their own particular wedding customs. You should also ask about receiving a Papal Blessing on your wedding day as well as public audiences that the Holy Father grants to newlyweds. You also might want to think about having a House Blessing after you return from the honeymoon.

Try not to fall into the trap of assuming that what everyone else is doing is traditional, let alone something that you are also supposed to do. For instance, it is difficult to find a Christian foundation for giving away the bride, not seeing each other before the wedding, throwing the garter, and the ringing of glasses for the husband and wife to kiss... just to name a few examples.

38. May I prepare and distribute a “program” at my wedding?

Certainly. 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 wedding; that is, it may not contain art or poetry that is incompatible with Christian faith. It should include a schedule showing the order of the ceremony or Mass, and it often lists the names of the wedding party, family members, those taking liturgical functions, the priest, and the musicians. 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 Nuptial Mass, the “Invitation to Holy Communion” **must always** be printed in the program (see No. 32).

In order to avoid confusion or error, **all programs must be submitted to the Music Director to review with the priest at least one (1) month before the wedding.** The program may not be printed without the priest’s approval.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE WEDDING

39. How many people may I have in my wedding party?

At least two (2) witnesses (Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor) must be present in the wedding party to witness your vows. Wedding parties larger than five couples (including the Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor) are *strongly discouraged* due to the spectacle that they can become.

40. How many people may I invite to serve in “liturgical functions” at the wedding?

The Music Director will serve as the cantor/soloist. You may invite different individuals (all must be practicing Catholics) to fulfill the following liturgical functions,

- 1) A reader for the 1st reading
- 2) A reader for the 2nd reading
- 3) A reader for the General Intercessions
- 4) Two (2) presenters (bearers) of the offertory gifts (only at a Mass)
- 5) **Altar Boys** (at least two for a Nuptial Mass and one for a wedding ceremony) are normally taken from St. Veronica’s regular Altar Boys. **You must** contact the Wedding Coordinator two weeks prior to the wedding to schedule the Altar Boys. Outside Servers are normally not permitted.

41. May I invite a non-Catholic minister to participate in my wedding ceremony?

In the wedding of a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, where a Nuptial Mass is **NOT** celebrated, a non-Catholic Christian minister may be invited to participate but not co-officiate in the wedding ceremony. These arrangements must be made with the officiating priest and approved by the pastor of St. Veronica.

42. May I invite non-Catholic lay people to fulfill liturgical functions in my wedding?

Anyone invited to fulfill the liturgical functions of readers, gift bearers and altar servers **must be a practicing Catholic** (or Eastern Orthodox Christian) whose good qualities of Christian life, faith, and morals recommend them to this function. Anyone asked to read at the wedding (i.e., Scripture and intercessions) should also have some experience at public reading/speaking.

43. May I invite non-Catholics to stand in my wedding party?

Absolutely! The Best Man, Maid of Honor, bridesmaids, groomsmen, and ushers need not be Catholic.

44. May children be included in our wedding party?

You are *strongly discouraged* from allowing children below the age of reason (7 years old) to serve as ring bearer, flower girl, etc., since very young children often disrupt and distract rather than enhance the ritual, especially during the wedding procession. If the children are not able to display the necessary demeanor at the rehearsal, the priest may have to exclude them from the wedding party. Finally, any children involved in the procession must be supervised by an adult at all times.

45. Are there any rules about what the wedding party may wear?

It is customary for the bride to wear white as a sign of purity. The white garment worn at baptism symbolized holiness in just the same way that Sacred Scripture describes the angels and saints robed in white; the white dress worn at First Holy Communion also can serve as a model for the wedding dress, both in symbolism and style. Similarly, altar boys, deacons and priests wear the white surplice and the alb, which specifically refer to having been washed clean in the Blood of the Lamb.

Wedding guests would do well to recall the parable told by Our Lord about their counterparts who were unceremoniously ushered out because of their inappropriate attire. Their apparel also should fit not only the solemnity of the day but also the sacredness of the church. Church attire, while being appropriately fashionable, must always be **modest** and **chaste**. We should want neither to attract attention to ourselves nor distract others in prayer. Go out of your way to help people worship God and not covet or envy your body. Unfortunately many of today's fashions attempt to do just the opposite. Here are some specific guidelines:

A wedding dress with sleeves is both elegant and unique. Brides and their attendants must cover their shoulders with a jacket or shawl in the church for the wedding if their dresses are strapless or otherwise expose bare shoulders, the back, or waist. Low necklines designed to

show cleavage are not permissible in the church. Hemlines above the knees and slits which rise above the knees must be avoided (even by men in kilts)

These rules must also be observed by all those who serve in liturgical functions (such as readers and gift bearers).

Appropriately modest dress should also be **observed at the rehearsal**. Please tell your guests that because the air conditioning is very cold, they might need sweaters.

46. Where does the wedding party dress and prepare for the wedding?

The bride and her attendants should dress before arriving, and they should arrive at the church no later than **20 minutes** prior to the start of the wedding. The bridesmaids, maid of honor, the bride, and the mother of the bride may wait in the Adoration Chapel (the area behind the pastor's confessional.)

The groom and his groomsmen are asked to arrive no later than **30 minutes** prior to the wedding. The groom and his groomsmen are asked to wait in the "main sacristy" located to the left of the sanctuary.

St. Veronica Church is not responsible for any personal items left behind. Please designate someone to collect all of your belongings so that you will not be burdened by cleaning up after the wedding!

MUSIC

47. May we choose our favorite songs for our wedding?

A wedding (whether within the context of Holy Mass or not) is a sacred service; 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. Familiar pieces like the Bridal Chorus ("Here Comes the Bride") from Wagner's *Lohengrin*, the Wedding March from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer's Night Dream* are not only secular, but their context actually mocks the sanctity of marriage. Recorded music is also never permitted during any liturgy of the Church.

The parish Music Director, Emily Mason, will help you select music that will be both beautiful and appropriate for your Catholic wedding. Therefore, please remember to contact the parish Music Director (703-773-2009) immediately after setting your date with the priest.

You may wish to schedule the joyful celebration of your wedding outside of the penitential seasons of Advent (the four weeks before Christmas) and Lent (the six weeks before Easter), because during these seasons, the music and decorations must also be of a penitential nature. If you do choose to schedule your wedding during a penitential season, however, the Music Director will advise you on what is appropriate.

48. Who may serve as musicians?

The Parish Organist will play for your wedding, and the Music Director will serve as the cantor and soloist. Outside musicians are normally not permitted.

49. Is there a fee for the music?

The organist, cantor, and any other musicians' fees are separate from any offering made to the priest or church. The Cantor's fee is \$250 and the Music Director's fee is \$150. To make sure everything goes smoothly, checks made out directly to the musicians must be submitted to the Parish Office one week prior to the wedding. These fees, however, assume that the wedding begins on time. Additional charges will apply if the wedding begins late.

WEDDING DECORATIONS

50. Are there any norms regarding flowers and decorations?

Please consult with our Wedding Coordinator when planning your wedding flowers and decorations. This consultation should take place **BEFORE any final arrangements are made** regarding flowers or decorations.

Provided that your wedding is not taking place during a penitential season, 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. Flowers in the sanctuary should be arranged so as not to restrict the movement or visibility of the priest, ministers, or the wedding party and as long as they not disrupt the lines for Holy Communion. **No flowers are to be placed on or in front of the altar, and no arrangements may be higher than the top of the altar (34 inches).** Considering these height restrictions, flowers will be placed on the floor and not on pedestals or stands.

Any flowers placed in the sanctuary are considered your gifts to Our Lord and are not to be removed after the wedding. Please take this into account when ordering 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 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 through the Wedding Coordinator.

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

51. When may the flowers and other decorations be delivered and set up in the church?

Flowers may be delivered to the church no sooner than one hour before the wedding. Any boxes with flowers should be properly marked ("bride", "bridesmaid", etc.). Decorations and flowers may also be set up in the church one hour before the wedding.

52. May we use rice, birdseed, flower petals, etc.?

St. Veronica does not have a full-time custodian on staff to clean up immediately following weddings. Though popular, blowing bubbles, throwing rice, or any other substance 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

53. Are there any norms regarding photographs at the wedding?

We do allow candid photographs during the wedding Mass or ceremony. It is also permitted to have your wedding videotaped. We urge photographers to exercise good judgment and common sense out of respect for the solemnity of the occasion, and at all times accept direction from the Wedding Coordinator and the priest.

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

- 1) No flash photography (or strobe/movie lighting) is allowed;
- 2) The photographer/videographer is asked to keep his/her visible movement to a minimum;
- 3) They may never walk in the area in front of the sanctuary or enter into the sanctuary;
- 4) They may never take a position during the wedding which would distract the assembly or obstruct anyone's view of the couple, the readers, or the priest;
- 5) They may not stop the procession; and
- 6) They may take candid shots from the back of the church.

All photographers/videographers must read this policy and sign the statements included at the end of this booklet.

54. May we take pictures in the church after the wedding?

We encourage couples to take group photographs at the reception. It may also be possible to receive permission from the Wedding Coordinator to take pictures in the Parish Hall for a few minutes after the wedding. Since the altar is not intended as a backdrop for photos and out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament, posing for pictures at the altar after the wedding is *discouraged*.

If a couple does receive permission from the pastor and Wedding Coordinator to pose at the altar for photos, **the church must be cleared within an hour and a half (1 ½ hours) after the start time for the wedding. This time limit is strictly enforced.** We also remind the couple and the photographer that they are still in the presence of Our Lord, truly present in the Tabernacle. During picture taking, the wedding guests and photographer must maintain an atmosphere of reverence that will not disrupt prayer in the church.

55. Are there any rules for guests with cameras?

Guests are also asked to observe the above rules for photography.

OTHER CONCERNS AFTER THE WEDDING

56. How long may we stay in the church after the wedding?

For an 11:00 a.m. wedding the church must be cleared by 12:30 p.m. For a 1:30 p.m. wedding the church must be cleared no later than 3:00 p.m. due to the beginning of Confessions, followed by the Saturday Evening Mass. Thank you for your cooperation in this regard.

57. May we have a “receiving line” after the wedding?

Because of the limited space and time constraints, **no receiving line is allowed at the church.**

58. 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.). Please delegate this task to someone so that you will not be burdened by cleaning up after your wedding! **Any flowers placed in the sanctuary are considered your gifts to Our Lord, and are not to be removed after the wedding.**

WEDDING FEES

59. 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. Veronica. Many couples, however, wish to make **customary donations** to the priest and/or parish, and such voluntary donations are greatly appreciated. Checks for such donations should be made out directly to the priest and/or parish, as the case may be.

For **non-parishioners, there is a \$750 facility use fee**, payable to St. Veronica Catholic Church. \$500 is due to the Parish Office when the date is reserved; the balance is due one week prior to the wedding.

Fees for the services of the following individuals are also due to the Parish Office one week prior to the wedding. Checks should be made out directly to the individuals listed below and NOT to St. Veronica.

Music Director and Organist	Emily Mason	\$275 (harp additional \$50)
Singer	Names and fees available from Music Director	
Wedding Coordinator	Gina McCue	\$75
Altar Boys (contact Wedding Coordinator to schedule)		\$10 each

Two altar boys are required for a Nuptial Mass and one for a wedding ceremony.

60. If the priest at St. Veronica prepares us but the wedding is in another city or state, is there a fee for his assistance?

Again, there is no fee for this pastoral service. Couples, however, may choose to give a gift to the priest in appreciation of his efforts.

St. Veronica Catholic Church

FORMAT FOR THE SIMPLE CEREMONY

A “simple ceremony” refers to a special manner of conducting a wedding for couples whose married life has already begun by virtue of either 1) being civilly married or 2) publicly cohabiting before the wedding. It resolves the discontinuity of living the married life without having exchanged irrevocable wedding vows. The simple ceremony provides for a simple and dignified exchange of vows in a manner that allows everyone to avoid any awkwardness. Nobody is put in the position of celebrating the purported beginning of something that for all intents and purposes has already begun.

Practically speaking, a simple ceremony is *less* elaborate and *more* subdued in tone and appearance than the usual wedding ceremony. It could take place in the priest’s office but the couple may request that it be celebrated in the church. Here are some specific guidelines:

- **Form of the Ritual:** The ceremony is conducted without a Nuptial Mass.
- **Guests:** A limited number of guests may be invited.
- **Wedding Party:** The wedding party will consist of only the best man and the maid/matron of honor. No others (groomsmen, bridesmaids, flower girls, ring bearer, etc.) are permitted.
- **Wedding Apparel:** Appropriate dress for a simple ceremony is semi-formal, i.e., a suit for the groom and a modest evening dress for the bride.
- **Procession:** There is no procession. The couple takes their places in the front of the church before the ceremony begins without any formality.
- **Decoration:** Only limited, subdued decorations will be allowed. For example, a few simple flower arrangements are appropriate (especially a bride’s bouquet and others which may be left in the church as a gift to God), while a “runner” would not be appropriate.
- **Music:** Music is permitted along the same guidelines that apply for all liturgies during Lent: as assistance to congregational singing. While there is no procession, there may be an opening and closing hymn. There would be no prelude, no postlude, and no other instrumental solos.
- **Readings:** The couple selects the readings according to No. 34 above.
- **Devotion to Mary:** The couple may make a customary devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- **Pictures:** Pictures are permitted along the same guidelines that apply for other weddings at St. Veronica.

This is the policy of the priests of this parish and is consistent with the instructions of the Bishop of the Diocese of Arlington. *Please do not ask for an exception in your case.*

Signature of Bride	Date	Signature of Groom	Date
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St. Veronica Catholic Church
WEDDING PLANNING SHEET

Please return this form to the Wedding Coordinator at least three months prior to your wedding.

Bride _____

Phone: H _____ W _____

Email _____

Groom _____

Phone: H _____ W _____

Email _____

Date of Wedding: _____ Time of Wedding: _____

Time of rehearsal: _____

Celebrant: _____ Mass, Ceremony, or Simple Ceremony? _____

Programs? Yes No (Program must be submitted to Music Director prior to printing.)

Devotion to Mary? Yes No

Offertory procession? Yes No (for Nuptial Mass, only)

Who will be bringing up the gifts? _____

Altar boys: (Please contact the Wedding Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the wedding to schedule.)

Number of guests: _____ % of Catholics receiving communion: _____

The entrance procession recommended by the Church for weddings is different from current popular practice. If you are interested in learning more about this, please ask the priest preparing you or the Music Director.

Special guests: (i.e., grandmothers or stepmothers)

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____

Groom's Mother and escort: _____ / _____

Bride's Mother and escort: _____ / _____

Bridesmaids and Groomsman:

Please list in order of the procession and do not include Maid of Honor/Best Man here.

1. _____ / _____

2. _____ / _____

3. _____ / _____

4. _____ / _____

Best Man: _____

Maid/Matron of Honor: _____

Bride Escort: _____

(Indicate whether your dad/uncle/brother/step-father or both parents and list the name(s) above)

Name of Florist: _____

Name of Photographer: _____

Name of Videographer: _____

Please return this form to the Wedding Coordinator at least three months prior to your wedding.

St. Veronica Catholic Church

3460 Centreville Road

Chantilly, VA 20151

Parish Office: 703-773-2000

Fax: 703-773-2001

St. Veronica Catholic Church
POLICIES FOR WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHERS

*This form must be returned to the Parish Office prior to the wedding.
If not completed and received, the pastor might not permit the photographer to work at St. Veronica.*

We urge photographers to exercise good judgment and common sense out of respect for the solemnity of the occasion, and at all times accept direction from the Wedding Coordinator and the priest.

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

- No flash photography (or strobe/movie lighting) is allowed;
- Photographers are asked to keep their visible movement to a minimum;
- They may never walk in the area in front of the sanctuary or enter into the sanctuary;
- They may never take a position during the wedding which would distract the assembly or obstruct anyone's view of the couple, the readers, or the priest;
- They may take candid shots from the back of the church;
- Taking pictures at the altar after the wedding is **strongly discouraged**; and
- **The church must be cleared within an hour and a half (1 ½ hours) after the start time for the wedding. This time limit is strictly enforced.**

PHOTOGRAPHER STATEMENT

Please keep a copy of this policy your records.

I have read the above guidelines for photography and video equipment
and will comply with the policies listed.

Lead Photographer

Date

St. Veronica Catholic Church
POLICIES FOR WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHERS

*This form must be returned to the Parish Office prior to the wedding.
If not completed and received, the pastor might not permit the videographer to work at St. Veronica.*

We urge videographers to exercise good judgment and common sense out of respect for the solemnity of the occasion, and at all times accept direction from the Wedding Coordinator and the priest.

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

- No strobe/movie lighting is allowed;
- Videographers are asked to keep their visible movement to a minimum;
- They may never walk in the area in front of the sanctuary or enter into the sanctuary;
- They may never take a position during the wedding which would distract the assembly or obstruct anyone's view of the couple, the readers, or the priest;
- They may take candid shots from the back of the church;
- Taking pictures at the altar after the wedding is **strongly discouraged**;
- **The church must be cleared within an hour and a half (1 ½ hours) after the start time for the wedding. This time limit is strictly enforced.**

VIDEOGRAPHER STATEMENT
Please keep a copy of this policy your records

I have read the above guidelines for videography
and will comply with the policies listed.

Lead Videographer

Date