

Saint Anthony of Padua Catholic Church

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Guidelines for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony

1. Preparation

The Diocese of Arlington requires notice six months in advance of the wedding date. (Although you may contact the priest before six-month notice to reserve the church and the priest.) During this time the priest will meet with you several times to complete paperwork, counsel if necessary, and to help with the planning of the ceremony. This includes diocesan marriage preparation courses. The following will need to be obtained by the bride and groom:

- **Baptismal Certificate:** For a Catholic: issued within the last six months. For a non-Catholic: a letter indicating baptism is sufficient.
- **Marriage Education Program Certificate:** Certificate of having attended the diocesan Engaged Encounter weekend retreat or Conference for the Engaged.
- **Free Status to Marry Affidavit:** Two affidavits by someone who has known you since you were 18 years old, for both bride and groom regarding free status to marry; these are to be filled out and signed in front of a Catholic priest, deacon, minister, rabbi or notary public.
- **Civil marriage license from the state of Virginia:** (issued 60 days or less before the wedding date) given to the priest before the wedding date.
- **Four Witness:** That knows you at least three years and are over 18 years old. Two for each other, it could be friends, family.

Wedding to take place outside of the Arlington Diocese: If the wedding is taking place outside of the diocese, all preparations, including paperwork, must be completed at least one month prior to the wedding date. The priest has to send your wedding file by mail to our diocesan headquarter, which, after reviewing everything, sends it by mail to the diocese in which the wedding is to take place. That diocese, in turn, after having reviewed the file, forwards it by mail to the parish in which the wedding will occur. If the wedding is to take place outside of the United States, all preparations, including paperwork, must be completed at least two months prior to the wedding date.

Your marriage is one of the most important steps in your life. It is our intent as the priests of your parish to help make your important day a most memorable one. We are here to help you in the months and days prior to your wedding. We hope that the following guidelines will be of help to you. If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to phone the wedding coordinator at 703-820-7111 or one of us.

God bless you both in the happy months ahead in planning your wedding.