



St. Theresa Catholic Church

Wedding Policy Guidelines

Revised January 2026

Wedding Policy Guidelines

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage. We are pleased to assist you in preparing for this important occasion. Marriage is a sacrament, between two baptized persons, and an indissoluble union. The clergy member who administers the preparation will help the engaged couple to enter whole-heartedly into this sacrament through a free choice of the will. While the couple will be working on the preparations for the day of the wedding, the clergy member will assist the couple in entering into an intimate union of life and love for the lifetime of the couple.

Your clergy member will help you discern the correct Rite of Marriage for your union:

Marriage During Mass – this Rite is used for the union between two baptized and practicing Catholics, where the marriage is a sacramental bond. Both the bride and groom will receive communion during Mass, as well as the Catholic faithful in attendance.

Marriage Outside of Mass – this Rite is normally used when the union takes place between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic. The marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament. This is otherwise known as a *Simple Ceremony*.

Marriage Between a Catholic and a Non-Baptized Person – this Rite is used when one of the spouses is not baptized. This non-sacramental marriage recognizes the indissolubility of the marriage union between the contracting parties.

In order to get married at St. Theresa Parish, **you need to be a current member registered for at least 3 months before you submit your marriage preparation form**. As a courtesy, we will consider officiating the weddings of people whose parents live in the parish or graduated from St. Theresa School, but who are not current parishioners themselves. In this case, preparation must be completed at your home parish. Further, if you are planning to have a wedding outside of our parish, you cannot have marriage preparation here unless you've been registered for at least 3 months and are a current parishioner. A church is not merely a building for ceremonies; rather, a church is a faith community committed to our Savior Jesus Christ.

Marriage Preparation Procedure and Timeline

Step 1: The couple submits Marriage Preparation Questionnaire online or in person in the Parish Office at least six months prior to the desired wedding date.

<https://sainttheresaparish.com/sacraments/marriage>

Step 2: A clergy member will be in contact following submission of the questionnaire. They will work with you on scheduling your meetings for Marriage Preparation. Your wedding date will not be finalized until you meet with the clergy member and submit a non-refundable church fee of \$250.00.

Step 3: Gather required documents (See Appendix A for more details):

- Newly issued baptismal certificates (copies will not be accepted)
- Affidavits of Free Status (Two for the Bride and Two for the Groom)
- If one of the parties is not Catholic, review the Promised of Mixed Marriage and apply for a dispensation with the clergy member

Step 4: Only after step 2 has been completed, contact the Wedding Coordinator and Music Director and introduce yourself (See **Appendix B and C** for Fee Schedule and Contact Information).

Step 5: Register for Natural Family Planning (NFP) Classes and Pre-Cana classes

<http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/familylife/marriage.aspx>

Step 6: Complete the FOCCUS Profile online – your clergy member will give you registration instructions.

Step 7: Once the FOCCUS Profile is completed, you are registered for the classes and conference, and you have your paperwork in hand, then schedule your second meeting with the clergy member.

Step 8: Before the third meeting with the clergy member, both the NFP classes and the Engaged Encounter should be completed. Once the couple has completed both, contact the clergy member to schedule the third meeting.

Step 9: At this point, you will have a clear idea with the clergy member preparing you, as to how many additional meetings may be required.

During your final meeting with the clergy member, you will discuss the day of the ceremony to include notes on guests, rehearsals, music, the liturgy and participants. The wedding coordinator will discuss certain particulars of each priest/deacon.

Step 10: Obtain a Civil Marriage License – this should be brought to your final meeting and given to the clergy member or brought to the wedding rehearsal and given to the wedding coordinator. The rehearsal will not take place without the marriage license on hand. This can be obtained up to sixty days prior to the ceremony.

Consolidated Timeline

6 months prior:

- Complete the online Marriage Preparation Questionnaire and submit online or in person.
- Submit \$250 non-refundable church fee to the Parish Office; by mail or in person. On memo line please write date of ceremony, place in an envelope and put to the attention of: Christine Young.
- A clergy member will arrange the first meeting with the couple
- Wedding date will NOT be confirmed until after first meeting with Priest Celebrant or Deacon and the church fee is received.

After first Meeting:

- Gather required documents
- Contact the Wedding Coordinator: **Robin Lillis - rmlillis@gmail.com**
- Contact the Music Director: **Matthew Ho - matthew.j.ho@gmail.com**
or music@sainttheresaparish.com
- Register for NFP classes
- Register for Pre-Cana Conference
- Complete FOCCUS Profile

60 days prior: Obtain a Civil Marriage License

Marriage Preparation Notes

*The couple will meet at least four times with the clergy member to discuss the future marriage union. These sessions will cover not only the teachings of the Church and the theology of marriage, but also address issues of a more practical nature, like communication and finance.

*Couples who are cohabiting will be asked to separate prior to marriage.

*For couples married civilly and seeking a validation, or for couples not married, but still living in the same domicile, the Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass, ***Simple Ceremony*** is conducted.

For couples already married civilly, that is, Marriage Convalidation, please see:

<https://sainttheresaparish.com/sacraments/marriage/convalidations>

The Wedding Ceremony

The Ceremony: A Nuptial Mass should be celebrated when both parties are practicing Catholics. When a couple is of different religious backgrounds, the Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass, or a ***Simple Ceremony*** is normally conducted. This Rite consists of the Liturgy of the Word (a selection of readings from Sacred Scripture), the statement of intention, the exchange of vows and rings, and the special nuptial blessing.

Visiting Clergy: Occasionally, the couple to be married may have a relative or a friend who is a priest or deacon. In order for a visiting clergy member to witness marriage vows at Saint Theresa:

- they must be bonded by the Commonwealth of Virginia. This should be completed well ahead of the ceremony to allow time for paperwork with the Clerk of the Court.
- they must supply the pastor of Saint Theresa with a letter of good standing from his diocese in order to receive delegation to witness the marriage.
- they must abide by the standard practices of witnessing a marriage at Saint Theresa as directed by the Wedding Coordinator and in accordance with the rubrics of the Roman Missal and the Rite of Marriage.

Lectors: Couples may have individuals serve as lectors. The lectors must be adults and practicing Catholics who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. They should be comfortable with public speaking. Some priests prefer to do all the readings for the Liturgy of the Word. The wedding coordinator will inform you once you begin working with her.

Ring-Bearers: If a child ring-bearer is used during the ceremony, the rings held by the child will be only for show. The actual rings for the ceremony will be held by the best man or another adult. This is for the couple's protection – to prevent droppage or loss of the rings. This position is usually served by (1) person.

Flower Girls: If a child Flower Girl is used during the ceremony, they may NOT drop petals of any kind as they process/recess from the church. This position is usually served by one 1) person; but not more than 4.

The Rehearsal: A rehearsal time, usually the day before the wedding will be arranged with the parish Wedding Coordinator. The Rehearsal is usually scheduled from 5:00-6:00pm and/or 6:15-7:15pm if two ceremonies are scheduled on Saturday. The entire wedding party and participants are asked to be at the rehearsal and all should be on time. Since a time limit is set for each rehearsal, a substantial delay could necessitate the canceling and/or loss of allotted time of the rehearsal.

Wedding Times: Times for the ceremony are 11:00AM or 2:00PM on Saturday. Other arrangements are possible depending upon the overall parish schedule and after consultation with the Priest Celebrant/Deacon and availability of the wedding coordinator. Once the non-refundable church fee has been collected and the ceremony date is approved by the Pastor, all details for the Rehearsal and day of Ceremony will be collaborated upon with the parish Wedding Coordinator.

Time Allotted: The couple is allotted one-hour and fifteen minutes for the Wedding Ceremony, to include taking photos. The couple should communicate with their clergy member their desires for the ceremony, including the homily, to ensure the wedding meets the time requirement. If the ceremony goes too long, the photography session may be forfeited.

Programs: If the couple chooses to produce a program or liturgical aid for the ceremony, it must be approved by the parish Wedding Coordinator. For a Nuptial Mass, the parish Wedding Coordinator will provide the couple with the diocesan approved verbiage concerning the reception of holy communion. The church does not supply programs.

Invitations: When sending invitations to the wedding, the address of the Church is 21371 St. Theresa Lane, Ashburn, VA 20147.

Dressing: The couple and wedding party are asked to be properly attired upon arrival at the Church. While the bride may wait in the Vestry, a small room off the vestibule before the ceremony, there is no dressing room at the Church. The couple and entire wedding party should arrive prepared; no make-up

artists, hair stylist, etc., allowed in the Vestry or Sacristy on the day of the ceremony.

Note: All wedding attire must reflect the virtue of **modesty and be appropriate to the respect due to God's house**. Please be sure that the bride's and bridesmaids' dresses reflect "that sense of modesty which should be the most beautiful adornment of the Christian woman." (Pope Benedict XV).

Floral Arrangements and Decorations: Floral Arrangements for the Altar of Repose are NOT mandatory. If you choose to have arrangements for the Altar of Repose, they are supplied by the couple at your expense. These arrangements must be taken away by the couple after the ceremony. Arrangements MUST be live flowers. No fake arrangements. **Sample pictures available upon request.**

The following restrictions to decorations apply:

1. Candelabra other than those provided by the Church are not permitted.
2. Pew décor is permitted for use in the church; however, the décor may NOT be affixed with tape, pins or tacks. **Sample pictures available upon request.**
3. The "wedding candle" or "unity candle" is not part of the Marriage Rite and thereby is not permitted.
4. The use of flowers, petals, seed, or confetti to be thrown in or outside of the church is not permitted.
5. All boxes for corsages, or other trash, must be removed at the end of the ceremony.
6. It is never permitted to rearrange church furnishings or church décor under any circumstance.

Photography: All couples want to have pictures to remember this very important day in their lives. However, the Church is not a photography studio and the following guidelines MUST be adhered to:

- The photographer will meet with the Wedding Coordinator no later than 45 minutes before the ceremony begins to discuss these regulations, as only the professional photographer is allowed to take pictures during the ceremony.
- Pictures may be taken throughout the ceremony in assigned, designated areas detailed by the Wedding Coordinator. The photographer may select where they would like to shoot following instruction/guidelines. The photographer should plan to be as stationary.
- The photographer is never permitted to enter into the sanctuary area. This area is forward of the front pews, including the Transepts (sides).
- The photographer is NEVER permitted on the altar or in the Sacristy.
- The photographer is not permitted in the center aisle during the ceremony.
- The photographer will NOT sit in any pew occupied by guests or an empty pew between guests.
- The photographer must NOT become a distraction to the ceremony, especially to the couple, wedding party and Priest (Officiant). Any warning from the Wedding Coordinator during the ceremony will forfeit photographer from shooting at St. Theresa Church.
- Other friends and relatives should not be taking pictures during the ceremony.
- After the ceremony, the photographer may take pictures for 15 minutes.
- The photographer should be working with a detailed list of those individuals who will be a part of the photography; this includes the couple, the wedding party, and immediate family.
- Pictures of extended family should be taken at the reception place or outside of the Church.
- It is never permitted to move or rearrange church furnishings under any circumstance.

Videotaping: Videotaping of the ceremony is permitted. However, the person doing the videotaping should be discrete and as inconspicuous as possible, setting up the video equipment in a suitable place, determined by the

Wedding Coordinator.

- The videographer will meet with the Wedding Coordinator 45 minutes before the ceremony begins to discuss these regulations as only the professional videographer is allowed to take videotape during the ceremony.
- Video may be taken throughout the ceremony in assigned, designated areas detailed by the coordinator. The videographer may select where they would like to shoot following instruction/guidelines.
- The videographer is never permitted to enter into the sanctuary area. This area is forward of the front pews, including the Transepts (sides).
- The videographer is NEVER permitted on the altar or in the Sacristy.
- The videographer is not permitted in the center aisle.
- The videographer will NOT sit in any pew occupied by guests or an empty pew between guests.
- The videographer must NOT become a distraction to the ceremony, especially to the couple, wedding party and Priest (Officiant). Any warning from the Wedding Coordinator during the ceremony will forfeit videographer from shooting at St. Theresa Church.
- Placing a mic on the Officiant should not be assumed; permission must be asked prior to the day of the ceremony.
- Placing a mic on the groom should be done no later than 30 minutes before the ceremony.
- The use of a floodlight is not permitted.
- Other friends and relatives should not be videotaping during the ceremony.
- It is never permitted to move or rearrange church furnishings under any circumstance.

Please Note: Failure to comply with the policies set forth in these Guidelines will forfeit your photography/videography company from having permission to return to St. Theresa Church for any wedding ceremony

Music: All music, instrumental and vocal, must be approved by the celebrant and must comply with the regulations of the Diocese of Arlington. You will work directly with Matthew J. Ho, our principal musician in the selection of your music. Only sacred music should be selected; no Hollywood, Broadway,

or other secular music is permitted. See Appendix C for the Music Contract and Fee Schedule.

Donation to the Church: While there is no donation required for the Church, use of the Parish Wedding Coordinator is required. A check in the amount of \$200.00 should be made out directly to the Wedding Coordinator. The celebrant will let you know the name once the coordinator is assigned.

Church Fees:

Church Use Fee	\$250 – Payable to St. Theresa Catholic Church – non refundable
Wedding Coordinator	\$200 – Payable to the Coordinator
Music Director	See Appendix C

Customary Donations for Weddings:

Celebrant Donation.....	\$200 – \$300 ...but we invite you to take into account the time and pastoral care the clergy devoted to you.
Altar Servers (2).....	\$40.00 (\$20 for each server)

The non-refundable church fee is necessary to secure the date of the ceremony. This fee will be deposited by the Church upon receipt.

Appendix A: Required Church Documents

1. **A Baptismal Certificate** For Catholics, the Baptismal Certificate must be issued from the Church of Baptism **no earlier** than the date of the initial meeting with the priest. Baptized non-Catholics should request a letter from the church in which they were baptized.
2. **A Confirmation Certificate** For Catholics: A copy of the original certificate is acceptable. A copy will be made and the original returned to you.
3. **The Certificate of Attendance from a Pre-Cana Conference**
4. **The Prenuptial Investigation** The priest will complete with the couple a short questionnaire, entitled The Prenuptial Investigation. This

questionnaire elicits basic background information from the couple, but also asks questions to make sure there is no impediment to enter into marriage. This will be completed during one of your meetings.

5. **FOCCUS** The couple will answer a 156 (or more) question survey entitled, "Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study." This survey instrument is not a compatibility test; rather, it raises issues concerning a broad range of areas, like religion, finance, communication, sexuality, and parenting. Information will be provided so that the couple may register online and take the Inventory separately. Results of the Inventory will be sent to the priest who will meet to review the results of the survey during your subsequent meeting.
6. **Affidavits of Free Status** The bride and the groom must each submit two Affidavits of Free Status. These forms should be completed preferably by relatives (especially parents) or others who have known the bride or groom for a long period of time. These affidavits attest that no impediment exists that would prevent the marriage from taking place. The Church requires these affidavits for the couple's own protection. The witnesses must sign the affidavits in the presence of a priest, deacon, or notary public.
7. If either party has been previously married, proof of a **Declaration of Nullity** or a certified death certificate must be supplied.
8. If either party is not Catholic, a **Dispensation for Mixed Marriage** will be required.
9. **Wedding License** The couple must obtain a wedding license from the Circuit Court of Loudoun County (703) 777-0270. The license is valid for 60 days. The couple should present the license to the priest at their last meeting.

Appendix B: Wedding Coordinator

Contact Information

Mrs. Robin Lillis
571-283-7121
rmlillis@gmail.com

A Wedding Ceremony questionnaire will be sent to you when you make contact with Robin. Do not contact the Coordinator without permission from the priest you are working with for Marriage Prep.

Fee Schedule:

\$200.00 – payable to Robin Lillis

Appendix C: Music Director

Contact Information

Matthew J. Ho, Music Director
St. Theresa Catholic Church
703-932-6774
matthew.j.ho@gmail.com

Sample Contract for Wedding Music Services

Contract Date: TBD

Event Type: Wedding Mass or Simple Ceremony

Event Date and Time: TBD

Event Location:

Saint Theresa Catholic Church
21371 St. Theresa Lane
Ashburn, VA 20147

Officiating Priest: TBD

Service Details: This is a contract for professional music services for the event listed above.

Music selections for the wedding ceremony or Mass will be coordinated with the organist, who will in turn coordinate with additional instrumentalists and vocalists as appropriate. Requests for instrumentalists or vocalists will be accommodated based on available resources. Music selections may be subject to approval by the parish Liturgy Committee, and should be finalized no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled event.

Musicians will provide prelude music beginning at approximately [TBD], twenty minutes prior to the scheduled start of the ceremony, and will continue until the start of the selected processional. Postlude music will be provided for up to ten minutes following the recession of the wedding party,

enough to cover the exit of most of the congregation, as appropriate. The total performance time will end not later than two consecutive hours past the designated start time. Additional fees of not more than \$75 per musician per hour may apply for times past the two consecutive hours, depending on the circumstances.

In the unlikely event of a condition that prevents a contracted musician from performing for the scheduled event, appropriate professional substitutes will be coordinated by the musicians and notification will be provided to the engaged couple.

Musician(s): Matthew J. Ho, Principal Organist / Pianist

Fee Schedule:

Organist

Wedding Ceremony or Mass (includes 1 planning session if required)
\$250.00

Organist/Vocalist

\$250 plus \$75.00

Organist

Wedding Rehearsal
\$50.00

Organist

Additional Rehearsals
\$35.00

Organist

Custom Musical Arrangements (per selection)
Starting at \$75.00

Trumpet

Wedding Ceremony or Mass
\$200.00

Vocalist

Wedding Ceremony or Mass
\$150.00

Payment: Payment is due in full before the start of the ceremony, and may be made in cash or check written out to each individual musician providing services in this agreement.

Signature (service provider):

Signature (service recipient):

Matthew J. Ho, Music Director
St. Theresa Catholic Church
703-932-6774
matthew.j.ho@gmail.com

Appendix D: Directions to Saint Theresa Catholic Church

From the North (Arlington)

Option #1 Take Route 50 (Arlington Boulevard) to Route 7. Stay on Route 7 past Tyson's Corners through Sterling until you see the sign for Claiborne Parkway. Exit and go East (not West, the direction toward the hospital). Stay on Claiborne Parkway for several miles until you come to a traffic light which is Broadlands Boulevard. Turn left. Remain on Broadlands Boulevard passing under the Greenway and you will see the entrance to the church on the left.

Option #2 Take the Dulles Toll Road/Greenway to the Claiborne Parkway exit. Turn left onto Claiborne Parkway. The first traffic light is Broadlands Boulevard. Turn left. Remain on Broadlands Boulevard passing under the Greenway and you will see the entrance to the church on the left.

From the South (Leesburg)

Option #1 Take Route 7 North toward Tyson's Corners. Take the exit for Claiborne Parkway turning right off the exit. Stay on Claiborne Parkway for several miles until you come to a traffic light which is Broadlands Boulevard. Turn left. Remain on Broadlands Boulevard passing under the Greenway and you will see the entrance to the church on the left.

Option #2 Take the Dulles Toll Road/Greenway to the Claiborne Parkway exit. Turn right onto Claiborne Parkway. The first traffic light is Broadlands Boulevard. Turn left. Remain on Broadlands Boulevard passing under the Greenway and you will see the entrance to the church on the left.

From the East or West

Taking the Washington Beltway 495 from either the East or the West, take the exit for the Dulles Toll Road/Greenway to the Claiborne Parkway exit. Turn right onto Claiborne Parkway. The first traffic light is Broadlands Boulevard. Turn left. Remain on Broadlands Boulevard passing under the Greenway and you will see the entrance to the church on the left.