

# U. S. Naval Academy

## Guide to Catholic Wedding Documents & Preparation

### **Greetings from the Catholic Chaplains at the Naval Academy.**

Our experience with hundreds of weddings and with the tight scheduling of our facilities for weddings of various faith groups requires a standardized format for all Catholic weddings. Be assured that we will make every effort to make your wedding day a beautiful, faith-filled event. However, you will have to make some adjustments; we simply cannot function like your local Catholic parish.

***The following documentation MUST be completed under the supervision of a priest or deacon and forwarded to the Naval Academy Catholic Chaplain no later than SIX WEEKS prior to the wedding. If the documentation is not received on time, the wedding may be cancelled.***

*Pre-marital forms for the Archdiocese for the Military Services can be accessed online at:*

<https://milarch.org/index/marriage-preparation>

### **- PREVIOUSLY MARRIED?**

If either party has been previously married, speak to your Catholic priest immediately. The Annulment Process must be completed prior to reserving a wedding date. A **formal case** annulment usually requires at least one year to complete.

Widows and widowers must produce a death certificate for their former spouse(s).

### **- ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKEND/PRE-CANA DAY**

**As soon as your wedding date is confirmed by the USNA Wedding Coordinator**, you must make arrangements to attend an Engaged Encounter weekend or Pre-Cana day. Engaged Encounter is highly recommended! All couples who attend enjoy it and say that it was very beneficial. You can register for an Engaged Encounter weekend at [www.engagedencounter.org](http://www.engagedencounter.org). As an alternative, you can attend a Pre-Cana day. Most parishes and dioceses offer Pre-Cana days throughout the year. Check with your local parish or Catholic chaplain. Provide certificate of attendance. Most Fleet & Family Support Centers and Marine Corps Community Services Centers offer generic pre-marriage seminars; these provide excellent information about marriage but **do not fulfill the specifically Catholic requirements.** Likewise, the Naval Academy sponsors a one-day pre-marriage seminar each January; this provides excellent information for spouses new to the military but **does not fulfill the specifically Catholic requirements.**

### **- UPDATED ORIGINAL NEWLY-ISSUED ANNOTATED BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE**

This must be issued within the past six months and will indicate all the sacraments you have received up to the date of issue. No photocopies can be accepted for Catholic records. If one party is a Baptized Christian but not a Catholic, then a photocopy of Baptism record is required, giving the date, place and denomination. Have these documents in hand for your first meeting with the priest or deacon who is preparing you for marriage.

### **- PRE-NUPTIAL INTERVIEWS & QUESTIONNAIRE**

**As soon as your wedding date is confirmed by the USNA Wedding Coordinator**, you must contact the priest or deacon who will be preparing you for Marriage – usually at your home parish or military chapel. Ask him to instruct you and complete the pre-nuptial questionnaire with you. Please notify the USNA Wedding Coordinator of the name of the priest or deacon who will be preparing you, along with the name of his parish or military base, and contact information for the priest or deacon. **The USNA Catholic Chaplain must know the name of the priest or deacon who is preparing you for marriage.**

- WITNESSES CONCERNING FREEDOM TO MARRY

These are sworn statements from two close relatives (usually parents) attesting to an individual's name, date of birth, baptismal status, marital status and freedom from coercion. They are required for all non-Catholics and when no Annotated Baptismal Certificate for Catholics is obtainable.

- LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM CIVILIAN PASTOR ON BEHALF OF THE CATHOLIC PARTY

This is required when the Catholic party is not on active duty and is marrying a non-Catholic.

-DISPENSATIONS & PERMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF THE CATHOLIC PARTY

These are required when one party is not Catholic. The Catholic party must promise in writing to remain a faithful Catholic and to do all in his/her power to raise their children in the Catholic Faith. The non-Catholic party must be made aware of this promise.

- SELECTION OF PRAYERS & READINGS FOR YOUR MARRIAGE CEREMONY

See: "Together for Life" – Special Edition for Marriage Outside Mass Published by AVE MARIA PRESS, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Because not all options are appropriate in every circumstance be sure to discuss them with your priest or deacon as part of your marriage preparation. Also complete p. 7 of this handout.

## ***SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION***

*As a matter of personal and sacramental integrity, Catholics must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) within a week before getting married. Any priest can hear your confession. Simply tell the Catholic Chaplain at the rehearsal that you did this. Please do not wait until the day of the rehearsal or the wedding day to ask for the sacrament of reconciliation, because by then time will be short.*

### **Information, Guidelines & Regulations For Catholic Wedding Ceremonies At the United States Naval Academy**

#### **Officiants at Naval Academy Weddings.**

At the request of the couple Catholic Clergy (military and civilian) attached to the Naval Academy will be assigned to officiate at weddings held in the Naval Academy Chapel.

A priest or deacon who is a relative or friend may also officiate with the permission of the Senior Catholic Chaplain at the Academy. In ALL such cases a Naval Academy priest or deacon will supervise the ceremony and it will be conducted strictly according to the Roman Catholic Rite of Marriage.

#### **Be on Time!**

It is imperative that all weddings and rehearsals start precisely at the appointed time! Any delay in your rehearsal and wedding has a snowball effect on those who follow you. It is also discourteous to your guests and to other wedding parties.

## **Marriage License.**

Your wedding license must be obtained no later than 48 hours before the wedding at the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County, Court House, Church Circle, Annapolis, MD. The fee is \$55.00 cash, credit card or money order (no personal checks). The license is valid only in the county in which it is purchased. For further information, please contact the County Clerk's Office, P.O. Box 71, Annapolis, MD 21404 or telephone: 410-222-1434. You must purchase the license from the Anne Arundel County Court, and we strongly urge you to do this **no later than two weeks in advance of your wedding.**

**Prior to your rehearsal please present your marriage license to the priest or deacon who will officiate at the wedding. You must present an unsigned marriage license. Inability to do so will result in immediate cancellation of the wedding ceremony in the Main Chapel.**

## **Already Married?**

If you have already been married civilly or in a ceremony of another church, the Catholic Church does not provide a subsequent "big church wedding." Instead, there is a smaller-scale ceremony, known as a *convalidation*, which is celebrated in a simple fashion in St. Andrew's Chapel. Ask the Wedding Coordinator or Catholic chaplain for details.

## **The Wedding Ceremony**

More than two hundred weddings take place annually at the Naval Academy. Consequently, we must exercise considerable restraint regarding the length of your Catholic ceremony, floral decorations, photographic opportunities, and other practices that would normally be available in a civilian parish.

For all Catholic weddings we will dedicate the full thirty minutes allotted to your ceremony to a memorable and prayerful celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony outside of Mass. In this instance, the church approved marriage ceremony consisting of the Liturgy of the Word, the Exchange of Marriage Vows and the Nuptial Blessing.

The Sacrament of Matrimony does not need to take place within a Mass in order to be valid. The exchange of vows outside of Mass is just as valid, and is equally recognized by the Catholic Church as the Sacrament of Matrimony, as the exchange of vows within a Nuptial Mass.

### **OUTLINE OF A WEDDING WITHOUT MASS**

Procession of the Wedding Party  
Greeting and Prayer  
Scripture Readings and Homily  
Exchange of Vows and Rings  
Navy Hymn (optional)  
Prayers of the Faithful (optional)  
Nuptial Blessing  
The Our Father  
Blessing and Dismissal  
Recessional  
Arch of Swords on the Chapel Steps (optional)

Specific concerns or questions regarding your wedding ceremony should be addressed beforehand to the priest or deacon who will officiate at the ceremony. The Wedding Coordinator will also be at the rehearsal to address such matters.

### **Nuptial Masses**

We can provide only a limited number of Nuptial Masses in the course of a year. Approval for a Nuptial Mass will be granted by the Naval Academy Catholic Chaplain under the following conditions:

1. Both parties must be “practicing Catholics in good standing.” This means that both bride and groom are Catholics who actually attend Mass regularly on Sundays. Both parties must present a letter from their civilian Pastor or military chaplain saying that they regularly attend Mass on Sundays. Also, “practicing Catholics in good standing” cannot be living together before marriage; Couples who are living together before marriage cannot have a nuptial Mass. Approval for Nuptial Masses will be case-by-case, subject to the discretion of the USNA Catholic Chaplain.
2. The request for a Mass must come from the couple themselves, not family members.
3. No Masses will be scheduled during Advent or Lent.
4. Holy Communion:
  - a. Only the couple will receive Holy Communion “under both species.”
  - b. Other eligible Catholics may receive Communion with the Host only.
  - c. The following note will always be printed in the program:  
*Practicing Catholics who wish to receive Holy Communion may now come forward. We invite those of other faiths to be seated and join us in prayer and song.*
5. The couple must agree to hire a cantor through the USNA Music Department to assure that the Mass is celebrated fittingly and with the active participation of the congregation. All hymns and other vocal music must be approved by the Music Department and the USNA Catholic Chaplain.
6. The Nuptial Mass will be scheduled for two wedding slots and only one Nuptial Mass will be celebrated on a given day.
7. If the couple wishes to invite a priest (military or civilian) from outside the Naval Academy to preside at their wedding, he must receive the necessary delegation from the USNA Catholic Chaplain and agree to follow the *Rite of Marriage & Order of Mass* exactly. He will always be assisted by a USNA priest or deacon.
8. The rule regarding the “Unity Candle” at the USNA Chapel applies to Nuptial Masses.
9. The Wedding Program will include the full text of the *Mass & Rite of Marriage*. Electronic copies are available from the Catholic Chaplain. The final version will be approved by the Catholic Chaplain before printing.

### **Preparing the Wedding Ceremony.**

Your priest or deacon will meet with you to discuss the ceremony and prepare you for your wedding. Further on in this packet you will find a work sheet, which outlines the ceremony and corresponds to a very helpful booklet, which you may purchase in advance **Together for Life** (special edition: Marriage outside the Nuptial Mass) by Joseph M. Champlin (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN 46556).

The booklet is available online from Amazon.com and at most Catholic religious stores and bookstores for approximately \$5.00. It is helpful for choosing readings, prayers, and some of the other options available to you. Complete the form below (not the one in **Together for Life**) and return it to the Wedding Coordinator NLT 30 days prior to the wedding.

### **The Day of the Wedding.**

Timing is VERY important. The Groom and Best Man should arrive to meet the priest or deacon at least 30 minutes prior to the wedding in the “Groom’s Room” on the lower level of the Main Chapel. The Bride and her wedding party should arrive no later than 20 minutes before the ceremony. The Wedding Hostesses will greet them at the door and escort them to a small waiting room at the back of the Chapel. Please be sure that your ushers are in place immediately following the wedding scheduled prior to yours in order to seat your guest.

### **Unity Candle**

Because of the time constraints, you will need to forego this practice in the Chapel. We suggest that you use the Unity Candle at the reception just prior to grace or the Best Man’s toast. Many couples have told us that this works very well.

### **Flower Girls & Ring Bearers.**

Flower girls and ring bearers are not seated in the sanctuary with the adult bridal party. On processing to the front of the Chapel, they should sit with parents or assigned family members. Children do not exit the recessional, but remain in the pews and leave with the other guests.

**We strongly recommend that these children be at least six years old.**

### **Music.**

The music at your wedding is **YOUR** responsibility. Please contact the Music Department at (410)293-2439 for information governing music for a Naval Academy Catholic Wedding (including soloists). This should be done no less than 3 months prior to the wedding.

### **Flowers.**

The Chapel provides the altar flowers and pew bows. Flowers for members of your wedding party are your responsibility. Flowers should be delivered to your house or hotel – not the chapel. The Chapel does not have a place to store flowers and cannot ensure safe and proper storage of flowers.

### **Aisle Runner.**

Aisle runners are not allowed in the Main Chapel or St. Andrew’s Chapel.

### **Proper Uniform for Weddings.**

A Groom who is a military service member, all members of the wedding party and all military guests should wear the prescribed uniform of the season and the Annapolis region. More information is given below under Military Protocol.

### **The Arch of Swords.**

The Arch of Swords is a military tradition and not a part of the religious ceremony. Swords, sword cases, gloves, and covers are to be left in the last pew on the right, facing the altar. Swords are never worn inside the chapel. Detailed instructions are given in the Military Protocol section.

**Photography.**

Professional photographers in the Annapolis area are well acquainted with the regulations regarding weddings in the Chapel (attached). Wedding guests are asked to refrain from taking pictures during the ceremony, and certainly not to use a flash.

**Under no circumstances are the following allowed.**

NO rice, flower petals, flowers, birdseed, confetti, bubbles, releasing of doves, butterflies or balloons will be allowed either inside or outside the chapel for your wedding.

NO alcohol. If the officiant suspects that either party is under the influence of alcohol he will refuse to proceed with the wedding.

NO receiving lines are permitted at the chapel after your wedding.

Your cooperation and that of your guests in abiding by these prohibitions will enable all weddings that day to begin on time and to assure that you have a truly memorable wedding service.

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If you have any questions please contact:

Chapel Wedding Scheduler at  
Telephone: (410) 293-1105; DSN 281-1105  
E-mail: [maccallu@usna.edu](mailto:maccallu@usna.edu)

The fax number to the Chaplain's Office is (410)293-4809.

Groom Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Bride Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Wedding \_\_\_\_\_

## Prayers/ Readings for Catholic Weddings at the Naval Academy

For use with "Together for Life"

- 1) Entrance Procession
- 2) Opening Prayer: Select one from A 1-4 (Page 8)      Our Choice: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) First Reading: Select one from B 1-9 (Page 10-26)      Our Choice: \_\_\_\_\_  
Scripture Reference: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reader: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Second Reading: Select from D 1-13 (Page 34-54)      Our Choice: \_\_\_\_\_  
Or you may also choose a Responsorial Psalm to be read.  
C 1 – 7 (pages 28 – 31)  
Scripture Reference: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reader: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Gospel read by the priest./deacon Select one:      Our choice: \_\_\_\_\_  
F 1-10(Pages 56-72)
- 6) Homily
- 7) Exchange of Marriage Vows (Select one)      Our choice: \_\_\_\_\_  
H-1 (Page 76-77) Contemporary wording in statement form  
H-2 (Page 77) Traditional wording in statement form
- 8) Blessing and Exchange of Rings      Our choice: \_\_\_\_\_  
I – 1, I – 2 or I – 3 (Page 78)
- 9) Organ Rendition of Eternal Father (Optional)      Yes /No
- 10) Prayer of the Faithful (Optional)      Yes/ No  
J -1, J-2, or J-3 (Page 80-82)  
Other petitions may be added.  
The priest or deacon can provide you with other options. Our Choice \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) Nuptial Blessing (Select one)  
Option One: M – 1 (Page 83)  
Option Two: M – 2 (Page 84)  
Option Three: M – 3(Page 85)      Our Choice \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) Final Blessing
- 13) Recessional