



Wedding Guidelines

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

Catholic Church

Established 1976

12807 Valleywood Drive; Lake Ridge, VA 22192

703-494-4008 or www.setonlakeridge.org

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*"Then the Lord said, It is not good that the man should be alone;
I will make a helper fit for him." (Genesis 2:18)*

First, congratulations! You are about to embark on the most wonderful of life's experiences. Remember that Christ holds marriage in the highest esteem as he chose the Wedding at Cana to perform His first miracle, thus beginning the public stage of His ministry.

All love comes from God; and as such, the covenant of marriage is, first and foremost, a sign and symbol of this love. The love which a couple has for each other mirrors the love God has for men and women.

*"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things.
Love endures." (1 Corinthians: 13:7)*

We look forward to working with you during this important time of your final sacramental marriage formation and preparation. Below are some items to consider when planning your wedding, and also a description of what our marriage preparation program entails. Please feel free to contact us with any questions. (703) 494-4008.

Is St. Elizabeth Ann Seton the proper parish for your wedding?

As a reminder, Church law specifies that the proper place for a baptized Catholic to marry is the parish in which they live. If your residence is within our parish boundaries, you may marry here. Only one person of the engaged couple must meet this requirement.

Those not residing in the parish and not registered will ordinarily be required to marry in the parish in which they reside. However, an exception may be possible if the parent(s) of one person of the engaged couple meets the residence requirement for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

What if you are a parishioner here and wish to marry elsewhere?

If your marriage preparation is to occur here at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, but your wedding will occur elsewhere, generally the following guidelines must be met with the exception of those that pertain to the wedding ceremony itself. If the preparation and wedding are to occur elsewhere, a simple letter granting the necessary dispensations or permissions from our pastor is normally required. Please contact our parish office for more information.

What if you are civilly married and desire to be married "in the church"?

You are not alone! In fact today approximately 20% of all sacramental marriages in the Church are what is referred to as "con-validations" of their current civil marriage. We welcome and strongly encourage you to participate in our *Transformed in Love* program, and experience this transformative sacramental marriage formation process.

Scheduling your wedding

Before any scheduling can take place, you and your fiancé must first meet with one of our parish priests. This meeting must take place at least **SIX MONTHS** prior to your proposed wedding date and must occur **BEFORE** any social arrangements for the wedding are finalized. This diocesan norm ensures a minimal time for preparation and the procurement of all necessary Civil and Church documents.

Please Note: Although six months is the minimum requirement between the first meeting with a priest and the actual wedding date, couples are strongly encouraged to schedule this meeting 9-12 MONTHS prior to their wedding to allow for a more normative pace for marriage preparation.

*"They say that it is not worth making a life-long commitment... 'forever',
because we do not know what tomorrow will bring
I pray for you. Have the courage 'to swim against the tide'.
And also have the courage to be happy." (Pope Francis on Marriage)*

Each bridal party has a scheduled time for both the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. Times for each are listed below. Because of our Confession schedule on Saturdays, the wedding party and all guests must be out of the church by 3:15 p.m.

Weddings during Advent or Lent.


Because there are seasons of the Church Year set aside for penitence and spiritual renewal, *wedding celebrations are discouraged during these times*. However, a wedding is allowed if it is in keeping with the character of the season. If you choose to have your wedding during Advent or Lent, please speak with the priest or deacon concerning any liturgical considerations which should be observed during those seasons.

Wedding and rehearsal times

Day for Weddings:	Usually Saturday; another day may be selected, if available and approved by the pastor and clergy celebrant.
Time for Weddings:	Saturday wedding times are as follows: 11:00 a.m. (access to the church or chapel from 10:30 to 12:15) 2:00 p.m. (access to the church or chapel from 1:30 to 3:15)
Time for Rehearsals:	Friday evenings at 3:30 p.m., or 5:00 p.m., or at another available time that is mutually convenient to the celebrant, the parish Wedding Coordinators and the engaged couple.





Please Note: "Con-Validations" will be scheduled on a case-by case basis, at an available day and time that is mutually convenient to the celebrant and the civilly married couple.

Inquiry


-  **Call, or stop by the parish office.** The receptionist or Office Manager will ask you a few basic questions and take down your, and your fiancé's contact information.


Please see Transformed in Love Marriage Preparation Chart on the back cover.


First Step: Initial meeting with preparing priest or deacon


-  One of the parish clergy will be in contact to set-up a meeting with you and your fiancé. During this meeting, he will ask you some additional questions and explain our *Transformed in Love* marriage preparation program and outline any documents that you will need. The **Prenuptial Investigation (PNI) questionnaire** will normally be completed during this initial meeting.
-  You will also be given an on-line link for both you and your fiancé to individually complete the **FOCCUS (Facilitate Open, Caring Communication, Understanding and Study) Premarital Inventory**. If you have been civilly married or in a marriage not recognized by the Catholic Church, you will be given an on-line link for you both to individually complete the **REFOCCUS Marriage Enrichment Inventory**. This is a tool designed to help engaged couples learn more about themselves and their relationship. It will also pave the way for you to discuss many of the topics that are central to ensuring that your marriage lasts a lifetime.
-  You will also be given information on how to register for one of the **Pre-Cana Conference** options:
- **Diocese of Arlington Conference for the Engaged**
 - **Engaged Encounter**
 - **Three to Get Married**
- To register for the diocesan Conference for the Engaged, please visit:
www.arlingtondiocese.org/familylife/marriage/conference-for-the-engaged
-  You will also be given information on how to complete the **Natural Family Planning (NFP)** course to learn more about this organic way of planning a family that also respects the integrity of your marriage.


After completing the conference and NFP course, you will receive certificates of completion that should be given to the preparing priest or deacon to be placed in your marriage preparation folder. Please note that these programs must be completed well in advance of your wedding day, especially if your wedding is to take place in a parish other than St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Do not delay in signing-up for these, as desired spots tend to fill-up quickly. There will be a review of the other documents that you will need as listed below.


-  **Recently Issued Baptismal Certificate:** For Catholics, this certificate must be signed and dated within the last six months **and not** a photo copy of the original certificate that was issued shortly after your baptism. You can obtain this new certificate by contacting the church where you were baptized and they will mail it directly to you. Be sure to ask your church of Baptism to include 'all notations'. For non-Catholic Christians, a photo copy of any baptismal documentation is all that is required.

 **Affidavits of Free Status:** These forms (two for each) are to be filled out by a relative or close friend (who has known you or your fiancé most of your adult lives) to be a witness to the fact that you or your fiancé are free to marry. Please note that the signatures on these forms must be notarized.


 **Wedding Liturgy Preparation Sheet:** Provided by the preparing priest or deacon. Please submit this completed sheet with both music and readings to parish office, or by email to the Director of Liturgy and Music at least 2 months prior to your scheduled wedding date.

 **Civil Marriage License:** In the Commonwealth of Virginia, this is obtained from any County Clerk or City Clerk. There is a three-day waiting period before the license may be used, and it expires in sixty days after issuance. By law, a wedding ceremony cannot be conducted until a valid marriage license is presented to the presiding priest or deacon. For a con-validation, a certified copy of the previously issued marriage license is required.

 **Application for Dispensation/Permission:** To be submitted to the diocesan office by the preparing priest or deacon when a Catholic is marrying a non-Catholic or when marrying in a non-Catholic church setting.


 **Choosing a Mentor Couple:** Our parish **Marriage Preparation Coordinator** is trained to facilitate your working through *Transformed in Love*, but we want you to choose a Mentor Couple who will accompany you during your engagement period and beyond! This couple should be someone you and your fiancé are both comfortable with and who will hold you accountable, inspire and challenge you. They will be expected to meet with you five times and go over the materials in the *Transformed in Love* workbook. Some of the criteria we ask you to use when you pick a mentor couple are fairly simple:

- The couple must be married in the Catholic Church for at least ten years.
- The couple must be parishioners of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton or a nearby parish and attend church regularly.
- The couple must have a marriage you admire!

 Once you have chosen a potential Mentor Couple that fits the above criteria, then please give their name, phone numbers and email address to preparing priest or deacon for their final approval. Once approved, he will then inform our parish Marriage Preparation Coordinator who will reach out to you to set-up a 'zoom' or in-person meeting with you, your fiancé and your Mentor Couple to assist you in completing our Wedding Agreement Form and guide you through the entire *Transformed in Love* marriage formation process.

Please Note: It is only after you have chosen a Mentor Couple and completed the Wedding Agreement Form that the date for your wedding will be secured. Once secured, a confirmation letter will be mailed to you by the Pastor. Included in this letter will be the contact information for the Director of Music and also the Head Wedding Coordinator who will assist you in the planning of your wedding liturgy.

Second Step: Meeting with Marriage Preparation Coordinator

 Once you've had your initial meeting with your preparing priest or deacon, and your Mentor Couple identified and secured, our Marriage Preparation Coordinator will contact you to set up a meeting with you, your fiancé and your Mentor Couple to review the *Transformed in Love* program. At this meeting, the coordinator will discuss other important details of the marriage preparation process and provide you with the printed resources and on-line codes to access additional materials and videos.

Third Step: Monthly meetings with Mentor Couple

 (5) meetings with your Mentor Couple begin.

Fourth Step: Pre-Cana Conference

 Attend one of the conferences as described above.


Fifth Step: Review FOCCUS Inventory with priest or deacon

 FOCCUS Premarital Instrument (or REFOCCUS Marriage Enrichment Inventory) review with you as a couple and your preparing priest or deacon.


Sixth Step: Theology discussion and meal

 Theology discussion at the home of mentor couple with you, your fiancé and your preparing priest or deacon.

Seventh Step: Concluding meeting with priest or deacon

 Finalize paperwork, review the wedding liturgy to go over the readings you have chosen and any other pertinent details, and invitation to relationship with parish.

Eighth Step: Wedding Ceremony

 In order to make your wedding ceremony be as beautiful as possible, please review the following guidelines regarding music, photography, flowers and decoration and Wedding Coordinator services.

Ninth Step: Marriage for life

Continued accompaniment by mentor couple and parish

Music

Our Director of Music will assist you in planning the music for your wedding. Readings are taken from an approved list as outlined in the wedding ritual. Music selections are generally taken from our parish hymnals and song book. All music must be approved by the Director. We will arrange for one of our cantors to sing at your wedding. In select cases, outside singers and/or instrumentalists may be approved by the Director based upon their musical qualifications and familiarity with the Catholic Liturgy.

Please Note: Following the wedding, no music/musicians are permitted to play or sing outside the church building. If desired, it is encouraged for this to take place at the wedding reception venue, even if that takes place on the proportion at Seton Hall.

Photography

Professional photographers are encouraged to contact the Wedding Coordinator prior to the ceremony to review the policies of the church.

Suitable places for photography

- ☞ Inconspicuously outside the sanctuary and along the side aisles.

Places where photography is NOT permitted:

- ☞ Anywhere in the center aisle beyond the last row of seated guests.
- ☞ Anywhere in front of the sanctuary.
- ☞ Anywhere directly in front of the congregation.
- ☞ In front of the center aisle near the groomsmen or bridesmaids.
- ☞ Near the cantor to the left of the sanctuary

Other Considerations

- ☞ ***No flash photography during the ceremony.*** Flash photography is permitted only during the processional and recessional. Note that the ceremony formally begins with the Sign of the Cross and ends with the Final Blessing, "*May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*"
- ☞ Videographers are asked to stand in one place during the ceremony either in the center aisle at the last row of seated guests or between the statue of the St. Joseph and the ambo, outside of the sanctuary.
- ☞ Photographers in or near the choir area are to be mindful of the organist/pianist and cantors.

Flowers and Decorations

Brides are encouraged to share the cost of flowers when there are two or more weddings on the same day. The Head Wedding Coordinator, will notify brides who are being married on the same day so that arrangements can be made for the sharing of flowers. Altar floral arrangements are customarily left in the church as a votive offering.

Please Note: For the safety of all, no runners are permitted nor are flower petals to be dropped by flower girls in the church. To maintain the dignity of the ceremony, signs carried by the wedding party, or incorporated in the wedding procession in any manner, are not permitted. Animals, wagons (or similar), confetti, birdseed, balloons, bubbles, and rice, etc. are not permitted anywhere on church property.

Parish Wedding Coordination Services

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish has a team that provides services as a gift to every bride and groom. On your wedding day, two coordinators will be present one hour before the wedding and throughout the entire wedding. If the celebrant of the wedding ceremony is a visiting priest, coordinators are available to attend rehearsals. You must notify the coordinator well in advance if you intend to have your own altar servers.

Our Wedding Coordinators are prepared to assist with everything concerning your wedding ceremony at the church, except for questions concerning the liturgy. Please contact the Head Wedding Coordinator at weddingcoordinator@setonlakeridge.org to review with you the items and services that the Coordinators will provide. Outside Professional Wedding Coordinators are not necessary nor encouraged at the church.

Before the wedding, the coordinators will:

- ☞ Put pew bows in place.
- ☞ Pin the boutonnieres on the men in the bridal party (The groom and the best man will have that done in the priest's sacristy and the ushers will be pinned in the vestibule of the main entrance to the church).
- ☞ Pin on corsages for the women in the bridal party.
- ☞ Hand out programs to the arriving guests, if the bride has supplied them.
- ☞ Assist the ushers in maintaining an atmosphere of quiet reverence conducive to prayer.

When the wedding begins, the coordinators will:

- ☞ Give the bridal flowers to the bride and her attendants.
- ☞ Fluff the veil and gown and arrange the train.
- ☞ Direct the bridal party when to process down the aisle.
- ☞ Seat late arriving guests by the side aisles.

The coordinators will also provide the following items and services:

- ☞ White pew bows.
- ☞ Altar Servers (*if requested*).

Coordinators' experience recommends that:

- ☞ Your invitations include accurate directions.
- ☞ Guests turn off all cell phones before entering the church.
- ☞ Discard any bottled beverages before entering the church.
- ☞ Your guests are informed either by programs or those distributing the programs that no photographs are permitted during the ceremony by anyone other than your professional photographer.

Marriage Preparation Checklist

- ☐ 1. We have selected our Mentor Couple.
- ☐ 2. We have completed the parish Wedding Agreement Form.
- ☐ 3. We have completed our Prenuptial Investigation questionnaire (PNI) with our priest or deacon that is preparing us for marriage.
- ☐ 4. We have completed our on-line FOCCUS premarital inventory.
(or REFOCCUS Marriage Enrichment Inventory)
- ☐ 5. We have attended our Pre-Cana Conference and secured the certificate of completion, *if applicable*.
- ☐ 6. We have completed our Natural Family Planning (NFP) course and secured the certificate of completion.
- ☐ 7. We have obtained our recently issued (within 6 months) copies of our Baptismal Certificates (*Catholic parties only*) from the churches where we were baptized.
- ☐ 8. We have secured our completed Affidavits of Freedom forms
(2 each; 4 total).
- ☐ 9. We have met with the Director of Music and completed our Wedding Liturgy Preparation Sheet and provided copies of the readings and the "Prayers of the Faithful", to those we have asked to proclaim a reading or recite the prayers.
- ☐ 10. We have contacted our parish Wedding Coordinator.
- ☐ 11. We have obtained our state Marriage License or the certified copy of our previously-issued marriage license.
- ☐ 12. We have completed Transformed in Love Workbook with our Mentor Couple
- ☐ 13. We have paid all Church and Music fees 15 days prior to the wedding.

Notes

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Transformed in Love Marriage Preparation Chart

Transformed in Love provides a rich and lasting formation and accompaniment for couples through a 9-step process:

