

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 Four 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, or, due to an inability to attend Pre-Cana together you may complete the Pre-Cana education at one of these two approved websites:

<http://www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com/archdiocese-military-services/>
<http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com/>.

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:

<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" – Fifth Edition, 2012. Joseph M. Champlin with Peter A. Jarret, C.S.C., Published by AVE MARIA PRESS, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556 www.avemariapress.com
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.

**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
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 need to purchase in advance: *Together for Life – Fifth Edition*, 2012. Authors: Joseph M. Champlin with Peter A. Jarret, C.S.C., Published by AVE MARIA PRESS, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556 www.avemariapress.com This booklet is available online from www.avemariapress.com or www.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

The Unity Candle is not an officially recognized ritual in the Catholic Rite Marriage, and 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.

If you have any questions please contact:

Chapel Wedding Scheduler at
Telephone: (410) 293-1105; DSN 281-1105
E-mail: 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" (5th Edition, 2012, or most recent publication)

1) Opening Prayer: Select one from A 1-7 (Pages 11-13) Our Choice: _____

2) First Reading: Select one from B 1-9 (Pages 16-32) Our Choice: _____

Scripture Reference: _____

Reader: _____

3) Psalm (Optional): Select one from C1-7 (Pages 36-40) Our Choice: _____

Scripture Reference: _____

*NOTE if a Psalm is chosen it must be SUNG and therefore must be arranged with the music director and requires a cantor to sing it.

4) Second Reading: Select from D 1-13 (Pages 44-64) Our Choice: _____

Scripture Reference: _____

Reader: _____

5) Gospel read by the priest/deacon Select one: Our choice: _____
F 1-10 (Pages 70-84)

6) Exchange of Marriage Vows (Select one) Our choice: _____

H-1 (Page 88) Contemporary wording

H-2 (Page 88) Traditional U.S. wording

7) Blessing and Exchange of Rings Our choice: _____

I 1 – 3 (Page 89)

8) Organ Rendition of Eternal Father (Optional) Yes /No

10) Prayer of the Faithful (Optional) Yes/ No

J 1 – 2 (Pages 91-92)

Other petitions may be added.

Our Choice _____

Reader: _____

11) Nuptial Blessing (Select one)
M 1 – 3 (Pages 97-100)

Our Choice _____

12) Final Blessing
O 1 – 4 (Pages 103-105)

Our Choice: _____

Military Wedding Protocol

Uniforms

1. Active duty military members are not required to wear a uniform. It is optional.
2. There are no special uniform exemptions for weddings. All uniforms must be worn in accordance with standard uniform regulations.
3. Brides and photographers are not authorized to choose which uniform to wear. The local military commander is the prescribing authority.
4. In general, for weddings one would wear the uniform of the day, the prescribed ceremonial uniform of the season of the corresponding uniform.
5. All participants should wear the same or corresponding uniform.
6. The uniform must be appropriate seasonal uniform of the locale where the wedding is taking place (not where the bride or groom live).
7. Military guests may be requested in writing beforehand to wear an appropriate uniform.
8. Lapel flowers are not authorized on uniforms.
9. Ribbons with large medals on Service Dress Blue/White, or small medals on Mess Dress.
10. Prank remarks on Groom's shoes ("Help Me") are inappropriate and not authorized.
11. All uniforms should be inspection ready.
12. Eliminate all chewing gum, keys, large wallets, pagers, and mobile phones. No bulging pockets.

Swords and Covers

1. Ceremonial swords are considered weapons. Weapons are never worn in chapel.
2. Swords may never be worn in chapel "at the ready". For transportation purposes inside the chapel, swords and scabbards may be hand carried.
3. Female sword bearers should wear trousers vs. skirts.
4. The groom does not wear a sword.
5. Transporting swords on a plane is a major security issue. Check ahead of time with the airline.
6. Covers are never worn in chapel
7. The groom may or may not wear his cover as he passes under the arch
8. Covers and swords are donned by the sword bearers only at the rear of the chapel and just prior to exiting the chapel for the Arch of Swords ceremony.

Arch of Swords

1. The Arch of Swords is Optional.
2. Either the bride or groom must be in uniform. The ceremony is not performed if both are in civilian attire.
3. Six or eight sword bearers, in the same or corresponding appropriate uniform of the season.
4. Performed outside on the steps – never inside – the chapel.

Program or Bulletins

1. Military members appearing in uniform should be listed by rank and branch of service.
e.g. Major Stephen Brown, USMC
1st LT Stephanie Carpenter, USAFR
2. Retired military members in uniform should be listed by rank and as (Ret).

Presentation of the Bride and Groom by the Clergy

1. If the bride or groom are in uniform:
e.g. LT and Mrs. John Smith
Lieutenants John and Mary Smith
LT John Smith and Elizabeth Jones
2. If not in uniform:
e.g. Mr. and Mrs. John Smith
John and Mary Smith
John Smith and Elizabeth Jones

Distinction between Military and Ecclesiastical Issues

1. Bridesmaids walking down the aisle, accompanied or unaccompanied? – Ecclesiastical
2. Order and content of ceremony? – Ecclesiastical
3. Selection of music for ceremony? – Ecclesiastical
e.g. The Naval Hymn (“Eternal Father”) is a recognized hymn.
The Marine Hymn and “Anchors Away” are not hymns in ecclesiastical usage.

Prescribed Military Uniforms for Weddings

1. One finds the following selected guidance in Chapter One of General Uniform Regulations:
 - a) GENERAL: Navy personnel shall wear the uniform of their respective rate or rank as prescribed by the designated uniform prescribing authority.
(Paragraph 1201, section 1.)

- b) **PRESCRIBING AUTHORITY:** The area/regional coordinators, as designated in Section 4 of Standard Navy Distribution List, OPNAV Po9B22-105, are the prescribing authorities responsible for issuing and controlling uniform policy within the geographic limits of their assigned region. This authority shall not be delegated. The senior officer present is responsible for uniform policy afloat. (Paragraph 1201, section 2.)
- c) **PRESCRIBED UNIFORMS:** Prescribing authorities select uniforms, the individual does not. (Paragraph 1201, section 4.)
- d) **REGULATIONS:** Each prescribing authority will publish uniform guidelines. They must be punitively enforceable with the force of a general order... (Paragraph 1201, section 5.)