

St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church
4611 Sadler Road
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

Norms For Marriage

1. The couple makes an appointment with the parish priest to schedule a meeting with him **at least 6 months** before they plan to marry.
2. The parish priest is the father of his spiritual family and has certain responsibilities toward his children. That is why the faithful call him “Father” (*Abouna*). As such, it is the priest’s duty to remind the engaged couple that among their other responsibilities, **the spiritual** ones must play a major role.
3. At that initial meeting:
 - ★ The parish priest will determine if both parties are able to have the Mystery of Crowning (Sacrament of Marriage) celebrated in the Catholic Church.
 - ★ He will also determine if they are eligible to be married in the parish.
 - ★ At least one of them should be a registered parishioner.
 - ★ He must make his determinations based on what he has witnessed and on information to which he has access. More specifically, he must see if both parties, (or at least one of them), are **registered parishioners** of his parish. In and out of itself, that shows at least, that they have the intention of being a part of the local “family of Faith.” Through parish registration, parishioners have the privilege of receiving all of the spiritual benefits offered by the Church through their parish priest. Of those, the most important of course, is the reception of the Mysteries (Sacraments). On the other hand, a registered parishioner is also bound by certain obligations; **attending the parish church on a regular basis** thereby contributing to the spiritual bond which ties the parish family together; and using the weekly offering envelopes thereby **contributing to the temporal responsibilities of the parish**. At this stage, it is still **not too late to register** and become an active member of the parish!
4. Seeing that a Marriage is the celebration of a Mystery (Sacrament), the Catholic Church prescribes that it is to be celebrated in a **sacred place**, that is, in the parish church (not in private homes or backyards, reception halls, gardens, beaches, etc.). Marriages are usually celebrated on Saturdays but arrangements for weekday Marriages can also be made with the priest.
5. It is customary that a **voluntary appropriate donation**, according to the means of the couple, be made to the parish church and a stipend given to the priest who celebrates the Marriage. (Fees for music and singers should be handled directly with them.)
6. If the parish priest sees that the couple is able to be married in the parish church, at the end of that meeting, and not before, a **tentative** wedding date can be established.

If one of the two parties was engaged in a prior marriage, no date will be set (**not even tentative date**) until after the proper Marriage Tribunal has given its final decision. Once a favorable final decision is obtained, then a **tentative date can be set**. The date is tentative because it depends upon the fulfillment of all of the Marriage requirements listed below (numbers 7-10).
7. Both parties must present the priest with an original **Certificate of Baptism**. This certificate cannot be more than six months old and can easily be obtained by contacting the church of baptism.

8. If one of the parties is not a member of the parish, a letter from their parish priest must be presented stating that they have **never been married**. If the party is unknown to the parish priest, then two witnesses, who have known the party for several years, must come to the priest to sign “affidavits” that the party has never been married before, either in a Catholic ceremony, another church ceremony or by the civil authorities.
9. The couple must attend together the **Marriage Preparation Classes** required by the Catholic Church. Information regarding these classes will be given to the couple by the priest. The “Certificate” of completion given to the couple at the end of the classes must be presented to the priest.
10. A **civil Marriage License** from the civil authorities, must be given to the priest at least 7 days prior to the celebration of the Marriage.
11. Marriages are **never celebrated during Lent**, unless there is a very serious reason.
12. The Mystery of Crowning is usually celebrated with the **Divine Liturgy** (a Mass), if both parties are practicing Catholics. Otherwise, the Mystery of Crowning is celebrated without the Divine Liturgy and without the Distribution of Holy Communion.
13. **Wedding dresses** for the bride and her attendants must be **modest** (no bare shoulders, no strapless, no plunging necklines and no backless dresses).
14. **Music** for the ceremony must be **liturgical** in nature (not pop tunes) and must be approved by the **celebrating priest** and not by the organist or the soloist . No recorded music is permitted.
 - ★ The Church has its own organist. If the couple wants to engage a different organist, he/she must be approved by the **Pastor first**.
 - ★ Other music instruments to be used at the wedding must also be approved by the **Pastor in advance**.
 - ★ The readings for the ceremony must be from the Bible.
15. **Pictures and Videos**
 - ★ **No Flash** can be used during the ceremony.
 - ★ **Photographers and Videographers** must attend a meeting with the Pastor prior to the wedding (at least a few hours before and not a few minutes before the ceremony begins). He will instruct them as to where they can stand. They can not roam around in the Church to take pictures. The couple assumes the responsibility to make sure their photographers abide by this policy.
 - ★ The Lector will make an announcement prior to the ceremony that **NO Pictures** can be taken by the guests during the ceremony.
16. **Flowers** for the church should be appropriately placed in consultation with the celebrant. Artificial flowers are not permitted.

If flowers are to be used around the pews, they must be tied with a ribbon. No tapes or thumb tacks or any adhesive can be used.
17. **Confetti, rice, balloons, bubbles, doves, and anything** else that detracts from the **sacredness** of the Mystery (Sacrament), are not permitted in or outside the church. **White runners** are not allowed in the center aisle.
18. The bride and her attendants may use the Sunday School building to dress prior to the ceremony. However, **alcohol and or tobacco** are not permitted in the building.

19. **Rehearsal**

All the parties involved with the wedding ceremony (groom, bride, witnesses, parents, attendants, musicians, singers etc...) must attend a wedding rehearsal prior to the ceremony. The order of the wedding procession must be approved by the **Pastor** prior to the rehearsal.

The couple and their attendants must be on time. The celebrating priest will not have to wait more than ten minutes for anyone. If a person cannot attend the wedding rehearsal the celebrating priest must be informed before hand to determine if there is a need for plan B.