

Something New: Weekend Mass at St. Andrew by the Bay includes marriage

Last autumn, a new Order of Celebrating Matrimony was shared by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Associations.

Informational sessions around the nation included an emphasis on the wedding procession following the custom of other liturgical celebrations – i.e., behind the cross – and a reminder that, like other sacraments, a couple can be married during a regularly-scheduled weekend Mass.

“It’s not common, at least not in this part of the country,” said Monsignor Richard Hilgartner, pastor of St. Joseph in Cockeysville, a workshop leader, “but if a couple is rooted in the parish community and they’re not interested in some of the trappings, maybe (it’s) a second marriage, it’s an option.”

That describes Lynn Thomas and Brian Yeatman, who were married by Father Jeffrey Dausen during 5 p.m. Mass Aug. 19 at St. Andrew by the Bay in Annapolis.

Yeatman is 63, his bride 60. Their witnesses were his brother, Richard, and her 30-year-old daughter, Chelsea.

Thomas’s previous marriage was annulled earlier this year. In April 2013, Father Dausen offered a funeral Mass for Yeatman’s then-wife of nearly 30 years, Debbie Jean.

In addition to the customary Saturday afternoon faithful, guests included three dozen family and friends. Yeatman has two adult children, Thomas four, plus a grandchild. Their marriage came three years and 10 days after their first date, made possible by Match.com.

“His profile was two sentences,” Thomas said. “Mine was considerably longer, and

included 'On Sunday, you will find me at Mass.'"

Reading that, Yeatman told himself, "That's the one."

He proposed on Easter 2016. Over an ensuing lunch with Father Dausen at the Blue Rooster in Cape St. Claire, he explained that one element in their plans for a church wedding was missing. After 29 years of marriage, she had divorced in 2009, but had not pursued annulment.

With the help of Deacon David Tengwall, that was completed in February.

"If it hadn't been as easy it was, it still wouldn't have kept us from getting it annulled," Thomas said of a process simplified during the Year of Mercy. "I wasn't going to give up Communion."

A Department of Defense employee, she had been extremely active at St. Mark Parish in Catonsville, where she was a Scout leader and taught religious education. An analyst for Xerox, Yeatman's affection for St. Andrew by the Bay grew during his first wife's decline with cancer.

"I was going to work one day, and Father Jeff came to the house and talked to her," he said. "He put her at ease, and calmed her. After that, she was ready go. I have great respect for him."

On the day before the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Thomas and Yeatman did not request special readings. The Gospel, Matthew 15:21-28, included a passage about a daughter "tormented by a demon." In his homily, Father Dausen joked, "Why now?"

The pastor recruited 4-year-old Kaitlyn Pioro, no relation to the couple, to serve as a ring bearer during the wedding ceremony itself.

While wallets and purses opened during the offertory collection, Yeatman remained as still as ever, as he contributes through Faith Direct.

"When I offered them this option, Lynn and Brian loved it," Father Dausen said earlier. "They wanted to keep it simple. Their experience is our faith community."

Monsignor Hilgartner, previously the executive director of the USCCB Secretariat

for Divine Worship, emphasized that connection.

“At a regular parish Mass, it isn’t going to be all about the bride and groom, but marriage isn’t just about the couple,” he said, drawing a parallel to baptism, first Communion and confirmation. “The sacraments are not private events. They’re acts of public worship of God for the church.”

Email Paul McMullen at pmcmullen@CatholicReview.org

Kevin Parks contributed to this article.