

Celebrating Marriage in a Catholic Church

So, you've decided to get married!

CONGRATULATIONS.

And you're thinking of celebrating it in a Catholic church?

WELCOME.

There are many things you will want to plan for the celebration of your marriage. This document will help you plan your wedding in a Catholic church and will answer your questions about church and civil requirements for marriage. The priest or deacon who celebrates your wedding with you will help you prepare for your marriage, complete the necessary documentation, and prepare the wedding ceremony.

Why Marry in a Catholic Church?

For Catholics, the marriage bond is sacred and permanent. In the wedding ceremony the bride and groom enter a holy pact for life by their mutual declaration of consent. In this awesome act, they are filled with the Holy Spirit who strengthens them for their life together. This is the blessing couples seek by coming to the Church for their marriage. The church building is a sacred place for celebrating publicly God's blessing of their union.

What Do We Need To Do?

The first step is always to contact the parish priest in the area where you live or, at least, where one of you lives. A Catholic wedding normally takes place in your own parish church so the priest is the one whose responsibility it is to help you. If you would like to celebrate your wedding somewhere else, it is wise to discuss it openly with your parish priest first.

Couples sometimes book a favoured church first only to encounter difficulty finding a priest who can prepare and celebrate their marriage with them.

Contact your parish priest as early as possible – normally at least six months before the wedding date – and he will help you.

You will need to provide:

- Birth Certificate (It is obtainable from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.)
- Baptismal Certificate (You need a recent copy, obtainable from the parish where you were baptised.)
- Evidence of Death or Annulment if you have been married before.

If other documents are required, the celebrant will inform you.

In Australia, the Catholic priest or deacon acts not only as a minister of the Church but also as a registered marriage celebrant for the state. He will help you fill out both the civil and church papers before the wedding.

There will be costs associated with a wedding in a church for administration and hire of the building. Depending on local arrangements there may also be a charge for music, flowers, photography and so on. Payment is also offered as a gift to the priest or deacon.

How Do We Prepare for Marriage?

Do not get so involved in preparing for the wedding that you lose sight of preparing for the marriage.

The wedding and reception last for a few hours; the marriage for a lifetime.

Before a Catholic wedding, all couples will be asked to reflect on their commitment to each other and to undertake some form of marriage education and spiritual preparation. It is best to begin this marriage preparation at least six months prior to your wedding. It will help you recognise the strengths of your relationship, identify and discuss any weaknesses, and give you the skills to build a satisfying marriage.

Your parish will help you locate suitable preparation programs in your area or sometimes the priest himself may work with you. Often the couple will arrange with the celebrant to have a wedding practice in the church a day or two before the ceremony.

The Catholic Wedding Ceremony

INTRODUCTORY RITES

After the entrance procession, the minister greets and welcomes the people and prays the opening prayer.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

A reading from scripture is followed by the singing of a psalm and the reading of the gospel. An extra reading from scripture may be included. Then in the homily the priest or deacon speaks of marriage.

CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY

After an introduction, the bride and groom declare their consent to marry. This is followed by the blessing and exchange of rings, and prayers of intercession. If the Liturgy of the Eucharist is not included, the Nuptial Blessing and Lord's Prayer follow.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

If the marriage is celebrated during Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist follows. It incorporates the Lord's Prayer and Nuptial Blessing.

For committed Catholics it is desirable for marriages to be celebrated during Mass because it is such a powerful expression of our love for one another in Christ.

However, if one of the families or a large number of those attending the wedding are not in communion with the Catholic Church, it is best to choose the rite of marriage outside Mass.

CONCLUSION OF THE CELEBRATION

The priest blesses the couple and the people. The marriage register is signed.

When a Catholic Marries a Person Who is Not a Catholic

At weddings in a Catholic church, a Catholic will often marry a Christian from another Church or a non-Christian person. The priest or deacon will help you (the Catholic partner) seek 'permission for a mixed marriage'. You are asked to reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ and state your intention to live that faith in the Catholic Church. You promise to do all in your power to share that faith with your children by having them baptised and brought up in the Catholic Church. You must inform your partner of this promise. No promise is required of the partner who is not Catholic. The minister of the non-Catholic partner may be invited to participate in the celebration of the marriage in a Catholic church, for example, by reading from the Scriptures, leading a prayer, or blessing the couple. Sometimes a Catholic will want to get married in another Christian church or outside a church setting. When there is sufficient reason, such a marriage may be recognised by the Catholic Church. You should discuss options with your parish priest.

Resources

Within the structure of the ceremony, you are able to choose readings, prayers and music to make your marriage a special celebration. There are also decisions to be made about how you enter the church in the entrance procession, where you stand, how your family and friends will be involved in the celebration, and so on. The priest will assist you in preparing your wedding and should be shown a copy of the booklet before it is printed. The parish musician will help you select suitable music, and help you fulfil any copyright obligations.

A valuable resource to help you with the ceremony is called [THE WEDDING](#) by Liturgy Publications. It is an electronic resource which enables you to select your texts and produce a booklet, a full running sheet or even a PowerPoint for display on a screen. You type in the names of the bride and groom once and they appear correctly throughout all the ritual texts. Texts can be edited and images can be added. You can view and insert music suggestions (with lyrics) into the rite. The resource also includes a hard-copy book which gives you helpful guidance and a printed copy of all the readings and prayers for the marriage rite.

*May God richly bless
your married life!*



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