

Getting Married in the Catholic Church



Introduction

First of all, congratulations if you are considering getting married.

On your wedding day you and your spouse, as ministers of Christ's grace, will each confer the Sacrament of marriage on each other by expressing your consent before the Church. You promise each other love and support for life, and in so doing you provide each other with help to attain holiness in your married life and the best environment in which to welcome and raise children.

It is the most important commitment that you will make. It is the privilege of the Church and this parish in particular to help you prepare for your celebration, and to celebrate the day with you.

This leaflet should give you general information, but please do make contact with Fr Allen as soon as possible, so that the best and most personal support and guidance can be offered.

First Steps

There is a certain amount of paperwork to get together, and need to take part in a Church preparation process to give you support as you prepare for the Sacrament and for married life.

Generally it is good to give twelve months notice of your intention to marry. Six months is the minimum notice.

As soon as you are able to give notice, then please make an appointment to meet Fr Allen.

Paperwork

In the months before your marriage the most important thing is to continue to find time for each other, and to help one another to prepare for the new way of life you will commit to. But there are other things to be done too. And one of these is making sure you have got all the paperwork right.

In many cases the procedure is very simple and straightforward. Sometimes things can be more complicated. Help is always available from Fr Allen, should you need it.

To prepare for a wedding in a Catholic church, in England and Wales, you will need to deal with

1. The church authorities – to obtain permission for your marriage to be celebrated in a Catholic church
2. The civic authorities – giving notice of your intention to marry

Papers for the Church

Preparation of papers

The person responsible for the compiling of marriage papers is the priest of the parish where the Catholic party or one of the parties to the marriage is resident.

When the marriage is to take place outside that parish, when the parish priest who compiles the necessary paperwork has completed his work he will forward the assembled papers to the diocesan chancery for forwarding to the church where the marriage is to take place.

A. Basic Papers

Proof of baptism

All Catholic parties are required to obtain a new baptism certificate from the church where they were baptised. This *must be dated within six months* of the date of the proposed wedding.

Other baptised Christians can simply provide their original baptism certificate if they have it or will need to obtain a new copy from their church of baptism.

Photocopies of baptism certificates are not acceptable.

Proof of Confirmation

Catholic parties who have been confirmed should provide a certificate of confirmation. This will generally be given on the baptism certificate, as details of confirmation should have been advised to candidates' parish of baptism. Otherwise, application should be made in writing to the church of confirmation.

Letters of Freedom

Both parties need to provide written evidence of their freedom to marry.

This is usually done by a Letter of Freedom from your parish of residence, if this has been your regular place of residence since the age of 16, except for relatively short periods. If your circumstances are not such as this, Fr Allen will advise what more needs to be done.

Certificate of completion of Marriage Preparation course

A certificate must be provided to confirm that the couple has attended a recognised Marriage Preparation course. Fr Allen can advise as to the forms of marriage preparation presently available.

B. Additional paperwork is required when

- a marriage is proposed between a Catholic and another Christian
- a marriage is proposed between a Catholic and a non-baptised person, (including those professing another faith)
- a Catholic seeks to marry in a non-Catholic church
- either party has been previously married or has entered into a Civil Partnership
- the marriage is to take place in a parish where neither party is resident

Additional paperwork is also regularly needed if you are marrying overseas.

Should any of these circumstances apply to you, Fr Allen will confirm what additional paperwork needs to be provided.

C. Paperwork fees

Parish fee

There is a standard charge of £50 to cover the costs related to the preparation of the marriage papers by the parish. (Payment should be made by cheque payable to 'Parish of St Nicholas')

Diocesan fee

An additional single charge of £30 is levied by the diocesan chancery should it be necessary for it to deal with any marriage papers – for example, the granting of dispensations, or forwarding papers to another diocese. The fee is raised to £50 if the papers are sent to an overseas Diocese.

These fees are payable when the Prenuptial form is completed.

If paying either of these fees is difficult for you, then please don't hesitate to mention it to Fr Allen.

Paperwork to meet Civil requirements

The following notes are offered for guidance only.

All details should be checked with the local Register Office.

Notice of marriage

If you want to get married at a Register Office or at approved premises both of you will need to give Notice of Marriage. The 'Notice of Marriage' replaces what was formerly commonly known as the Banns. It is the responsibility of each couple to obtain the necessary 'Notice of Marriage'. You both need to go to your local register office to give notice of your intention to marry. No one else can do it on your behalf.

The notice is published in the Register Office for a period of 28 clear days. After this period, another document called a 'marriage authority' is issued. This document is the legal clearance and allows your marriage to take place. Two authorities will be required for a marriage to take place.

If you live in Birmingham you must give your notice of marriage at Birmingham Register Office.

Birmingham Register Office
Holliday Wharf, Holliday Street
Birmingham, B1 1TJ

To make an appointment either fill in their booking form at www.birmingham.gov.uk/ceremonyenquiry and the Registrar's Office staff will ring you or you can ring them on 0121 675 9353. But be aware their phone is very busy!

Each notice can be given up to 12 months in advance of your ceremony, but must be given more than 29 days in advance of your ceremony. It is advisable to book an appointment to give your Notice of Marriage at least 3 months in advance of your ceremony.

Foreign Nationals

If you or your partner are foreign nationals and subject to immigration control, you will need to give notice to marry at a 'designated register office', such as Birmingham Register Office are designated. If you both live in England or Wales then you must attend a designated registration office in England and Wales, together.

Preparing for the Wedding Service

This is clearly something important too!

Fr Allen will be very happy to discuss the arrangements for this when you meet with him.