

WEDDINGS

What are the rules and requirements for a valid Catholic wedding?

There are three basic requirements for a valid Catholic wedding:

- The couple must be capable of being married—that is, they must be a woman and a man who are free of any impediment that would prevent marriage.
- The couple must give their consent to be married—that is, by an act of their will they irrevocably give and accept one another in order to establish marriage ([Canon 1057](#)).
- They must follow the canonical form for marriage—that is, they must be married according to the laws of the Church so that the Church and the wider community will be certain about the validity of their marriage.

Let's break down each of these points.

Impediments to marriage

First, both people must be capable of being married and free of any impediment (obstacle) that would prevent marriage. Some impediments to marriage include:

- Age: Both persons need to be old enough to contract marriage according to the local civil laws. (The Church has a minimum age requirement as well; see [canon 1083](#).)
- Previous marriage: You cannot marry someone else if you are already married. This most common impediment to marriage is discussed more below.
- Relatives: You cannot marry someone who is already your relative ([canons 1091-1094](#)).
- Reason: Anyone who is incapable of understanding what marriage is and the responsibilities that come with it (because of mental impairment, for instance) cannot enter marriage ([canon 1095](#)).
- Fear: No one can be forced into marriage, either directly or because of some "grave fear" ([canon 1103](#)).

This is not an exhaustive list. It is ultimately up to your pastor to determine whether there are any impediments to your marriage.

Previous marriage is probably the most common impediment to marriage. The Church follows Christ's teaching that marriage is a covenant that cannot be dissolved, so it does not recognize divorce as "dissolving" the previous marriage. However, the Church has a legal process for determining whether the previous marriage was valid—that is, that the couple freely gave themselves to one another in a way that brought about a valid marriage between them. If the Church determines that the previous marriage was not valid, it is said to be annulled. An annulment removes the impediment to marriage.

Freely given consent

In order to enter a valid marriage, each person must freely choose to give his or her entire self to the other, and to accept the gift of the other, irrevocably (forever). Church law presumes that the words and actions of the couple during the wedding accurately reflect their intention to do this. Immediately before the couple consent to enter into marriage (by reciting the marriage vows), the assisting priest or deacon asks the couple three questions:

- Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?
- Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?
- Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church? (*Rite of Marriage* #24)

If there are serious doubts about the ability of one or both persons to give their free consent to marriage "without reservation," the pastor may ask the couple to spend additional time addressing the issue; the wedding may even be delayed "for a time" until the issue is resolved (canon 1077).

For example, cohabitation (living together) is an issue that usually receives extra attention during the marriage preparation process. "If there is not sufficient awareness on the couple's part of the essential elements of Catholic teaching on the sanctity of marriage and sexual relations and of the commitment, fidelity, and permanence needed in marriage, then the marriage should be postponed until such awareness has developed". A mature awareness of the nature of sacramental marriage contributes to a couple's ability to freely consent to marriage. However, the sacrament of Marriage cannot be denied solely because a couple is living together. In fact, the Church has urged that pastors approach cohabitating couples with respect, charity, and patience.

The question about accepting children (which may be omitted for couples beyond the child-bearing years) may not seem to have anything to do with freely given consent. But the Church teaches that marriage is naturally ordered not only to "the good of the spouses," but also the "procreation and education of offspring" (canon 1055). In other words, since having children is part of the natural purpose of marriage, it is impossible to give yourself to the other "without reservation" if children are excluded.

In order to ensure that couples fully understand what it means to give oneself in marriage, the Church requires a period of preparation before marriage. Usually, the marriage cannot take place until this happens.

The form of the marriage

The Church has certain rules about how the marriage takes place (Code of Canon Law #1108-1123). These rules are meant to ensure certainty that a valid marriage actually took place. Basically, a valid marriage must be witnessed by an authorized representative of the Church (usually a priest or deacon) and two other witnesses. It also must follow the *Rite of Marriage*, the book containing the words and actions that make up the wedding liturgy. Under special circumstances, your pastor can ask your bishop to dispense with the requirement to celebrate the wedding according to the *Rite of Marriage*. This is most commonly the case when Catholics marry someone who is not Catholic and choose a wedding ceremony from the religious practice of the person who is not Catholic.

Other Catholic wedding requirements

The requirements listed above are only a partial rundown of the laws governing marriage in the Catholic Church; additional rules deal with special circumstances and administrative details. However, each diocese (the region administered by a bishop) also has its own rules regarding marriage. Moreover, individual parishes may have policies regarding marriage preparation and the wedding ceremony. You will need to check with your pastor for details about any of these additional requirements.

Can we get married in the Catholic Church if one of us is divorced?

No, unless the previous marriage is found to be not valid or the former spouse has died (Canon 1085). The marriage covenant is sealed by God, and the Church does not have the authority to dissolve it (see Catechism #1639-1640); the Church bases this on the teaching of Jesus (see Mark 10:6-12).

A new marriage is permitted, however, if the proper Church authorities determine that the previous marriage was invalid from the beginning. A declaration that the previous marriage was invalid is called a declaration of nullity, or more commonly, an annulment. An annulment is not a type of divorce, because it does not dissolve the marriage bond; it merely confirms that the marriage bond was never properly contracted in the first place.

What is involved in getting an annulment (declaration of nullity) for a previous marriage?

A person who has previously been married cannot re-marry in the Catholic Church, even if he or she has obtained a civil divorce, because marriage is an irrevocable covenant that the Church does not have the authority to dissolve (see Catechism #1639-1640). A new marriage is permitted, however, if a Church marriage tribunal determines that the previous marriage was invalid from the beginning.

The process of investigating the validity of the marriage begins when one of the parties to the marriage petitions the diocesan marriage tribunal—a sort of "court" set up to judge such cases. The tribunal then investigates the validity of the marriage by interviewing the parties to the marriage as well as any witnesses; any supporting documentation is also reviewed. If necessary, a sort of trial may take place, with advocates arguing both for and against the validity of the marriage.

A marriage may be found to be invalid if the basic requirements for a valid marriage did not exist at the time of the wedding. The marriage tribunal might make a declaration of nullity:

- ✓ if a legal impediment to marriage existed at the time of the wedding;
- ✓ if full and free consent to marriage was lacking on the part of one of the spouses at the time of the wedding;
- ✓ if the wedding did not follow canonical form—that is, the Church's laws governing how marriage is to take place.

The most common reasons for declaring a marriage invalid are "insufficiency or inadequacy of judgment (also known as lack of due discretion, due to some factor such as young age, pressure to marry in haste, etc.), psychological incapacity, and absence of a proper intention to have children, be faithful, or remain together until death".

Will the Catholic Church recognize the marriage of a Catholic to a baptized Christian of another faith?

A Catholic needs to obtain permission from the local bishop in order to marry a baptized person of another faith, which is easily done through the Catholic pastor. Before permission can be granted, the following conditions must be met:

- ❖ The Catholic party must promise to do all in his or her power to have all children baptized and raised in the Catholic Church.
- ❖ The Catholic party must declare that she or he is prepared to remove all dangers that might cause him or her to fall away from the faith. (For instance, the Catholic person might want to ensure that he or she is not prevented from attending Mass or receiving sacraments.)
- ❖ The non-Catholic person must be informed about the Catholic party's promises and obligation to fulfill them.
- ❖ The couple must be informed of the ends and properties of marriage. (In a nutshell, the purpose of marriage is the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children, and its essential properties are its unity and indissolubility.)

If one of us is Catholic and one is not, what are our options for a wedding ceremony that will be recognized as valid by the Catholic Church?

You have a wide range of options for celebrating your wedding. First, though, the Catholic person must obtain permission from the bishop (to marry a baptized Christian of another faith) or a dispensation from the bishop (to marry an unbaptized person). Once this is done (usually not a problem), you can discuss the following options with your Catholic priest:

- You may celebrate the Catholic Rite of Marriage with a Mass (although the person who is not Catholic will not be able to receive communion).
- You may celebrate the Catholic Rite of Marriage outside of Mass.
- You may have your marriage witnessed by a Catholic minister, and invite another Christian minister to participate in the wedding (for instance, by

reading from the Scriptures or offering prayers and blessings). Your Catholic minister will need to obtain permission from his bishop to extend such an invitation.

- You may have your marriage witnessed by a Christian minister, with a Catholic minister assisting (for instance, by reading from the Scriptures or offering prayers and blessings). Before doing so, your bishop must provide you with a "dispensation from canonical form" (in other words, your bishop must dispense with the requirement for Catholics to be married through a celebration of the Rite of Marriage).
- You may have your marriage witnessed by a minister of the faith of the non-Catholic person, if the Catholic person first obtains a dispensation from canonical form from his or her bishop.

May we have two separate wedding ceremonies—for instance, a civil ceremony and a Catholic ceremony, or a Jewish wedding ceremony followed by a Catholic wedding ceremony?

Church law forbids two separate ceremonies (Canon 1127) in order to avoid confusion. By definition, once you're married, you're really, truly united in marriage once and for all. It is impossible to get married again—unless the first marriage was somehow invalid. Having a second wedding ceremony would imply the first wasn't "real."

If a Catholic is married in a ceremony that is not recognized as valid by the Church, the couple may have their marriage convalidated—that is, they may celebrate the Catholic rite of marriage to make their marriage valid. In some cases, another option would be to request a sanation, in which the Church simply recognizes the validity of the marriage without a formal ceremony.

This question is sometimes prompted by a desire to incorporate two different faith traditions into the wedding ceremony; couples in this situation have several options for doing so. See the link below for more information.

Will the Catholic Church recognize the marriage of a Catholic to someone who is not a baptized Christian?

Yes, although the Catholic party must first obtain a “dispensation” from her bishop. The Church teaches that the marriage of a Catholic to someone who is not a baptized Christian is impeded (blocked) by “disparity of cult”—that is, the difference in their religious backgrounds. (This would include

marriage to someone who is an atheist or agnostic.) This impediment can be removed (dispensed with) by the bishop if the following conditions are met:

- ❖ The Catholic party must promise to do all in his or her power to have all children baptized and raised in the Catholic Church.
- ❖ The Catholic party must declare that she or he is prepared to remove all dangers that might cause him or her to fall away from the faith. (For instance, the Catholic person might want to ensure that he or she is not prevented from attending Mass or receiving sacraments.)
- ❖ The non-Catholic person must be informed about the Catholic party's promises and obligation to fulfill them.
- ❖ The couple must be informed of the ends and properties of marriage. (In a nutshell, the purpose of marriage is the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children, and its essential properties are its unity and indissolubility.)
- ❖ You may request a dispensation through the Catholic minister who will witness your wedding.

Can we get married in a civil ceremony and then have a Catholic wedding?

The Church does not recognize a civil wedding ceremony as valid when one or both people are Catholic. If a couple is married in a civil ceremony, the Catholic person(s) are asked to refrain from receiving the Eucharist until the marriage is recognized as valid by the Church. The reason for this, in a nutshell, is that the Church recognizes marriage as a spiritual reality, not just a piece of paper or a legal formality.

If you've already been married in a civil ceremony, how can you have your marriage recognized as valid by the Church? Talk to your pastor, who will probably recommend a process called *convalidation*; it usually involves an expedited marriage preparation process (to determine that there is no impediment to the marriage) and a simple celebration of the sacrament of marriage so that the consent of the couple to be married can be witnessed by the Church. Another process, called radical sanation, may sometimes be used to recognize a marriage as valid without a formal exchange of consent (vows).

While you may be (understandably) eager to be married as soon as possible, giving your whole selves to one another for the rest of your lives is a huge

commitment—and a much greater challenge than waiting to be married. Taking the time to prepare for that lifelong giving through the sacrament of marriage will ultimately make your marriage stronger and richer.

Can I have a Catholic wedding even if I do not attend Mass?

Probably, although your pastor may question your readiness to receive the sacrament of Matrimony if receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist is not important to you. The Eucharist is the "source and summit" of Christian life; all the other sacraments are bound up with it (Catechism 1324).

All Catholics have a right to receive the sacraments, unless there is some reason that makes it impossible for them to do so. It is your pastor's responsibility to ensure that you are able to receive the sacrament of marriage. Since the essence of the sacrament is the consent to be married that the bride and the groom exchange in the wedding vows, it is essential that both persons understand what that exchange of consent means. The question your pastor will have to answer is whether your reasons for not participating in the Mass affect your ability to consent to sacramental marriage.

If being married in the Church is really important to you, your pastor will probably gently encourage you to begin receiving the Eucharist regularly as part of your preparation for marriage. If you have been away from the Church for an extended period of time, you may be invited to attend some adult faith formation classes as well.

How long do we have to wait before we can be married in the Catholic Church?

Most dioceses do require a waiting period in order to ensure that couples are adequately prepared for the lifelong commitment of marriage. Generally, couples are asked to participate in some sort of marriage preparation classes during this time. According to a 2005 survey of diocesan marriage preparation guidelines, 70 percent of dioceses required a six-month waiting period; waiting periods in the remaining dioceses ranged from four to twelve months.

In the case of an emergency, you may be able to be married sooner than is usually allowed, but it is up to your pastor to determine.

What days and times should we avoid scheduling our Catholic wedding?

You may schedule your wedding for any day or time you like except for Good Friday and Holy Saturday during Triduum. You may also want to avoid scheduling your wedding during Advent (the time from four Sundays before Christmas through Christmas Eve) or Lent (the penitential period of about forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter); weddings held during these times should take into account the fact that the whole Church is observing a special period of penance.

Your pastor may advise you to "tone down" your wedding if you choose to hold it during this period, and a wedding Mass held on a Saturday evening or Sunday during these periods will have to include the readings for that Sunday rather than readings of your own choosing.

Finally, be aware that your local parish may limit the times and days when you may celebrate your wedding, for practical reasons. You should definitely coordinate a date with your parish before reserving that reception hall!

What happens during a Catholic wedding?

What happens during a Catholic wedding depends in part on what form the wedding takes.

- ✓ If you celebrate your wedding during a Mass, you can expect all of the elements of a typical Sunday Mass. The Rite of Marriage, which includes the exchange of consent (vows) and the exchange of rings, occurs immediately after the homily. In addition, the Mass includes several prayers and blessings for the bride and groom.
- ✓ If you celebrate your wedding outside of Mass, the wedding will begin with the liturgy of the word (Scripture readings), followed by a homily and the Rite of Marriage. The Prayers of the Faithful follow, and the ceremony concludes with a blessing of the couple.

Whichever form you choose, the height of a Catholic wedding occurs when the couple exchanges consent to be married. The effects of the sacrament of matrimony are described beautifully by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

“The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself. From their covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law, . . . even in the eyes of society." The covenant between the

spouses is integrated into God's covenant with man: "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love." (1639)

Can we use non-Scriptural readings in our Catholic wedding?

Some engaged couples consider supplying their own readings for their wedding: a favorite poem, the lyrics from a significant song, excerpts from a novel, and so on. Usually the couple reason that a non-Scriptural reading of their own choosing is just as meaningful to them as one from the Bible, if not more so. Although such readings may be meaningful to the couple, the Church does not allow non-Scriptural readings to substitute for the readings supplied by the *Rite of Marriage* or the *Lectionary for Mass*.

Why not? Well, for starters, a Catholic wedding is a celebration of the whole faith community, so it makes sense to choose readings that belong to the whole faith community, not just the couple. More importantly, though, in a Catholic wedding the couple and the whole Church recognize that it is ultimately the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, who seals the covenant that the couple make (Catechism #1624). So at a Catholic wedding, God should be at the top of the guest list. One of the many ways that God is present at the wedding is through the reading of the Scriptures—the Word of God. The Church believes that it is Christ himself who speaks when the Scriptures are read (Catechism #1088).

Other texts may have special meaning for you as a couple; you might even hear God speaking to you through them. Even so, it is through the Scriptures that God has chosen to speak to all believers for the sake of their salvation (Catechism #105-108).

So think of the Scriptures as a way for Christ to speak to you—and your guests—in a special way on your wedding day. That doesn't mean you have to ditch your other readings; consider including them in the printed program, or reading them sometime during the reception.

Can we have our wedding someplace other than a church building?

In most cases, Catholics are required to be married in a Catholic church building (see Canon 1118). There are some exceptions. When a Catholic marries someone who is not Catholic, the Catholic party may request permission from the local bishop to celebrate the wedding at the other person's place of worship. Because Church law states that a wedding may be

held in "some other suitable place" besides a Catholic church, it is technically possible that the local bishop might allow outdoor weddings, but few do.

No one would argue against the beauty of a natural setting; after all, creation reveals the presence of the Creator in a powerful way. But Catholics remember that Jesus Christ promised to continue to be present whenever his friends gathered in his name. The church building is the "house" in which the followers of Jesus do this on a regular basis to celebrate weddings and funerals and baptisms and confirmations and reconciliations and anointings of the sick—in short, all the most important events of their lives. For Catholics, it makes sense to begin a new household in this sacred house. Doing so symbolizes the new family's connection with the wider community of believers—not only those present at the wedding, but also all the parishioners who gather in that space, and ultimately, the universal Church.

Can we use popular, non-religious music in our wedding?

Using popular music in a Catholic wedding—the latest love song to hit the charts, say, or a classic Frank Sinatra ballad—is almost always strongly discouraged; in fact, most parishes will simply not allow it.

Understandably, some couples react with disappointment when the parish priest or music minister turns down their request to have a soloist sing their favorite song. Remember, though, that a Catholic wedding (even one outside of Mass) is a liturgy. The whole thing, from beginning to end, is a prayer. That's why the Church says that all music used in its liturgy should be easily identifiable as prayer. If you're not sure whether a particular song or piece of music passes the "prayer" test, check with your pastor or music minister.

Can we use recorded music in our wedding?

The Church strongly discourages the use of recorded music during the liturgy, including during wedding liturgies. Some dioceses will allow recorded music to be used on rare occasions, such as when no musicians are available for the wedding.

That's because the whole wedding, including the music, is a prayer, and an essential element of any prayer is that it comes from the person who is offering it. Imagine using a CD or tape recording to replace a spoken prayer, like the Lord's Prayer—it just wouldn't be the same as saying it yourself. The same reasoning applies to musical prayer.

Choosing wedding music

“He who sings prays twice,” St. Augustine said. The Church calls music a “necessary” part of the liturgy because it helps the assembly pray together more vibrantly (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1156; cf Sacrosanctum Concilium 112). If it is done well, this special form of prayer unites the whole assembly together in one voice and becomes a window onto divine beauty. Here's a step-by-step guide to choosing Catholic wedding music with that ideal in mind.

Work with your parish music minister

In most cases, couples work with their parish music minister to choose music that is beautiful, appropriate, and within the realm of possibility. Your music minister will be able to direct you to a range of possible selections, assist you in finding musicians, and help you obtain reprint permission from the copyright holder (if necessary). As you work with your music minister, keep the following points in mind:

- Although couples usually have wide latitude in choosing the music for their wedding ceremony, the pastor and music minister may "veto" your selections for practical or liturgical reasons. In a sense, the whole Church participates in your wedding liturgy, so it's important to ensure that the music is prayerful.
- Most music ministers are happy to help couples prepare for their wedding, but keep in mind that many already have their hands full with their regular music ministry duties. You'll win your music minister's appreciation if you offer to work around her schedule, and come to your initial meeting with her having done a little advance preparation—so read on!

Three criteria for choosing Catholic wedding music

The Church keeps no official list of “approved” wedding music, but it does offer three criteria for liturgical music that can be applied to your choice of wedding music.

- **Is it prayerful?** The purpose of any Catholic liturgy, including a wedding liturgy, is to give glory to God and to sanctify (make holy) the worshipers. Your wedding music should reflect that purpose; in other words, it should help the assembly to pray and to give thanks to God for your love. The criteria of prayerfulness is one reason why popular music—including some of the "classic" wedding marches taken from secular operas—is often not permitted.
- **Is it accessible?** In other words, will the assembly be able to sing along? In Catholic worship, the assembly (everyone attending the wedding) is not an audience, passively watching events unfold at the altar. Catholic liturgy calls on the assembly to actively participate in the prayer of the Church, including its sung prayer. Doing so is one of the most powerful ways your friends and family can express their love and support for you and your spouse.
- **Is it beautiful?** Beauty is a window onto the divine (Catechism #32), so it is not surprising that the Church calls for the music used in its worship to be beautiful. This criteria is obviously somewhat subjective, depending on personal tastes and local culture. Whether your music is beautiful or not may depend less on the particular selection than on the skill of the musicians who sing or play it. A hymn that seemed ho-hum the first time you heard it in church might have great potential in the right hands.

Can we write our own vows for our Catholic wedding?

Some couples like to write their own vows as a way of expressing their love for one another more personally. Because the *Rite of Marriage* does not provide an option for couples to write their own vows, however, it is unlikely that the priest or deacon who assists at your wedding will allow you to do so.

One option for couples who want to publicly express their love in their own words would be to include a personal statement in the printed wedding program. Another possibility: exchange a profession of love during the reception.

Why can't couples write their own Catholic wedding vows? The Church actually has some good reasons for sticking to traditional vows:

- One of the ways that the Church expresses the unity of all believers is through the unity of the liturgy (in this case, the wedding), especially in its

essential parts (*Catechism* #813, 815). In other words, it would become hard to recognize the unity of the Church if everyone started using different words for the most important parts of the liturgy. By using the vows provided by the Church, the couple is acknowledging that they are part of something larger than themselves. The wedding unites them not only with one another, but with the whole Body of Christ, the Church.

- The mutual consent of the bride and groom to be married to one another is what brings about the grace of the sacrament (*Catechism* #1623, 1626, 1639 - 1640). The words that express that consent should reflect the sacredness of the moment, which the Church ensures by providing the wording for the vows.
- Because consent is what makes the marriage, it is important for everyone to be clear that the bride and groom have actually declared their mutual consent. If the vows aren't clear about that—or if they contain wording that might be interpreted as placing conditions or limits on the marriage—then the validity of the marriage becomes questionable (cf. Code of Canon Law #1101 - 1102, 1107; also #1119).

Do we have to celebrate Mass during our Catholic wedding?

No. The Church encourages couples to celebrate the sacrament of marriage within the Mass, especially if both people are Catholic, but sometimes it makes more sense to celebrate the rite of marriage alone, without a Mass. In fact, the Rite of Marriage contains an option for doing so. That option is advised when a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, in part because the person who is not Catholic will not be able to receive the Eucharist (*Rite of Marriage* #8). When a Catholic marries a person who has not been baptized, the rite for celebrating marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person is used.

The expectation, however, is that a wedding between two Catholics will take place within the Mass (*Rite of Marriage* #6). In marriage, two people pledge to give all of themselves to one another forever. This mutual self-giving is strengthened through God's grace, which was poured out in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Celebrating the sacrament of marriage together with the sacrament of the Eucharist is a good way to remember the essential connection between the marriage covenant and the New Covenant established in Jesus Christ.

Can we light a unity candle during our wedding?

Many couples choose to signify that "two have become one" by lighting a unity candle during the wedding ceremony. Before or at the beginning of the wedding ceremony, a representative from each family lights two taper candles. During the ceremony, the bride and groom use the two taper candles to light a large pillar candle (the "unity candle") together. Some Catholic parishes prohibit the use of a unity candle, however, because there is no provision for it in the *Rite of Marriage*. Also, within Catholic liturgies, candles primarily refer to the light of Christ and baptism; the Easter candle, lit at the Easter vigil, is the central candle in the sanctuary. If you would like to have a unity candle, ask your parish whether it is permitted. The unity candle must not be placed on the altar. If you want a unity candle but your parish does not permit one, consider using a NUPTIAL CANDLE; its lighting can be incorporated into the blessing after the signing of the register.

GUIDELINES TO BE DISCUSSED WITH THE COUPLE

THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED BEFORE YOUR WEDDING MASS

1. The priest (of the parish) who has prepared your marriage papers (and who usually is also the priest who will celebrate your nuptials, unless you would like to contact someone else) must be contacted in advance in order to discuss the liturgy.
2. For an unscheduled mass you are permitted to have you own lector who should be advised to be appropriately dressed for the responsibility. For the choirs you may contact any of the parish choirs. The choirs have been instructed about the hymns to be sung. Congregational hymns and response are encouraged. Solos and performances are discouraged. Kindly do not recommend any songs not befitting the liturgy, like pop songs, love songs or even hymns for a personal devotion.
3. If you have a choir from outside the parish, kindly have the hymns approved of by the priest preparing your papers.
4. The printing of booklets with the prayers and the readings has been discouraged by the Archdiocese. These have no place in the liturgy. However, you may have a hymn folder.
5. If you wish to have your own priest, then a letter from him stating his consent to celebrate your nuptials has to be presented before the wedding so that the parish priest can give him the necessary delegation.

6. If there is more than one couple for the wedding mass, the couples are requested to meet the priest of the parish well in advance to discuss the co-ordination of lectors, readings, seating arrangements, choir, celebrant, etc.
7. If you are decorating the pews please avoid using sticking tape.
8. Please do not light fireworks in the Church compound or playground. Not only is it dangerous, it also leaves a lot of litter. It is best to avoid fireworks.
9. When planning your wedding gown and the dresses of the bridesmaids and others, please ensure that these are proper for a Church and a time of prayer.
10. For flower arrangements kindly avoid converting the sanctuary into a garden or a florist shop!

ON THE WEDDING DAY

PLEASE SEE THAT YOU ARE IN TIME FOR YOUR WEDDING (at least 15 minutes before the mass)

Remember:

The bride and the groom are the ministers of the rite, therefore the entire focus is meant to be on them.

At the Entrance to the Church

- When the Mass is about to begin it is suggested that all the members of the family should already be seated inside the Church. Only the bridal couple, the best man and the bridesmaid should be waiting for the celebrant to come and welcome them. Ideally the members of the family should be in the pews standing to welcome the couple into the Church as the entrance hymn is sung.
- If the bride would like her dad to escort her into the Church then he may do so till the centre of the Church where the groom and the celebrant will be waiting and the dad then hands over the bride to the groom and proceeds to the pews.

IT IS BEST TO DISCUSS THE ENTRANCE WITH YOUR CELEBRANT

In the Church

- Those proclaiming the Readings & or leading the Prayers of the Faithful should rehearse the same properly. Kindly ensure that those proclaiming the Word are appropriately and decently attired!
- The nuptial ceremony is conducted after the Gospel and homily. However in the case of Disparity of Cult, the nuptials are held before the Thanksgiving Mass (with the readings of the Day, not special nuptial readings). A witness from either side chosen in advance is required and is expected to stand beside the couple as the ceremony progresses. It is advised that the rings be kept in the groom's pocket or with the best man. If the page boy is given the responsibility of the ring cushion, then he should be guided to bring the same forward.
- The nuptial vows are best recited by heart and with the couple facing each other. It makes the ceremony very meaningful. Of course there will be nervousness. In that case keep the cue card close to you.
- The procedure of offering gifts like flowers and fruits, bible and rosary with commentaries to explain the same is discouraged. If the couple would like to give something for the Church or the poor it can be done placed at the foot of the altar before the mass. Kindly consult the priest about the objects of use for the Church or the poor. In case the couple would like to have a new Bible and rosaries to enhance their prayer life as a family then these may be placed on the altar or given to the celebrant so that the celebrant blesses the same and hands them over, maybe after the signing.
- After the Our Father, the Church reserves a special nuptial blessing over the couple.
- Communion will be given in the form of both species. During communion use the time to pray for each other, for your marriage and for your families.
- There is no need of a Thanksgiving Prayer after communion because the Eucharist is itself the highest prayer of thanksgiving.
- After the final blessing, the celebrant leads the couple along with their witnesses to the table near the altar to sign the registers. Please remember the sanctuary is a sacred place and not a studio for posing for photographs. Also you are encouraged to maintain the sanctity and decorum of the Church when you are gathered near the entrance of the Church and respect those who have come to Church to pray and prepare for the next Mass.

The Nuptial Rite

Priest: "(Name) and (name), have you come here to enter into Marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly?"

Groom: Yes, I have
have

Bride: Yes, I

"Are you prepared, as you follow the path of Marriage, to love and honor each other for as long as you both shall live?"

Groom: Yes, I am

Bride: Yes, I am

"Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?"

Groom: Yes, I am

Bride: Yes, I am

Priest: Since it is your intention to enter into the covenant of Holy Matrimony, join your right hands, and declare your consent before God and his Church.

Groom

(after joining right hands)

Groom: I, (name of Groom), take you, (name of Bride), to be my wife. I promise to be faithful to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honour you all the days of my life.

(after blessing of rings)

Groom: (Name of Bride), receive this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Bride

(after joining right hands)

Bride: I, (name of Bride), take you, (name of Groom), to be my husband. I promise to be faithful to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honour you all the days of my life.

(after blessing of rings)

Bride: (Name of Groom), receive this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

When there is a disparity of cult marriage

(after blessing of rings)

Catholic party : (Name of Catholic party), take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of God Almighty.