

## Who Can Be Married?

Undoubtedly, Roman Catholic marriages have stricter rules than their Anglican counterparts, but the strictness is often greatly exaggerated. Catholics are *encouraged* to marry other Catholics in order to attain what is often referred to as a 'perfect union', but inter-faith marriages are much more common occurrences these days.

It is not a pre-requisite for either partner to be a practising Catholic, although some priests may have a different view on this. On the whole, as long as neither partner has been married before at least one partner has been baptised as a Catholic, and the couple are willing to sign up to the following four basic principles of marriage, then we will usually be happy to conduct the Ceremony.

The four basic principles are:

- You are choosing to marry freely, without external pressure.
- You intend to remain together for the rest of your life.
- You intend to remain faithful to one another.
- Unless the Bride is past childbearing age, you intend to have at least one child.

In terms of where the marriage can take place it really means here in St Joseph's although some couples will come to us for marriage preparation to marry elsewhere in a catholic church.

Being divorced does not totally exclude one from marriage in the church but there are requirements of annulment that have to be met first before it can even be considered.

## Arranging the Service

Once you know that you want your marriage to take place here, and have obtained the permission to do so, then you can then get down to the business of formalising the arrangements at a meeting with the either Fr Nick or Deacon's Pat or Paul.

The route the arrangements will go down will depend on whether both the Bride and Groom, or just one of the partners, is a member of the Catholic faith. In all cases you must be contact us at least three months before the planned date for the Wedding, although closer to six months is preferable.

Here are all the things that need to happen in order to arrange a marriage in the Catholic Church. Please note that not all activities may be necessary, and where this is the case it is clearly marked.

### 1. The Discussion

The first step for all couples wishing to tie the knot in a Roman Catholic Ceremony here at St Joseph's is to meet with the Fr Nick or one of the Deacons Gerard or Les, who will perform the ceremony. Then we will want to meet with the Bride and the Groom that's both of you, regardless of whether you are both Catholic, and speak to you both at length about the attitude of the Catholic Church towards marriage and each partner's views on the union. Then we need to be satisfied that as a couple you understand the obligation you are about to undertake before moving on to the next phase of the arrangement.

## **2. Paperwork**

The clergy, approving of the marriage, will then help you as couple to fill out a few simple forms. The forms state that each partner is legally and spiritually able to marry, is doing so of their own free will, and that you agree with the Church's views on marriage. At this point we will normally pencil in the date and time for the marriage and make a provisional reservation.

## **3. Dispensation**

The final act of the meeting is for the priest to apply for dispensation. There are two types of dispensation that can be applied for; 'Permission for Mixed Marriage' (required if a Catholic wishes to marry a baptised non-Catholic Christian), or 'Dispensation from Disparity of Cult' (needed if a Catholic wishes to marry someone who is not baptised). This again should be relatively straightforward but the latter and sometimes the former will need to be granted by the Bishop or the Chancellor of the Diocese so we have to submit a request.

## **4. Register Office**

Before the date for the Wedding can be finalised, as a couple you must give notice to the Registrar's Office in the district in which you live and for most of you that will be Birkenhead. Once the priest has received written confirmation from the Registrar that the couple has fulfilled their requirements, the application for the Ceremony can proceed. See later.

### **. Banns**

As with a Church of England Ceremony, banns will be read in the Church but only if both partners are Roman Catholic. However, unlike a Church of England Ceremony, the publication of the banns is not a requirement for marriage. The banns are therefore more symbolic than anything else, and as such interfaith marriages are not privy to the same privilege.

## **6. Finalisation of Wedding Details**

Once the preliminaries are out of the way, this is the best time to schedule another appointment with the us to discuss the intricacies of the Service. We will tell you about the Service and discuss your requirements with you, the choice of Wedding Service or Nuptial Mass and the reasons behind the choices. We will also provide help and advice as to what hymns, music, psalms and music could be incorporated.

## **7. Pre-Marriage Preparation**

We request that both the Bride and Groom take part in a course of preparation before they enter into marriage. Normally this will happen a few months before the Wedding and be spread over a number of weeks. These pre-marital counselling sessions, sometimes referred to as Pre-Cana, sometimes involve groups of couples and discussions about all aspects of a Roman Catholic marriage as well as practical aspects of marriage. We hope to provide a **Saturday morning pre-marriage preparation course** in the Parish Centre on two occasions.

# Registering a Marriage

## **Giving Notice of Marriage**

Couples intending to marry must personally give notice to the superintendent registrar.

You should make an appointment at the register office in the district in which you have lived in for the 8 days prior to giving notice.

## **How do you arrange a Civil Marriage?**

For marriages at the Register Office or other approved premise in Wirral:

- Telephone 0151 606 2020 or 666 3681 to provisionally book your marriage date (up to 15 months in advance) in the marriage diary. This booking will be held for three months.
- The wedding diaries will be available 2 years in advance.
- There is a £30 non-refundable booking fee, which has to be paid when the booking is taken. It can be paid by debit/credit card over the telephone. Alternatively call in person to the Register Office, at Birkenhead Town Hall and provisionally book your wedding and pay the £30 cash.
- If you both live in Wirral we will book you an appointment to give notice of your intention to marry. This is a legal requirement prior to marriage and each partner is required to give an individual notice.
- If you and your partner live in the same district, it is helpful if you both attend at the same time.
- If you live outside of Wirral you will need to give notice of your intention to marry at your local register office. This will be forwarded to Wirral and will be used to confirm your provisional booking.
- You can give notice of your intention to marry a minimum of 16 days before the date of marriage and a maximum of 12 months before.

In a Register Office or Approved Premise in another district:

- If you are marrying in another district but one or both of you lives in Wirral, then you must give notice of your intention to marry here in Wirral. We will forward this information to the relevant authority.

### **a What information will I need to give Notice of Marriage?**

You will need to produce number of documents when you Give Notice of Marriage. They are:

- If you were born after 1 January 1983 you **must** produce a passport. If a passport is not available you **must** produce your birth certificate and your mother's birth certificate
- A passport (or a birth certificate if a passport is not available)
- Proof of address (a recent council tax bill, utility bill, bank statement or a driving licence)
- If either party has been through a form of marriage or civil partnership previously, you will need to provide evidence of the dissolution (a certified copy of your decree absolute)
- If either party is widowed, you will need to produce a certified copy of the death certificate.
- A fee is available for this service. Please contact the Register Office on (0151) 606 2020 for more information

If you have a query about the documents you need to produce please call us on (0151) 606 2020.

Please note that the marriage can only take place at the venue you name on the notice of marriage. If you were to change the venue it would be necessary to give, and pay for, new notices of marriage.

Special rules apply if one or both of the people proposing to get married are subject to Immigration Control ([Link to marriage and immigration control page](#)).

### **How much does it cost to give Notice of Marriage?**

A fee of £35 is payable to the Superintendent Registrar at the time of giving the Notice of Marriage for each of you that is £70 in total

### **Civil Marriage and Civil Partnership – Special Licences**

If someone or their partner has a terminal illness it is possible to get a licence to marry or form a civil partnership very quickly without having to give the usual statutory notices. You will need to speak to a Registrar who can provide further information. Please contact **the Register Office on 0151 666 3684 to book a provisional marriage date.**

### **Opening Hours**

By appointment only from 9.00am to 4.00pm (Monday to Friday) except Thursday, which is 10.00pm to 4.00pm. Please call (0151) 606 2020 to make an appointment.

### ***What happens next?***

After the i's have been dotted and the t's have been crossed, a copy of the notices to marry (one for each partner) will be displayed on the notice board in the Register Office(s) for fifteen days and people have the right to make a legal objection to the impending ceremony. Assuming this doesn't happen (it normally only happens in the movies, so don't worry), then you will be granted Authority to go ahead with your **Wedding Ceremony**. So as soon as you have them bring them to us as your loss will only incur more expense and even worse delay of the wedding.

With the paperwork out of the way, it is then time to move onto the fun bit – getting stuck into discussing the nitty gritty of the service here in St Joseph's.

The major decision that effects a **Catholic wedding order of service** is whether or not Mass is to be included in the proceedings. Typically, when both the Bride and Groom are practising Catholics, the 'Rite of Marriage During Mass' will be the obvious option whilst for mixed denomination weddings, and for those couples seeking a shorter service, the 'Rite of Marriage Outside Mass' will be the chosen path.

A **Catholic wedding order of service** which includes Mass can last about an hour, with non-Mass Ceremonies lasting about forty minutes.

A **Catholic wedding orders of service** is as follows:

*Rite of Marriage During Mass* : The Entrance Rite, The Liturgy of the Word, The Rite of Marriage, The Liturgy of the Eucharist, Communion Rite & Nuptial Blessing, and the Concluding Rite.

*Rite of Marriage Outside Mass* : The Entrance Rite, The Liturgy of the Word, The Rite of Marriage, Nuptial Blessing, and the Concluding Rite.

The complete transcript for a Roman Catholic Wedding is quite long (even without Mass), but if you are keen readers, we should be able to provide you with a copy for you to take away and read. For those of you who would prefer something a little easier to digest, we have summarised the various elements of a **Catholic wedding order of service** below.

## ***Catholic Wedding Order of Service***

### ***1. The Entrance Rite***

The Bride will make her way to the front of the Church sometimes on her father's arm, preceded by her Bridesmaids. Alternatively, the Bride can be met in the porch of the Church by the priest and the wedding guests and proceed towards the altar with the priest followed the guests. The Bride's procession can be accompanied by a musical accompaniment or a hymn sung by the congregation. The Bride and the Groom will then sit or kneel on special cushions and the priest introduces the ceremony, invites the congregation to make the sign of the cross and says a short prayer.

### ***2. Liturgy of the Word***

One or two passages from either the Old or New Testament (normally chosen by the couple) will be read. This can be done by the priest but couples may be given the choice of choosing a relative or friend to do it. A responsorial psalm will be recited or sung after the first reading and a Gospel acclamation will follow the psalm or second reading and be succeeded by a Gospel Reading (again, this can often be chosen by the couple). The Liturgy of the Word concludes with a short homily (a practical, not theological sermon) by the priest.

### ***3. The Rite of Marriage***

The congregation will stand and the priest will turn to the couple and ask them three questions about their freedom of choice, faithfulness to one another, and acceptance and upbringing of children. The couple answers the three questions separately then declare that they know of no lawful impediment as to why they cannot be married. The Bride and Groom then clasp hands, exchange their vows, then go onto exchange the rings.

After receiving the rings (usually from the Best Man), the priest will bless them before the Groom takes the Bride's ring and places it on her thumb saying aloud 'Take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity', 'in the name of the Father,' (the ring is moved onto the Bride's index finger), 'and of the Son' (the ring is moved onto the Bride's middle finger), 'and of the holy Spirit. Amen' (the ring is finally placed upon the Bride's fourth finger) - the Bride will then repeat this with the Groom's ring.

Following the exchange of the rings, a few short 'bidding' prayers are spoken - it is possible for the couple to write these themselves and opt to have them spoken by the priest or a member of the congregation of their choosing.

### ***4. At Mass - Liturgy of the Eucharist***

Regular Churchgoers will be familiar with the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and that which takes place in a **Catholic wedding order of service** has very little difference from the everyday version which you will be used to, the only difference being that the Bride and Groom can themselves present the gifts.

To summarise the Liturgy of the Eucharist for those of you not familiar with it, first is the 'Preparation of the Altar' and the 'Presentation of Gifts' where the bread and wine are brought forward along with any money collected from the congregation. Next, an appropriate hymn will be sung followed by the priests 'Prayer of the Gifts' which may be spoken or sung.

The congregation will stand (or kneel in Ireland) and the priest will read the 'Eucharist Prayer'. To complete the Liturgy of the Eucharist, 'Sanctus, Sanctus' ('Holy, Holy'), 'Memorial Acclamation' and 'Great Amen' are sung by the congregation.

### ***5. Communion Rite & Nuptial Blessing***

Communion (the distribution of the consecrated bread and wine) will be taken at this point in the Ceremony to all those eligible and wanting to receive it - the Bride and Groom will be the first in line. Once Communion has concluded, the priest will recite the 'Lord's Prayer'. Next follows a Nuptial Blessing given by the priest to the Bride and Groom which is followed by the Rite of Peace. The Bride and Groom and all guests then show their love and wishes for peace to one another by shaking hands and saying 'peace be with you'. 'Agnus Dei' (Lamb of God) and the 'Communion Hymn' are sung concluding the Communion Rite.

### ***5. Concluding Rite***

A final blessing is given by the priest and the Bride and Groom seal the union with a kiss. The wedding party will then move into the sacristy to make the civil declaration and sign the register, often accompanied by a hymn of thanksgiving sung throughout by the congregation. Once the formalities are complete, the priest will introduce the Bride and Groom as husband and wife and they will then proceed out of the Church, followed by the Wedding Party and remainder of the congregation accompanied by a recession hymn.

# COSTS

Although there are no charges to receive the Sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church we ask that you make a donation to the church and the clergy for the provision of the building and the time the clergy spend in the preparation of your wedding and conducting of the ceremony.

These are the charges made by the Council

## **Registrars Fees**

### **Marriages and Civil Partnerships at Birkenhead or Wallasey Town Halls**

Registrars fees for Marriages and Civil Partnerships at Birkenhead Town Hall:

Monday - Thursday	£110.00
Friday afternoon	£165.00
Saturday afternoon	£199.00

Proposed fees for all weddings from 1 April 2017

### **Marriages and Civil Partnerships at other approved premises**

**If we were not approved registrars then the Council would charge the following to officiate at your wedding.**

Registrars fees for Marriage and Civil Partnerships at other approved premises (see below) are:

Monday - Friday	£410.00
Saturday	£464.00
Sunday and Bank Holidays	£549.00

### **Civic Room Hire for the Wedding Service**

**Leasowe Castle**      Week days £265      Saturdays £350

**The River Hill**      Weekdays £389      Saturdays £478

**The Saddle Club**      Weekdays £450

**St Saviour's or St Stephen's** £465 for the basic service extra charges heating, verge, candles music etc £850

## Useful Contacts:

Presbytery		0151 652 5767
Email		<a href="mailto:stjosephbh1@hotmail.com">stjosephbh1@hotmail.com</a>
Deacon Gerard		07742659728
Deacon Les		07716301071
		<a href="mailto:les.archdeacon@gmail.com">les.archdeacon@gmail.com</a>
Flowers	Julie Newman	0151 608 7071
	Sister Catherine	0151 652 3715
	Maggie McMahon	0151 653 0689
Music & Choir	Stella McGann	0151 648 4901
		<a href="mailto:ptrmcgann@aol.com">ptrmcgann@aol.com</a>
Organist	Peter Rawlinson	0151 677 0852
	Maria Coulson	0151 334 4560
Registrar's Office	Wirral	0151 606 2020
		<a href="mailto:rbdm@wirral.gov.uk">rbdm@wirral.gov.uk</a>
		0151 666 3684

The Register Office  
Town Hall  
Mortimer Street  
Birkenhead  
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