

Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage in the Diocese of Meath

Five Steps to Organise your Wedding

The marriage ceremony is an important part of your wedding day. It requires organisation, care, attention and prayer.

Step 1 When you decide to get married

First of all, book the church where you would like your wedding to take place. When booking the church and seeking a preferred date, you must furnish details of the priest who has agreed to celebrate your wedding Mass. Please note that weddings are not permitted on Sundays. Secondly, contact the Registrar of Marriages (see details below) and begin the process to get permission from the State for your wedding to take place. It is important that the priest you ask to celebrate your wedding is registered as a solemniser.

Step 2 Year before the wedding

The Pre-Marriage Course should be booked. Details of courses locally are available on www.accord.ie.

Step 3 6 months before the wedding

After you have completed the Pre-Marriage Course, start the paperwork (see details below). Ensure the Pre-Nuptial Enquiry meeting with the priest has taken place and that all the paperwork is in order. This meeting takes place in the parish where you live.

Step 4 3 months before the wedding

Finalise the wedding ceremony. Choose the Readings, Mass text, vows and music. Finalise your booklet, if taking this option.

Step 5 3 weeks before the wedding

By this stage, all should be complete. Carry out a final check that everything is in order – the civil registration, the Pre Nuptial Enquiry Forms and the ceremony details.

Church Paperwork

Church papers are completed in the parish where the bride and groom reside. The paperwork should be completed at least 3 months prior to your wedding.

You must both obtain the following certificates as soon as possible so that you can meet with the priest in the parish that you currently reside in to complete the Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form:

Baptismal Certificate

Each of you should contact the parish of your baptism seeking a new baptismal certificate. When contacting the priest or parish office, please inform them of your date of birth and parents' names.

Confirmation Certificate

Each of you should contact the parish from which you were confirmed seeking a confirmation certificate. You may need to indicate the primary school you attended and the year of your confirmation. In cases where parish/place of baptism and confirmation are the same, these may be recorded on the one form.

Declaration of Freedom

A letter from a family member (parent or sibling) should be addressed to the priest stating that you are over 18, your religion and that you have not been married before in either a religious or civil ceremony.

Pre Marriage Course Certificate

When you have completed the Accord Pre-Marriage Course, you will receive a certificate. This should be given to the priest when finalising the church paperwork.

Permissions and Dispensations (where applicable)

If you or your fiancé has been previously married or is non-Catholic, it is essential that freedom to marry be established before any marriage arrangements can be confirmed.

All of the above forms should be brought with you when filling in the **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form** (with the priest of the parish you live) and will be included with the papers being forwarded or filed.

Civil Registration

You must receive permission from the Registrar of Marriages for your wedding to take place. As soon as possible, contact the Registrar's Office and arrange a one-to-one meeting. If this is not done within the timeframe and requirements, the priest will not be allowed by the State to perform the ceremony. If the priest celebrating the wedding lives outside Ireland, he will have to be registered as a 'temporary solemniser'. For details see www.groireland.ie or contact your local

The Marriage Ceremony

The church ceremony is one of the main parts of your day and we hope that it will be full of meaning and one that expresses beautifully the vows you make at the altar.

General

For details on the various wedding Mass texts, including all the Scripture readings and options on the vows you can check out www.gettingmarried.ie.

Taking Part in the Wedding Mass

There are two readings from the Old and New Testament. Two family members usually read these. Couples usually ask family members and friends to read 'Prayers of the faithful'. Normally there are 4 -6 prayers included in the ceremony. The gifts of bread and wine are often brought to the altar by family members. It can be helpful, but not necessary, to have a Mass booklet for the ceremony. Sometimes couples may choose to celebrate a wedding ceremony rather than a wedding Mass. The priest will explain this option to you.

Music

Good music can play an important part in the ceremony. There is now a wide range of new Church music which is suitable to the wedding Mass. Only Church music and hymns are appropriate. Couples are discouraged from using CD or recorded music during the ceremony.

Photographers and Video Personnel

Ask the photographer and video personnel to meet the priest before the ceremony begins. They are expected to act with respectful discretion, in

keeping with the sacredness of the occasion and place. They should not delay the start of the ceremony. A discreet presence should be kept during the ceremony. Video recorders should be battery powered (ie. no electric leads). For insurance reasons, no auxiliary lighting or scaffolding is permitted.

Further Points

Please do not interfere with any of the church furnishings (including seats, notice boards, candelabras). Confetti should not be used in church grounds. It is normal for the groom and groomsman to occupy the front seat at least fifteen minutes beforehand. This enables them to deal with any last minute details, as well as having a final word with the priest. It is courteous for the bride to arrive on time. This allows the maximum time afterwards as other liturgies may be arranged for the church. It is customary for the couple to give an offering to the priest who celebrated the wedding.