

How do I get married in the Catholic Church?

You and your fiancé(e) should see your Parish Priest as soon as you have decided to get married. Make sure that both he and the church are available *before* confirming your venue for a wedding reception, etc. If you intend to ask someone else to officiate at the ceremony (e.g. a relative or a family friend who is a Catholic priest or deacon) then you must obtain the Parish Priest's permission for this also.

Your Parish Priest will complete a form with some of your details and explain to you the documents that you need to obtain. For a Catholic these are; a *recent* copy of your baptismal certificate (not the original one) obtained from the parish where you were baptised; evidence of confirmation; and evidence of freedom to marry in the form of either a parish letter of freedom or a Statutory Declaration of Freedom. These documents are needed to provide the necessary proof that you are a baptised Christian and not bound by an existing sacramental marriage.

A baptised member of another denomination must provide a copy of their baptismal certificate and similar evidence of freedom to marry. A non-baptised person must obtain a Statutory Declaration of Freedom (your Parish Priest will explain this to you).

Marriage preparation

Your Parish Priest will help you arrange some form of preparation for marriage.

Who can marry in Church?

Any Catholic has a right to get married in their Parish Church provided they are free to marry and are not obviously too immature to marry or intending to attempt marriage in a sense contrary to Catholic teaching, for example, denying its permanence or excluding the possibility of having children (if they are of an age to do so).

Marrying in another parish or abroad

If you wish to marry in a church other than your Parish Church, this will be entirely at the discretion of the Parish Priest there, and preparation should still normally be undertaken by your own Parish Priest, who will have to give his permission for the marriage to take place outside of his parish.

If you wish to marry abroad, you should first obtain the agreement of the priest who will be marrying you and the parish where you will marry, and then proceed as above by contacting the Parish Priest where you live. He will forward the necessary papers abroad and help you to participate in some form of marriage preparation.

If you have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation

If you are not confirmed, you are strongly encouraged to receive this Sacrament before marrying. Marriage in the Catholic Church is a life-changing decision and this provides you with a unique opportunity to develop and enrich your personal relationship with God and the Church. You will not have to attend Confirmation classes with people a lot younger than you – your Parish Priest will make special arrangements.

What if my fiancé(e) is not a Catholic or is not Baptised?

You are free to marry a Christian of another denomination, but should bear in mind that *you* will be asked to undertake to bring your children up as Catholics. Your fiancé(e) would not be put under any obligation to assist with this, but should at least consent to your doing so.

If you are intending to marry a person who hasn't been baptised, a dispensation is required from the Chancery Office and the Parish Priest will seek this on your behalf.