

Marriage

This page gives a brief introduction to the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Parish. If you are planning to get married in the near future, please be sure to contact the priest at the earliest opportunity. The following questions will be answered.

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What does the Catholic Church say about Marriage?

Marriage is both a very wonderful and a very serious commitment.

The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptised to the dignity of a sacrament.

The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church: the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life. (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

Christian marriage is a participation in the faithful and creative love of God. In it, God's creative love is made present in the world. Because of this, it is permanent, exclusive and open to the possibility of having children. If any of these are ruled out by either party in a marriage then the couple cannot be married in a Catholic Church.

Who can get married?

Anybody over the age of 16 who is free to marry, having not been married before, or their previous spouse having died. Those under the age of 18 need the consent of their parent or guardian.

However in order to be married in a Catholic Church the couple must first go through a preparation process which involves a pre-nuptial enquiry and a marriage preparation course. For this reason a minimum of 6 months notice is normally required.

Where can we get married?

Catholics are normally required to get married in their own Catholic parish church. Where the couple are both Catholics and live in different parishes they can freely choose in whose parish to marry.

To marry anywhere else, such as the parental home town of one party, requires permission from the parish priest.

Under some circumstances permission can be given for a couple to be married outside a Catholic church, for example in the church of a non-Catholic partner in a mixed marriage. In any case you must first consult the parish priest. He will be able to advise you further.

What if my fiancé is not a Catholic?

This is not a problem provided your fiancé is not hostile to your Catholic faith. If your fiancé is a baptised Christian of another denomination then the priest can give permission. If your fiancé is not baptised then we have to seek the permission of the Diocese but that is a very straightforward process.

You will be required to make a promise not to fall away from your faith and to have your children baptised and brought up as Catholics.

What does the preparation involve?

The pre-nuptial enquiry gets all the necessary personal details required for marriage, establishes your freedom to marry, and deals with any dispensations or permissions that may be needed. This is done with one of the clergy.

The marriage preparation course focuses on preparation for being married (rather than the wedding). Details will be given when you come to arrange a wedding.

Preparation for the wedding itself will normally be done with the priest or deacon who will be presiding at the wedding.

What if either of us has been married before?

Assuming a former partner is still alive, then you are not free to marry in a Catholic church. This may seem harsh, but it was Jesus himself who forbade divorce and remarriage. Marriages between Christians are marriages before God and "What God has joined together, no-one may separate".

Having said that, there are circumstances where a previous marriage can be shown not to be a marriage in the eyes of God. If investigation shows that the previous marriage, though it may have been entered into in good faith, is judged to be null, then a declaration of annulment is made, and the parties are free to marry.

All such investigations are carried out by the diocesan marriage tribunal. You can either speak to the parish priest about this, or contact the tribunal directly on 01508 495168.

Final important note

Wherever and whenever you plan to get married. If you are Catholic living in Huntingdon you must make an appointment with the priest at the earliest possible opportunity, preferably before you do too much of your planning.

And may we wish you many, many happy years ahead together!