

Diocese of Dallas



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GETTING MARRIED IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH *(As of August 25, 2015)*

Where do I get married?

Under normal circumstances, you, as a Catholic, marry in the church of the parish in which you live. Instead of residence, parish registration might apply. If you both are Catholic, the parish of either may be used.

Can I marry in a church other than my own?

Your wedding can be celebrated in another Catholic church with the permission of your Catholic pastor.

My fiancée (fiancé) is not a Catholic, so can we marry in her/his church?

It is possible. If one of you is not a Catholic, it is possible to arrange for the marriage to take place in his/her church with the minister of that church officiating and two witnesses. This requires a dispensation from canonical form granted by the bishop of the Catholic party.

It is possible for this permission to be extended to a wedding in another diocese but only after the Diocese of Dallas clears that with the bishop of the other diocese.

Whom do I see about getting married?

The pastor is responsible for your preparation for marriage. Many parishes have someone specifically assigned to coordinate marriage arrangements, so you may be asked to work with the parochial vicar, deacon, or lay minister.

Who will celebrate my wedding?

Obviously, the pastor or the parochial vicar can celebrate your wedding if he is available. In some parishes, a deacon may be assigned to officiate. Depending on the policy of the particular parish, a priest or deacon from someplace else can be delegated to officiate at your wedding. Such arrangements must be worked out ahead of time with the pastor or parochial vicar.

Well, now that I know that, I'm ready to get married, right?

So far, we know where and before whom the wedding can take place. But a person must be prepared for marriage. People get married all the time; that's true, but there is much more to marriage than a ceremony.

There are two phases in preparing for marriage: the immediate preparation for leading an enriched married life and the establishment that both parties are free to enter marriage.

How is the preparation done?

Marriage preparation is a part of the pastoral office of the Church and is not like a class in school or college. Preparation opens to each partner the awareness of the sanctity of Christian marriage and introduces the methods for living out a future life together to their mutual benefit and happiness as well as to that of any children born to the couple.

In the Diocese of Dallas, the office of Marriage Ministries manages and is responsible for appropriate Diocesan-approved marriage preparation.

Some parishes in the Diocese of Dallas provide couple to couple individualized preparation and/or provide an approved adaptation of diocesan-sponsored programs.

Sometimes marriage preparation programs offered in other dioceses satisfy this need. Some other Christian churches or denominations now offer comparable marriage preparation programs, which could benefit a couple with different religious heritages. Preparation sponsored by other Christian churches must be partnered with an approved Catholic process to ensure the sacramental teaching of the Catholic Church.

Isn't there some paperwork?

In practical terms, establishing your freedom to marry will seem more complicated than your marriage preparation. Before a wedding can take place in the Catholic Church, it must be established that each party is not restricted in marrying by past events or his/her current situation.

Through the centuries, certain personal situations were set down by the Church as "impediments" to marriage. Such an impediment renders a person incapable of contracting marriage validly in the Catholic Church. In other words, the marriage is invalid from the beginning. Currently, in the Roman Catholic Church there are twelve impediments.

A dispensation may be obtained for some impediments. A dispensation is a relaxation of a Church law or an exception made for the spiritual good of the parties. For a fuller explanation of impediments contact (214) 379-2840 or mgillett@cathdal.org.

If either party, whether Catholic or not, has been married previously, a wedding cannot be scheduled until that past situation has been resolved. Even if a declaration of invalidity already has been given, the decree or notice from the Church court must be reviewed in case any stipulations were set by the court.

If one of the parties is a widow or widower, a death certificate is required.

For Catholics, a recently issued baptismal certificate/record is required, because it is supposed to note significant church celebrations affecting a person's status in the Church (like being confirmed, ordained, married, etc.). An affidavit of "freedom to marry" for each of you is required from one of your parents or older relative who has known you since early adolescence.

That's a lot more than I expected in getting married in the Catholic Church!

Yes. For that reason, you should approach your parish priest, deacon, or marriage coordinator in plenty of time not only to make arrangements for the wedding but also to begin marriage preparation and to complete necessary prenuptial paperwork.

Married couples participate in God's plan of creation and God's plan of salvation. The Catholic Church assists couples in experiencing a nice, memorable wedding and in supporting their life together so they can receive God's grace and blessings.