

### **Getting married in the Church of the Assumption, Howth.**

Welcome and our warmest congratulations to you both as you prepare to marry. Marriage is probably the most important life choice that most people will make because to get married means entering a covenant by which you commit yourselves totally to live in love with one another all the days of your lives. God's desire for your marriage is that you will have a delight and a joy in each other so profound that your love will radiate to your family and to the people around you, especially the children with whom you may be blessed and, in this way, reveal something of what God's unconditional and utterly faithful love means. In the case of children, it means growing up in a home filled with love and joy knowing that they have parents who love each other deeply. Marriage is also a human relationship and couples over their life will face difficulties and challenges but know that through the Sacrament of Matrimony they can draw on God's abundant grace, given freely and generously to them. Know too that as a team, you are always stronger together than just the sum of two individuals.

While love gives rise to many feelings, to truly love someone is to make a choice that is freely and generously given.

This idea of marriage as a covenant of love is reflected throughout the Bible from the Book of Genesis through the passionate Old Testament love poem of the Bride and Groom in the Song of Songs to the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels and the letters of St. Paul. A unique feature of the Sacrament of Marriage is that it is the husband and wife who minister the Sacrament to one another. The priest solemnises this ministering of the Sacrament to which the guests present give witness. The priest also acts as civil solemniser of the marriage on behalf of the State.

As Marriage is a lifelong commitment, it is not to be entered into lightly. Out of concern for each couple's future happiness, the Church endeavours to ensure that those wishing to marry have made adequate preparation for what it means to be married; to understand what they are undertaking and to make their marriage vows to one another in complete freedom and with full consent.

As regards helping to deepen your understanding of the sacramental meaning of marriage, the Dublin Diocesan agency ACCORD provides marriage preparation courses for engaged couples.

- For information visit: [www.accord.ie/services/marriage-preparation](http://www.accord.ie/services/marriage-preparation)

Catholic Engaged Encounter also offers the engaged encounter marriage preparation experience that takes place over a single weekend.

- For information visit: [www.marriageencounter.ie/engaged-encounter](http://www.marriageencounter.ie/engaged-encounter)

It may be that a couple has been in a long term relationship including having children together, or may have made a civil marriage but now wish to sacramentally solemnise their relationship before God and draw on the richness of his abundant graces that he provides through the Sacrament to them and their family. If so, they should contact their priest and discuss how they would wish to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony in Church.

For your convenience we have set out this page under three headings:

- What the Church requires
- What the State requires
- Check Lists for both

### What the Church requires:

The preparations listed below to prepare for your wedding ceremony are, in general, applicable to any church of the Dublin Diocese and probably applicable also in detail.

If you wish to marry in the Church of the Assumption, Howth first contact the Parish Office and enquire if the date you have in mind is available. Request a Booking Form to complete and return it to the Parish Office at your earliest convenience. Only when the completed Form has been received will your booking be confirmed in the Parish diary. The Booking Form is available to download, see the link on the Marriage page on our website.

Your next step is to contact the priest whom you are inviting to be the celebrant at your wedding and ensure his availability on the day. If he is not a Dublin Diocesan priest, check with him that he has the necessary State authority to solemnise your civil marriage.

Next, make an appointment with the priest of Howth parish to complete a **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form** for each of you. This involves declarations that you are both free to marry and that you understand what is involved in a Christian marriage. For this meeting you will each need to bring the following papers with you:

1. A copy of your **Baptism Certificate** newly issued in long form from the church where you were baptised; (this should be issued and dated within 6 months of the date of your wedding).
2. **Confirmation Certificate:** a record of your reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is often shown on your Baptismal Certificate and this will suffice. If there is no record shown then you will need to get a **Confirmation Certificate** from the parish where you were confirmed.
3. **Letter of Freedom to Marry:** You will need a Letter of Freedom from each parish in which you have resided for six months or more since you were sixteen years of age. If you have lived in many parishes during that period of time, or if it would be particularly burdensome to obtain one, then a sworn affidavit, witnessed by a Commissioner of Oaths, will suffice.
4. **Certificate of attendance at a Pre-Marriage Preparation Course.** These courses offer couples the opportunity to reflect on their relationship with one another as they prepare for their marriage. Every couple is expected to make a serious effort to attend a pre-marriage preparation course. For further information on the nature and content of these courses, please visit the links mentioned above.

Completing **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Forms** normally takes about 20 minutes.

If your wedding is to take place in another church, your completed **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Forms** plus the above documents will be sent to that church and after the wedding they will be kept on the parish records there.

If neither of you resides in this parish, you should fill out the **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Forms** with a priest in the parish in which at least one of you resides.

Once the above has been undertaken, you can begin to focus on your wedding ceremony. It would be advisable to contact your celebrant to discuss your preparations of the Marriage liturgy including readings, music and other aspects of the Nuptial Mass or marriage service.

### Frequently asked questions

#### What form does the wedding ceremony take?

- Most weddings take place within the celebration of Mass (known as ‘The Nuptial Mass’) but that is not obligatory. If you prefer, a wedding liturgy can be prepared without a Mass and reception of Holy Communion but would include chosen prayers and selected scripture readings interspersed with music and hymns. This option is often chosen for inter-faith marriages or where neither party regularly attends Mass.

#### Rehearsal

- A rehearsal can be very helpful because it familiarises you and members of your immediate wedding party with the ceremony details in advance. This can help reduce anxiety on the day itself. Please arrange a date and time with the priest and if a visiting priest is the celebrant, please advise the Parish Secretary.

#### Music

- Music is an important part of a wedding ceremony and some thought should go into its selection - always remembering to choose pieces appropriate for celebration in a church. Please confirm your choice of music with the celebrant in the days before the wedding.
- If you need help finding a musician, the Parish Office may be able to supply musicians names and contact details but does not endorse any particular musician. You must make such arrangements yourself.
- If you wish that your wedding be live stream broadcast using the church webcam, you will need to agree to the GDPR regulations which apply to the capture of images on camera and all music performed live or from recordings must be reported under the appropriate copyright licenses held in the parish. For this reason the parish will need to know your music choices in advance of the wedding day.

#### Can we receive a Papal Blessing?

- Some couples like to receive a Papal Blessing on the occasion of their wedding. If you would like this, ask your priest to sign a form of recommendation which will be sent with your chosen parchment (available in Veritas, Mid Abbey Street, Dublin 2) to Rome. The whole process takes about 10 weeks.

#### Sacrament of Reconciliation

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is an excellent preparation for your wedding day and is available in this parish usually on Saturdays after the 10.00 am Mass. Should this time not be convenient, the priest of the parish will be only too pleased to accommodate you at an alternative time.

#### Flowers / Red Carpet?

- If you do not have a florist or a contact for a red carpet, the Parish Office may be able to provide information on potential suppliers.

## SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY/MARRIAGE

### Is there a fee?

- There is no fee as such. However, most couples are happy to make a donation. The amount suggested is:
  - €100 if either bride or groom is a parishioner;
  - €250 if neither bride or groom are parishioners.
- Offerings may be placed in an envelope marked appropriately and presented by the Best Man on the day.

### Should we prepare a Nuptial Mass or wedding service booklet?

- While such a booklet is not essential, it is a very convenient and welcome support especially for your guests in following the ceremony and makes for a very nice family souvenir of your special day.
- Preparing the booklet yourselves and choosing appropriate readings and prayers is an excellent way of entering more meaningfully into the celebration of the Sacrament.
- Your priest celebrant will gladly help you with selecting the readings, prayers, etc.
- For some useful tips, visit [www.accord.ie](http://www.accord.ie)

### Use of confetti?

- Our church is cleaned by volunteers who give generously of their time and we would ask you to respect this by substituting confetti with an environmentally friendly alternative, e.g. bubble-blowing, which leaves a clean-up unnecessary.
- In any event, the throwing of confetti in a public place contravenes the litter by-laws as well as risking being blown by the wind into neighbouring properties and causing a nuisance.

### Dispensations:

- These are required if you plan to marry a person who is not a Roman Catholic. This obligation exists in order to protect and respect the religious beliefs of both parties.
  1. If you are marrying another baptised Christian, you will need to write to your Bishop as a canonical requirement for reception of the sacrament.
  2. If you are marrying outside of the Christian tradition, a canonical dispensation will be required from your Bishop.
- The priest of the Parish where you live will be glad to give you and advice or guidance which you may require on these matters.

### Where can Catholic Marriages take place?

- The proper and ordinary place for the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is a Catholic parish church.

### What the State requires **[SUBJECT TO TEMPORARY AMENDMENT UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS]**:

- To meet State requirements, you need to have booked the church for your wedding ceremony as this will also be the recognised venue of your civil marriage.

## SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY/MARRIAGE

- The State requires that couples intending to marry meet with the civil registrar to give notice of their intention to marry at least 3 months before the wedding in order to comply with the civil requirement.
- At this meeting, you will need to confirm the availability of the church on the date chosen and provide the civil registrar with the name of the priest who will also be the civil solemniser of your marriage.
- Visit this link for contact details of civil registrars of marriage:
  - [www2.hse.ie/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/contact-a-civil-registration-service.html](http://www2.hse.ie/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/contact-a-civil-registration-service.html)
- Visit this link for a list of documents that you will need to bring to the civil registrar's office:
  - [www2.hse.ie/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/how-to-get-married-in-ireland/marriage-notification-appointment-checklist.html](http://www2.hse.ie/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/how-to-get-married-in-ireland/marriage-notification-appointment-checklist.html)
- When all civil requirements have been complied with, the civil registrar will issue you with a **Marriage Registration Form (MRF)**.
- Without an **MRF**, you may not lawfully marry, nor may the solemniser proceed with the ceremony.
- Both the priest solemniser and the parish priest of the church for the marriage will be notified by the civil registrar's office concerning your marriage due to take place.
- You must present the **MRF** to the priest solemniser before the wedding so that he can check that its details are correct before your marriage takes place. This should be done as early as is convenient.
- If changes become necessary - e.g. changing the name of the solemniser - you must contact the civil registrar to arrange for the **MRF** to be re-issued at the earliest possible date before the ceremony is due.
- The priest solemniser is obliged to ask you to make a verbal declaration of there being no civil impediment to marry. This should be made not more than two days before the wedding takes place.
  - Both you and your priest solemniser must sign a document to this effect.
  - It is best practice that this declaration be verbally repeated at the beginning of your wedding service, after you have arrived at the sanctuary.
- After the wedding, the priest ensures that the **MRF** is signed by both of you, the two witnesses and himself.
- After the wedding, it is your responsibility (not the parish priest nor the priest solemniser) to return the **MRF** to the civil registrar's office that issued it. You must return your **MRF** within one month of the marriage having taken place. If not, your marriage will not be deemed in civil law to have taken place.

### Who is the Solemniser?

- The priest who officiates at the marriage is called 'the 'solemniser'.
- To officiate at marriages, priests must be on the 'List of Solemnisers' submitted by each diocesan Bishop to the State Registrar-General.
- If a priest is not on the List of Solemnisers, he must become a temporary solemniser. He can do this by submitting a request to the Bishop in whose diocese the church of the wedding is situated together with an appropriate testimonial letter signed by his own bishop or his Religious Superior. This takes time to arrange.

### Getting Married abroad?

- The Church's requirements for getting married in the Catholic Church abroad are similar to those in Ireland.
- For the Civil Requirements visit: [www2.hse.ie/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/registering-a-birth-death-or-marriage/how-to-register-a-marriage.html](http://www2.hse.ie/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/registering-a-birth-death-or-marriage/how-to-register-a-marriage.html)
- You should also establish the civil marriage requirements of the country in which you intend to marry. A good starting place could be that country's embassy in Ireland.

### APPENDIX

#### Check list for Couples

##### Civil Requirements:

- Book the church.
- Have the name of the priest who has agreed to be celebrant and solemniser of your wedding.
- Meet the civil Registrar at least 3 months before the wedding to give notice of your intention to marry.
- Receive the Marriage Registration Form (MRF) from the civil registrar (Fee charged).
- Show the Form to the priest celebrant (Solemniser).
- Make the verbal declaration of no civil impediment existing not more than 2 days before the wedding.
- Return the signed MRF to the civil registrar not later than 1 month after the wedding.

##### Church Requirements:

- Book the church.
- Obtain copies of your Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates.
- Obtain Letters of Freedom.
- Obtain Dispensations (if necessary).
- Present a Certificate of attendance at a Marriage Preparation Course.
- Arrange with church for flowers, music, etc., for the day.
- Arrange any musicians who you may wish to perform at the ceremony.
- Make appointment for a rehearsal.

Once again, we warmly congratulate you both and if we can be of any further assistance to you, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We wish you every happiness on your special day and a long life of joy and fulfilment together in the years ahead.

*Love one another as I have loved you [Jn 13:34]*