

# *Your Wedding in St Patrick's Cathedral Parish*



*You have requested to be married in Church. Depending on the type of wedding you are planning, there could be many, many things to think about and decide; from the reception to the car hire, from the flowers to the choice of bestman and bridesmaid. With so much to plan it's easy to forget or neglect that which is at the centre of it all—you, the one you love, and God. These months before the wedding can be a special time in which to discover more about each other and lay the foundations of a really Christian Marriage.*

*As you are choosing a Catholic Wedding, the sacred nature of the ceremony is paramount. We want your ceremony in Armagh Parish to reflect the important, solemn commitment you are undertaking. The Church will encourage you to concentrate on what is at the heart of any successful marriage - true love for one another lived out in such a way that it enriches you, your family, the Church and our society. We believe that your marriage provides you both with the opportunity to reflect and make decisions about the practice of your faith as well as the many other issues you will inevitably face.*

## **Marriage Preparation**

When you book your wedding, it is important that you register immediately for a pre-marriage course. Courses can be booked through ACCORD T 028 3833 4781 or check [www.accord](http://www.accord). This is a group of trained married people who are willing to help you work through some of the issues involved in a marriage relationship.

Some couples are put off by the idea of marriage preparation. A few even think that the Church is interfering. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The Church aims to help you plan your own marriage and grow even closer as a couple. It would be rather unfair if the Church encouraged people to marry without any preparation and then expected them to live up to standards to which they didn't realise they were committing themselves.

## **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry**

There is a considerable amount of paperwork associated with a marriage and this can vary depending on your circumstances and plans. Papers may have to be obtained from one or several other parishes and in some cases approval may even be required from the Diocesan Bishop. It is therefore important to contact a priest as soon as you decide to marry so that you can be made aware of all relevant documentation.

### **(i) The usual procedure**

Normally speaking, it is only when you have completed your pre-marriage course that you should make an appointment to complete the Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form. Church law requires that each partner is interviewed separately.

If you were baptised (and confirmed) in another parish, you should bring along with you a recent Certificate of Baptism and Confirmation, and a Letter of Freedom from that parish and any other parish in which you have resided for six months or more since you reached the age of sixteen. If the bridegroom is not from Armagh Parish, he should contact a priest in his own local parish, well in advance of the wedding, to have his Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form completed. That priest will then forward the bridegroom's Enquiry Form (and Certificates of Baptism, Confirmation and Letters of Freedom—if any of these are required) to Armagh parish.

### **(ii) Special circumstances or arrangements**

Circumstances may be such that other procedures have to be followed; e.g.. If the marriage is to take place abroad, or one or both parties to the marriage is currently living abroad etc. Details or factors of this kind, which will affect preparation, should be brought to the attention of the priest at the earliest opportunity.

Couples getting married in Northern Ireland or in the Republic of Ireland must give three months notice to the Civil Registrar of the district in which the marriage is to take place. If the wedding is to be celebrated in the Cathedral Parish of Armagh, the Civil Registrar can be contacted at the Palace Lodge, Friary Road, Armagh T 028 3752 9615 [www.armagh.gov.uk](http://www.armagh.gov.uk) follow the link *more*, select the heading *marriages*.

### (iii) Mixed Marriages

If your marriage is one of mixed religions or denominations then a particular procedure is adhered to. All papers will be prepared in Armagh Parish. The non-Catholic party will be asked to provide a Certificate of Baptism, (if he or she is baptised) and proof of freedom to marry. After all pre-nuptial papers are prepared, they are sent to the Diocesan Office for approval of the Diocesan Bishop. The celebration of Mass is not essential for a wedding and, if desirable, a Wedding Service can be arranged.

## **Times for Wedding Ceremonies**

Weddings in Armagh Parish take place Monday—Saturday, in St Patrick's Cathedral and St Malachy's Church at either 1.00pm or 3.00pm and the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Tullysaran and Church of St Colmcille's, Knockaconey at the bride and groom's choice of time. Before the ceremony begins it is good for the bride to allow at least fifteen minutes at the Church doors if photographs are to be taken. We expect all weddings to start at the time you have arranged with the Parish. Other arrangements may have been made for the use of the Church afterwards and the Priest will probably have other appointments following your wedding. If you wish to invite the priest to attend your wedding reception then please send him an invitation in advance. It is important to appreciate that he may not be free to attend the reception because of other commitments.

## **The Wedding Mass / Ceremony**

There are a variety of prayers, scripture readings and essential elements in the Marriage Ceremony which the priest will discuss with you (see [www.gettingmarried.com](http://www.gettingmarried.com) or the Accord website). You may like to involve relatives and friends in readings or prayers. Such participants should be competent and properly prepared. Family or friends may also be involved in the presentation of the gifts of Bread and Wine at the offertory. The priest will try to arrange with you a suitable time for a rehearsal. All who are intending to participate in any way should be in attendance at the rehearsal. This makes for a more meaningful ceremony and will help everyone's confidence on the day. Altar Servers will only be asked to participate if they are related to the couple and are in attendance at the wedding as guests. The signing of the Civil Register always takes place in the sacristy, or in a side area of the Church as the Altar is for liturgical use only. The priest, bestman and bridesmaid act as witnesses to the celebration of the marriage as they sign the Civil Form afterwards.

## **Music for your Wedding**

Music will add to the joyful atmosphere of your wedding. Be sure, however, that the music is suitable, respecting the sacred character of the occasion. Some musical pieces, which might be entirely suitable at the reception afterwards, or in other situations, may not be appropriate in a church setting. All hymns and music should be liturgical. Secular songs are never allowed in the Church. A list of your chosen music should be given to the priest well in advance of the occasion to avoid any embarrassment on the day. Usually each church has its own policy regarding organists and their availability. It is important to clarify these options before you make any specific plans.

## Stationary and Photography

Before printing wedding stationary please confirm times and dates with the priest. If you decide to print an Order of Service or Wedding Mass booklet please ensure with the priest that all of the text is accurate. If you are engaging a photographer or video technician, advise them that they must do their work quietly without causing unnecessary distraction. All cameras and videos should be battery powered without need for auxiliary lighting. They shouldn't intrude unnecessarily or obstruct aisles or passageways. It is often a good idea for the photographer and the video technician to be in attendance at the practice.

## Flowers for the Church

Each of the four parish churches enjoy the service of flower arranging teams. In St Patrick's Cathedral and St Malachy's Church, flowers are prepared for the sanctuary weekly in neutral colours to accommodate all events in the Churches. No additional flowers should be placed in the sanctuary with the exception of a candle arrangement. Flowers may be used to decorate the Church in a moderate fashion. No pins or adhesive tapes may be used when attaching displays to seat ends. The throwing of confetti is not permitted at any time in the church or church grounds.

## Cost

If you intend to spend a large amount of money on your wedding, this is entirely your own choice and is in no way required by the Church. The Church requires only that a couple be properly prepared and committed and that they have two witnesses and a priest to officiate at the ceremony. Often times, couples are unsure as to what contribution should be made to the Church or parish where their wedding takes place. Should couples wish to offer a stipend / gratuity to the priest on the day, this is of their own choosing. The parish fee however is £150, which includes altar flowers in St Patrick's Cathedral and St Malachy's Church. The fee for weddings in Tullysaran and Knockaconey Churches is £100. The fee for non-parishioners having a wedding celebrated in any of the Churches in the parish is £300. This must be paid, in full, to the Parish Finance Secretary in the Parish Office before the wedding takes place (cheques can be made payable to Parish of Armagh). It's also suggested that a small gratuity be given to the Church Sacristan for his / her help on the day.

