

Marriage

FOR PARISHIONERS:

Marriages are to be arranged with the pastor or the deacon at least six months in advance. Permission of the pastor is required for another priest or deacon to celebrate your marriage in our parish churches. All preparing for marriage must attend a “preparation for marriage program.” St. Agnes does offer a marriage prep weekend usually in February and August. Please contact the parish office @ 573-483-2555 or check the parish website “Events and Calendar” page for more details.

Below is some information about the Sacrament of marriage. To learn more about this special sacrament, please read.

Marriage

The Church has a rich tradition in its teaching on sacramental marriage and covenantal union. The Old Testament authors write of God making a covenant with the chosen people and promising them that they will never be forsaken. The New Testament authors write of Jesus as the new covenant and compare the relationship of Jesus with the Church to the relationship of a husband and wife. The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership for the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.

Basic Requirements for a Valid Catholic Wedding

First, both people must be capable of being married and free of any obstacle that would prevent marriage. Some obstacles to marriage include:

Age: Both persons need to be old enough to contract marriage according to the local civil laws

Previous marriage: You cannot marry someone else if you are already married. The Church follows preaching that marriage is a covenant that cannot be dissolved, so it does not recognize divorce as dissolving the previous marriage. It does have a legal process for determining whether a previous marriage was valid. If it determines the marriage wasn't valid, it can be annulled which removes the obstacle to marriage.

Second, each person must freely choose to give his or her entire self to the other and to accept the gift of the other, forever. This also means that both individuals must be open to accepting children.

Third, the couple must be married according to the laws of the church so that the Church and the community will be certain about the validity of their marriage. This means the marriage must be witnessed by an authorized representative of the Church (a priest or deacon).

When is marriage a sacrament?

The *Code of Canon Law* recognizes that, "a valid matrimonial contract cannot exist between the baptized without it being by that fact a sacrament". So there are two requirements for a marriage to be a sacramental marriage: (1) the marriage must be valid; and (2) both parties must be baptized.

To be in a valid marriage, Catholics must meet certain requirements of canon law including the obligation to observe the Church's form of marriage celebration or to be dispensed from that form. This applies to every Catholic, even when marrying a non-Catholic.

All valid marriages between Catholics are sacramental because you can't be Catholic without being baptized. However, a valid marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic is sacramental, while a valid marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person is not.

If a Catholic wants to marry a non-Catholic, how can they assure that the marriage is recognized by the Church?

In addition to meeting the criteria for a valid Catholic marriage the Catholic must seek permission from the local bishop to marry a non-Catholic. If the person is a non-Catholic Christian, this permission is called a "permission to enter into a mixed marriage." If the person is a non-Christian, the permission is called a "dispensation from disparity of cult." Those helping to prepare the couple for marriage can assist with the permission process.

Why does a Catholic wedding have to take place in a church?

For Catholics, marriage is not just a social or family event, but a church event. For this reason, the Church prefers that marriages between Catholics, or between Catholics and other Christians, be celebrated in the parish church of one of the spouses. Only the local bishop can permit a marriage to be celebrated in another suitable place.

If a Catholic wishes to marry in a place outside the Catholic church, how can he or she be sure that the marriage is recognized by the Catholic Church as valid?

The local bishop can permit a wedding in another church, or in another suitable place, for a sufficient reason. For example, a Catholic seeks to marry a Baptist whose father is the pastor of the local Baptist church. The father wants to officiate at the wedding. In these circumstances, the bishop could permit the couple to marry in the Baptist church. The permission in these instances is called a "dispensation from canonical form."

Can you get married in a Catholic church if you're divorced?

If a person was married validly and then divorced but never obtained an annulment, then that person is still married in the eyes of the Church. He or she cannot validly marry again in the Catholic Church.

If two Catholics or a Catholic and non-Catholic are married invalidly in the eyes of the church, what should they do about it?

They should approach their pastor to try to resolve the situation.

When a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, must the non-Catholic promise to raise the children in the Catholic faith?

The non-Catholic spouse does not have to promise to have the children raised Catholic. The Catholic spouse must promise to do all that he or she can to have the children baptized and raised in the Catholic faith.

Who Administers This Sacrament?

A sacrament, as we know, is an outward sign that confers an inner grace.

In the sacrament of Matrimony, the outward sign is the exchange of marital consent on the part of a baptized man and a baptized woman. In other words, the couple who are getting married administer the sacrament of Matrimony to each other.

It is not correct to say (although we often do) that "John and Mary were married by the priest." More correctly we should say, "John and Mary married each other in the presence of the priest."

The priest cannot administer the sacrament of Matrimony; only the contracting couple can do that. The priest (or deacon) is simply the official witness, representing Christ and Christ's Church. The priest's presence is normally essential; without him there is no sacrament and no marriage. But he does not confer the sacrament.

Does the Catholic Church offer help for troubled marriages?

Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME) - Looking for the perfect weekend? A weekend to bring you and your spouse closer together? Take your spouse on ME weekend and you will actually improve your marriage! Any married couple who desires a richer, fuller life together, will enjoy Worldwide Marriage Encounter (ME). This weekend is designed to deepen and enrich the joys a couple shares together, whether you have been married a short time or many years. The weekend is oriented strictly to each individual couple. A series of presentations are given by a team of Catholic couples and a Catholic priest. Each presentation allows you and your spouse a rare opportunity to look at yourselves as individuals, then to look at your marriage and your relationship to one another, and finally to look at your relationship to God, the Church and the world. After each presentation, the husband and wife have time in the privacy of their room for their own personal discussion, using a unique communication technique taught on the weekend. The weekend starts at

8:00 p.m. Friday night and runs until about 4:30 p.m. Sunday afternoon. A \$50. NON-REFUNDABLE application fee confirms your food and lodging. No one is ever refused the opportunity for lack of funds. To register, please apply online at www.stl-wwme.org

Retrouvaille is a program designed to provide help and support to married couples who are undergoing difficulties in their relationship, for those who are hurting in brokenness and loneliness. It has also proven helpful to couples who are separated and divorced. Although Retrouvaille is Catholic in origin, couples from all or no faith traditions are welcome to attend. For further information, visit www.helpourmarriage.com.

The Third Option - The love between a man and a woman is beautiful. But most struggling couples see only two options: Painful marriage or divorce. Please know that there is a Third Option, A way to a better, renewed marriage. For more information, please visit <http://www.thethirdoption.com/>

The Institute for Marital Healing - The mission of the Institute for Marital Healing is to strengthen Catholic marriages and families by educating spouses, marital therapists and clergy about common causes of conflicts in marital self-giving and effective approaches to alleviating such conflicts. Through a combination of online resources, educational programs and publications, the Institute employs a time-tested approach to marital therapy that recognizes the importance of both science and faith in the process of marital healing.

Catholic's Divorce Survival Guide - The Catholic's Divorce Survival Guide is a powerful DVD series to help separated and divorced Catholics find peace, power, and renewed passion for life. This 12-week program features 30-minute DVD shows each week, covering topics of shock, denial, anger, grief, guilt, forgiveness and much more, as well as discussion opportunities. Whether you were divorced ten days ago or ten years ago, the program offers valuable insight for everyone.