Frequently Asked Questions about Marriage in the Catholic Church

**Why should we get married in the Catholic Church?**

The Catholic Church understands that marriage is a vocation. Any vocation (married life, single life, or religious life) is our cooperation with God in His plan of salvation. In the vocation of marriage, God calls each person to cooperate with Him in helping his/her spouse get to heaven. If you see your marriage as a calling from God, and you desire to cooperate in God’s plan of salvation, then you are ready to marry in the Church.

When you act in cooperation with God to get your spouse to heaven, you become an icon of Jesus to each other. In order to assist you in this task, the Church asks that God pour out His abundant love and His grace on you to assist you in your life together. This is why the Catholic Church considers marriage a sacrament.

**Who can get married in the Catholic Church?**

Any baptized Catholic that is *free to marry* can get married within the Church. In order to be *free to marry*, a person must not have been previously married, or a member of a religious order, or received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. You must be able to consummate the marriage, be open to having children, and be willing to raise them in the practice of the faith. All three of these criteria must be met to marry in the Catholic Church. If these conditions are not met, you should discuss this with the pastor or deacon to help resolve any issues.

**What is the process to get married at Church of the Resurrection?**

Once you are engaged, a meeting should be scheduled with the pastor. He will walk you through the process of marriage within the Church. A wedding date will be discussed at this time. After this meeting, you will then meet with the deacon. He will discuss the Sacrament of Marriage and provide you with a “marriage inventory”. This inventory is a series of questions designed to help prepare you for marriage. A “mentor couple” will then be assigned to you. These are parishioners with marital experience who will help guide you through your marriage process. While meeting with them over the course of a few weeks, you will come to understand the sacrament, and each other, more fully. Finally, you will need to attend a Diocesan Marriage Preparation weekend.
The “wedding ceremony” is called by different names. What is correct: Ceremony, Liturgy, or Liturgical Celebration?

Actually, all of these are correct. “Ceremony” is a generic term that is widely used to refer to a religious or secular event. A wedding ceremony may take place in a church, a park, or anywhere the couple wishes. All exchanges of vows before an authorized individual, whether they are a religious leader or a secular authority, are wedding ceremonies. “Liturgy” or “Liturgical Celebrations” refer to religious ceremonies. The meaning of the word “liturgy” comes from Greek, and simple means “the work of the people.” Thus, when the Church gathers together as a community in formalized worship, whether it is Sunday Mass, a baptism, or even saying the rosary as a group, it is *the work of the people* to give God glory and worship and to ask for His help. Words like “Order” and “Rite” refer to the specific rituals prescribed by the Catholic Church for marriage.

Check out the sample programs to see the difference between a full Mass and a ceremony only in the documents section of the Matrimony webpage.

**Can our wedding take place where we want? (e.g. a parent’s house, a park, a restaurant, a beach, or Disney World?)**

In the Catholic tradition, the wedding celebration only occurs in a church. The church building is where the people of God gather to give Him worship. It is fitting that a celebration of a wedding occur in this parish church building. If the either of you are not Catholic, and you desire to have your wedding somewhere other than a Catholic Church, you must obtain permission from our Bishop.

**Only one of us is Catholic. Can we still have a Mass?**

Yes. However, since the wedding is about the joining of two families, the ceremony should reflect this coming together of families. Only Catholics can receive Eucharist so non-Catholics may feel left out, or slighted. When Catholics and non-Catholics are present, a Ceremony including the Word of God (where all Christians are united), together with the Wedding Rite, might be a better choice.

**If there is no Mass as part of our wedding, is the wedding still considered a sacrament?**

Yes. A marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman where vows are exchanged is considered a sacrament. The Mass does not make it a sacrament. You, the couple, are the ministers in the marriage rite while the priest or deacon are witnesses. As long as the Order of Celebrating Matrimony occurs in the presence of a priest or deacon and two witnesses, it is a valid celebration of the Sacrament.
Can a non-baptized person marry in the Catholic Church?

Yes. A Catholic can marry someone who is not baptized. The priest or deacon can further explain the guidelines for this arrangement.

In the Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and an unbaptized person, the form is similar but the language that pertains to the sacrament is eliminated, since only a baptized person can receive a sacrament. There will still be prayers, readings from the Bible, and a blessing, as well as the exchange of vows.

Can our non-Catholic friends and/or family receive communion on this special occasion?

The guidelines for receiving Communion, which are issued by the U.S. bishops and published in many missalettes, explain: "We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ’s prayer for us ‘that they may all be one’ (John 17:21)….Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Communion."

Sadly, division still exists within the Christian community and as a result of these divisions Communion cannot be received by those who do no profess the Catholic faith.

Can the ordained minister from a non-Catholic church have a role in the wedding?

Yes. This should be discussed with your priest or deacon. There are, however, a few restrictions. Only one person can receive the vows from the couple. This is true for both civil law and Church law. Both ministers cannot co-officiate the wedding, and there cannot be two ceremonies. Nevertheless, the visiting minister can read the Scriptures, provide a reflection on marriage, and even offer his blessing over the couple. The pastor’s permission is required for another ordained minister to participate in the marriage ceremony.

Do the best man and maid of honor need to be Catholic?

No. Cannon law simply states that there needs to be two witnesses. They do not need to be Catholic or even baptized, or even one man and one woman. The only requirement is that they are of the age of reason, in full command of their reason, and understand what they are doing.
Do I need a civil wedding License?

Yes. The priest or deacon is licensed by the State of Ohio to solemnize the marriage. The civil license for marriage is to be presented to the Wedding Coordinator at the wedding rehearsal. It is recommended that you apply for your license at least three weeks prior to your wedding. Wedding licenses are valid for 60 days. This link provides you with the information on how to obtain a license:

https://probate.franklincountyohio.gov/departments/marriage.cfm

Do I have to go to Confession before my Wedding?

There is no requirement for Confession prior to your wedding. However, it is strongly recommended that you do so, especially if it has been many years since your last Confession. As you are starting a new life together, it is a good idea to seek God’s mercy and forgiveness for times when you may have made wrong choices. The sacrament of Confession wipes away all sins and allows you to start your new life as a couple in God’s grace.