

Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Dorchester

Marriage in the Holy Catholic Church

The Parish of Dorchester in the Diocese of Plymouth
Parish Priest: Fr. Barry Hallett
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Registered Charity No. 213227

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Introduction

For Catholics, marriage is a sacrament, a sacred sign of God's unconditional love for us all, and the way to celebrate the union of a man and a woman in the context of that love. The Church will do everything possible to help the couple gain every grace and blessing from the sacrament, both during the time of preparation, and afterwards. What follows is a simple outline of the practical necessities if you are to be married within the Catholic Church.

Guidelines

- One of you must have been baptised and confirmed in the Holy Catholic Church and both of you must be able to show that you have never been married before.

You must make an appointment to see your Parish Priest at least six months before the proposed date of the wedding - he will want to meet both partners together and individually.

- The priest will ask for information from you, and will note it down in a special form. In particular, he will want to know where you were baptised and he will need a certificate of your baptism.
- If one partner has never been baptised, the priest will need a dispensation from the Diocesan Bishop to celebrate the wedding.
- If one partner is not a Catholic, the Catholic partner will be asked to promise to keep to his or her Catholic faith and to do everything he or she can to ensure that any children are baptised and brought up as Catholics.
- Before you finalise a date for the wedding, you must give notice to the civil Registrar of Marriages in the district where the church in which you wish to be married is located. The Registrar will inform you of the requirements of civil law which must be fulfilled before your marriage can take place in a Catholic church. The priest cannot proceed with the marriage unless he has written confirmation from the Registrar that these requirements have been fulfilled.

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- The Church requires that you both take part in a course of preparation before you enter into marriage and the priest will inform you of what arrangements can be made for this. You will also have the opportunity in further visits to discuss with the priest arrangements for the wedding service.

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK

What if I have been married before?

You can only marry in a Catholic church if there is no existing marriage bond. Civil divorce is not sufficient to make it possible for you to marry in the Catholic Church. It does sometimes happen that someone who has been through a form of marriage is able to have that marriage declared null by the Church, which means that the former marriage is judged not to have met the Church's requirements for marriage in the first place. To establish this is likely to involve a long drawn-out process, whose outcome cannot be certain until the case has been examined by appropriate Church authority. No priest of the Catholic Church is able to authorise a second marriage in Church unless the former marriage is declared, by the relevant and competent Church authority, to be null or not now existing. If you are faced with such a situation, the priest can be expected to listen to you in a sensitive and understanding way, even though he may be unable to officiate at your wedding.

How is the music arranged?

If you wish to have the organ played, the priest will help you to find an organist. The choice of music and hymns will be agreed between yourselves and then approved by the priest. Holy Trinity Church does not provide a choir for weddings.

What will it cost?

A fee of £75 is payable in advance to the Registrar officiating at the wedding. The organist's cost is currently £60. (Please note that fees may increase). A donation is normally made to the Church and the Parish Priest can advise on the usual amount.

What about flowers?

Any arrangements must be discussed in advance with the Parish Priest. The church has regular flower arrangers and you may decide either to let the church arrange the flowers as normal, or, if you prefer special flower arrangements, you may bring in a florist of your choice. If you decide to bring in your own florist then the priest will advise you as to where you may place the flowers within the church. If you wish to take away floral arrangements then this should be discussed and arrangements should be removed after the wedding ceremony before the church is locked.

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In addition, if you are using your own florist/flower arranger then you will need to discuss suitable access to the church in advance with the priest – this is to avoid clashes with Holy Mass times, or other activities in the church. Access to running water can be arranged but please be aware that certain areas in the church are not left unlocked and so this must also be discussed in advance. The flower arranger will need to ensure that she/he brings all items necessary for the creation and arrangement of the flowers (i.e. oasis, additional vases, etc). It is important that the florist clears and cleans up before leaving.

Any photographs?

You may use an official approved photographer, who should check with the Parish Priest on how he or she can proceed.