

Marriage

1. What do I need to do to be married in the Catholic Church?

It is recommended that couples contact the parish priest before setting a date for their marriage in order to make preliminary inquiries as to dates, existing marriage preparation programs, and other requirements which must be fulfilled.

2. What are the Catholic Church requirements for marriage?

Both parties must be free to marry and they must have a valid marriage license. They must have made the appropriate arrangements with the parish. Additionally they must participate in marriage preparation and complete the required paperwork and documentation as required by the Church through the parish.

3. What paperwork must we complete before our marriage in the Catholic church?

It is best to consult the priest or deacon from the parish where the preparation and marriage will take place. Among the documents required are

- a. Bride and Groom's forms to establish freedom to marry*
 - b. Two witness forms for each party which attest to the freedom of the parties to marry*
 - c. Newly issued copies of baptismal certificates "with all notations" if one or both are baptized. The Catholic Church recognizes and accepts the baptismal certificates of the Orthodox Churches and of many Christian churches.*
 - d. A certificate of participation in a marriage preparation program of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.*
 - e. A dispensation from Mixed Religion or Disparity of Worship, etc., if required for a particular marriage.*
 - f. In situations of a second marriage or a convalidation, the following documents are also required: if the previous spouse is deceased, a copy of the death certificate is to be inserted in the pre-nuptial papers; if a prior marriage received a dissolution or declaration of nullity, the proper information is to be inserted in the pre-nuptial file; if the parties were civilly married, a copy of the civil record of the marriage is to be included for convalidation.*
 - g. Delegation for a visiting priest or deacon to witness a marriage in the church of celebration.*
 - h. If a marriage involving at least one Catholic takes place before a minister of a church or an ecclesial community which is not Catholic, a dispensation from canonical form is required for the Catholic party.*
4. What happens to this paperwork completed at the parish during the preparation for the marriage? How long is it kept on file?

Each parish is required to maintain a file of the papers collected during the period of marriage preparation. The file typically will include prenuptial forms, questionnaires, correspondence, notes and dispensation documents and a copy of the civil license. The premarital file is to be retained for 60 years or until both parties have died. Expired files are to be destroyed so that no one can gain access to them.

5. What sacraments must a Catholic have received before receiving the sacrament of marriage?

To receive the sacrament of marriage a Catholic must have been baptized. The reception of the sacrament of confirmation is strongly encouraged if it can be done without serious inconvenience and if the conditions for a fruitful reception of confirmation can be satisfied; however, neither canon law of the Catholic Church nor the Archdiocese of Santa Fe require that the parties for marriage be confirmed. It is highly recommended that the Catholic parties receive the sacraments of penance and the holy Eucharist in order for the sacrament of marriage to be received fruitfully.

6. What kind of marriage preparation do we have to fulfill before the wedding?

In the ASF a four to six month time of marriage preparation is recommended for those who have completed their eighteenth birthday and have not been civilly united. For guidance in choosing a more comprehensive marriage preparation program please check the ASF Family Life webpage or call the Family Life office at 505-831-8117.

7. If my fiancé/e is a non-Catholic, does he/she have to convert to Catholicism? Does he/she have to promise that our children will be baptized and raised in the Catholic Church?

No. If the non-Catholic party is baptized in another Christian denomination, then to celebrate this marriage in the Catholic Church the following items are required:

- a. The Catholic party must declare his or her intention to practice their faith and to do all in his or her power to have all the children baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church.*
- b. The other party is to be informed of these promises which the Catholic party has to make.*
- c. Both parties are to be instructed on the essential ends and properties of marriage, which are to not be excluded by either party.*

8. Are we required to participate in other marriage classes after we are married?

No. However there are a number of after marriage programs which enable a couple to continue to strengthen and support their marriage. Please check the ASF Family Life webpage or call the Family Life office at 505-831-8117.

9. Are there conditions established by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe that must be observed regarding the scheduling of weddings and Nuptial Masses?

It is the policy of the Archdiocese to leave to the pastor of the parish the determination as to when marriage is to be celebrated in his parish so as not to be in conflict with other parochial functions.

However, the following conditions must also be observed:

- a. nuptial masses are not to be celebrated on Sundays or holy days*
- b. a wedding may not be scheduled within two hours of the start of a regularly scheduled Saturday afternoon or evening Mass*
- c. the wedding must be scheduled so as not to interfere with the scheduled time for the sacrament of Reconciliation*

10. Is it permissible to take pictures during the wedding?

The parish sets the specific guidelines for pictures during any liturgical celebration. The bride and groom are responsible for asking about the particular policy in the parish and communicating that clearly to the photographer before the day of the wedding. In general

photographers are asked to limit themselves in taking pictures in the church after the wedding ceremony from twenty to thirty minutes. The time limit is important so as not to interfere with other scheduled services. They are asked not to move any of the sanctuary or altar furnishings.

11. Does the ASF require the engaged couple to be married at the bride's parish church?

The marriage ceremony may be celebrated in the parish church of the bride or of the groom.

12. What is the policy of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe regarding teen marriages?

The ASF has a marriage policy which is specifically applicable to the marriage of those under the age of 18. In situations where parties civilly attempted marriage or where they have cohabited and now wish to convalidate their union, this policy is applicable if one or both have not yet completed their twentieth birthday.

The pastoral experience of the Church in recent years has noted little success in the area of teen marriages. Therefore it is strongly recommended that teenagers be discouraged from attempting marriage and that such marriages only be allowed with the permission of the Chancery. The criteria used by the Chancery in the considering of such permission is as follows:

- a. *a marriage preparation time of six months is required*
- b. *before marriage preparation begins, a pre-marriage evaluation is to be conducted by the pastor with the parents of both parties.*
- c. *if the above preliminary evaluation is favorable, the following steps may be implemented:*
 - ∞ *each couple is required to participate in a pre-marriage program authorized by the priest or deacon who will officiate at the proposed wedding. A written self-evaluation of the program by both the prospective groom and bride is required. These evaluations are also to be maintained in the pre-nuptial file.*
 - ∞ *a written evaluation by the officiating priest or deacon which addresses itself to the practice of the faith by the parties, their maturity and freedom, as well as the priest's or deacon's own effort at pastoral preparation of the parties is to be included in the pre-nuptial papers.*
 - ∞ *parents or legal guardians of both parties are to give written consent for the proposed marriage along with their estimation as to why they believe the union will succeed.*
 - ∞ *the necessary documents, i.e., civil marriage license, recent copies of the baptismal certificates, and the pre-nuptial papers for the groom and bride are to be collected and signed.*

It is important to note that

- a. *pregnancy is not an acceptable reason for an exception to the above requirements. If an exception is judged warranted, it is the responsibility of the officiating priest or deacon to request the exception in writing to the Archbishop's delegate for the matter.*
- b. *in those situations where the officiating priest or deacon is willing to witness the marriage, the completed pre-nuptial papers with copies are to be submitted to the Chancery office for review and the granting of the permission for the teenage marriage by the Archbishop or his delegate and the copies of those papers retained by the Chancery for safe keeping.*

13. May we celebrate our marriage in a Mass if one of us is not Catholic?

As a general rule, a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic does not take place during the Eucharistic liturgy. The celebration of the sacrament of marriage requires the full participation of both parties to the marriage contract. Because of issues of Eucharistic sharing arise from the presence of witnesses and guests from other ecclesial communities and beliefs, a mixed marriage celebrated according to the Catholic form ordinarily takes place outside the Eucharistic liturgy. For a just cause, however, permission may be given by the Archbishop to celebrate the Eucharist.

14. May a non-Catholic minister officiate at a Catholic wedding?

If a marriage involving at least one Catholic takes place before a minister of a Church or an ecclesial community which is not Catholic, a dispensation from canonical form is required for the Catholic party. This dispensation is prepared and requested at the parish of the Catholic party.

With reference to the marriage ceremony, Catholic Church law does not permit two religious ceremonies; nor is it permitted to have a religious celebration in which a Catholic and a non-Catholic minister, assisting together but following their respective rituals, ask for consent of the parties.

It is permitted, and encouraged where possible, for the Catholic and non-Catholic minister to assist at the ceremony. If the Catholic ritual is to be used, the Catholic minister must ask for and receive the consent of the bride and groom. If the non-Catholic minister is to ask for and receive the consent, a dispensation from canonical form must be obtained. This dispensation is prepared and requested through the parish of the Catholic party.

15. May a Catholic wedding take place in a wedding chapel or park?

The ordinary place of marriage for Catholics is their parish church where they live or another Catholic church or chapel. Permission will not be given for churches or chapels which do not belong to the Catholic Church or where the sacred liturgy is not regularly celebrated. While such churches are often very beautiful and historically important, Catholic marriage is a community celebration which should take place in the parish church.