

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

This sacrament is one of the seven sacraments of the Church. It is the only sacrament that is not administered by a priest, but rather by the spouses, who confer it upon each other. The role of the priest (or deacon) is to bless the marital union and to receive the marriage vows of the bride and groom in the name of God and the Church (and in Canada, also in the name of the State, since the priest is a “registered religious official authorized to perform marriages in the Province of Ontario”).

The pastor of every parish is obliged to ensure that the wedding takes place in accordance with liturgical norms and the law (both Church and civil law), so that it is valid from both the Church’s and the State’s perspective. Church law requires that:

1. **At least one of the parties must be a baptized Catholic.**
2. **Both parties wishing to enter into marriage must be free from any impediments** that would make the wedding impossible (in both civil and canon law, e.g., consanguinity, age, or being bound by a prior valid marriage). Such impediments, if present, may delay or even prevent the wedding – even if the person affected by a canonical impediment is not Catholic. Therefore, it is important to meet with a priest at least a year before the planned wedding date so that any impediments can be resolved (if possible) in time. For this reason, it is also important to contact the parish early and to avoid booking a reception hall/restaurant before meeting with the pastor, as it could turn out that the hall is booked and a deposit paid, but the wedding cannot take place on that day – or even that month.
3. **At least one of the parties should be a registered member of our parish for more than one year** or live within its boundaries. Since we are an “ethnic” rather than “territorial” parish, people of Polish origin may be considered parishioners even if they live within the boundaries of another parish, provided they attend our church regularly. Anyone who does not meet at least one of the above conditions must obtain “permission to be married outside one’s own parish” from the pastor of the parish to which they belong or attend.
4. **For Catholics, choosing a church wedding (that is, receiving the sacrament of marriage) should come from a desire to nurture one’s faith and to deepen one’s friendship with God.** Every sacrament in the life of a Christian is a source that strengthens and helps one’s relationship with God to grow. Even more so for two believing people, the sacrament of marriage should be a source of strength and holiness in their daily Christian family life to which they are called. *God is very important in my personal life – God is very important in my married life, and therefore I choose a church wedding.* If this

is not the case, and my motivations are different – for example, the beauty of the church, or “because of what the family would say,” etc. – then it is worth considering whether a church wedding means anything to me at all, or whether it would simply be an empty formality.

5. **The Catholic party (or parties) must present a baptismal certificate issued “for marriage purposes”** from the parish where they were baptized. This certificate must be dated within three months before or after the first meeting with the pastor of our parish. If the person was baptized in our church, such a certificate is not needed.
6. **A person from outside our parish must obtain permission from their own pastor to be married in our parish.** This letter should be requested from the parish where the person is registered or regularly attends.
7. **It is also recommended that the Catholic party be confirmed** (a notation of confirmation will appear on the baptismal certificate).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of the above points, the pastor will gladly explain as needed.