



PARISH OF
KIRKINRIOLA

*A Guide for the Celebration of the
Sacrament of Matrimony
in
All Saints' Church Ballymena
and
St Patrick's Church Crebilly*

CONTACT US - Monday to Friday (Office Hours: 9am - 12 noon)

Parish Secretaries: Breda or Teresa

All Saints' Church
2 Broughshane Road
Ballymena
BT43 7DX

Telephone: 028 2564 1515

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your decision to get married! This is a very special time for you both as you prepare to commit to each other in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

This booklet provides information about the practical preparations for marriage so that you can prepare well for your wedding ceremony and married life!

When couples come to book their wedding they often ask one very important question, 'What do we need to do?'

First, you need to complete a Marriage Request form, available on the parish website - www.ballymenaparish.org, or call at the Parish Office. The date you request and the time are provisional until the request is signed by the Parish Priest.

If you have any further questions please contact the Parish Secretary.

CATHOLIC MARRIAGE

People often think that a couple are married by a priest or deacon but the Catholic understanding is that the couple marry each other. The priest or deacon is the witness of the Church to the consent given by the couple when they exchange their marriage vows. The Best Man and Chief Bridesmaid are also witnesses to the consent given by the couple.

In the Catholic Church Christian Marriage is called the Sacrament of Matrimony. It is a sign of the faithful love of God for us and the whole human race, reflected in the love of husband and wife. For Catholics, marriage is not just a legal contract; it is a lifelong bond of love which unites the couple in their commitment to bring Christ's love to everyone they meet during their married life.

THE CHURCH DOCUMENTS

Both parties must arrange to meet with their parish priest/deacon to complete what is known as a 'Prenuptial Enquiry Form'. If you are Catholic you will need to obtain a full Baptism Certificate and a Confirmation Certificate. They can only be obtained from the Parish in which you were baptised, and must be issued within six months of your wedding. These documents must be presented to the priest/deacon when you come to complete your Pre Nuptial Enquiry forms.

Both the bride and the groom will be required to complete a Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form. To complete these forms you need to make an appointment with the priest of the *parish in which you are currently living*. We would recommend that these forms are completed at least two or three months before the wedding.

A Pre-Marriage Preparation Course must be attended before the pre-nuptial enquiry forms can be completed.

To book places on a Marriage Preparation course:

Contact Accord Ni Tel: 028 9023 3002

Email: info@accordni.com Website: www.accordni.com

A marriage between a Catholic and another Christian, or a person of no faith, is permitted in a Catholic Church - if both parties are free to marry.

For those who are not resident in Ballymena

Couples who are not from the parish are welcome to use All Saints' Church Ballymena or St Patrick's Church Crebilly, for their wedding, provided the Church is available.

The couple must identify a priest/deacon from outside the parish of Ballymena who is willing to come and celebrate the Wedding Ceremony. The couple must provide the name and contact details of this priest/deacon to Ballymena Parish Office.

A letter will be sent to him asking him to confirm that he will celebrate the wedding, and, if he is not available, he will arrange for another priest/deacon to officiate at the ceremony. If neither the bride nor the groom comes from the parish then there is a fee of £300 for the use of the Church.

Only when the letter has been returned to Ballymena Parish by the priest/deacon and the fee received, will the Parish Priest of Ballymena give permission for the booking to be confirmed.

If the priest/deacon is coming from outside of Ireland to officiate at the wedding, he will need to contact the Diocesan Office, 120 Cliftonville Road, Belfast - 028 9049 1990 - for guidance. Contact with the Diocesan Office should be made at least six months prior to the wedding.

THE CIVIL REGISTRATION OF ALL MARRIAGES

For your marriage to be legally recognised by the State, you will also have to notify the Registrar of Marriages at Mid and East Antrim Council that you have decided to marry in this jurisdiction.

How to do so is outlined below:

1. Obtain a 'Notification of Marriage' or 'Marriage Schedule' form from the Council offices. These can be downloaded from the Council's website - www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk
2. Both parties intending to marry must complete a Marriage Schedule Form. When these have been completed, you need to make an appointment with

the priest/deacon who is officiating at your wedding (known as the *Officiant* by the State), so that he can sign the forms.

3. Return the forms, along with any fee and other required documents, in person, to the Council offices. This should be done at least **eight weeks** before your wedding.
4. Usually within fourteen days before your marriage you will need to return to the Council offices to collect the 'Marriage Schedule'. This form can only be collected by the bride or the groom *in person*.
5. We would recommend that you bring the Marriage Schedule to the wedding rehearsal or to the Parish Office. **IMPORTANT: This form must be in the Church at the time of your wedding; if it is not, the wedding ceremony cannot go ahead!**
6. After the wedding the Marriage Schedule is signed by the bride, groom, witnesses and priest/deacon. It will then be given to you. It must then be returned to the Registrar within three working days of the wedding. You will also sign a parish receipt for the Schedule. This will be kept with your marriage papers in this parish.

THE REHEARSAL

The rehearsal is usually held at least one day before the wedding. This can be arranged with the officiating priest or deacon.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

In the Catholic Church the celebration of matrimony can take place with Mass or without Mass. The couple need to discuss with the priest or deacon which option is most appropriate for them.

When one of the parties is not a Catholic, the Mass is not normally celebrated.

CHURCH REGULATIONS

You have chosen to marry in the Catholic Church and therefore, the celebration of your marriage is a sacramental liturgy and not merely a social event. In coming to the Church to celebrate your wedding you are freely consenting to the marriage before God and asking for His help to fulfil all the responsibilities of Christian Marriage. The priest/deacon who is officiating at your wedding is therefore required to fulfil all Church

regulations regarding the celebration of the Rite of Marriage.

THE CELEBRATION OF A CHURCH WEDDING

It is never appropriate for secular songs or music to be sung or secular music to be played during the wedding or celebration of Mass. When you are planning your wedding ceremony you will receive a list of appropriate hymns and music to assist your singers/musicians.

Most musicians who have sung in Church will be aware of the restrictions and will be able to assist in choosing music appropriate for the occasion.

Please note: The Diocese does not have a licence for the playing of secular music in its Churches.

As a courtesy, all musicians/singers are asked to contact the Parish Office with details of the music and hymns they have been provisionally agreed with the couple. Any visiting Officiant will also be expected to adhere to the parish policy.

Musicians must provide to the Parish Office a copy of their Public Liability Insurance, in advance of the wedding.

TIME OF THE WEDDING

It is imperative that your wedding begins on time. This will ensure that other religious ceremonies taking place in the Church, after your wedding, can also begin on time.

Weddings taking place on Friday or Saturday cannot be celebrated before 2 00pm.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

In most circumstances arrangements of flowers will be gladly accommodated. *It is best not to place fresh flowers at end of seats.* Please be aware that Sellotape and drawing pins etc must not be used on the seats or other Church furniture.

Carpets, banners and other floor coverings are not permitted on the floor of the Church. Trees or arches can only be placed outside the main doors of the Church.

The florist must provide to the Parish Office a copy of their Public Liability Insurance, in advance of the wedding.

The florist must contact the Parish Office to arrange a suitable time to come to the Church.

CONFETTI

Guests at the wedding may not throw anything inside or outside of the Church, whether rice, bird seed, confetti, or flower petals. You will appreciate that it only creates

unnecessary work for the parish staff when the wedding is over.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

For the duration of the ceremony, photographers and videographers must stay in the body of the Church. Under no circumstances are they to enter the Sanctuary of the Church or take photographs from behind the priest or near the altar.

As a courtesy, all photographers and videographers should speak with the officiating priest or deacon in the Church before the wedding begins.

Photographers and videographers must provide to the Parish Office a copy of their Public Liability Insurance, in advance of the wedding,

A SUMMARY OF REEQUIREMENTS:

- 1. Up to a year before the wedding** you can book your marriage preparation course with ACCORD - telephone 028 9033 9944 - www.accordni.com
- 2. Six months before the wedding, but not earlier:** contact the parish again to obtain your Baptism and Confirmation certificate and arrange an appointment with the priest or deacon to complete your Church paperwork. If affidavits are required you can complete these now with a solicitor or commissioner of oaths. The Parish Office will have a template for an affidavit and you can email them - ballymena@downandconnor.org to request same.__
- 3. Also, Six months before the wedding:** pick up (or download) two '*Notification of Marriage Forms*' (Civil Marriage Forms) from the Council Offices. Ask the priest/deacon officiating at your wedding

to sign the forms before you return them to the Council Offices.

4. When you meet the priest/deacon:
 - a. Bring your Baptism/Confirmation certificates
 - b. Bring the completed Civil Marriage Forms - *if the priest/deacon you are meeting is the priest/deacon marrying you.*
 - c. If an Affidavit is required (in the case of a Catholic marrying a Christian or non Christian or for a marriage abroad) bring your signed and witnessed Affidavit with you.
 - d. You can discuss the Order of Service with the priest if you have not already done so.
 - e. Set a date for the rehearsal.

5. **Two months before the wedding:** if you have any documentation outstanding that the priest/deacon needs '*get it now*'. If you have not submitted your civil papers *do so as soon as possible*.

6. **Approximately two weeks/ten days before the wedding:** the Civil Registrar will contact you to arrange for you to pick up the Marriage Schedule. *Only the bride or groom can do this.*

7. Bring your marriage schedule and booklet with you to the wedding rehearsal.

FINALLY . . .

This will be your 'big day' and you will be nervous and excited and maybe a little worried that all will go to plan. Please be assured that everything will be done to help you prepare well for your wedding. The officiating priest/ deacon will also do everything he can to help you enjoy a very special day in your life.

In short, there are three things that last;

Faith, hope and love,

and the greatest of these is love.

(The first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 13:13)