

Catholic Church with permission from the Bishop. The Catholic Party must promise to raise the children of the family in the Catholic Faith as a requirement for this permission of the Bishop, and the non-Catholic must at least promise not to impede the Catholic upbringing of their children. Because mixed Marriages can be problematic due to clashing church, or even pagan cultures, the Church seeks to defend the Catholic party's faith and the salvation of the children born in a mixed marriage. Often Protestants have a different idea about marriage than Catholics and this causes problems later in the marriage—especially with an eye to what they consider legitimate reasons for divorce.

Where May We Celebrate Our Wedding?

In the Diocese of Pueblo, weddings may only be celebrated in a Catholic Church. The Bishop of Pueblo regularly denies requests for outdoor weddings. To be married in the Catholic Church, normally, you must be married at the parish where you have been living for the past six months, although special permissions may be sought.

What Options For the Celebration are allowed?

The currently approved *Rite of Marriage* of the Roman Catholic Church contain the texts and options that may be used in your wedding. There are many options within this ritual book. No extraneous texts, vows, or ceremonies which are not approved by the Diocesan Bishop may be introduced, especially if they are pagan in origin, and deny the Catholic Church's teachings. There are some customs that have been allowed from Native American Culture, as well as those customary rituals approved by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, or regional Bishop's conferences from other countries. Most notable among these are from lands that used to belong to Spain and Portugal.

How Fancy Must The Wedding Be?

The Catholic Church only requires that five people be involved in the celebration: the priest or deacon, the bride and groom and their two witnesses. There are NO other requirements imposed by the Church. Vesture, party, gifts, etc., are up to you according to your budget. It is expected that you will hire a musician who can play at the church wedding celebration, whether you have a mass or not.. There is a minimal donation expected for the Parish, but if you cannot afford it, we will work with you. People customarily give \$100 to the parish.

Outline of the Formation Process

Per Diocesan policies a minimum of six months is required for marriage preparation including:

- Initial interview with pastor, and filling paperwork to establish freedom to marry. Once this is proven, a date may be set.
- Take FOCCUS couple's inventory
- Study/classes/meetings with pastor and his team for formation
 - Study of Theology of Marriage
 - Meetings on issues raised in FOCCUS

Additionally, the parish requires that engaged couples do the following:

- Take NFP training,
- Make engaged couple's weekend retreat called "*Engaged Encounter*"
- Study of the texts
 - The Good News About Sex And Marriage By Christopher West.
- At the option of the pastor, other texts may be required.
- Finally, planning of Liturgy with Pastor, and arrangement for musicians and other liturgical ministers
- Then the Wedding Rehearsal
- And the Celebration!!!



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Catholic Marriage: theology, practice, Q&A

What is Marriage?

Because it was founded by God, and blessed by Jesus Christ at Cana, the celebration of marriage, the Catholic Church, also founded by Christ, has been long invested in the preparation, celebration and living out of marriages by her faithful.

Marriage is under attack now as never before, and the Pope's have had much to say about what makes a marriage a sacrament, and what cannot be included in the notions of marriage, even in a secular society.

Let us be clear; Marriage is only possible between one man and one woman. The rationale for this is rooted in the very design of our bodies and the Natural Law which can be discerned from an investigation of the bodily processes that come from conjugal love (sexual love between man and woman). In Natural Law, conjugal love is ordered toward no less than two things: procreation (having children) and the good of the spouses (unity and pleasure). To remove either part of this formula is to deny the natural end for conjugal love. Breaking or severing one of the parts of the dual meaning of conjugal love is considered by the Catholic Church to be a moral evil.

Hence, because contraception homosexual acts and masturbation frustrate procreation, they are morally bankrupt.

The Theology of the Body

We believe that God intended for men and women, through their complementary roles in child-making and child-rearing, to reveal to us much about God's own person and His love for us. God is a community called the Trinity, the married couple is a community, reflecting this truth. The two people "become one flesh" reflecting that God is One. God's Love created all life, and this is reflected in the loving embrace of husband and wife as they can participate in the creation of a child. God teaches us how to live through revelation and a special relationship, parents teach their children about life, good

and evil, responsibility toward the community and toward individuals. God endures our moral failings, is faithful and forgives us because He made a covenant with us and will never abandon us. And following suit, the married couple makes a covenant to remain faithful and never to dissolve their union, despite their hardships and failings. In short, there are many things that point to who God is in the human relationships formed in Marriage. That is why marriage was elevated to the level of a sacrament—because it reveals God to us in very many ways.

Catholic Marriage

The Catholic Church considers Marriage a Sacrament when two baptized persons marry. Sacraments reveal the mysteries of God through tangible signs and symbols—ordinary things—that become super-saturated with meaning such that they present Christ in a real way to us.

In its Catholic expression, the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony has requirements that are over-and-above the standards for the civil or secular institution of marriage. Because God is a partner in the life of the married couple, and as a sacrament, they must reveal God, the Church tries to ensure that Catholic marriages can accomplish this end by requiring a lengthy preparation process (at least six months) for the bride and groom. In the rituals themselves, multiple symbols (rings, vows, Eucharist) are employed to bring out more clearly the meaning of what the Church intends in Holy Matrimony. Though Catholic Marriage is for the Church, it is also for the couple. On the wedding day, the couple already begins their symbolic and sacramental role in the very celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. That is why sometimes you may hear it said to the couple, "Today is not about you, it is about us!"

Who May Celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony?

It is preferable that both the bride and the groom be baptized Catholics. But even if there is only one who is a baptized Catholic, a marriage can be performed with the requi-

site permission of the Bishop. However, both must be also be free to marry (*see next section, below*). In the Catholic Church it is legislated that all Catholics must be married before a Catholic priest, or deacon who has the faculty to witness marriages from the Bishop of the Diocese. The couple should be confirmed, though it is not necessary, and they should be in good standing with the Church and not under any Ecclesiastical Penalty or restriction.

Freedom to Marry

Only unmarried persons may be married in the Catholic Church. Simply being divorced does not mean you are free to marry in the Catholic Church. Until it has been proven by documentation to the parish priest that you are free to marry, it is best that you not set a date for your marriage. The documents needed to prove freedom to marry include:

- New original Baptismal Certificate with margin notes indicating no Church Marriage pre-exists.
- At least two affidavits signed by people who have known you from infancy and notarized by an Ecclesial Notary (Catholic Priest or Deacon) that you never married civilly, by common law or church marriage.
- Formal Decree of invalidity from a Catholic Church Marriage Tribunal for all previous marriages.

In cases of a prior marriage or marriages, it (they) must be adjudicated by the Diocesan Tribunal so that your freedom to marry can be established. This can take some time, and **will delay the setting of your wedding date**. Civil Marriages are always discouraged until both man and woman are free to marry in the Church. Not complying with this law will result in a restriction on both the man and the woman from celebrating the sacraments until their marriage can be celebrated in the Church, unless imminent death is foreseen. But they must still attend Mass every Sunday.

What Is A "Mixed Marriage?"

A mixed marriage is a marriage between a non-Catholic and a Catholic. These marriages can be celebrated in the