

Celebrating a Catholic Marriage at Our Lady & St Patrick's

MASS OR CEREMONY?

There are two ways of celebrating a marriage in the Catholic Church - a **marriage ceremony** or a **nuptial Mass**. The ceremony has readings and the rite of marriage followed by the Our Father and the final blessing. It is not a Mass and doesn't have the offertory, Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion. A ceremony usually lasts 25-30 minutes while a nuptial Mass would be 40-45 minutes.

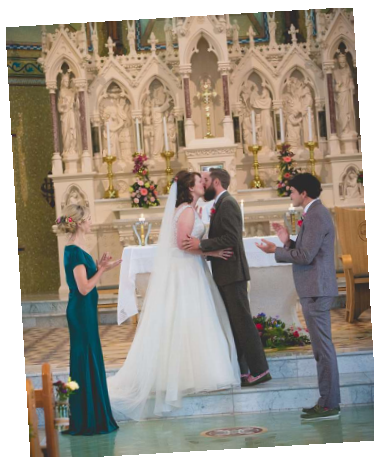
When the bride and groom are both practicing Catholics who go to Mass each Sunday and most of the guests are practicing their faith then a nuptial Mass is a suitable choice.

If not, then a marriage ceremony is the better option - it's a terrible shame to have a church full of people who don't know what to do at Mass and who don't know the responses! If it's a mixed marriage it can be difficult for one side to come up for Holy Communion when the other side doesn't.

Both ceremonies are equally valid ways of celebrating the sacrament.

TIME

The couple set the time for the wedding and the parish organises the church, the priest and the parish volunteers to help. Please respect the time you booked! Some people think that the bride can be as late as she wants - **this is wrong!** The wedding must start on time as there may be another ceremony in the Church that day, or the priest may have other appointments afterwards.



READINGS

The priest will give you a selection of possible readings. You need to choose:

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm (this is usually sung by the musician)
- Second Reading

One reader reads the First Reading (and the Responsorial Psalm if it's not sung). Another reads the Second Reading.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

The couple usually choose another reader (or more than one) to read the prayer of the faithful.

The priest will give you sample prayers which you can use. You may wish to add or change the prayers to make them more personal.



MUSIC

For a **nuptial Mass** you would usually have music at the following times:

- Opening music as the bride comes in
- Responsorial Psalm (this does not have to be sung)
- During the Offertory
- During Communion
- Signing the Register

It's preferable to sing the parts of the Mass as well (like the 'Holy Holy' or the 'Lamb of God'). Either your musicians or the priest can sing these.



For a **marriage ceremony** the music is at the following times:

- Opening music as the bride comes in
- Responsorial Psalm (this does not have to be sung)
- After the Prayer of the Faithful
- Signing the Register

The music choices for a wedding need to be **Christian hymns** or **sacred instrumental music** out of respect for God and the Church. The priest needs to approve the music choices.

Couples usually organise their own singer and/or organist or musicians.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of **wedding traditions** which are *optional* such as the lighting of three **candles** or the giving of **silver and gold coins**. If you want to have these traditions at your ceremony, please let the priest know.

The couple are usually welcome to organise **flowers** to decorate the church. However, check with the priest if there will already be flowers in the church at the time of your wedding.

Unfortunately the use of **confetti is not permitted** at Our Lady & St Patrick's. It is very difficult to clean up, and can look inappropriate (especially if there is a funeral on in the church later).

BOOKLETS

Some couples spend a great deal of money on booklets for their wedding. They usually all end up left in the church! A booklet isn't really necessary, and if you want some sort of order of service then a small leaflet is usually enough.

If you are getting a booklet printed then the priest needs to see it in plenty of time beforehand. Some people cut and paste from other wedding booklets and end up with the wrong prayers or readings. If you send the priest a copy of the text by email before you print it, he can check that it is the right text for your service.

WEDDING REHEARSAL

Many couples like to have a rehearsal a day or two before the wedding. The rehearsal usually takes about 20 minutes and it helps everybody to be familiar with what's happening and where they need to stand or sit. You should book the rehearsal time with the priest in good time beforehand.

The rehearsal time is also a good opportunity for the bride and groom (and anyone else who wishes) to go to **confession**. The sacrament of reconciliation is an important way of preparing spiritually for the blessings God is going to give you at your marriage.

Prayer for an engaged couple

Lord Jesus Christ, we give you thanks for the love we share, and for bringing us together.

Teach us to prepare for our wedding by an increase of love towards each other,
by an increase of generosity to others and by the prayers we make for a long and happy life together.

Bless all those who are helping us to prepare for our wedding. Keep us good-humoured and joyful as the day draws near.

Mary our Mother and Saint Joseph keep us always in love with each other.
Teach us to live as you did and to love Christ with great devotion all the days of our life together.

Amen.

