



Archdiocese of Saint Boniface

Guidelines for Marriage in the Catholic Church

Congratulations on your decision to marry in the Catholic Church! We welcome you on this journey of discernment, discovery and formation as you prepare for your upcoming wedding. Your marriage is an important chapter of your life, and your faith will strongly support you in this journey. The following information is intended to help you understand the requirements and guidelines for marriage in the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface.

Important Timeline:

Please contact your parish priest or parish life director at the beginning of your engagement or at **least 9-12 months** prior to your anticipated wedding date. **Please do not set a firm date or book any services or venues** until you take part in an Initial Meeting with the priest or parish life director of the church in which you are requesting marriage.

Initial Meeting:

The process of preparing to be married in the Church begins with an initial meeting with your priest or parish life director. Please book a date for this meeting as soon as possible after your engagement. During this first meeting, you will have the opportunity to share about your relationship and your hopes for your marriage, and to ask any questions you may have as you embark on this journey towards Sacramental Marriage. As well, you will be guided and encouraged to reflect on your faith experience, your relationship as a couple, and your understanding of marriage in the Church.

Special Circumstances

During your initial meeting, please discuss with your priest or parish life director if:

- either or both of you have been married before
- either of you are or were in a “common-law” union
- you are civilly married to each other and wish to have your marriage convalidated in the Catholic Church
- you are presently living together
- either you or your fiancé/e is a teenager
- a pregnancy is involved
- one of you practices another faith tradition or does not follow any particular religious faith
- you are Catholic but not Confirmed.

Your priest or parish life director will take into consideration any special circumstances and offer you information & guidance related to your particular situation. **It is after this meeting that the date of your wedding ceremony is determined.**

Preparatory Marriage Formation Process

This process of preparation for a sacred marriage takes time and care. All couples requesting Marriage in the Catholic Church must allow at least 6-9 months for the process of Preparatory Marriage Formation. **This formation process begins only after the First Meeting with the priest or parish life director.**

It is strongly recommended that the preparatory formation process be completed 2-3 months prior to the wedding ceremony date. This allows you as the couple time for further meetings with the priest or parish life director to reflect on the formation process and to prepare for the liturgy of your wedding. The last few weeks before the wedding ceremony can be focused on personal reflection, prayer and receiving the sacraments. This timeline will also allow for you to attend to last-minute preparations for the wedding.



Preparatory Marriage Formation Process Details

In the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, Preparatory Marriage Formation is done as a **2-Part Process**. This process is designed to help couples prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage and to introduce them to the beauty and richness of the Church's teachings on fertility, marriage, and the family. Marriage formation also offers couples the opportunity to evaluate and deepen their readiness to live married life; and to gain insights into themselves as individuals and as a couple. Continued formation which is offered after the wedding is especially effective in helping couples to navigate and be supported through the challenges of the early years of marriage.

Please make sure to register for both components (Part 1 & Part 2) of the Preparatory Marriage Formation Process. For any questions, please contact your parish or the Marriage, Family and Life Office (mfl@archsaintboniface.ca).

Part 1 – Preparatory (Sacramental) Marriage Formation Sessions

Preparatory Marriage Formation Sessions may be offered in a variety of formats, from one-on-one meetings with a sponsor couple, to group sessions or online programs. The parish where you are getting married will offer you information on what format is available to you.

Main Sacramental Marriage Formation offered in the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface: For Better & For Ever Program – with parish Sponsor Couples

This sponsorship-based program helps engaged couples build a connection with their parish through their 'sponsor couple', a married couple from the parish who journeys with the engaged couple during 5-6 sessions before the wedding, and 1-2 sessions after the wedding. While sessions are typically offered in person at the sponsor couple's home, it may also be possible to connect remotely at times by choosing an online meeting platform that works for both couples. Cost: \$125 (this includes the books which are available at the Archdiocesan Centre). Please contact your parish to register.

NOTE ON CONVALIDATIONS:

Civilly married couples and other couples with very special circumstances may discuss a customized marriage formation with their pastor, or contact the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface Office of Marriage, Family & Life for more information: mfl@archsaintboniface.ca

Part 2 – Fertility Health Awareness Seminar

Offered by the Office of Marriage, Family and Life in the Spring and Fall, this 3-hour seminar offers couples preparing to marry in the Church the opportunity to deepen their appreciation for God's plan for conjugal love, to discover the various methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP) and Fertility Awareness, as well as receive certified teaching on one of the methods. **All couples asking for marriage in the Church (including those who are civilly married) must register and attend the Fertility Health Awareness Seminar.** There is no cost. *Couples receive a certificate of attendance to certify the completion of this integral component of the marriage formation process.* Please register at bit.ly/fhas-register.

Additional Information that may be helpful:

Place of the Wedding

- The celebration of marriage is an act of worship and a Sacrament for two baptized Christians. Hence, a church, the house of God, is the proper place for weddings. Gardens, beaches, secular “wedding chapels” or other settings are for this reason deemed inappropriate.
- The wedding of two Catholics is a sacramental liturgy and takes place in the parish of either the bride or groom. To be married in another parish, permission must be granted from the parish in which you wish to be married, as well as from the parishes where you are registered.
- A wedding in which only one of you is Catholic would take place in the parish of the Catholic party. The Chancellor of the Archdiocese may permit you to celebrate your wedding in the place of worship of the non-Catholic party when a special pastoral reason suggests it. Please consult with your priest or parish life director.

Documents needed from the couple

- **Baptismal Certificate:** If you are a Catholic, you must have a new baptismal certificate issued within the six months prior to your wedding. If you have been baptized in another Christian denomination, you may supply either your original certificate or a copy.
- **Marriage License:** Please obtain a Marriage License at least 24 hours before the marriage (Note: It is only valid for marriages being performed in Manitoba and is only

valid for three months). Both parties must be present to buy the marriage license from a registered issuer. This is not required for a convalidation ceremony. For convalidation (those who already married civilly), a marriage certificate is needed.

Sacraments

- Every Catholic should complete his or her initiation into the faith by receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, if possible, before the wedding. If you have not been confirmed, the time of your pre-marital formation is an opportunity to prepare for Confirmation as well.
- The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist will prepare you for a more meaningful experience of your wedding liturgy.

Wedding Liturgy

- Your parish priest/deacon or parish life director will help you plan your wedding liturgy after your preparatory marriage formation process is complete. You may receive a booklet that will guide you in the choice of Scripture readings, prayers, and music. He will also inform you of any additional requirements that are particular to that parish.

*Also visit the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface
Catholic Marriage FAQ page:*

