

MARRIAGE BOOKLET

Loughshore Parishes

This booklet contains information
to help you arrange your wedding.

PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY

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INTRODUCTION

This is a very special time for you both. Getting married is one of the most important decisions you will make in life. Your relationship with each other will be a source of joy but it will also be a life-giving challenge. Marriage is not just about one day but a lifetime together. This is the time to ask yourself, and your fiancé honestly and at a deeper level: *who am I, how do we relate, what do I bring to this relationship from my family background, when we have an argument how will we end up more in love at the end of it!* Getting married means committing yourselves to each other for life, providing stability for a family and reflecting on how a relationship with God can help you to do both.

Now that you have confirmed your wedding booking, you may be wondering ‘*what do we do now?*’ This booklet will give you the information to help you prepare for marriage and gather the necessary paperwork in good time.

CHOICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Even though you have already booked the Church, ask yourselves ‘what made us choose a church wedding?’

“I/We want a religious setting for our wedding”

“It is more romantic getting married in a church”

“Our families expect us to get married in church”

“We believe marriage is sacred and want to make our vows before God and the Church”

Often there is not one reason why couples seek to marry in church. You might find yourselves agreeing with each of the above. In Ireland, family expectations still play an important part in deciding where couples marry. Once you announce your plans, family members are eager to advise you what you should do, what the custom is and what is expected of you. You may find advice from family helpful or intrusive - or both. It is important that *you make the choice* where, when and how you marry each other and that *you are clear about the responsibilities your choice entails*.

Getting married in the Catholic Church involves more than getting married in a church building. Marrying in church means taking on the hopes and the ideals the Church has for the sacrament of marriage: hopes and ideals that originate with Jesus Christ and his witness of love and forgiveness. On your wedding day the priest will ask you for an assurance that you clearly understand the meaning of *Christian Marriage*.

The parable in the Gospel of Matthew 7: 21-29, about the man who builds his house on sand and the man who builds his house on rock, teaches you that future happiness in marriage involves taking the time and making the effort to have the foundations right from the beginning.

If you choose to marry in church, YOU take on the responsibility of preparing yourselves adequately for this sacrament. You can book a pre-marriage preparation course with ACCORD ph. 9033 9944, a voluntary non-profit organisation that helps couples prepare for marriage. When you call to book they will inform you of the cost. Take marriage preparation as seriously as you take hotel preparations! And remember that ‘putting yourselves out’ for your marriage beforehand is a good sign that you will ‘put yourselves out’ for each other once you are married.

If you are living abroad but are getting married in the Loughshore Parishes, you should discuss marriage preparation and the completion of your Church Paperwork (i.e. Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Forms) *with your local parish (i.e. the parish in which you are living)*. Contact your local priest at least a year before the wedding, to give you plenty of time to organise marriage preparation. Also it might be an idea to phone to the office of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages at Mossley Mill to discuss submitting ‘Notice of Marriage Forms’ with that office especially if you are only coming home weeks before the wedding.

Marriage Preparation Course
ACCORD ph. 9033 9944
Book early!
www.accordni.com

CIVIL REGISTRATION: *The local registrar*

Even though you will marry in church, you have to notify the local registrar of your decision to marry. **Read the following guidelines carefully.**

1. You should contact the local registrar. In the case of the Loughshore Parishes, that may be either Belfast City Hall or Mossley Mill.
Get/download two 'NOTICE OF MARRIAGE FORMS'.
Do this about 5/6 months before your marriage, or earlier if you prefer.
2. Complete the forms *and ask the priest who is to marry you* to sign ONE of the forms. To do this you can leave the completed paperwork in the parish office (Mon-Fri 9am-1pm) and collect it when it is signed by the priest or bring it with you to your second appointment with the priest. If the priest marrying you is NOT your local priest you may need extra paperwork. Check with the parish office.
3. To return the completed 'NOTICE OF MARRIAGE FORMS' to the local registrar (along with the fee and any other documents) you will need to make an appointment. For Mossely Mill phone 9034 0179/90340180 or email registrar@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk.
Make sure these papers are returned AT THE LATEST 6 weeks before the marriage or the Registrar may not give you the required permission to marry.
4. The local registrar should have the 'MARRIAGE SCHEDULE' ready for you to collect 10-14 days before the marriage. **The bride or bridegroom must collect it in person. DO NOT LOSE IT. YOU CANNOT GET MARRIED WITHOUT IT.**
Some couples collect the MARRIAGE SCHEDULE a few days before their church rehearsal, bring it to the rehearsal and leave it with the priest for the wedding day.
5. After the marriage ceremony the priest will give you back the 'MARRIAGE SCHEDULE'. You (or a member of your family) must return the 'MARRIAGE SCHEDULE' to the local registrar within 3 working days.

If you have any questions you can ask the registrar when you first visit the registrar's office.

CHURCH DOCUMENTATION: *The local priest*

If you were baptised (Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant), the church documents you require to marry in church are as follows:

1. **A Certificate of Baptism** from the parish in which you were baptised. For Catholics it should be a *recent certificate* (i.e. it should be issued in the year before the wedding. An older one will not suffice).
2. **A Certificate of Confirmation (if applicable)**. When you receive your recently issued Baptism Certificate, check if your confirmation is also recorded on that certificate. If it is, then you do not need a separate Confirmation Certificate: If it is not, you will need a separate Confirmation Certificate from the church you were confirmed in.
3. **A Pre-nuptial Enquiry Form**. (*You sign this form to indicate that you understand the promises you are undertaking.*) You could ask the priest to complete these papers when you are asking him to sign your civil forms, around 5/6 months before the wedding. You can make an appointment to meet the priest with the parish office. Bring your civil form (if not already signed) and your recently issued Baptism and Confirmation Certificates with you.
It is preferred that you have completed your marriage preparation beforehand. This visit will also be a good time to discuss the ceremony in more detail.
4. For **Inter-Church Marriages** (i.e. mixed marriages) You both will need to become familiar with inter-Church guidelines for mixed marriages, so contact the priest as soon as possible when you have booked your wedding. The guidelines give advice about where the ceremony should take place, whether or not to celebrate Mass, and inviting other ministers.
5. For **Marriages going abroad** both parties to the wedding may need to get affidavits signed – a legal oath that you are free to marry. Check with the parish office, they will have affidavit forms that you can have witnessed by a solicitor or commissioner of oaths.
6. If marriage papers have to be **posted recorded delivery** in Ireland or abroad there will be a charge.

CELEBRATING YOUR WEDDING DAY

You can download copies of the Readings, the Wedding Booklet (within mass and outside of mass), Prayers of the Faithful and a list of liturgical musicians from the parish website.

Please note the guidance on Wedding Music on the website.

“Only hymns/religious music should be played at the Church ceremony. Some traditional Irish music can be appropriate. If you have a favourite song/pop song this is usually played at the wedding reception – it is not really appropriate to have pop/folk songs in church.”

USEFUL NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

CHURCH (LITURGICAL) MUSICIANS

A liturgical musician is one who is familiar with Church Weddings and knows at what parts of the ceremony music can be included. He/she will also have a repertoire of religious music: hymns and instrumental music. Usually anyone who is/was in a church choir or folk group will have this knowledge also.

Please contact the parish office if you would like a list of some liturgical musicians who regularly sing in churches. This is only for guidance and you are not bound by this list. You should contact the musician yourself and discuss their musical repertoire and expenses.

PLEASE NOTE:- Only hymns/religious music should be played at the Church ceremony. Some traditional Irish music can be appropriate.

PARISH OFFICE – 02890370845
Monday to Friday 9am – 1pm

THE COUNTDOWN

(These are only guidelines. You can do things earlier if you wish but do not to leave things to the last minute)

1. **Up to a year before the wedding** you can book your marriage preparation course with ACCORD ph 9033 9944 and obtain your baptism (& confirmation) certificate.
2. **Six months before the wedding but not earlier:** contact the parish again 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 the affidavit and you can email them loughshore@downandconnor.org
3. **Also Six months before the wedding:** pick up (or download) two 'Notification of Marriage Forms' (Civil Marriage Forms) from the appropriate Council Offices. The priest can sign them when completing your church paperwork.
When you meet the priest:
 - a. Bring your Baptism/Confirmation certificates with you.
 - b. Bring your Completed Civil Marriage Forms *if the priest you are meeting is the priest marrying you.*
 - c. If an Affidavit is required (mixed marriage or 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.
4. **Two months before the Wedding:** if you have any documentation outstanding that the priest needs '*get it now*'. If you have not submitted your Civil Papers do so *as soon as possible*.
5. **Approx. two weeks/ ten days before the wedding:** the Civil Registrar will contact you about picking up the Marriage Schedule. Only the Bride or Groom can pick it up.
6. **A few days before the wedding** is time enough for the rehearsal. Bring your marriage schedule, any booklets or candles you wish to leave in the church. You can also bring the donation to the parish (less the deposit) which the priest will leave in the parish office for you.