Marriage

In the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane



GUIDELINES
FOR PARISHES

“Even though the analogy between the human couple of husband and wife, and that of Christ and his Church, is ‘imperfect’, it inspires us to beg the Lord to bestow on every married couple an outpouring of his divine love.”

Pope Francis - Amoris Laetitia 73

A Sacred Moment

For many engaged couples, seeking a Catholic wedding may be one of the few times they connect with the Church between finishing high school and baptising their children. This presents us with an extraordinary opportunity! Every encounter they have with us (priests, parish office personnel and other Catholic representatives) during this time is a chance to joyfully witness to the gospel through our welcome and support. At the very least, this will help to make their wedding day a joyful experience. At best, it will open the door for couples to encounter Christ Jesus and make the Catholic Church their home of faith as their family grows.

The purpose of this resource is to offer suggestions for how to practically embody this. It makes suggestions for how to extend hospitality and care to wedding couples, as well as tips and tools for navigating behind-the-scenes aspects of marriages in the Catholic Church. This information is accompanied by 'Marriage in the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane: A Guide to Planning Your Wedding and Preparing for Marriage' for couples wishing to marry in the Catholic Church. This resource is available for download as a PDF or by following the link provided here. Parishes may wish to print these 'welcome' brochures to give to couples which provide a direct link to 'Marriage in the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane: A Guide to Planning Your Wedding and Preparing for Marriage'

Contents of this booklet include:

- Suggested protocol for responding to wedding inquiries
- Overview of legal and canonical paperwork for marriage
- Organising details of Catholic wedding celebrations
- Following up with couples after their wedding



Wedding Inquiries

When an engaged couple contacts your parish, what should you do?

1. **Congratulate them!**
   Let them know that the Church is there for them in this moment of their life and wish them the best as they begin to prepare for the sacrament.
2. Make *'Marriage in the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane: A Guide to Planning Your Wedding and Preparing for Marriage'* available to them, either in hard copy form or digital, as well as any documents your parish provides couples who are preparing to marry. Depending on the couple, you may invite them to take some time to peruse these resources in case any questions arise for them.
3. Discuss the **basic requirements** for marrying in the Catholic Church: freedom from any impediment (i.e. previous marriage that has not been granted annulment, at least one person is a baptised Catholic).
4. Check the availability of the couple's preferred Church for their requested date, and make a **tentative booking** in the parish calendar and the celebrants diary, if relevant. Discuss donation cost and the timeline for payment.
5. Make a booking for the couple to **meet with their celebrant** as soon as possible, and ask them to bring along necessary documentation to this meeting.
6. Refer the couple to a **pre-marriage education course** (options available in 'Marriage in the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane: A Guide to Planning Your Wedding and Preparing for Marriage').
7. If possible, offer assistance and/or **recommendations** for musicians, booklet printing, floral arrangements and liturgy planning.
8. Communicate any **necessary parish matters** (e.g. renovations, time restrictions, etc.) with the couple as soon as you are aware of them.
9. Ensure the couple are aware of arrangement for accessing the church for their **rehearsal** and on the day of their wedding, as well as any sound set-up information, and appoint a r**epresentative from the parish** to assist on the wedding day.

Legal and Canonical Requirements

As detailed in the Archdiocesan marriage booklet for couples, the following forms must be completed by couples for the wedding to be valid in the eyes of the State of Queensland:

- *Notice of Intended Marriage* (signed no later than **one month before** the wedding)
- *Declaration of No Legal Impediment to Marriage*
- *Official Certificate of Marriage*

In addition, the following Church documents must be completed:

- *Pre-Marriage Inquiry Form*
- *Permission for Mixed Marriage or Dispensation from Disparity of Worship* (when one partner is not a Catholic)
- In the instance of previous marriage, proof of nullity
- Permission for marriage outside a church if necessary (such as in the case of a garden wedding).

Parish priests and parish office personnel can work together to create drafts of these forms for wedding couples to review at an appointment, before printing the final copies for the wedding day. Parishes may wish to create an **online celebrant portal** with Births, Deaths, and Marriages to minimise administration. These portals pre-populate all government forms with the couples' wedding details, and can easily be edited to include updates.

Wedding couples should ideally meet with their celebrant three times to complete paperwork, discuss the meaning and liturgy of their nuptial celebration, and become familiar with any details they need to be aware of. A minimum of **six months preparation** time is recommended for all couples wishing to marry in the Church.

Remember to follow up with the couple once they are married to **congratulate** them and **invite** them to be part of the parish community,

Logistics and Details

Many couples will ask for help with one or more of the following:

- **Music** and musicians (e.g. organist, choir, digital setup)
- Liturgy **booklet** printing
- **Flowers**
- Additional **access** to the church

These moments of interaction can be more than just business transactions. They are opportunities to share God's love with the couple, and to bring peace and support into these often stressful moments of their lives.

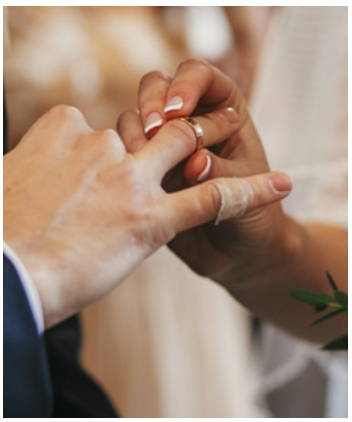
The Archdiocese of Brisbane asks all its parish priests and parish office personnel to attend to logistical details with a spirit of **hospitality, flexibility, and pastoral support.** If a wedding couple has a bad experience in this time, it may become a prohibitive factor for them pursuing a life of faith or wanting to raise their children in the Church.

It may be helpful for your parish to create an **index of suppliers** (e.g. musicians, local florists, etc.) whom you can refer couples to should they need assistance in this area.

It is also desirable to have a **main contact person** at the parish office who will guide couples through each step of the process, unlock the Church for their rehearsal, and be there one their wedding day in case of any last minute glitches. This gives couples a sense of confidence and ease in their arrangements. It can be frustrating for couples to experience a lack of continuity in their dealings with a parish, and not to know whom to contact in unforeseen circumstances.







Following Up with Married Couples

In his Apostolic Exhortation, Amoris Laetitia, Pope Francis stresses the importance of ongoing pastoral accompaniment of married couples, particularly in the first few years of marriage. As an Archdiocese we are committed to **supporting couples beyond their wedding day** and into their years of marriage. The following ideas are wonderful ways to re-connect with couples after their wedding to offer them congratulations and ongoing pastoral care:

- An **email** of congratulations with a **request for a photo** to include in the parish newsletter.
- A **phone call** from the wedding celebrant one month into marriage to check in.
- A **care package** in the mail with information about parish events and support groups.
- An **anniversary card** one year into marriage to let them know we still care.
- Adding the couple to the **parish database** so they receive regular email newsletters.
- Connecting newlywed couples with an older **couple** in the parish who can offer practical wisdom and pastoral support in the early years of marriage.
- Forming a **newlywed network** at your parish to give recently married couples a chance to connect with others in the same stage of life.
- Giving couples information on how to obtain a **papal blessing**.
- Providing newlywed couples information about **events** and support groups around the Archdiocese such as ministries to the newly married, mums groups, and conferences.
- Forming a **parish library** with books about marriage and family life, including Pope Francis' Amoris Laetitia, resources on Natural Family Planning, and manuals on communication, conflict resolution, and faith in the family.

We'd love to hear about any other ideas your parish has for connecting with newlywed couples as they begin married life together!

Archdiocesan
MINISTRIES
AN AGENCY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE