

# Getting Married: What do we need to know?



**SAINT PHILIP NERI**

CATHOLIC PARISH BIRKENHEAD

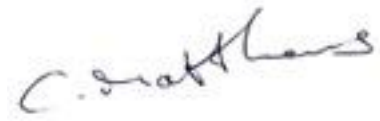


**Congratulations on your engagement!**

It is wonderful to be a part of this deeply significant occasion in your lives, and to help you to celebrate this great sacrament of marriage. We hope that this brief guide will help with your preparations and enable the wedding day to go as smoothly as possible, as you begin your married lives together.

If you have any questions, then please don't hesitate to ask.

With every blessing

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C. Matthews', written in black ink.

**Reverend Father Christopher Matthews**  
**Parish Priest**

## **Booking your Wedding**

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### **Initial Paperwork!**

When you meet with one of the clergy to book your wedding in one of our two churches, it is important to do some of the initial paperwork quickly, then there will be time to organise any permissions or dispensations that may be required. If you do not live within the boundaries of the parish, you will need permission from your own parish priest. It is also important to tell us if one of you is baptised in a different Christian tradition or not baptised at all.

### **Proof of Entitlement and Freedom to Marry:**

Catholics must obtain a fresh copy of their Baptismal Certificate (no more than six months old) to establish their freedom to marry. Please contact the priest of the church where you were Baptised. If you are having difficulty finding the exact address we can probably help you to track it down. Tell the priest your name, date of birth, approximate date of baptism, and that you are getting married. We recommend enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. There is often no charge for the certificate, but always offer to make a donation to help cover any costs.

Baptised members of other denominations are asked to provide some evidence of their baptism (e.g. the original certificate, a new one, or a letter from someone who was present giving the name of the church and the date of the baptism) and also a letter from someone who knows them well certifying that they have not been married before and are free to marry. If you have not been baptised we will require a letter from someone who has known you since birth stating that you have never been baptised and that you have never been married.

### **The Law of the Land:**

It is a requirement of civil law that both of you give the Registrar at the Registry Office notice in person of your intention to marry in our church. This can be done at any time from twelve months before the wedding date. After interviewing you, Banns will be posted in the Registry Office of your place of residence. After fifteen days of public notice the Registrar will issue you with blue Certificates which enable your Marriage to be solemnised in the presence of an Authorised Person in the Catholic Church.

These Certificates are amongst the most important documents needed for your wedding, without them the wedding cannot proceed.

We recommend that in most cases you notify the Registrar of your intention to marry at least three months before the proposed date. If you live outside the Registration District of Wirral, it is your local Registry Office to which you need to apply.

Once you have collected your blue Certificates, we advise you to send them into the Parish Office for safe keeping.

On your wedding day, an Authorised Person has to be present to oversee the civil registration of your marriage on behalf of the state; you do not need to organise this, the parish takes care of this on your behalf. The fee for this is currently £50.00. You then receive a Certified Copy of the Entry of your wedding in the Marriage Register. If you ever lose your Marriage Certificate, you can contact the parish and we will write you a new Copy. There is a charge for this.

### **Wedding Service or Nuptial Mass?**

When you get married in the Catholic Church, you have the choice of either a wedding service, which is simply the wedding ceremony within a Liturgy of the Word, or a full Nuptial Mass, which is the wedding ceremony within a celebration of Mass. It is important that you discuss these options with the priest or deacon when you meet to book your wedding.

## **Preparing for Marriage in the Catholic Church.**

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### **Marriage Preparation!**

Early each year we invite all those getting married in our parish the coming year to meet together. We also invite all couples to attend a Marriage Preparation Day. Here we will cover aspects of married life, talk through your hopes and expectations, what it means to be married in church and your future together as Mr and Mrs. If you are unable to attend the course, you will be expected to attend some other form of marriage preparation, either more locally to you if you live outside the parish or with the national agency Marriage Care or online. Marriage Preparation is an expectation of the Catholic Church.

You should get back in touch with the priest or deacon about six months before your wedding date. It is normal to meet up for three or four sessions with the minister, in order to complete the paperwork, organise the details of the service, discuss your understanding of marriage, and to arrange the rehearsal. These sessions also help you to get to know the priest or deacon who will be conducting your wedding, and gives him a chance to get to know both of you.

## **Planning the Liturgy:**

Please make sure you plan the wedding liturgy carefully, but always in partnership with the priest or deacon who will be presiding at your wedding. There are lots of options, but there are also lots of expectations! The Church has a very clear understanding of what must happen within the wedding liturgy and an outline of the liturgy can be found on pages 12 and 13 towards the back of this booklet.

## **Rehearsal!**

There will usually be a rehearsal in the week before your wedding at a date and time convenient to you and the priest/deacon. It is helpful to have as many of the wedding party present as possible, however it is vital that you the couple are present, the chief bridesmaid, Father of the Bride (or the person giving the Bride away) and the best man are also there. Anyone else who can make it is an added bonus! If those doing readings what to be at the rehearsal to practice, then they are more than welcome too.

Some times it is helpful to have the photographer attend the rehearsal, particularly if they have never photographed a wedding in our parish church buildings of Saint Joseph's or Saint Michael & All Angels before.

## **The Venue!**

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**Saint Joseph's church building:** You are getting married in a beautiful building, lovingly maintained by the parish community and not needing much in the way of floral decoration or other embellishment. We ask you to respect its dignity and consult closely with the clergy before finalising arrangements for such things as music and flowers. Please note no candles are allowed; nothing attached to the hand rails at the entrance to the church; nothing on the Mass altar and nothing around the pillars.

The church seats approximately 400 guests, but can look very full with as few as 80 guests.

**Saint Michael & All Angels church building:** You are getting married in a modern but elegantly simple building, lovingly maintained by the parish community. The architect designed the church with clean crisp lines and so it needs little embellishment. When thinking about flowers, you will need simple but bold arrangements. We ask you to respect the dignity and design of the building, and so please consult closely with the clergy before finalising

arrangements for such things as flowers. Please note no candles are allowed; nothing attached to the hand rails at the entrance to the church; and nothing on the Mass altar.

The church seats approximately 500 guests, but can look very full with as few as 80 guests.

### **Confetti.**

You are welcome to throw confetti, but we ask that it is only thrown outside with the church doors firmly shut! Confetti does make a terrible mess and it is the minister who has to clean it up!

### **Fees.**

Unlike other churches and non religious venues, we do not have any fixed fees for the church or minister. The parish simply asks for a donation towards parish funds and covering costs. We ask for a minimum donation of £200.00. Plus there is the legally set fee of £50 for the Authorised Person, which must be paid. It is also customary to make a financial gift to the priest or deacon who guides you through the preparation and presides at your wedding. We suggest about £200 as a token of thanks for the time they spend with you preparing for your wedding and on the day itself.

Flowers, organist and singers all come at a cost! When you contact the relevant people, they will inform you of their fees.

We ask that all fees are paid before the rehearsal. Please place each fee or donation in the envelopes provided and give them to the minister or hand them in to the Parish Office.

### **Flowers.**

We have an excellent team of flower arrangers in our parishes and they are more than happy to offer you advise and help you with your queries about flowers. *All* couples are asked to make contact with the Parish Office to make arrangements for their wedding flowers. If you wish our team to arrange the flowers for you, the Office will make sure one of the team makes contact with you. If you hope to have your own flower arrangers, that is not a problem, but please let the Office know so the diary can be planned.

## **Ministers.**

There are five deacons and two priests serving the Parish of Saint Philip Neri, one of whom will be happy to preside at your wedding:

Father Christopher Matthews (Parish Priest), Father Humphrey Agbim, Deacon Gerard Boyle, Deacon Pat Regan, Deacon Les Arch, Deacon Paul D'Ambrogio and Deacon John Birch. All can be contacted via the Parish Office ~ see contact details at the back of this booklet.

## **Music.**

Music is a very important part of your wedding ceremony. Stella McGann is Director of Music at Saint Joseph's. Stella can be contacted on 0151 648 4901 or ptrmcgann@aol.com and will guide you through what is and what isn't appropriate for your wedding! The Saint Joseph's Church Choir are also very willing to sing at your wedding, Stella will be able to advise you on their availability, their fee and the music they can provide. Stella can also arrange for instrumentalists - piper, trumpeter, string quartet - for example to play at your wedding. *Please note that we do not allow pre recorded music (CD's) to be played as it is not appropriate during a Catholic wedding liturgy, and we also do not have a license or copyright permission for pre-recorded music to be played. Please do not embarrass the minister by asking, as he will have to refuse.*

## **Order of Service.**

It is usual for you to provide an order of service for your guests. This not only helps the congregation to follow the ceremony and participate fully in it, but also provides them with a souvenir of the day. The priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding will give you advice on how to put your order of service together.

*Please Note:*

*Most of the texts used in liturgy are copyright; it is against the law to copy them without permission. They are either texts of the Church and so copyright protects their liturgical and literary integrity or they are the work of individual authors and composers.*

It is helpful for everyone concerned if a draft order of service is given to the minister and Stella (if she is arranging your music) at least 6 weeks before your wedding. This will allow time for corrections to be made, music and readings to be prepared, and in particular to ensure that the texts you have included conform to current copyright rules about reproducing words, hymns, poems etc.



## **Photographs and Videos.**

The Parish of Saint Philip Neri has a very tight policy on photography and video recording of weddings based on our previous experience.

Your official stills photographer may take photographs at any point during the ceremony, but is asked not to be intrusive or distracting. We insist that they keep any movement to a minimum. We ask them to introduce themselves to the minister prior to the wedding who will tell them where they can and can not go.

We ask that members of the congregation refrain from taking pictures during the ceremony, but are invited to take photographs as you process out.

Photographs before and after the wedding are entirely at your discretion. However, if the bride is late then time for photographs may be considerably shortened. It is usually possible to come back into the church at the end of the ceremony for photographs, so long as this does not conflict with another event in the church building. This may help if it is raining. You are welcome to have photographs taken around the church. However, please be sensitive to the needs of any events following your wedding and the sacred space that you are in.

The signing of the register is a very serious and legal moment; therefore we can not allow the photographer or video camera person to be present. We will of course mock up the signing immediately afterwards and invite them in to record the moment for you.

Unlike other churches, we do not charge an additional fee for the video recording of a wedding in either of our church buildings, however, we do ask that your camera operator follows these simple rules:

- The camera operator must comply with any instructions given by the minister.
- No extra lighting is permitted, nor will the minister wear an extra microphone.
- The camera operator must not move around the church during the ceremony, except as agreed before hand with the minister.
- The camera operator will not be allowed to record the actual signing of the register, but is welcome to record the mock up alongside the photographer.
- Copies of the recording must only be produced for private use only and not sold (except to the people commissioning the recording).
- No recording (or extract from it) shall be exhibited in public (You Tube, You've Been Framed etc.)

We ask that you pass on these rules to your photographer and camera operator. If they have not photographed or recorded a wedding in Saint Joseph's or Saint Michael's church buildings before, they should come to the rehearsal, or make contact with the minister before the day of the wedding.

The Parish clergy and staff retain the right to stop the recording at any moment and if necessary ask the photographer or camera operator to leave church building.

*Please note:*

*Most of the texts used in liturgy are copyright.*

### **Ushers.**

You may wish to ask people to serve as ushers. Their main jobs are to welcome guests and guide them to their places; to give out the Orders of Service or hymn books; and to collect them up at the end of the Service.

By tradition the groom's guests sit on the right, and the bride's on the left, as you face the altar. Apart from immediate family, however, this convention is seldom strictly observed!

## On the Day!

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### Don't panic!

By this time everything has been sorted out and it is too late to change it. So just enjoy the day.

### Get to the church on time:

*Groom:* at least 30 minutes before the set time  
*Bride:* at least 10 minutes before the set time

### Signing the Registers

You will need two witnesses (one for the bride and one for the groom), who have to be over 18 years of age. The Authorised Person will ask for their details before the ceremony begins.

#### **Please note:**

- \* If you are late we reserve the right to postpone the wedding to a time convenient to us.
- \* If you (or one of you) are drunk or otherwise incapacitated we are not allowed, by law, to marry you.
- \* If the photographer (video or stills) does not abide by the instructions of the minister they may be asked to leave.

But of course, these things never happen. All will go smoothly, the sun will shine, everyone will enjoy themselves, and it will be a glorious day!

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

## **Outline of a Nuptial Mass:**

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If you have chosen to have your wedding take place within the celebration of Mass, the liturgy will follow the guidelines below:

- Entrance Music
- Greeting and words of welcome and introduction by the minister
- Opening Hymn (Optional)
- Opening Prayer
  
- Liturgy of the Word
  - First Reading – usually from the Old Testament (New Testament if you are not having a Second Reading)
  - Psalm – this may be sung
  - Second Reading – optional and usually from the New Testament
  - Gospel Acclamation – this must be sung or omitted
  - Gospel – taken from one of the four Gospels
  - Homily given by the minister (sometimes called a sermon)
  
- Rite of Marriage
  
- Blessing and Exchange of Rings
  
- Universal Prayer (formerly called bidding prayers, or intercessions)
  
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
  - Hymn for the Preparation of the Gifts
  - The Catholic tradition is to sing the Mass (not sing at Mass!) so at Saint Joseph's we strive to sing the parts of the Mass – the Holy Holy, Memorial Acclamation and Lamb of God
  - Distribution of Holy Communion – it is customary to sing a hymn
  
- Prayer after Communion
- Final Blessing
- Hymn – optional
- Signing of the Registers
  
- Recessional Music

## **Outline of a Wedding Service:**

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If you have chosen to have your wedding take place outside the celebration of Mass, the liturgy will follow the guidelines below:

- Entrance Music
- Greeting and words of welcome and introduction by the minister
- Opening Hymn (Optional)
- Opening Prayer
  
- Liturgy of the Word
  - First Reading – usually from the Old Testament (New Testament if you are not having a Second Reading)
  - Psalm – this may be sung
  - Second Reading – optional and usually from the New Testament
  - Gospel Acclamation – this must be sung or omitted
  - Gospel – taken from one of the four Gospels
  - Homily given by the minister (sometimes called a sermon)
  
- Rite of Marriage
- Blessing and Exchange of Rings
  
- Universal Prayer (formerly called bidding prayers, or intercessions)
  
- Nuptial Blessing
  
- Final Blessing
- Hymn – optional
- Signing of the Registers
  
- Recessional Music

## Contact Details:

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The Parish Office serves both church buildings and can be contacted as follows:



Saint Philip Neri Parish Office  
10 Willowbank Road  
Birkenhead  
Wirral  
CH42 7JY



0151 652 5767



[admin@saint-philip-neri.co.uk](mailto:admin@saint-philip-neri.co.uk)

Saint Philip Neri is a parish within the Diocese of Shrewsbury,  
which is a registered charity (Number 234025).

Notes: