



*Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora*

*Diocese of Clonfert*

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**This information and associated weblinks can be found at [www.galwaydiocese.ie/sacraments/marriage](http://www.galwaydiocese.ie/sacraments/marriage)**

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Congratulations on your engagement and your commitment to enter into the lifelong sacrament of marriage. The following information is provided as a general guide in the preparation for Christian marriage. Please consult your local priest when arranging your wedding.

### **Church Requirements for Christian Marriage**

- A minimum of three months' notice to the church;
- A recent certificate of baptism;
- A recent certificate of confirmation;
- Declaration of freedom to marry;
- Attendance at a Catholic pre-marriage course;
- Completed pre-nuptial enquiry form;
- Relevant dispensations (where applicable);
- All civil requirements satisfied.

By episcopal decree, a person must be at least 18 years of age before they can book a wedding in the Galway diocese.

### **Certificate of Baptism**

This document records the fact of your baptism into the Christian faith, and indicates the venue and date of the celebration of the sacrament. Evidence of Christian baptism is required before the celebration of most sacraments, since baptism marks the beginning of the process of initiation into the church. For the purpose of preparing for Christian marriage, your baptism certificate should be obtained from the church where you were baptised within a six month period prior to your wedding. Persons who are not of the Christian faith are not required to provide a baptism certificate.

### **Certificate of Confirmation**

When you are confirmed in the Christian faith some time after your baptism, you receive a Confirmation certificate. Like your baptism certificate it too provides the specific details of your Confirmation and serves as evidence of your full membership of the Christian church. Persons who for whatever reason were baptised but not confirmed are strongly encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation before their marriage. The local priest can arrange this if given sufficient notice.

## **Declaration of Freedom to Marry**

Letters of freedom or a declaration that you are free to marry are necessary for both the bride and the groom. They may be arranged in one of the following forms:

1. A letter of freedom from the parish priest of each of the parishes where you may have lived for six months or more since the age of 16, stating that you did not get married while living in that parish and that you are, therefore, free to marry now.. Your local priest can help you obtain these.

—*or*—

2. A sworn affidavit confirming that you are free to marry.

—*or*—

3. A formal declaration from a family member, signed by a family member and witnessed by a priest, that you are free to marry. Most churches will have a template of this type. One is also available on our diocesan website.

## **Pre-Marriage Course**

The Catholic Church requires all who wish to marry to prepare adequately for the celebration of the rite of marriage. A pre-marriage course is part of the outreach of the church to those preparing for their wedding. These courses are run by ACCORD and by other approved Catholic centres around the country. Attendance at an approved pre-marriage course is obligatory for all who intend to marry. Courses are eight hours in length and are held over weekends or during the week.

Contact:

ACCORD, Galway Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Árus de Brún, Newtownsmith, Galway.

Tel. +353-91-562331 or email [galwayaccord@gmail.com](mailto:galwayaccord@gmail.com)

Website: [www.accord.ie](http://www.accord.ie)

## **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Forms**

When you decide to get married, your first task should be to contact the priest of the parish in which you currently reside to let him know of your intention to marry. This may not necessarily be the same priest who celebrates your wedding with you. Your local priest will make an appointment with you and discuss all relevant necessities appropriate to your personal circumstances. Part of the documentation required for Christian marriage is a pre-nuptial enquiry form (not to be confused with a pre-nuptial civil agreement) which details the specifics of your wedding. It is your local priest who fills out this form with you.

## **Dispensations**

A dispensation is a permit granted by the local bishop which removes an otherwise obligatory condition for the celebration of Christian marriage. A typical example of the need for a dispensation occurs when a Catholic person wishes to marry a person who is not Christian. In this example the dispensation removes the obligation for baptism and confirmation of the non-Christian person. In all cases where a

dispensation is required, it is the local priest assisting in your preparation who will obtain it for you by petitioning the bishop.

### **Bringing your own priest**

It may happen that you know a particular priest well or that a priest is a family friend or relative and you would like him to celebrate your wedding with you. In Galway diocese we welcome visiting priests to celebrate weddings and make every effort to accommodate them. Priests who do not normally minister in Galway diocese require special permission from both the Church and the State. Your local priest will take care of that for you but you must let him know well in advance so that the necessary permissions can be obtained.

### **Music at Christian weddings**

Getting married is a hugely significant step in life and a profoundly sacred moment. The rite of Christian marriage should be celebrated with dignity and honour. As a sacrament of the Church, marriage is a personal commitment lived out in a faith community.

The purpose of music at any act of worship is to direct our minds and hearts towards God and assist in creating a sacred atmosphere. It is not merely to entertain the congregation. Mindful that couples sometimes seek to personalise their wedding ceremony with the use of music, the Church encourages couples to reflect carefully on their choice of music and to be conscious of the liturgical guidelines in existence.

As a matter of policy in our diocese music of a religious nature only – in text and style – is to be used at weddings. The Director of Music at Galway Cathedral, Mr Ray O'Donnell, is happy to provide assistance and advice by appointment: he can be contacted at [music@galwaycathedral.ie](mailto:music@galwaycathedral.ie)

### **Civil requirements explained**

Marriage is a solemn legal contract and it is vital that all the necessary preliminaries for a marriage be completed in order that the marriage is legally valid. The marriage provisions of the Civil Registration Act, 2004 became law on 5 November 2007. The General Register Office is the statutory body which administers the relevant legislation.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) is the local point of contact where a minimum three months' notice of intention to marry is required.

### **Getting married abroad**

A fee of €50 is applicable to cover administration and postage costs when you are getting married abroad. It is advisable that you organise all paperwork both with your priest and with the State well in advance.

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