

The sacrament of Matrimony is...

... a matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman – who are free to marry and who freely express their consent – establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and an intimate communion of life and love. This sacrament has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by God and is ordered – by its nature of unity, indissolubility, and openness to fertility – to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of their children. It is Christ who raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament.

The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church and also perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life.

How is this sacrament celebrated?

A marriage to be valid has to be contracted before the local ordinary bishop, pastor, or a priest or deacon delegated by either of them who assist, and before two witnesses. Also, the Catholic Church normally requires that the marriage is celebrated according to the Church's form.

- Sacramental marriage is a liturgical act. It is therefore very appropriate that it should be celebrated in the public liturgy and in the church or chapel.
- Marriage introduces one into a Church's order, and creates rights and duties in the Church between the spouses and towards their children, especially by educating them in the Catholic faith.
- Since marriage is a state of life in the Church, certainty about it is necessary (hence the obligation to have two witnesses).
- The public character of the consent protects the "I do" once given. It also helps the spouses remain faithful to it.

Divorce vs. annulment.

A sacramental consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power and by any cause, except death. Therefore there is no such thing as a divorce in the Catholic Church for any divorce separates what God has joined together. The remarriage of persons divorced from a living, lawful spouse contravenes the plan and law of God as taught by Jesus Christ. Remarriage doesn't separate these persons from the Church, but they cannot receive Holy Communion.

An Church's annulment on the other hand is a process of finding that there was no actual valid marriage contracted in God's eyes, and consequently that there was no marriage in reality, regardless of civil laws or appearance to people. An annulled marriage is considered never to have validly existed and verified by the Catholic Church is completely independent from obtaining a civil divorce. Cases concerning the merely civil effects of marriage belong to the civil authorities.

For a person seeking to validate his/her second marriage, it is very important to discuss the process of the previous marriage annulment with a priest. The situation and circumstances of every person vary and this process – after a confidential and careful analysis – is a possible window to a sacramental marriage.

I and my fiancée would like to get married in the church. What shall we do?

Please contact your parish priest as soon as you make your decision to get married. The process of marriage preparation consists of taking the pre-marriage instructions and some paperwork. Preparation for your marriage should never be done in haste, so give yourself at least six months to go through it. Also after you contact the priest, he will be able to answer any questions regarding your marriage and the wedding ceremony itself that you have.