



About the Catholic Church

Welcome to the Catholic Church, a community of believers professing faith in Jesus Christ. There are over five million Catholics in Australia, the largest single denomination representing over 27% of the population. The Catholic community includes people of every nationality.

Bishops and priests, religious brothers and sisters as well as families and single people make up the Catholic Church. The Catholic community has a place for everyone, whether young or old, married or single, and of all races and nations. Each person is invited to personally share in the love of Jesus through his Church.

The Catholic Church seeks to live its mission by supporting all sectors of the community – through prayer and worship, education, healthcare and social welfare services.

Many people who are Catholic choose to have their marriage made holy in the Sacrament of Marriage which is going to take place today.

What is the Sacrament of Marriage?

In Marriage a man and a woman give themselves to each other in an exclusive life-long partnership. This human love of husband and wife is an opportunity to experience something of the love of God.

The Church sees marriage as a sign of the unconditional love God has for all people, and a sign of the unity in which all Christians are called to live.

What happens during the Marriage Ceremony?

You've been invited to the Church to attend the Marriage of your friend or relative and you might be wondering what to expect...

The Introduction and Welcome

During the Introduction, the priest welcomes everyone, the couple declare their intention to marry and the assembly pray an opening prayer.

Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word consists of Readings from Scripture (between one and three readings), usually read by a family-member or friend of the couple, and the priest or deacon delivers a homily. Every liturgy is based around the word of God in Scripture.

Liturgy of Marriage

The Liturgy of Marriage includes the exchange and reception of consent, the nuptial blessing, the blessing and exchange of rings, the Prayers of the Faithful and the Lord's Prayer.

Because the bride and groom marry each other they make their promises to each other. The giving of consent begins with a short introduction by the priest followed by questions to both bride and groom. The consent is then acknowledged.

The nuptial blessing is when the Church asks God to bless the marriage.

Concluding Rite

During the concluding rite the civil documents are signed and the parents or family may pray over the couple. This is followed by the solemn blessing in which the priest or deacon, on behalf of the community, prays for the newly-married couple. They also pray that the couple may become blessings for the community.

What is the difference between a Catholic marriage with a Nuptial Mass and one without it?

With a Nuptial Mass the wedding is celebrated in the context of the Mass and guests who are Catholic are invited to receive the Eucharist. If a Nuptial Mass is not celebrated, Holy Communion is usually not distributed.

If both the bride and groom are Catholic and most of the congregation are likely to be Catholic the Nuptial Mass would be customary. If one person is not a Catholic, and a large number of the guests are not Catholics normally the shorter wedding liturgy alone is celebrated.

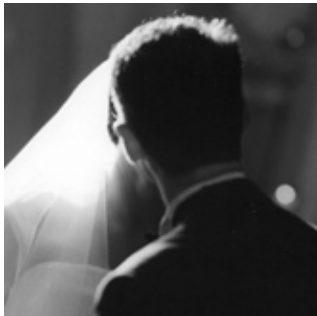




I am not Catholic but I would like to find out more?

If you are not a Catholic, the first step is to make an appointment to meet with the parish priest or pastoral associate in your local area.

Adults will probably be asked to participate in a series of talks to learn about the faith. Sometimes the priest does this himself while some churches have a program – the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) to prepare people for Baptism, or if you have already been baptised a Christian, for reception into the Catholic Church.



Am I alone in wanting to become Catholic?

Many people are Catholic because they were born into a Catholic family. But others make the decision to become Catholic during their adult life.

Each year thousands of people enquire about the Catholic faith and go on to be received into the Catholic Church.

Others who were baptised as an infant make an adult decision to follow Jesus Christ more closely in the Church.

Prayer of Commitment to Jesus Christ

*Jesus,
I am seeking more meaning in my life.
I seek happiness and peace for myself and my loved ones.
Up until now You have not played a big part in my life.
But little by little, as I look back over my life,
I can see You have been calling me to Yourself.
Through all the events and people that have come into my life
I can see Your presence, Your guiding hand through it all.
Help me not to be afraid as I resolve to learn more about
You and Your Church
and make You more of a part of my life. Amen.*



Contacting the Catholic Enquiry Centre

If you or someone close to you is interested in finding out more about the Catholic faith, please contact Catholic Enquiry Centre on 1300 4 FAITH (1300 432 484) or email info@catholicenquiry.com

Other places you might like to look for information:

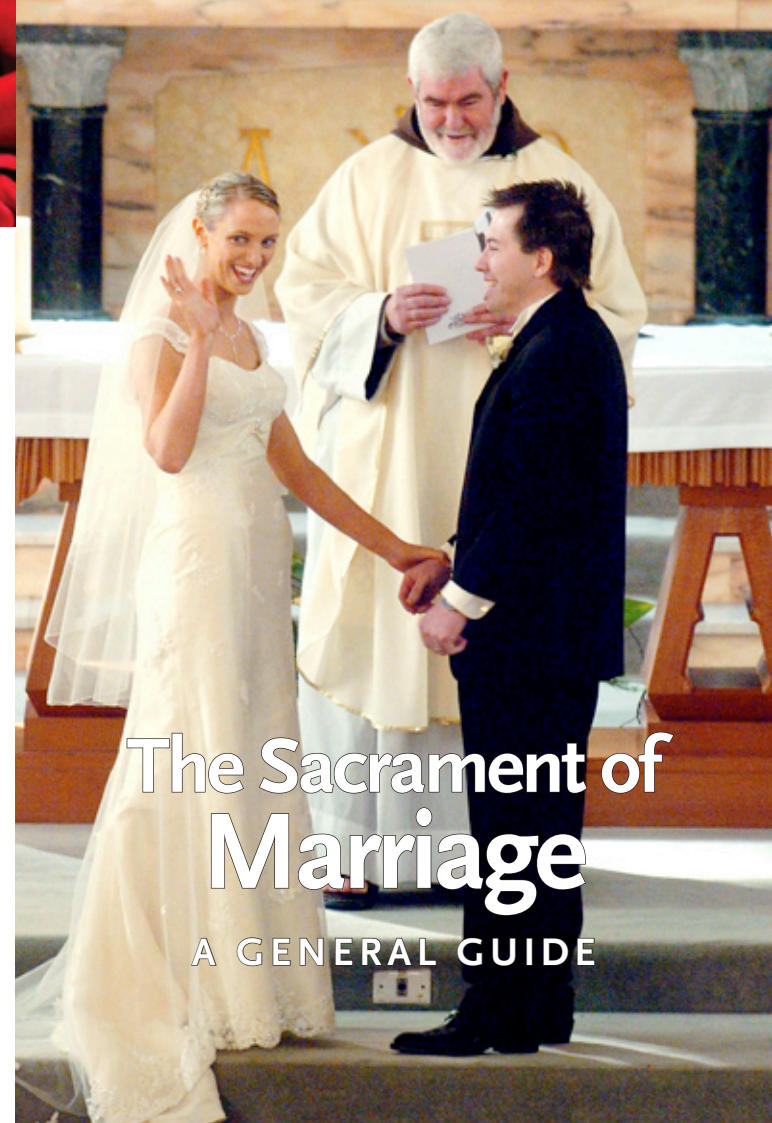
- www.catholic.org.au
- www.acbc.catholic.org.au
- www.catholicaustralia.com.au
- www.vatican.va



Catholic Enquiry Centre

Reaching out in faith
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

1300 4 FAITH (1300 432 484) email: info@catholicenquiry.com



The Sacrament of Marriage

A GENERAL GUIDE



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