

# GETTING MARRIED AT THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION BICESTER

*He answered, "Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh? They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide."  
Matthew 19: 4-6.*

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Getting married is one of the most significant steps in anyone's life. Perhaps it is the most significant. Two people make vows to each other to remain exclusively together for the rest of their lives, "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death."

The Catholic Church's understanding of marriage is that it is a unique, indissoluble partnership between one man and one woman, in mutual and lasting fidelity and open to the possibility of bringing children into the world. Anyone getting married in a Catholic Church must have the same understanding of marriage as the Church, even if they are not a Catholic themselves.

It is because the Church attaches such importance to marriage, both for the couple themselves and for society as a whole, that she is concerned that couples intending to marry are adequately prepared, and understand what it is that they are committing themselves to.

These notes are intended to help couples thinking about getting married at the Immaculate Conception. The priest or deacon who is marrying you will want some time to get to know you, to make sure you understand the meaning and obligations of marriage, and to help you plan the service so as to make one of the most important days of your lives as good as it can be. He will be able to recommend reading and courses beyond what is outlined here.

If you are thinking of getting married at the Immaculate Conception, please read these notes and then get in touch with the priest/deacon or parish office for a chat. And please spend some time in prayer, to be able to make the right decisions, for each other, and for all married people.

## Preliminaries

You need to give six months warning prior to getting married at the Immaculate Conception Church. This rule is there to make sure there is enough time to complete the preparations for marriage. These include:

A period of preparation will involve you attending a marriage preparation course. Unfortunately we do not have a marriage preparation group in our parish at the moment but we are fortunate that we are able to use the Oxford Marriage Preparation Group. They run Saturday courses on selected dates (Saturdays) throughout the year at Elmthorpe Convent, Oxford. Booking forms will be sent to you in the New Year for you to arrange a date. On completion of the course you will be given a certificate, please bring this with you to your appointment with the Parish Priest. The day includes younger and older married couples who are invited to share their experience with those preparing to be married. There are talks about the meaning of Christian Marriage according to the mind of the Catholic Church and practical advice from an expert on Natural Family Planning.

The Civil and Church paperwork. You need to advise the registrar in the place where each of you lives that you intend to marry. This needs to be done about six months before the date of the wedding and not less than one month before. The priest/deacon needs to find out whether you are free to marry and to make certain that you are aware of the duties of Christian Marriage. Enquiries will need to be made in the church where you were baptised and sometimes dispensations need to be sought – all of this can take some time.

The priest will need to have your certificates of baptism. In the case of Catholics this needs to be a recent copy taken from the register of the church where you were baptised within six months of the date of your wedding.

If neither of you is resident within the boundaries of this parish permission will need to be sought from the Parish Priest of the place of residence of one of the parties.

Please contact your Parish priest of the place of residence of the Catholic as all the necessary paperwork will be done there.

Planning the ceremony. There is always much to discuss in the planning of the ceremony. A wedding Mass or the wedding service; the readings, hymns and other music; who will be involved; flowers; photography; parking - to name only a few. This is the exciting part but it also needs time to get right.

### **Freedom to Marry**

You cannot be married in a Catholic church if either of you has been married before, unless that marriage has been annulled by an ecclesiastical tribunal. This rule includes marriages that have taken place in register offices or in non-Catholic churches (although in the case of Catholics who have been married in non-Catholic services a declaration of nullity may be possible).

At least one of you must be a baptised Catholic. In cases where one of the parties

has not been baptised in any Christian denomination a dispensation from the Archdiocese is required and in these cases a Wedding Mass is not possible.

## **The Ceremony**

There are two forms of marriage, the Wedding Service and the Nuptial (Wedding) Mass.

The Wedding Service is shorter and consists of up to three hymns, three readings, the vows, blessing and signing of the register. The choir, soloist and the organist can also play a part. This service takes about 45 minutes.

When the wedding takes place in the context of Mass, this is called a Nuptial Mass. All the usual parts of the Mass are present, readings, hymns, choral pieces and perhaps a musical Mass setting. The vows are taken after the Gospel and the sermon by the priest. **The registers are usually signed at the end. This service takes about an hour.**

Where both parties (and a good proportion of the guests) will be regular, practising Catholics, a Nuptial Mass is highly recommended. It is not possible when one of the parties has not been baptised.

In all other cases the Wedding Service is recommended. This service does not involve Holy Communion – those who would be unable to receive will not feel excluded.

The readings chosen for your wedding must be from the Catholic Lectionary. The priest will be able to give you a booklet containing a good selection. Please make sure your readers know the form for beginning and ending the readings.

The hymns should be from the hymn book used in this church – Laudate. It contains a good selection of traditional and modern hymns.

Ideally you should produce your own order of service. The priest/deacon will be able to help you with this and will have specimen copies for you to see. It should contain at the very least the texts of the hymns and the references to the readings. You don't want your ushers to have to hand out too many different things on the day.

## **Flowers and Confetti**

You may wish to provide your own flowers for your wedding although this is not essential.

The parish office will be able to provide florists details if you require. Arrangements may be placed in the following areas: One large arrangement by the font, at the back of the sanctuary, or on the ends of pews. You may be asked to find somebody who can remove some of the flowers (like pew ends) straight after your wedding service. But we ask you to leave the flowers in the sanctuary so that the church will be decorated for the

rest of the week.

The church is in constant use. A few weeks before the date of your wedding, please agree a time when the florists can come to church to make the arrangements.

Please ask your guests to only scatter bio-degradable confetti or flower petals.

## **Costs**

The church is dependent on weddings and other events for its upkeep and maintenance. The parish office staff will give you details of the current fees.

## **Music**

The music used in church should always be of a sacred nature. The reception is the place for other music.

If you are having hymns, please choose two or three that people are likely to know and sing! In addition you may like to have the choir or a soloist sing at particular points in the ceremony, especially during the signing of the register. At a Nuptial Mass there may also be music at the offertory, at communion and for the Mass setting itself. Instrumentalists may be used. You will need organ music for the entry and the exit. The parish office will arrange for an organist, ( a separate fee applies).

## **Photography and Videos**

Please make sure that this is discreet during the service. Please ask the photographer or videographer to liaise with the celebrating priest before the service.

If there are musicians performing there may also be performers' rights issues.

## **Parking**

Parking is available in the church car park or locally in the Market Square.

## **The Wedding Practice**

**We usually have a practice the evening before the wedding, or at some other time a few days before the ceremony. Obviously the bride and groom need to be there, but it also helps if the best man, the chief bridesmaid, the bride's father (or whoever is leading her up the aisle) and any other people taking a prominent part can be there too. We practise the entry and the exit, the vows and the rings. We can also talk about last minute details for photography, flowers, music or parking. Please bring the following things with you: a copy of the order of service; the cheques for the church and the musicians, and the civil certificates.**

**Next Step...**

If you would like to set a wedding date, please complete and return the enclosed form the parish office together with a non-refundable deposit.

As the information booklet states approximately 6 months before your wedding date make an appointment with you local registry office. Once you receive the blue forms from the registrar please contact the parish office on Tel: 01869 253 277 or by email [admin@immaculate-conception.org.uk](mailto:admin@immaculate-conception.org.uk) to arrange an appointment with the priest/deacon who will marry you.

Please bring the blue form with you to your first appointment together with the remaining church fees. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Immaculate Conception'

### Check List

- Have you returned the enclosed form to the parish office with a deposit?
- Have you notified the register office?
- Do you have the blue forms from the registrar?
- Have you made an appointment to see the Parish Priest?
- Have you made arrangements to attend a Marriage Preparation course?
- Have you presented the marriage presentation certificate to the Parish Priest?
- Have you paid the final church fees?
- Have you got your baptism and other certificates?
- Have you chosen hymns?
- Have you chosen readings and readers?
- Have you prepared and order of service?
- Have you set a date for the wedding practice?
- Have you arranged a time for the florists to work in church?

If you would like details on hiring the **John Paul II Centre** for your wedding reception, please contact the Centre Manager on [npc@immaculate-conception.org.uk](mailto:npc@immaculate-conception.org.uk) or telephone 01869 324 307.

### Useful Contacts

**Parish Office**  
**John Paul II Centre**

**Causeway  
Bicester  
OX26 6AW  
Tel:01869 253 277  
Email: [admin@immaculate-conception.org.uk](mailto:admin@immaculate-conception.org.uk)**

Bicester Register Office  
Council Offices  
The Garth  
Launton Rd  
Bicester  
Oxon  
OX26 6PS  
Tel: 01869 252 915

**Registrar's information line:**

Tel: 0845 129 5900