

GETTING MARRIED AT ST. JAMES CHURCH, ST. ANDREWS

General Principles

- Marriage is the permanent and life-long covenant of love between one man and one woman.
- Marriage is contracted by a man and woman who make a solemn and public commitment to one another.
- The Church recognises all such solemn and public marriages as valid – regardless of their specific form.
- However, because of the importance of marriage for society and for the Church, Catholics are obliged to get married according to the forms of marriage prescribed by the Catholic Church.
- So, although all marriage is valid for non-Catholics, this is not true for Catholics who are obliged to get married according to the forms prescribed by the Church.

- Any baptised Catholic over the age of consent, who has not been married before within the Church, is therefore free to marry and has a right to do so.
- The only condition being that the proposed spouse has also not been married before and is therefore also free to marry.
- All that the Church requires is that the couple are free to marry, that they give six months' notice of their intention to marry and that they complete the necessary course of marriage preparation prescribed by the local Bishops Conference.

Please Note, therefore, if either of you have been married before – you need to speak to the Parish Priest before going any further.

Civil Registration of Marriage

- Marriage is not just a religious institution; it is also a civil institution with important civil legal implications.
- When a couple in Scotland wish to get married in a religious ceremony, therefore, this religious marriage also needs to be registered by the state.
- For this to happen the state authorises the minister of religion to act as a civil registrar.
- The civil registration of all marriages (religious or otherwise) is a legal requirement, and it is illegal in Scotland for a minister of religion to conduct a marriage ceremony without this delegation from the state.
- In order to get married in St. James Church, St. Andrews, therefore, the couple who want to marry need to inform the local Marriage Registrar at Fife Council. The minimum notice period is 29 days. However, The Registrar recommends that you

submit all paperwork 10-12 weeks prior to the date of your marriage. This is now done online: [Marriage and Civil Partnership Paperwork | Fife Council](#) It is easy and well explained.

- Once you have registered your intention to get married – about one week before the wedding the Registry Office will issue you with a marriage licence (in Scotland it is called a Marriage Schedule). You need to pick up the Schedule from the Registry Office and bring it with you to the wedding practice the day before the wedding in order to give it to the priest. He will fill it in and give it back to you (or to the person you delegate) after the wedding service and thereafter it is your responsibility to return it to the Registry Office within three working days.
- Please note it is the sole responsibility of the couple getting married to complete this civil registration. It is their sole responsibility to obtain the Marriage Schedule, to bring it to the practice and to return it to the Registry Office.
- It is illegal to hold a religious wedding in Scotland without a Schedule from the local Registry Office.

Getting Married in St. Andrews if you live in St. Andrews or the East Neuk

- If you are a resident of the parish of St. Andrews, Crail and the East Neuk, you have a right to get married either at St. James, St. Andrews or Most Holy Trinity, Crail. All you need to do is make contact with the Parish Priest who will guide you through the process.

Getting Married at St. Andrews if you live elsewhere

- If you do not live in St. Andrews but wish to get married in St. James, St. Andrews or Most Holy Trinity, Crail – this is possible but it is more complicated and so you should read the following carefully before making your decision.
- Marriage in the Catholic Church is organized geographically. This means that you must register for marriage, and complete the necessary Church-related bureaucracy, in the parish in which you are currently and permanently living.
- So – regardless of where you wish to have your wedding –when considering getting married you need to contact your local parish (where you are currently living) and make an appointment with your parish priest.
- According to the law of the Church you must do this at least six months before you intend to get married. And you must do this regardless of where you want the marriage service to take place.

Getting Married at St. James' Parish in St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland.

- If you are wanting to get married in St. Andrews, therefore, the first things you need to do are:
 - Email the St. James Parish Office in St. Andrews and make sure that the Church in St. Andrews is available on the date that you want to get married.

- If the Church is available – the Parish Office at St. Andrews will send you a form to fill in and return (“Notification of Marriage”).
- In order to secure a date for your wedding at the Church – you will need to complete and return the form to the parish office and transfer a non-refundable deposit of £200 to the Parish Bank Account.
- Only when the Parish Office receives the completed “Notification of Marriage” form, together with the non-refundable deposit - will the Office send you a Confirmation of Wedding Date. Once this is done, the day will be held for you and no other bookings will be taken for that date.

Contacting your local Parish (where you currently live).

- More or less at the same time as securing a booking of the Church at St. Andrews, you need to phone your local parish (where you are currently living) and inform your Parish Priest that you intend to get married. You must also inform him that you would like to get married in St. Andrews – and that you have been in touch with the parish there and that this is possible. He will then (normally) arrange an appointment for both of you to meet with him to begin what is called “The Pre-Nuptial Enquiry.”
- At that meeting he will inform you that you both need to attend a “Pre-Marriage Course” before you can get married.

Pre-Marriage Course

- Pre-Marriage courses are usually organised by local Dioceses. They are widely advertised on Diocesan web sites. They usually occur three or four times a year, take place in local urban centres, and last one day. You will easily be able to book a place on one of these courses online. However, take note, it is absolutely necessary for both of you to attend an approved marriage course and you will not be able to get married anywhere in the Catholic Church unless you have attended an approved pre-marriage course. These courses are popular and usually book out fast – so you should book up sooner rather than later.
- When you have completed your pre-marriage course you will be given a Certificate and (not to labour the point!) you will not be able to get married without this Certificate.

Pre-Nuptial Enquiry

- Once you have completed your pre-marriage course – about six to eight months before your wedding – you should make an appointment to meet again with your local Parish Priest to complete the Prenuptial Enquiry.
- On this occasion you will need to provide the Parish Priest with the following:
 - Baptism Certificates for both of you – if you have both been baptised.
 - Confirmation Certificates – if you have both been confirmed.

- Letters of Freedom for both of you stating that you have not been married before. The form of these “Letters of Freedom” varies from Diocese to Diocese – so you need to find out from your local Parish Priest what he requires.
- If you have lost your Baptismal and/or Confirmation Certificates – you can easily obtain copies of them by writing to the parish in which you were baptised/confirmed and requesting a copy. This is a normal procedure – we do many of them in every parish – so it should not prove difficult for you to obtain copies.
- Your Parish Priest will include these Certificates and Letters of Freedom with the Prenuptial Enquiry – and the requests for any necessary dispensations – and he will send all this documentation to his local Diocesan Curia.
- The local Diocesan Curia (on the behalf of the local Bishop) will review all these documents and, if all is in order, the local Bishop will grant any necessary dispensations. All this will then be sent by that Curia to the Diocesan Curia for the Archdiocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. The Archdiocesan Curia in Edinburgh will again review all the documents and, again if all is in order, on behalf of the Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, they will send permission to the Parish Priest of St. James, St. Andrews to conduct the ceremony.
- This process (of sending documents from Curia to Curia) can take time – and so (as a rule of thumb) you should make sure that your local Parish Priest has sent the documentation away to his local Curia at least three months before your wedding.
- Again – just to spell it out – you cannot get married in St. James Parish, St. Andrews unless the Parish Priest receives this permission from the Archdiocesan Curia before the wedding date.

Dispensations

- Every Catholic (over the age of consent) who has not previously been married has the right to get married. So, two Catholics require no dispensation to contract marriage in the Catholic Church.
- A Catholic who wishes to marry a non-Catholic needs to request a dispensation to do so.
 - For a Catholic to marry a baptised Non-Catholic (a non-Catholic Christian) - a Dispensation for a Mixed Marriage is required.
 - For a Catholic to marry a non-baptised person (a non-Christian) a Dispensation from Disparity of Cult is required.
- There is usually no problem receiving either of the above Dispensations.
- Catholics are obliged to get married in Catholic Churches.
- Catholics are not permitted to get married in registry offices or other non-sacred places and there is no deviation from this rule.

- For very serious reasons, however, Catholics can seek a dispensation to get married in non-Catholic Christian Churches.
- Such a dispensation is known as a Dispensation from Canonical Form. It is seldom granted and only for serious reasons (e.g. the father of the non-Catholic partner of a mixed religion couple is the minister of the Church where the couple want to get married.) This dispensation will not be granted just because a couple like the look of a particular non-Catholic Church!
St. Salvator's University Chapel
- For serious reasons (such as the above) it is possible to request a Dispensation from Canonical Form to get married in St. Salvator's Chapel in St. Andrews. There is however no guarantee that such a Dispensation will be granted.
- Moreover, it is **not** possible to have a Nuptial Mass in St. Salvator's Chapel. So even if the Dispensation were to be granted it would only be granted for a Marriage Service.

Organising the Marriage Service

- Although the actual form of the wedding service (Music, readings etc) is probably the most important thing on the couples' mind (!) it is actually one of the last things to be sorted out.
- Only once you have:
 - booked the Church,
 - made contact with your local Parish Priest,
 - completed the pre-marriage course
 - completed the Pre-Nuptial Enquiry

do you need to make an appointment with the Parish Priest of St. Andrews to discuss the form of your wedding.

- If you are visiting St. Andrews at some point before the wedding (to look at reception venues for instance) it is always a good idea to make an arrangement to come and meet the priest. But you do not need to do this until about six months before the wedding, and you can meet him then either face to face – or on zoom. He will guide you through the various options concerning the service and help you to plan the service. These include:
 - Readings
 - Readers
 - Bidding Prayers
 - Hymns
 - Extra Music – soloists etc
- The key question is whether you wish to have a Nuptial Mass or a Marriage Service (without mass). And you may both want to discuss this in advance together. The key advantage of the Mass being that it is nicer (!); the key disadvantage being that it can

be mystifying to non-Catholics and that it can be divisive in that non-Catholics cannot go to communion.

- The other thing that needs to be booked in advance is the organist and/or any other musicians and soloists that you might want to have at the wedding.
- The Parish Organist is Victoria Costa. If you want an organist at your wedding, you should contact her sooner rather than later. If she cannot play for your wedding, she can help find an alternative organist and she will also happily advise about music and about available musicians and soloists in St. Andrews.
- You can contact Victoria on vc47@st-andrews.ac.uk

Frequently Asked Questions:

- Can I invite a priest friend to conduct my wedding at St. Andrews?
Yes. You should indicate if this is the case when you return the “Notification of Marriage” form or as soon as possible.
- Can a non-Catholic minister participate in our wedding service?
Yes. Although (for legal reasons) the Priest needs to be the main celebrant – other ministers are very welcome to participate in the wedding and this can be discussed.
- Can we use non-scriptural readings at our wedding?
No. The readings at the service must come from Holy Scripture but there is nothing to prevent a non-scriptural reading (if appropriate) being inserted into the service at another point.
- Can we write out own vows?
No. This is not permitted in the Church. The vows as laid down by the Church are necessary for the validity of the marriage.
- Do we need to pay the priest?
No. The priest is not paid, however, it is normal (and very much appreciated) for the couple to give some sort of donation to the priest.