
POLICY ON THE PLACE FOR MARRIAGE

[Originally promulgated by Cardinal Bevilacqua on October 1, 1999; Amended by Archbishop Chaput on January 12, 2018; and by Archbishop Pérez on July 20, 2020]

I. GENERAL NORMS

- A. Catholics are to be encouraged to celebrate marriage in their own parish church, or at least in some other Catholic church, oratory, or chapel.
- B. Whenever the Catholic form of marriage is celebrated, regardless of the location, the marriage ritual is to be carefully and fully observed, including prescriptions regarding scriptural readings and liturgical music. Marriage may be celebrated within Mass only in a Catholic church, oratory, or chapel.
- C. Marriage is not to be celebrated in a chapel on a secular school campus; in a religious house; in a commercial non-denominational church or chapel; in a private home; in a bar; in a restaurant; in a casino; on a boat; or in any similar location. Only in the most extraordinary cases will the Chancery grant permission for marriage in any of these places.
- D. In addition to the Chancery, Pastors are authorized to grant permission on a case by case basis for the celebration of a marriage using the Catholic form in any Catholic church, chapel, or oratory located within the territorial boundaries of their parish.¹
- E. Marriage using the Catholic form may be celebrated in the chapels of those Catholic Colleges and Universities that have requested and received such standing permission from the archbishop.²

¹ The regular norms on delegation to witness a marriage apply. (i.e. normally to be obtained from the pastor of the parish in whose territory the marriage is to take place.)

Such marriages are to be recorded in the marriage register of the parish in whose territory the ceremony took place.

² Contact the Chancery Office for information on which Catholic Colleges and Universities currently have this standing permission. Villanova University's "Chapel," is the parish church of Saint Thomas of Villanova Parish, Rosemont and as such may celebrate marriages as a parish church.

The regular norms on delegation to witness a marriage apply (i.e. normally to be obtained from the pastor of the parish in whose territory the marriage is to take place.)

Marriages are to be recorded in the marriage register of the parish in whose territory the ceremony took place.

- F. When a marriage is to be celebrated outside the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, in other than a parish church, the priest/deacon preparing the couple is to consult first with the Chancery of the diocese in which the wedding is to take place, regarding the suitability of the proposed place for marriage. This is to be done as early as possible.

II. MARRIAGE BETWEEN TWO CATHOLICS

- A. Ordinarily, it is to be celebrated in the parish church of the bride or groom.
- B. With permission of the pastor of the bride or groom, or with permission of the Chancery, it may be celebrated in another parish church. With permission of the Chancery, or in accord with I-D and I-E above, it may be celebrated in some other Catholic church, chapel, or oratory.
- C. It is not to be celebrated elsewhere, except in extraordinary circumstances, and with the permission of the Chancery.³

III. MARRIAGE BETWEEN A CATHOLIC & A BAPTIZED NON-CATHOLIC

- A. Employing the Canonical Form for Marriage:
 - 1. Ordinarily, it is to be celebrated in the parish church of the Catholic party.
 - 2. With permission of the pastor of the Catholic party, or with permission of the Chancery, it may be celebrated in another parish church. With permission of the Chancery, or in accord with I-D and I-E above, it may be celebrated in some other Catholic church, chapel, or oratory.
 - 3. With permission of the Chancery, it may be celebrated in a non-Catholic church or chapel of particular significance to the non-Catholic party.³
 - 4. It is not to be celebrated elsewhere, except in extraordinary circumstances and with the permission of the Chancery.³
- B. With a dispensation from the Canonical Form for Marriage:
 - 1. Ordinarily, it is to be celebrated in a non-Catholic church or chapel of particular significance to the non-Catholic party.
 - 2. May be celebrated in another suitable location with the permission of the Chancery.³
 - 3. It is **not** to be celebrated in a Catholic church, chapel, or oratory.

³ See the "Application for Permission for a Wedding Outside of a Catholic Church, Oratory, or Chapel"

IV. MARRIAGE BETWEEN A CATHOLIC & A NON-BAPTIZED PERSON

A. Employing the Canonical Form for Marriage:

1. Ordinarily, it is to be celebrated in the parish church of the Catholic party.
2. With permission of the pastor of the Catholic party, or with permission of the Chancery, it may be celebrated in another parish church. With permission of the Chancery, or in accord with I-D and I-E above, it may be celebrated in some other Catholic church, chapel, or oratory.
3. With permission of the Chancery,⁴ it may be celebrated:
 - a. In a non-Catholic church, chapel, or sacred edifice of particular significance to the non-baptized party.
 - b. In a neutral setting.

B. With a dispensation from the Canonical Form for Marriage:

1. It may be celebrated in a non-Catholic church, chapel, or sacred edifice of particular significance to the non-baptized party.
2. It may be celebrated in a neutral setting.
3. It is **not** to be celebrated in a Catholic church, chapel, or oratory.

⁴ See the "Application for Permission for a Wedding Outside of a Catholic Church, Oratory, or Chapel"



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

THE CHANCERY OFFICE

222 North Seventeenth Street • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-1299
Telephone (215) 587-4538 • Fax (215) 587-3907 • E-mail: chancery@archphila.org

Application for a Wedding Employing the Canonical Form for Marriage Outside of a Catholic Church, Oratory, or Chapel

Name of Priest/Deacon submitting this Application: _____
Parish: _____ Parish Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email Address: _____
Priest/Deacon who will witness the marriage, if different from submitting priest: _____
Contact information: _____

A. The Couple – Who is the designated contact for questions? ☐ Bride ☐ Groom

Name of Bride: _____ Baptismal Status: _____
Telephone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Name of Groom: _____ Baptismal Status: _____
Telephone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Date of Proposed Wedding: _____

Note: If either party an Eastern Rite Catholic or an Orthodox Christian, please consult with the Chancery before submitting this application.

B. Place of Proposed Wedding: ☐ Indoor ☐ Outdoor

The following guidelines apply to all proposed locations.

- The parish church is the preferred location for all Catholic marriages. Before making a request for another venue, the priest or deacon should strongly encourage the couple to have the ceremony in a church.
- The location should be in keeping with the sacredness of the character of Catholic marriage.
- The location should be in keeping with the sacredness for the occasion.
- The wedding location may not be a commercial non-denominational church or chapel, in a private home, a bar, a restaurant, casino, on a boat, on the water, or other similar location.
- Marriages that take place outside of a Catholic Church, Oratory or Chapel can only take place using "The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass".
- This application can only be submitted to the Chancery Office if the proposed wedding venue is located within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. If it is located in another diocese, it is the responsibility of the priest/deacon preparing the couple to first consult with the Chancery of that diocese regarding the suitability of the proposed place/venue for marriage. This is to be done as early as possible in the marriage preparation process.

Indoor Wedding Location:

Place of Proposed Wedding: _____

Physical Address _____

Website: _____

If this location is not a public venue, please provide photos with this application that fully describe the venue for the wedding.

Outdoor Wedding Location:

Place of Proposed Wedding: _____

Physical Address _____

Website: _____

If this location is not a public venue, please provide photos with this application that fully describe the venue for the wedding.

Proposed alternative Indoor venue (in case of inclement weather): _____

Physical Address _____

Website: _____

C. Canonical reason for permission (check all that apply):

- ☐ Spiritual good of the parties
 - ☐ Catholic education of the children
 - ☐ Probability of conversion of non-Catholic
 - ☐ Danger of attempted marriage
 - ☐ Validation of attempted marriage Date of attempted marriage: _____
 - ☐ Mutual aid in advanced years
 - ☐ Other (please specify) _____
-

D. In a few sentences, please describe the reasons the couple is seeking this permission:

Signature of Submitting Priest/Deacon: _____ Date: _____

Applications must be submitted at least 6 months in advance of the proposed wedding date, by mail to the Chancery Office, Archdiocese of Philadelphia, 222 N 17th Street, Philadelphia PA, 19103 or by email to CHANCERY@archphila.org

For questions call the Chancery Office at 215 587 4538.