

Preparation

If you have decided to get married in Church then the parish community offers its congratulations to you. To succeed at anything in life it is necessary to prepare diligently. In relation to marriage there may be a lot of focus on the logistics of the wedding day. However, to be ready to live out marriage for life in conformity with God's will it is important to understand its origins and purposes. The Church therefore encourages her members to appreciate that marriage is not a mere social convention or contract – it is a relationship established by God and made a sacrament by his Son. If we acknowledge this then we will see more clearly how marital love is an imitation of Christ's love for us all. This in turn allows us to understand why the values associated with marriage are so important to its success. Fidelity, mutual respect and total self-giving between husband and wife are commitments that are integral to fulfilling the relationship established by God.

An awareness of the spiritual significance of marriage and prayerful preparation for the reception of the sacrament will open you up to the grace God offers. This in turn will sustain you through married life. These benefits will not render you immune from the difficulties and worries every married couple faces. However, it will allow you to keep a perspective on these problems and, united in faith and love for one another, you will find that obstacles are more easily overcome.

The parish encourages its members to wholeheartedly support those who are preparing for marriage and those who have recently received the sacrament. The example of couples who have lived happily together in service to God is a source of great encouragement to people starting out in this vocation. In a culture that increasingly lauds instant gratification and fulfilment it is all the more urgent to be close to those who are committing themselves to an irrevocable union of love in marriage. The general well-being of Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of married and family life. Please remember married couples and their families in your prayers.

Practical Advice

For couples planning to marry, please make contact with a priest of the parish at least three months in advance of your intended wedding date.

Couples preparing for marriage must undergo a pre-marriage course. This is designed to foster a proper understanding of the duties and obligations inherent in Christian marriage. This will be arranged in conjunction with the priest. Please consult some of the useful websites in the resources section.

Since 1 January 2004 the law in Northern Ireland requires that a couple apply for permission to marry. This is complied with by filling out a "Notice of Marriage" that can be obtained from the local registrar's office. The form can be returned to the Registrar of Marriages in the District 12 months before the wedding date but not later than 2 weeks before that date. For more information consult the website of the Northern Ireland Registrar by clicking [here](#).