

Marriage

Congratulations to you both on your forthcoming wedding. We hope everything you both plan for comes to fruition, for both the wedding day and in the years ahead. In order to help you, and the parish, prepare as well as possible for such a significant occasion, we have included the following for your guidance and information. As you will see, there are many details that need your attention in planning your marriage ceremony. We strongly suggest that you both take the time to read through this information to avoid or minimise any misunderstandings or frustrations.

Q What do I do first in planning our wedding ceremony?

A You need to advise the Parish Office as soon as possible, (no less than 6 months in advance if possible), that you wish to have your wedding ceremony in the Parish. This will confirm the following information:

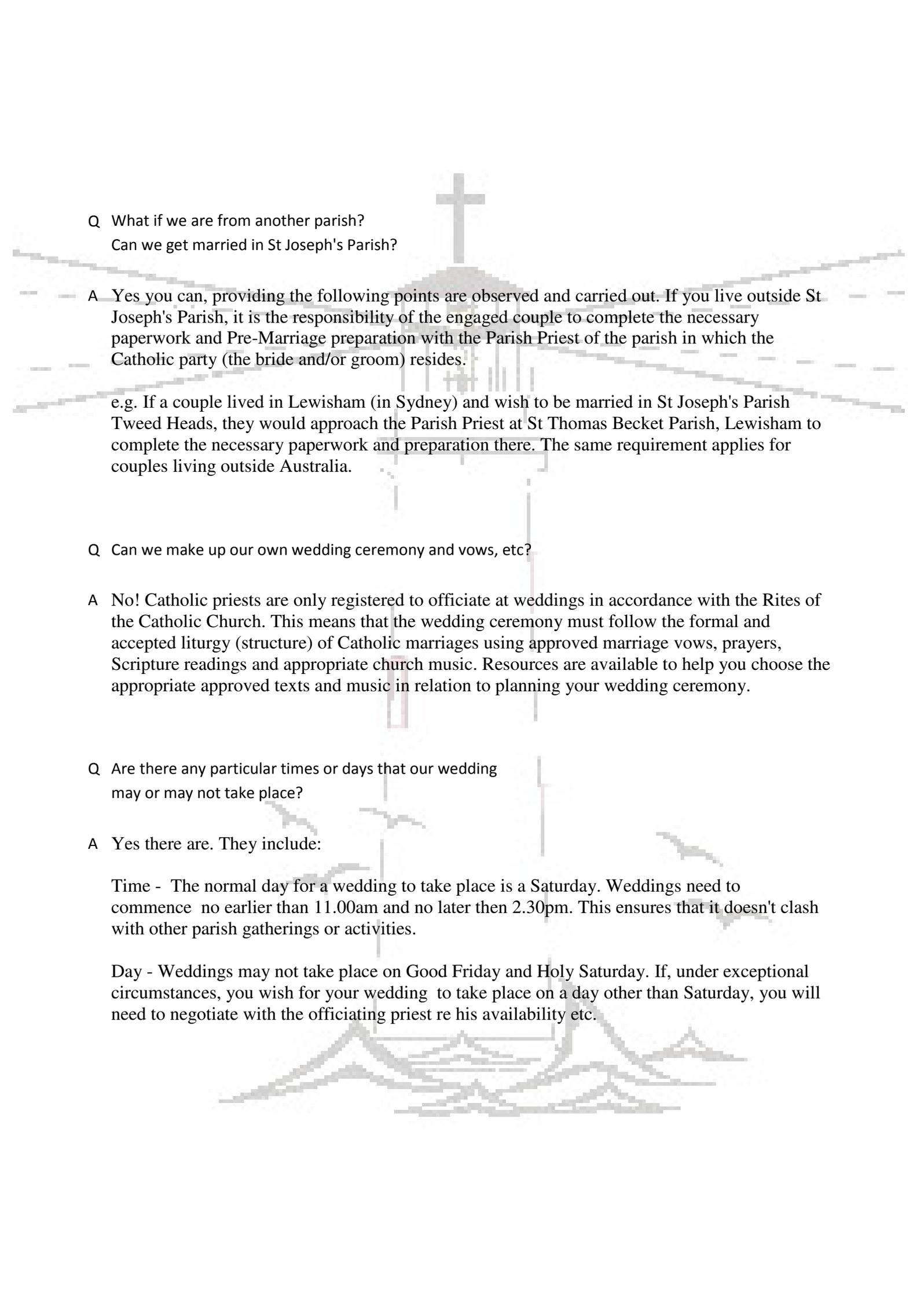
- the date of the wedding,
- the time of the wedding,
- the church in which the wedding is to take place, and the priest who will officiate at the wedding.

Please note: It is the responsibility of the engaged couple to secure the booking with the church before making any commitments with caterers, reception venues etc.

Q Where can we get married in St Joseph's Parish?

A All weddings are St Joseph's Church, Tweed Heads

Please Note: In accordance with Church laws and Diocesan regulations, it is not permitted for a Catholic priest to officiate at weddings in any other location in this parish other than the parish churches listed above.



Q What if we are from another parish?
Can we get married in St Joseph's Parish?

A Yes you can, providing the following points are observed and carried out. If you live outside St Joseph's Parish, it is the responsibility of the engaged couple to complete the necessary paperwork and Pre-Marriage preparation with the Parish Priest of the parish in which the Catholic party (the bride and/or groom) resides.

e.g. If a couple lived in Lewisham (in Sydney) and wish to be married in St Joseph's Parish Tweed Heads, they would approach the Parish Priest at St Thomas Becket Parish, Lewisham to complete the necessary paperwork and preparation there. The same requirement applies for couples living outside Australia.

Q Can we make up our own wedding ceremony and vows, etc?

A No! Catholic priests are only registered to officiate at weddings in accordance with the Rites of the Catholic Church. This means that the wedding ceremony must follow the formal and accepted liturgy (structure) of Catholic marriages using approved marriage vows, prayers, Scripture readings and appropriate church music. Resources are available to help you choose the appropriate approved texts and music in relation to planning your wedding ceremony.

Q Are there any particular times or days that our wedding may or may not take place?

A Yes there are. They include:

Time - The normal day for a wedding to take place is a Saturday. Weddings need to commence no earlier than 11.00am and no later than 2.30pm. This ensures that it doesn't clash with other parish gatherings or activities.

Day - Weddings may not take place on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. If, under exceptional circumstances, you wish for your wedding to take place on a day other than Saturday, you will need to negotiate with the officiating priest re his availability etc.

Q Are there any Pre-Marriage information sessions we need to attend?

A Yes there are. The Catholic Church, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government of Australia, requires and strongly encourages all engaged couples to participate in an approved preparation course, prior to their wedding day. This course will help prepare the couple in many different ways in order to live out married life together as successfully and harmoniously as possible.

The Pre-Marriage courses may take one of the following forms:

- A parish based Pre-Marriage weekend program for engaged couples
- The Engaged Encounter weekend program
- The Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study (FOCCUS) program
- Private instruction/information sessions with a priest.

St Joseph's Parish offers the Pre-Marriage weekend for couples 3 times per year plus the FOCCUS program. The weekend program is run by a dedicated team comprised of the Parish Priest, religious and married couples from the parish, with assistance and input from all members of the team. Please check with the Parish Office about the dates for the next course.

We strongly urge and encourage couples from the area to participate in the weekend. However, if you don't live locally but are able to participate in the weekend in Tweed Heads, you would be most welcome to do so.

If you complete your Pre-Marriage preparation elsewhere, and in what ever form it takes, the Parish Priest at that parish will need to supply St Joseph's Parish with written confirmation, stating that you both have completed the Pre-Marriage preparation course.

Q What do we need to have before we meet with the priest?

A The following documents are required by the Church and/or the Commonwealth Government of Australia:

- A full birth certificate is required for both bride and groom.
- If either the bride or groom or both are Catholic, a recent copy of their baptism certificate, (no more than 6 months old). You can apply to the Parish where you were baptised to obtain this certificate. If the bride or groom are not Catholic but have been baptised into another faith, any dated copy of their baptism certificate is required.
- If either the bride or groom is not a Catholic, permission to marry for the Catholic party will be sought from the Bishop of the Diocese where the Catholic party resides. This will be a simple formality.

Q What other documentation will be required to be completed?

A The other important documents that need to be completed include:

Notice of Intended Marriage form

This is an Australian Government document which is to be completed no more than 18 months and no less than one month and one day prior to the date of the wedding. This document is normally completed by the officiating priest when he meets with the engaged couple, or by the parish priest of the 'parish-of-residence' of the Catholic party if the wedding is to take place outside that parish.

If you are from overseas (i.e. a non Australian citizen) or an Australian citizen who resides overseas, this document may be obtained, completed and witnessed at the Australian Embassy or Consulate in the country in which you reside.

Pre Nuptial Inquiry form

This is a Church document and is to be completed by the officiating priest, or by the Parish Priest of the 'parish-of-residence' of the Catholic party.

If you are from overseas, (i.e. a non Australian citizen), or an Australian citizen who resides overseas, this document may be completed by the Parish Priest of the parish where the Catholic party resides.

Q What details do we need to know in preparing the liturgy for our wedding?

A Basically, there are 2 liturgical (service) formats to choose from for your marriage Ceremony:

- a wedding service focusing on the Scriptures and the vows and prayers of marriage, or
- a Nuptial Mass, that is centred on the Eucharist and also focuses on the Scriptures and vows and prayers of marriage.

In deciding which liturgy to choose, it may be helpful to keep in mind this simple yet important point in making that choice.

The marriage liturgy, which ever one is chosen, should reflect and parallel the level of faith, commitment, observance and understanding that the couple, especially the Catholic party, has in relation to God specifically and towards the Church community in general.

The priest will assist you in making this choice that both expresses your uniqueness as a couple as well as preserves the beauty and sacredness of the Church's tradition.

Q Who are the various people involved in our wedding ceremony and what are their roles?

A Of course, the primary people involved are yourselves, the bride and groom, as you both are the actual ministers of the sacrament to each other.

The Role of the Priest

The role of the priest or deacon is twofold: to serve as an official witness for the Church and for the Commonwealth Government, and to preside at the liturgy of the Church, which ever is chosen.

Normally, the Parish Priest of St Joseph's Parish would help you prepare for your wedding, as well as preside at it.

Priests from outside the Parish

Sometimes the couple may wish to invite a priest from outside the parish (i.e. a family friend or relative) to preside at their wedding. This is permitted, providing the visiting priest has formal authorisation to perform weddings and has sought and received the approval from the Parish Priest at St Joseph's. The visiting priest would also be responsible for completing all the necessary paperwork as well as all related matters such as rehearsals, etc.

Music Ministry

The music arrangements for a wedding can not only be one of the more important points to consider, but also one that can often be the cause of frustration and misunderstanding. That is why it is vital that you speak with the priest who will be helping you to prepare your wedding and preside at it, as soon as possible. He will be able to provide you with a list of local musicians and singers who have a good understanding of what is required and expected when it comes to weddings that take place in a Catholic church setting.

As a broad general rule, just as it would be inappropriate to expect you, the engaged couple, to play hymns and church music at your wedding reception, so it would be inappropriate to expect to play secular songs and music at the church! A simple case of "horses for courses!"

From the list of musicians and singers provided, you will need to contact and negotiate with them as soon as possible what music is required. This would be at your own expense.

Ministers of the Word (Readers)

Generally family or friends of the couple are asked to read various readings from Scripture, during the wedding ceremony. This is to be encouraged. However, in considering who to ask, it is relevant to bear in mind the following:

- because the readings form a central and critical part of the wedding ceremony, and because you both will have spent some considerable time choosing those that 'speak' to you about what you are doing, they need to be read both reverently and effectively. Who ever is asked to read should be someone who is both competent and confident to do so. It is particularly helpful to all

concerned if the person(s) asked to read is already a reader in their local parish.

Photography and/or Video Recording

So as to not interrupt the free flowing nature of the ceremony, and also to ensure that everything important is captured for prosperity, it is highly recommended that those engaged in photography and/or videoing speak to the priest prior to the wedding ceremony. The priest will inform them where they may or may not operate from. Photographers and/or video operators **ARE NOT** to encroach onto the sanctuary area of the church. They should also ensure that their movements or positioning do not hinder or distract from the solemnity of your wedding ceremony.

Flowers and Church Decorations

You are free to engage florists of your own choice for your wedding. If needed, the Parish Office can provide you with contacts for flowers, as well as flower arrangers. If you are having flowers delivered to the church on the morning of your wedding day, you will need to make prior arrangements with either the Parish Office (during office hours) or the presiding priest, to ensure that they are delivered when the church is open.

Pew bows may be brought to the church on the day of the wedding, by arrangement. They must be able to be tied on only. Use of sticky tape, glue, blu-tac, staples or thumbtacks **IS NOT** permitted!

Please Note: It is an expectation that one arrangement of flowers should be left at the church after the wedding, as a gift to the parish, to enhance the sanctuary area for the weekend Masses.

The use of confetti, rose petals or rice is not allowed in or around the church buildings area, to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. Bubble bottles may be used afterwards, but only outside the church.

Punctuality

Whilst some may regard the late arrival of the bride to be some sort of 'tradition', please note that we don't! Brides and their attendants are asked to arrive at the front of the church at least 10 minutes before the start of the wedding ceremony. This will leave time for photographs etc. before the ceremony, so that it begins on time.

Quite often the priest, plus musicians and singers, have other duties or engagements to attend to and the unnecessary late arrival of the bride will only delay them. The Groom and his attendants should be at the church at least 15 minutes before the ceremony is due to begin. They should advise the priest when they have arrived.

If you have any further questions about planning for your wedding, please contact the Parish Office as soon as possible.