

Preparation For The Sacrament Of Marriage

By Fr. Carroll Parker, OMI

(This document is meant for Roman Catholics, who are English-speaking or who have English as a second language and who, in either case, do not speak Danish and who, at the present time, are a short time resident of Denmark.)

The Sacrament of Marriage within the Roman Catholic Church pertains to all baptized Roman Catholics without exception.

The Roman Catholic can marry any person of the opposite sex, who is not a close relative, and who is of an appropriate age. Very importantly, the Roman Catholic and the fiancé must both be free to marry, that is, both must not have been married before. If there has been a prior marriage, a declaration of divorce in itself is not sufficient to grant a person the freedom to marry again. This question should be taken up immediately during the first visit with the pastor.

As a Roman Catholic, who desires to marry, you will contact your local pastor, that is, the Catholic priest of the parish where you attend Mass and are enrolled. He alone has the authority to help prepare you and your fiancé for your marriage, regardless of the fact, that the marriage may take place in the country where you now have residence (Denmark) or you may want to travel back to your country of origin for your forthcoming marriage. (NOTE: the priest, who will officiate at your marriage in your country of origin, does not have this authority. This authority is given to him to officiate at your marriage by the local pastor in Denmark and Roman Catholic Bishop of Denmark.)

It is desirable that the you have met with your local pastor here in Denmark in advance and that the pastor knows that you are a practicing Catholic or knows of your unique circumstances.

A marriage should not be planned in normal circumstances until after you, as a Roman Catholic, together with your fiancé, has met with the local pastor. This meeting should take place at least six months in advance of your proposed wedding date, especially for a wedding, which is to take place in another country. Again, do not set a date, arrange a place, or make arrangements, etc., for your wedding until after this meeting with the pastor.

Requirements for a Catholic Wedding:

1) For the Roman Catholic:

- + Your full name, full address, telephone, fax & e-mail.
- + A valid Baptismal certificate, no more than six months old, which includes the name and full address of the Church of your Baptism. A Birth Certificate is not accepted, nor is a passport. If you do not have this document, you must obtain one from the parish of your Baptism, informing the pastor there of the reason of your request. This document will have written, under marriage, "No marriage recorded."
- + The date and place (Church with address) of your Confirmation. This can be included or written on the back of your Baptismal certificate, or you may have a separate document from the place where you received this sacrament. This information should be included in the baptismal registry of your place of Baptism.
- + A document of your freedom to marry.
 - a. Obtained from the baptismal registry of your place of Baptism, no more than six months old. (See the above.).
 - b. If you have lived away from home for a year or more, a personal document from a family member or other reliable person who will attest as
 - to whom this person is: his/her relationship to you,
 - to how long he/she has known you,
 - to the fact that you have never been married, civilly or religiously,
 - and then this person will date the document, sign it, and give his/her full address and telephone number.
 - c. In Denmark, you and your fiancé can apply for a Marriage License (Prøvelsesattest) from the local kommune, which will state your status of freedom to marry in Denmark (as well as that of your fiancé) as ugift-unmarried, fraskilt-divorced. This document is valid for two months. It will not have to be used for a marriage outside of Denmark, but it is an important document of your freedom to marry for the time you have residence in

Denmark. For a marriage in Denmark, this document will be given to your pastor at least one month before the planned wedding.

- + Your parents' full names and their addresses. If one or both are deceased, this will be so noted.
- + The full names and addresses of the two witnesses at the time of your marriage. One must be Catholic.
- + The full name and address, telephone, fax & e-mail of the priest who will officiate at your marriage, and the same for the parish where the marriage will take place, if the priest is not the pastor.
- + The full name and address, telephone, fax & e-mail of the Bishop of the diocese where the marriage will take place. (This is not necessary if the marriage takes place in Denmark.)

2) For the baptized Christian, the unbaptized or one of another religious faith:

- + The person's full name and address, telephone, fax, e-mail.
 - + If baptized, a copy of his/her baptismal certificate.
 - + No requirement for Confirmation, as this does not apply.
 - + For the unbaptized or member of another religious faith, a valid birthcertificate is required.
 - + A statement or document of freedom to marry (the same as for the Catholic person).
 - + Parents' full names and address.
- 3) Both parties of the wedding will meet with their local pastor in Denmark. If the couple has residence in two countries simultaneously (one in Denmark and one in another country), each will receive instructions from the local Catholic priest of the place where he/she now resides. The papers will be collected by the pastor of the bride (or of the Catholic person), and he will forward them to the proper authority for the marriage.
- 4) The local pastor of the place where the wedding will take place will aid the couple with making all the practical arrangements for the forthcoming marriage. If the couple will marry in a parish outside of Denmark, it is desirable that the couple has met with him after their wedding instructions have begun in Denmark.
- 5) Note: When two countries are involved in your wedding, one where you receive your instructions and one where you will marry, the local priest must send all the papers first to his bishop, and then they are sent on to the receiving bishop and priest of the country where the marriage will take place. Time is involved here.
- 6) All of this takes time. Prepare for your wedding in good time. Enlist the aid of family and friends to help you with all the practical arrangements.

May the Lord be with you and your fiancé as you prepare yourselves for this most important day in your lives. God bless.

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