

- (In exceptional circumstances when marrying a non-Catholic, it is possible to get – in advance – a dispensation from canonical form.)

Why does the Church require canonical form?

- The Church wants to underscore the religious nature of marriage, especially as a sacrament between the baptized.
- The Church wants to make sure that couples receive suitable marriage preparation.

Are there negative implications for those married outside the Church?

- Unfortunately, yes. The civil or non-Catholic religious ceremony that the parties participated in is *invalid*.

“I would remind all married couples that marriage is not an ideal but the measure of true love between a man and a woman: a love that is total, faithful and fruitful.”

– Pope Leo XIV



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Are you Married Outside the Catholic Church?

- The Catholic Church requires anyone baptized Catholic (or received into full communion) be married in the Catholic Church in order to have a valid marriage.
- Catholics are required to marry before an authorized Catholic priest or deacon. This requirement is called *canonical form*.
- The requirement of canonical form applies even when marrying a non-Catholic.

- Jesus gave his authority to St. Peter and the Apostles and their successors, the pope and bishops, to make such determinations.
- Those in an invalid marriage are not permitted to receive Holy Communion (or function as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion).

I've entered an invalid marriage. What can I do?

- Marry in the Catholic Church through a new marriage ceremony, commonly called a *validation*.



What does a validation require?

- A validation requires personal marriage preparation. Discuss this with your parish clergy. The preparation requirements are tailored to your individual needs as a couple.
- A marriage validation does not magically solve a troubled marriage. In those situations, preparation is even more important.
- A validation also requires some paperwork, including Catholics getting a newly issued baptism certificate from their parish of baptism (or a full communion certificate, if applicable).
- A validation does NOT require a new civil marriage license. Just provide a copy of your civil marriage certificate to your parish.

What does a new marriage ceremony entail?

- Some couples opt for a very simple ceremony, with just the priest or deacon and two witnesses present.
- Other couples want a big ceremony, with music, flowers, dresses, a veil, coins, etc.

What if one of us was married before?

- The party with a prior marriage needs to address this matter first, prior to any validation preparation.
- Talk to your parish clergy about this.

What if my spouse will not cooperate with this?

- It might be possible to validate your marriage instead through what is called a *radical sanation*.
- Talk with your parish clergy about this possibility.