



Catholic 101

Why Does a Catholic Wedding Have to Take Place in a Church? ^[1]

Emily and Jim are planning their spring wedding. They've found the perfect site—an historic mansion with lovely grounds that will be in full bloom. They are pleased that their guests can stay in one place for both the wedding and the reception. But there's one problem: Emily, who was baptized and raised Catholic, would like to marry in a Catholic ceremony. She wants to know how she can find a Catholic priest or deacon who will officiate at the wedding.

Many couples like Emily and Jim are surprised, and sometimes disappointed, to find out that the Catholic Church normally requires weddings to take place in a Catholic church. Paulist Father Larry Rice explains the reason:

“The Church expects that a wedding, being a solemn and sacramental event, should occur in a church—in sacred space... We Catholics take this notion of sacred space very seriously. That's why being inside a church feels different from being somewhere else. An atmosphere of peace, reverence and respect is important to us, so that all will feel welcome, and so that a sense of God's loving presence permeates the place. We believe that weddings are sacred moments, which should ordinarily happen in the place where the bride or groom worships, with their families and their faith community. A church isn't just a set or backdrop for a wedding; rather, a wedding is an expression of a faith community's joys and hopes.”

A couple who wants to hold their wedding in a place other than a church needs to obtain permission from the local bishop. Such permission is usually given only for serious reasons. Moreover, without such permission a Catholic priest or deacon who wants to remain in good standing cannot officiate at such a wedding.

^[1] Author unknown. (2011). *Why Does a Catholic Wedding Have to Take Place in a Church?*. Available: <http://foryourmarriage.org/why-does-a-catholic-wedding-have-to-take-place-in-a-church/>. Last accessed 12/29/2011.