



PAUL DENNIS ETIENNE
BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND
THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE
ARCHBISHOP OF SEATTLE

CHANGE TO THE POLICY ON MATRIMONY

Through the Sacrament of Matrimony, Christian spouses are strengthened by God's grace to live out their lives as husband and wife, with all the joys and challenges that may come. It is fitting to celebrate this sacrament within the sacred space of a church and, when two Catholics are married, within the celebration of the Eucharist.

However, the law of the Church also allows the bishop to permit the celebration of marriage in another suitable place outside of a church, although the setting should still be in keeping with the dignity of the occasion.

With this decree, I am asking pastors to seek permission on behalf of couples who wish to celebrate marriage in a suitable place other than a church.

Whereas, I have heard from the Presbyteral Council and the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council on this matter; and

Whereas, canon 1118 §2 allows the local ordinary to permit a marriage to be celebrated in another suitable place outside of a church.

Now, Therefore, I hereby decree the following change to the local policy of the Archdiocese of Seattle published in the *Many Gifts, One Spirit* section on Matrimony. This text replaces the current MR 12 and 13:

MR 12. Normatively, a Catholic marriage is to be celebrated in a parish church. It can be celebrated in another church or oratory with the permission of the archbishop or his delegate. (see CIC, c. 1118 §1)

MR 13. For a period of three years, beginning November 8, 2024, the archbishop encourages pastors to seek permission on behalf of couples who wish to celebrate their marriage in a suitable place outside a parish church.

Out of pastoral sensitivity to the needs of the faithful in the Archdiocese of Seattle, the archbishop is implementing a three-year experimental pastoral practice of allowing

Catholic marriages to be celebrated outside the proper ecclesiastical setting. The pastor is to request permission from the archbishop, identifying the requested site for the marriage celebration. Marriages outside the normal ecclesiastical setting will be celebrated using "The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass," or, when one party is not baptized, "the Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian."

The wedding location should be in keeping with the dignity of the celebration and may not be a bar, casino, or other similar location.

Marriages must be celebrated with proper delegation from the local pastor or the vicar general and recorded at the parish within whose boundaries the celebration takes place. For weddings outside the normal church setting, please contact the Chancellor if you are unsure of the parish boundaries to ensure for a valid celebration.

A wedding between a Catholic and a non-baptized person may take place in a suitable setting since the church may not be acceptable to one of the parties and his/her family. Priests are to assist the couple in determining a suitable place outside the proper ecclesiastical setting.

This change is effective immediately and will be reevaluated after three years.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
of the Archdiocese of Seattle
this 8th day of November
in the year of our Lord, 2024.



Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle

Benjamin Altenhofen
Chancellor