

SACRAMENTS

Baptism



Baptism is the visible way in which someone enters the Christian family. The Catholic Church accepts the baptism of anyone who was baptised in the name of the Trinity.

If you wish to have your child baptised, the usual place is where you normally participate in Sunday Mass. However, for sailors the usual place of their Sunday worship may be in their ship and so a practice has grown up of having a child baptised in the father's or mother's ship.

Should you wish to have your child baptised in your ship, then you need to obtain permission both from the Commanding Officer and from the Principal

Roman Catholic Chaplain, acting as the Bishop's Vicar Episcopal. The appropriate order in which to do things (though a little simultaneous activity is perfectly proper) is:

- speak to the appropriate Catholic Chaplain and propose a mutually agreeable date. You may wish to invite someone other than the local Chaplain to conduct the baptism, but you still need to speak to him.
- ensure with the appropriate people on board that the spaces you wish to use are available.
- seek the permission of the Commanding Officer.
- write formally to the Principal Chaplain asking permission for the baptism to take place (a format is below).
- the Principal Chaplain will respond.
- arrange for godparents. A godparent stands as a representative of the Catholic community, and so it follows that the godparent should be a baptised and confirmed Catholic. You must have at least one baptised and confirmed Catholic who is not the child's parent. You may have other baptised Christians as well, though technically they are Christian witnesses to the baptism, but the common usage is still to call them godparents. Someone who is not a baptised Christian cannot be a godparent.
- ensure the Naval Base Main Gate and the Officer of the Day have a list of guests and vehicle details in good time. You will need to follow the naval base and ship visitor access instructions.
- set up the place of baptism with the ship's bell. If the ship does not have a cradle for the bell, speak to the Naval Base Chaplaincy or a neighbouring capital ship.
- arrange with the Officer of the Day for the Church pennant to fly during the service, and for the baptism to be recorded in the ship's log.



Baptism certificates

The baptism will be recorded in the Baptism Registers of the Bishopric of the Forces in Aldershot, from where certificates may be obtained. The address is:

Registrar, Bishopric of the Forces, Wellington House, Thornhill Road, Aldershot, GU11 2BG
Email: freda.sheppard858@mod.gov.uk

Engraving the bell

It is the custom of the Service to inscribe the name of people baptised in a ship around the inside of the ship's bell. It is the ship's responsibility. There is no public provision for this, and either the ship's Welfare Fund will bear the cost, or the individual will need to pay for it. It is only worthwhile doing once there are several names to inscribe. The local Naval Base Chaplaincy will generally know which engravers are capable of the work.

Format for letter to PRCC(N) seeking approval for baptism onboard a ship

Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain (Naval),
Chaplaincy HMS SULTAN,
Military Road,
GOSPORT,
PO12 3BY

Dear Principal Chaplain,

I am writing to request that the baptism of my son/daughter *NAME*, who is *AGE* months/years old, takes place onboard Her Majesty's Ship *NAME*, in which I am currently serving.

I have spoken to Fr *NAME*, the local Catholic Chaplain, and have obtained permission from my Commanding Officer, *RANK NAME*, to hold the baptism onboard on *DATE* at *TIME*.

The baptism will be conducted by Fr/Deacon *NAME* and will take place in/on the ship's *VENUE* (e.g. *bridge*) and be followed by a reception in *VENUE* (e.g. *mess/dining hall*).

Yours sincerely,

Signed

NAME
RANK/RATE

NAVAL MARRIAGE



Getting Married

If you are getting married, this information should help you with the legal and church regulations, and the accompanying pages will be a resource for planning the wedding ceremony.

The Catholic partner's obligations

The Church requires that all Catholics marry before a Catholic priest or deacon and two witnesses for the marriage to be recognised as a Catholic marriage. Why? Because even though we use the same

word - marriage - the Church and the civil law mean different things by them.

In civil law, marriage is a *contract* between two people, with obligations on both sides. And just like any contract, if one side does not keep the obligations, the other side can be released from their obligations.

In the Catholic Church, marriage is a *covenant* between two people. They make the same obligations to each other, but these are not dependent on the other person keeping their obligations. It is a commitment which is unconditional. Since the earliest days of the Church, the giving of a man and a woman to each other was seen as reflecting the way that Christ gave himself to us. That Jesus was crucified did not take away his commitment to us.

If there is a *good* reason for marrying in some other way, for example the Catholic is marrying an Anglican and the Anglican has a much stronger part in the life of his or her local church, the Bishop can dispense from what is called the *Canonical Form of Marriage* (i.e. marrying before a Catholic priest and two witnesses). In this case, the couple will complete all the preparations as though they were marrying in a Catholic Church, but the Bishop gives permission for the Anglican service to be accepted as fulfilling the requirements.

Many people today choose themed weddings, for example on a beach abroad or in a country house. A dispensation from Canonical Form will not be granted for such as these.

Marrying in a Catholic Church

If you intend to marry in a Catholic Church, there is preparation to be done. This is not just preparation for a wedding which will last an hour, but for a marriage which will last a lifetime. Speak to your priest or Chaplain as soon as you intend to marry. He will let you know the requirements for your particular circumstances. Many people seem to book the reception venue long before they speak to the priest: don't be surprised if the church is not available to fit in with your wedding timetable if you don't speak to the priest first!

You will need to produce some documents for this preparation. Catholics will need a copy of their *baptismal certificate* issued by the Church of baptism within the last 6 months. This will have on it not just the record of baptism, but also the record of confirmation and any record of a marriage

within the Catholic Church. If you have been received into full communion with the Catholic Church, you will need to obtain a certificate of Reception. Christians of other communities will simply need to produce their baptismal certificate, or a certified copy from the church of baptism.

Each of you will also need a *Letter of freedom*. This is a formal statement that you have not been married before, either in a church or civil ceremony. If you are serving in the Armed Forces this is done by your Unit HR consulting your Service records. Your Catholic Chaplain can give you the template for them to complete. If you are a civilian, either your local Parish Priest can issue a Letter of freedom if he has known you well enough throughout your adult life, or failing that a parent can make a formal statement that you have never been married, either in church or in a civil ceremony.

Banns of marriage are usually only placed in a Catholic Church when two Catholics marry each other. They are not read out, as they are in the Church of England.

Civil law requirements

The law is different in England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The following are the outline requirements for England & Wales, but you should check these out with your local Superintendent Registrar. Speak to your Chaplain, priest or the local Registrar for details of the requirements in other parts of the United Kingdom.

If you are marrying in any church other than in the Church of England, you give *Notice of Marriage* to the Superintendent Registrar. This is done in the place(s) where the two of you are normally resident. If the church building in which you are to marry is not in either party's registration district, then you have to demonstrate that the church is your usual place of worship. Failing that, one of you will have to establish a residence within that district, which involves having an unbroken residence of 7 days before giving notice on the 8th day. After notice has been given, the Notice is posted in the Registrar's offices(s) for 15 days, and after that the Registrar(s) issue(s) an authority to marry which is valid for 1 year. Notice must be given in both parties' registration districts, and authorisation must be issued by each Superintendent Registrar. It is the couple's responsibility to ensure that these certificates are both valid on the day of the wedding.

The marriage will be certified either by a Registrar travelling to the church, or by an Authorised Person, often the local priest or a parishioner. The church building must be registered as a place for weddings.

Marrying in a Service Church

If you are marrying according to Catholic rites in a Service Church, you will need to follow the procedure for Notice of Marriage above. The Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea, HMS RALEIGH, is the only Catholic Chapel registered for marriages. However, there is an agreement that marriage according to Catholic rites may take place in the following chapels:

- ⚓ St Ann's, HM Naval Base Portsmouth
- ⚓ St Barbara's HMS EXCELLENT
- ⚓ St Nicholas's, HM Naval Base Devonport
- ⚓ The Chapel, Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth
- ⚓ St Alban's, CTCRM Lympstone

⚓ St Bartholomew's, Yeovilton

Other than fulfilling the civil law requirements, including residence requirements, you need permissions from a few people if marrying in a Service Chapel:

⚓ From the Catholic Chaplain, HMS RALEIGH, if marrying at Our Lady Star of the Sea.

⚓ From the local Anglican Chaplain, if marrying in an Anglican Service Chapel.

⚓ From the local Commanding Officer, if marrying in his or her Establishment.

Further information

If you have a query which the above does not answer, then speak to your local Catholic Chaplain or contact the Principal Chaplain: david.conroy977@mod.gov.uk, telephone 02392 542686.

Navy Marriage Etiquette and Customs

Permission

It is a long-standing custom of the Service that a Naval Officer writes formally to his or her Commanding Officer to ask permission to marry. Although the Commanding Officer has no power to stop the marriage - unless he knows of some legal impediment - it is a custom nevertheless, rather like asking the bride's father for permission to marry his daughter.

Uniform

It is customary for male Service personnel to marry in uniform, and this would be the expectation if the marriage takes place in a Service church. The appropriate uniform is 1A/ Blues. Male guests who are in the Armed Forces will usually wear uniform as well. A bride who is in the Naval Service may wish to include something naval within her dress, headdress, or flowers. It is the custom to ask for the Commanding Officer's permission to marry in uniform.

A Junior Rate marrying wears white instead of black silks on their uniform. The Best Man and Ushers or any sailor playing a part in the service may do the same.

Swords



Service Officers wear swords as part of their wedding uniform but take them off in church. Usually they are left at the back of church under someone's eye. The local priest may allow the bridegroom to keep his sword in the sacristy/ vestry and to wear it to leave the church. This is the local priest's call. The bridegroom should always agree with the priest beforehand what will be done with the swords.

At the wedding of an Officer, it is usual for the Officer guests to make an arch of swords outside the church door. They leave towards the end of the Service (often when the register is being signed) and form up. It can make for better viewing if the bride and groom process to the back of the church and move into a side chapel to allow guests to leave the church. When everyone is outside, the newly married

couple can then leave the church and process beneath the arch of swords where everyone can see them. It is usually best to give the task of arranging and rehearsing the arch of swords to someone who is not the Best Man, for example, the senior officer in the guard.

Garlands

It is traditional for an evergreen garland, decorated with white satin sashes, to be hung in the rigging of a ship on the day on which an Officer of that ship marries. The Officer him- or herself will need to make the arrangements unless a fellow Officer undertakes to make it so.

Cutting the cake

A Naval or Royal Marine Officer will usually use their sword to cut the wedding cake. Experience demonstrates that if you return the sword to the scabbard immediately, you never lose the cake crumbs attached. Better to lay the sword to one side to be cleaned later or have a steward take it out and wipe it before replacing it.

Car and carriage

There is a custom that sailor guests will haul the car or carriage in which the couple leave the church or reception for at least a part of the way.

Naval Funerals



The death of someone in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines is always tragic, because no-one dies of old age in the Service. The funeral service will often reflect the different identities which people have - as a Christian, as a family member, as someone who wore their country's uniform.

For advice on the preparation for and conduct of a Service funeral, including suggestions for readings, hymns and prayers, please consult a Naval Service chaplain.