

St Werburgh's Chester

Information for Weddings - October, 2011

Thank you for expressing an interest in marrying here at St Werburgh's. This *Information Sheet* is designed to answer some of the many questions you will have at this stage, and throughout the period of preparation for your Marriage.

1. Who can marry at St Werburgh's?

Wherever you marry, in any religious or civil ceremony, there will be some conditions you will have to meet. For a Catholic wedding, there are four:

- (a) One of you at least needs to be a Baptised Catholic;
- (b) One of you at least needs to reside in the Parish or have links with the Parish;
- (c) Neither of you must be married now or have been married before (with your previous partner still alive);
- (d) You need to give at least six months' notice of your intention to marry.

2. How do we go about arranging our marriage at St Werburgh's?

The couple concerned will need to make an appointment with Fr Paul so that the three of us can go through all those four conditions carefully - and *then* start looking at dates! We can't do this on the telephone, nor through the good offices of a concerned parent or caring grandparent! You have to come along yourselves, and you have to discuss all the implications of a Catholic Wedding at St Werburgh's. Then, and only then, can we start looking at diaries...

3. What happens next?

The preparation for your wedding from the Church side of things takes two forms: regular meetings with Fr Paul every six to eight weeks, and attendance at one of our *Marriage Preparation Courses*. These courses are held over four evenings or one full Saturday. You are free to attend whichever suits you best, and the material covered is the same either way. At the end of the Course, you will be given a *Certificate of Attendance*. In many European countries, such a Certificate is a compulsory condition for marriage in the Catholic Church, and that may well become the case in England and Wales in the years ahead.

4. Do we need to do anything from the Civil point of view?

When you marry in any of the mainstream Christian churches in this country, that church's Minister can be both your Priest *and* your Registrar: it is then one and same ceremony, not two separate ones, as in many countries abroad. In terms of the Civil side, you need to make an appointment at your local *Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (in the Local Authority to which you pay your Council Tax), to register your intention to marry. You both need to attend, you need to take your Birth Certificates with you, and to state that you are marrying at St Werburgh's on such-and-such a date. You will have a formal interview and fill out a form with the Registrar, who will

then ask you to come back in about three weeks, when a Certificate will be issued to you both (two copies, one for each of you). This is the State's "Certificate of Clearance", indicating that you are free to marry. The Certificates are a distinctive blue colour, and are often known as your "Blue Forms". There is a charge for these forms, payable to the Registrar: keep the forms very carefully, and hand them personally to Fr Paul at your next meeting.

5. What other paperwork is required?

The only other paperwork required is your Baptismal and Confirmation Certificate(s), if you have been Baptised and / or Confirmed. Try to locate these as soon as possible - mothers usually have them in a safe place! If you cannot find them, don't worry: just contact the Church where you were Baptised (also known as Christening) and they will issue you a duplicate straightaway. Again, please hand them personally to Fr. Paul.

6. No Banns?

No: Banns have not been used in the Catholic Church for a very long time. They go back to a time when everyone lived in settled communities, and so everyone knew everyone else. Nowadays, we all move around the country (and the world) a lot more, and so the State ascertains your "freedom to marry" by rather more sophisticated, computerised means! (Which is the meaning of the Blue Forms).

7. How do we plan the details of the Wedding Ceremony itself?

Again, this is something we look at regularly in our meetings together, as well as forming a key part of the *Marriage Preparation Course*. There is a choice of Ceremony - Nuptial Mass and Wedding Ceremony - and the difference will be carefully explained to you. The majority of couples nowadays choose the Wedding Ceremony, which is every bit as beautiful and full as the (older) Nuptial Mass. In the old days, the Nuptial Mass was only possible when Catholic married Catholic. Nowadays, it is an alternative for all couples marrying in the Catholic Church but, for reasons we will explain, most couples choose the Wedding Ceremony. Early on in our meetings together, we will give you a *pro forma* which lists all the parts of the Wedding Ceremony, and indicates which ones you will be asked to choose for yourselves - the hymns, the readings, the music for coming in and going out, and so on. It will also indicate the opportunities for asking your family and friends to be part of the Service, for example with the readings and the bidding prayers. You will not be asked to decide on all these details immediately: rather, we will continue to look at this form throughout our meetings together, in the hope that everything will be finalised in good time for the wedding, probably six to eight weeks before the day itself. This gives plenty of time for the details to be taken to the printers, or (as is increasingly the case) for couples with IT skills, to produce super versions yourselves! (And save four or five hundred pounds into the bargain...)

8. What else does the Church arrange?

St Werburgh's will happily be responsible for the Organist and Church Florist, if you would like them to do so. Equally, it is no problem for us if you wish to bring your own florist or organist. All we ask is, if you use your own florist, you leave some of the flowers in the church afterwards for the following Sunday.

St Werburgh's Organist: Mr Ray Harper: Telephone 01244 - 372822

St Werburgh's Florist: Mrs Marie Broadhurst: Telephone 01244 - 311374

You can of course use a different organist or florist; if you do this could you kindly let Fr Paul know as soon as possible?

9. What are the Church Fees?

Marrying in the Catholic Church is incredibly cheap, as we have no Church Fees as such! The only payments connected with marrying in St Werburgh's are:

- (a) Organist's Fee: £70.00
- (b) Florist's Expenses for decorating the Church: £130.00
- (c) Civil Registration Fee for the Wedding: £47.00 (fixed by the Government).

In addition, as there is no Church Fee or Minister's Fee, we would ask you to consider making a Donation to the upkeep of our beautiful - and very expensive - Church building. As this is a Donation, we do not suggest any set amount, and it is entirely voluntary. But those donations we do receive are extremely welcome and appreciated. Also, if you are a tax payer and feel able to, you can Gift Aid your donation which enables the Church to claim an additional 28% from the Government, a very valuable additional source of income.

10. Is there a Rehearsal?

Certainly - and we fix the date and time in our regular meetings. We try to hold the rehearsal some three or four days before the wedding. Increasingly, couples want to have the rehearsal on the night before, on the grounds that this is the only time key players will be in town.... OK, but there's a lot to be said for a really quiet evening on the night before your nuptials! Everyone who would like to attend is very warmly welcome to the rehearsal: the people we need to have there are those who have a significant part to play. Apart from the couple themselves, this would include whoever is giving the Bride away, the Chief Bridesmaid, the Best Man, at least two of the Ushers, and as many of the Readers as possible.

And finally... You will have a hundred and one other questions, but don't worry: there will be lots of opportunities and time for you to ask them all! Meanwhile, thank you for choosing St Werburgh's to help with your marriage, and we all hope you have a splendid day and a very happy and fulfilling married life thereafter.

Fr Paul

October 2011