

# MARRIAGE DOCUMENTS

The Catholic Church has issued definite regulations regarding the documents that must be secured by those entering marriage. The purpose of these documents is to prove that both parties are free from impediments that might make marriage invalid. These regulations, it should be noted, are general Church legislation and not the personal orders of a pastor or bishop. A Catholic should know that the following papers must be secured before his marriage may take place.

1. A Certificate of Baptism. (No birth certificate is required). The new law of the Church requires that the certificate of baptism be one issued within the six months preceding the day of marriage. This certificate is secured by writing to the parish in which the baptism took place. The letter of request should contain the full name of the person, date and place of birth. It should be stated in the letter that the certificate will be used for purposes of marriage.

Catholic converts baptised when in the U.S. Military Service will find their baptism record in the church of baptism, if they received this Sacrament in a church. If they were baptised in a camp, aboard ship or elsewhere, the information wanted is filed with the Catholic Military Ordinariate, New York City.

There are rare cases where no baptismal record is available, because church documents were destroyed by fire or because the baptism took place in a foreign country where contact is now impossible. In these cases two close relatives or friends will be asked to testify, under oath, before a priest, to the fact of baptism.

None of the marriage documents are returned to the parties to the marriage. So if one has reason to keep a baptismal record in his possession, he should request a second certificate.

The parties themselves must write for their own documents; it is their obligation and not the pastor's. It is advisable for sake of speed and efficiency to address all requests to the church in question and not to the Pastor, because he may be out of town, and thus unable to handle the request immediately. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should be inclosed. No charge is made for this certificate, but many persons send a courtesy offering with their request.

2. A Certificate of Confirmation. This document is required of those who have been confirmed. Marriage is never held up because one has not received the Sacrament of Confirmation. The church in which the ceremony took place contains this record.

3. A Certificate of First Communion. This paper is likewise secured from the church in which the Sacrament was administered. Where two or more Sacraments were received in the same church, a single document is often issued giving the complete data.

4. A Letter stating that the Banns have been (or will be) announced. The pastor of the bride and the pastor of the groom makes these announcements and grants the letters.

5. A Questionnaire must be filled out by both parties who appear separately before a priest.

The pastor of the bride should be approached about six weeks before the desired date of marriage. The processing of the documents will not be a hardship if both parties do not delay in securing the required certificates in the manner outlined by the bride's pastor.