Getting married in church

When you know the date you would like:

Arrange a meeting with the priest.

Check your date is available (You may share a day with someone else,

so be prepared to liaise).

Settle on a time of day.

Make sure it's written down in the diary.

A marriage service in Church is not necessarily a Nuptial Mass. Discuss the different forms of service, and choose what you both want (not just what your parents would like you to have). Discuss it with the priest too. Whichever service you choose to have, you will get the same attention to detail from the priest.

A service in Church usually includes music - to walk into, to walk out to, to sing. Is there any music particularly significant to either of you, or meaningful to you? When it comes to hymns for singing, remember not all your gusts will be familiar with hymn singing - and if you want them to join in, choose a well-known tune, or an easy one to sing along with. Look at the words of the hymns too; many hymns are appropriate to the occasion.

Music needs a musician - arrange to see the organist / musician and make a firm booking for your date and time.

Discuss your choice of music with the organist before making any final decision. If you want an organist of your own, then this is acceptable, but remember to be sensitive to the regulars.

At least one month before the wedding (and up to one year before) you must go to see the registrar in the area where the wedding will take place. This is a legal requirement and the wedding cannot go ahead without it. The registrar will give you a blue form; take this to the priest as soon as you receive it.

Any form of service can include readings from the bible; don't leave it to the priest - give it a bit of thought. Is there anything from personal life, family life, working life etc which can be linked with the bible reading? Who is going to read them?

The marriage vows and signing the register is the central factor.

All your guests are witnesses to this important procedure - where do you want it to happen?

At the altar steps, on the sanctuary itself - facing each other, facing the congregation?

When you arrive in Church, where do you want to sit? Side by side, face to face or with your families; backs to the congregation or up on the sanctuary for everyone to see you.

Where are you going to sit after the marriage vows?

While you are thinking about seating arrangements, where are the bridesmaids and the best man going to sit?

If you are having a Nuptial Mass you will need an altar server. Is there someone special you would like to ask? It is customary to pay the altar server.

Special occasions in Church always say it with flowers. There is a skilful group of flower arrangers in the Church whom you can talk to and who come up with some beautiful displays. If you want to bring in someone else then remember to be sensitive and remember that it will cost you a lot more to bring in a professional, and there is no guarantee that you will get something better! If there are two weddings on your day, you may need to come to some agreement about the decorations in Church (colour and cost!)

Of course you will want to record your special moment and photographs and videos are permitted, so long as they are discreet; this is for your own benefit. Many photographers are familiar with all the local churches, but if yours is not, perhaps a visit beforehand would be a good idea.

When you are planning your wedding invitation do you want to let people know what type of service to expect? (eg: say "with Nuptial Mass", if that's what you're having).

Are you thinking of printing an "Order of service" - do you want it to be just the order of events, or perhaps include all visible features, eg: Readings, Hymns, Special Prayers. Or do you want it to be the complete service from start to finish? Any form of service booklet is a keepsake for your guests.

While thinking about seating, do you want it to be traditional, with bride's guests at one side and groom's guests on the other - or would you like everyone to mix together? Having people sitting together can prevent any chance of a one-sided appearance. If you have ushers, showing people into church, it is their job to get people to sit as you would like, and encourage them to sit towards the front of the church.

If you are having a Nuptial Mass, you will need a Eucharistic Minister to help with communion. Is there anyone you would especially like to perform this service?

When you leave the church, it's a good idea to let all the guests out (unless of course it's raining!) before you have photographs taken at the church door.

And please remember that someone else will have to clear up any confetti, so please ask your guests to be considerate, especially in the church porch and pathway.