DECREE
FOR THE PROMULGATION OF THE GUIDELINES FOR
REQUESTING THE CELEBRATION OF A MARRIAGE
IN “ANOTHER SUITABLE PLACE” (C. 1118 §2)

WHEREAS, God created marriage to be a sacred union between a man and a woman through which they form an intimate communion of life and love and have the great privilege and responsibility of being co-creators with him by having and raising children (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25),

WHEREAS, Christ raised the covenant of marriage to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized (Matthew 19:3-6; John 2:1-11) and “by the Sacrament of Matrimony Christian spouses signify and participate in the mystery of unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:25); therefore, both in embracing conjugal life and in accepting and educating their children, they help one another to become holy and have their own place and particular gift among the People of God” (Order of Celebrating Matrimony, 8),

WHEREAS, the sacraments, which make people holy, build up the body of Christ, and express a relationship of worship to God (Sacerdodium Concilium, 59), are celebrated in sacred spaces – parish churches, chapels, etc. and, thus, the place of marriage is ordinarily a parish church, or another church or oratory (c. 1118 §§1 and 3 of the Code of Canon Law),

WHEREAS, for some time, there has been a significant decline in the number of the faithful who approach the Church for marriage and, consequently, enter unions that are not recognized by the Church, which are without the grace of the sacrament,

WHEREAS, there is no quick or simple solution to the present crisis of marriage and family, deeply rooted in a culture that is marked by individualism and a lack of awareness of the sacred, particularly, of God’s plan for marriage, yet along with continued prayer, witness and the work of evangelization something should be done for those who plan to get married in “another suitable place,” that is, outside a sacred space (e.g., parish church), but still want to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony,

WHEREAS, the Code of Canon Law allows the local ordinary to permit marriage to be celebrated in “another suitable place” (canon 1118 §2) and many bishops in dioceses throughout the United States are considering giving this permission while some have already begun doing so (e.g., Archbishop Lori in the Archdiocese of Baltimore),

Faith • Hope • Charity
WHEREAS, Guidelines for Requesting the Celebration of a Marriage in “Another Suitable Place,” were developed last year and used on a trial basis, requests were considered and, in many cases, granted, and many of the faithful who had planned to unite civilly in “another suitable place” were married in the Church by a priest or deacon.

THEREFORE, I, the Bishop of Syracuse, out of pastoral concern for the faithful of the diocese, do hereby officially promulgate the attached Guidelines for Requesting the Celebration of a Marriage in “Another Suitable Place,” effective November 29th, 2020, the First Sunday of Advent.

At the same time, I remind all those who assist engaged couples in preparing for marriage – priests, deacons, lay faithful – of their duty and responsibility to ensure that they are duly prepared. This includes, but is not limited to: (1) determining the free status of the party using the Pre-Marital Investigation Form, (2) obtaining any necessary dispensations or permissions, (3) providing instruction on the meaning of marriage: origins, nature and purpose, sacramentality, vocation, spirituality, sexuality, family life, practical considerations, etc. over a suitable period of time, (4) encouraging Catholics who have not been confirmed to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation, (5) encouraging Catholics to celebrate the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist before they are married, and (4) assisting the couple in preparing for and taking part in the celebration of the ritual.

Likewise, I remind all priests and deacons of their duty and responsibility to celebrate Matrimony validly and licitly, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law and the Order of Celebrating Matrimony: (1) obtaining any required dispensations or permissions, (2) ensuring that they have the necessary delegation, (3) observing canonical form, (4) recording the marriage in the sacramental register.

It is my sincere hope that this pastoral provision will lead to an increase in the vocation of marriage within the diocese and, indeed, in the vitality of the Church of Syracuse.

Given this nineteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord, two-thousand twenty.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse

Mrs. Danielle E. Cummings
Chancellor
The Diocesan Bishop may permit a marriage between two Catholics or between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic or between a Catholic and a non-baptized party to be celebrated in a church or oratory or in another suitable place. (c. 1118)

Given the importance and dignity of marriage, the norm for the place of its celebration is, indeed, a Parish church.

When in certain cases and under certain circumstances permission is requested for a marriage to be celebrated in “another suitable place,” it must be within the Diocese of Syracuse.

Since not every location proposed for the place of marriage is “suitable,” approval is not automatic and is subject to review of this application and is contingent on the approval of the Diocesan Bishop.

Approval of the location of the marriage is to be obtained before wedding plans continue.

If this permission is granted, all the canonical requirements for marriage still apply (e.g., preparation, freedom from impediments, permissions, and dispensations). Moreover, the marriage is to be recorded in the sacramental register of the parish where the ceremony is celebrated. The marriage file is also to be kept there.

The priest or deacon who is asked to officiate at the marriage ceremony is under no obligation to do so. This does not necessarily have an impact on the decision of the Bishop to grant the request.

When permission is sought, please keep in mind that:

A marriage celebrated within Mass is to take place in a sacred space (e.g., chapel, oratory, outside grotto with an altar, etc.). A marriage celebrated without Mass may take place in “another suitable place” (e.g., event room, garden, etc.).

A wedding ceremony cannot be part of larger event (e.g. concert, festival, etc.). It must be a separate occasion with no other events, other than a reception, connected to it.

Applications must be submitted at least 6 months in advance of the proposed wedding date by the priest or deacon who is preparing the couple for marriage and submitted to:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse / Office of the Tribunal
240 East Onondaga Street / Syracuse, NY 13202
Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse
Guidelines for Requesting the Celebration of a
Marriage in “Another Suitable Place”

Name of Priest/Deacon Submitting Application:
Parish: ____________________ Parish Address: ____________________
Phone #: ____________________ Email Address: ____________________

Priest/Deacon who will witness the marriage, if different from submitting priest:
_________________________________________________________________

Contact information: ______________________________________________

The Couple:
Who is the designated contact for questions? Bride □  Groom □

Name of Bride: ___________________________________________________
Telephone Number: ______________ Email address: ____________________
Mailing Address: _________________________________________________
Current Parish: _________________________________________________
Parish Address: _________________________________________________
Baptized: □ Yes □ No  Religion: __________________

Name of Groom: __________________________________________________
Telephone Number: ______________ Email address: ____________________
Mailing Address: _________________________________________________
Current Parish: _________________________________________________
Parish Address: _________________________________________________
Baptized: □ Yes □ No  Religion: __________________

Date of the proposed wedding: _____________________________________

In a few sentences, please describe the reasons the couple is seeking permission:
(please use additional paper if necessary)
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
The Order of Celebrating Matrimony:

☐ within Mass ☐ without Mass

Indoor Wedding Venue

Place of proposed wedding: ____________________________
Physical Address: ____________________________
Website: ____________________________

*If this location is not a public venue, please provide photos that fully describe the location.*

Outdoor Wedding Venue

Place of proposed wedding: ____________________________
Physical Address: ____________________________
Website: ____________________________

*If this location is not a public venue, please provide photos that fully describe the location.*
Please provide alternative indoor venue in case of inclement weather:
Place: ____________________________
Physical Address: ____________________________
Website: ____________________________

**Canonical reason for permission:** (please check all that apply)

☐ Spiritual good of the parties ☐ Catholic education of the children
☐ Probability of conversion of non-Catholic ☐ Danger of attempted marriage
☐ Validation of attempted marriage Date of attempted marriage: ____________________________
☐ Mutual aid in advanced years
☐ Other – please specify: ____________________________

Signature of submitting Priest/Deacon: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Comments of submitting Priest/ Deacon in favor or against this request: ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

*Applications must be submitted at least 6 months in advance of the proposed wedding date*

Contact the Tribunal Office at 315-470-1480 with any questions or concerns