How to Get Married in the Catholic Church

For those living near MIT getting married outside of the Archdiocese of Boston:

1. As soon as you get engaged, even before deciding on the wedding date, you should consult with a priest—either Fr. Moloney or another priest in the Archdiocese of Boston. The priest will help determine several things under canon law that will be helpful to know even before picking the date (for example). In the Archdiocese of Boston, an engagement is normally six months and the marriage preparation process need take no longer than that; other dioceses might recommend longer engagements.

2. Usually, it will make sense for your marriage preparation to take place in the Archdiocese of Boston, even if you are being married someplace else. Often, it is required by canon law that you be prepared here. The Archdiocese of Boston will then send all the necessary paperwork to the diocese where you are being married. This is a common occurrence, and usually happens smoothly.

3. If you are a baptized Catholic and have not received the sacrament of Confirmation, the Church strongly urges you to try to receive it before the wedding (see c. 1065). Mention that in your initial conversation with the priest.

4. You will need to arrange to have a new baptismal certificate sent from the parish where you were baptized. This is a normal task for the parish to do under canon law, everywhere in the world. This should be a new baptismal form, not one from the time of your Baptism, but ideally created within six months of the wedding day.
   - If the baptismal form does not include a record of your confirmation (ask the parish secretary), then you should also contact the parish where you were Confirmed for a confirmation certificate.

5. You will need to attend a retreat, called a Pre-Cana retreat, recognized by the Archdiocese of Boston. The list of approved courses is here.
   - The Archdiocese particularly recommends a program that it developed called “Transformed in Love”; it is especially useful for those who did not grow up Catholic or who could use a refresher course on Catholic basics.

6. Over the course of six months, you typically have three meetings with the Boston priest, and one meeting with the priest who will marry you, to talk about the wedding.
   - The introductory meeting, described above. This will help orient you in the process, map out a plan, and start to think about how you will celebrate the sacrament of marriage.
   - One meeting after the Pre-Cana retreat, to talk about the conversations the retreat provoked.
   - An individual meeting between the priest and each person, to fill out paperwork and discuss certain personal aspects of marriage.

7. **Resources:** The Rite of Marriage can be found here, with readings here. A good FAQ is here. The US Bishops’ Conference has a good resource here. The Archdiocese of Boston has resources about Natural Family Planning here. (If you’d like to talk to a certified NFP instructor with an MIT connection, contact Fr. Moloney.) (If you want to read about NFP, aka, Fertility Awareness Methods, look at this (nonreligious) website and book, and this (Catholic) one; also, this YouTube channel is helpful. A lot of real life testimonies are here.) A classic book on getting married is here. A little more theological take is here. And then there’s the whole St. JP2 treatment. Good Protestant books are here and here.