Changes in the Catholic Rite of Marriage
Pre Vatican II

• Elements of the ceremony were the same for everyone
• Marriage was for procreation
• Emphasis on having children
• Father giving away the bride can be seen as transferring the ownership of the bride to her man
• Lifting of the veil at the point of handover indicated her purity
Vatican II

- Laity were to be included in as much as possible
- Workers in the Church who were not religious were to be acknowledged as valuable
- Women were to be respected for their unique role in the mission of the Church
- The Mass was to be said in the vernacular
• The sacrament of marriage needed to be written in a manner which emphasised the grace of the sacrament and the roles of the spouses

• “The rites themselves are to be modified and adapted to the needs of modern times so that the true meaning can be grasped”

• Equality of the man and woman was emphasised
Inter-faith Marriages

• Prior to Vatican II the non-Catholic had to sign a pledge to bring up the children as Catholics
• In the late 60s the non-Catholic needed only to make such a pledge verbally
• Now they do not have to at all – it is the responsibility of the Catholic person
Inter-faith Marriages (cont)

- 1940s the marriage was a service in the rectory
- Late 1940s service was held inside the church but outside the communion rails
- 1950s the couple could be in the sanctuary and in the context of a Mass
Effect of Vatican II

- Key change: the couple’s involvement in the ceremony and the planning of the ceremony
- Couples could now select their own bible readings, music and prayers. They could personalise the ceremony so that they understood the meaning of the sacrament
- Church emphasised that marriage was a sacrament between two people witnessed by the priest
- Priest must ask for and obtain the consent of the man and woman
Post Vatican II

• Church taught that marriage was not just for procreation but was an unbreakable contract between two people for their welfare and the welfare of children
• Now the partners were equal and had the right to be treated as such by each other
• Each partner was to fully contribute his/her gifts and abilities to the other spouse and receive the same in return
• Defining element of marriage is conjugal love which is only possible between a man and a woman
• The prayers of the faithful can be written by the bride and groom
• The bride and groom can choose whom they wish to read them
• During the offertory procession the bride and groom may bring the gifts to the altar or they may receive them from someone else and then give them to the priest
• The bride and groom receive Holy Communion under both kinds
New Rite for Celebration of Marriage Outside of the Mass

- Pre Vatican II only could have the full rite inside a Nuptial Mass
- Now the new rite consists of the epistles, gospel, homily, celebration of marriage, nuptial blessing
A Convalidation Ceremony

- For couples who have been married in some other ceremony
- Church is always open to validating a marriage
- Can be a full Nuptial Mass
The Rite of Marriage

Getting Married in the Catholic Church

• One of the partners must be Catholic
• If baptised in another church need evidence of baptism
• If unbaptised permission for marriage must be sort from Bishop (priest or deacon does this)