



## ***Decree in relation to Parish Charges for Weddings***

*The Catholic Church proclaims the truth of marriage as a sacred covenant between the couple entered into before God. Marriage between baptised Christians is a sacrament which imparts special graces to the couple and signifies a greater reality, the love between Christ and His Church. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring a rich marriage preparation experience for an engaged couple rests with the Priest or Deacon concerned.*

*Whilst there are many contemporary influences mitigating against marriage, it remains a great gift. Pastors should make every reasonable effort to encourage properly disposed couples to marry and ensure, as much as possible, that nothing, including costs, remains an obstacle. No couple should be refused a Church wedding for financial reasons. However, it is appropriate that parishes be able to levy moderate charges to alleviate the costs associated with parish Church maintenance and administration.*

*Following consultation with the Council of Priests in relation to the matter of charges to be applied for the use of Churches for weddings within the Archdiocese of Sydney, and out of a desire to allow for flexibility in accordance with specific pastoral needs, as Archbishop of Sydney I now decree:*

- *Parishes in the archdiocese are **permitted** to charge a standard **administration and cleaning fee** for the use of the Church for a wedding.*
- *This charge is **not** compulsory and may be waived at the discretion of the parish priest who will be alert to genuine financial difficulty, pastoral needs, the prior contributions of a couple who are parishioners, or sensitivities about how this fee might be interpreted by others.*
- *The standard fee will be up to \$500 in the case of parishioners and up to \$800 in the case of non-parishioners. The fee structure applied at a Parish should follow discussions with the Parish Finance Council. Any non-refundable deposit must be included in this fee and invoices should be issued. Any charge must be inclusive of GST and be included in the Parish BAS return.*
- *Charges for additional items (music, flowers etc.) must be invoiced separately.*
- *Parishes of special significance (including St Mary's Cathedral, Cerretti Chapel, Manly, St Patrick's Church Hill and Our Lady Star of the Sea, Watson's Bay) are permitted to charge an additional fee – with the explicit approval of the Archbishop.*
- *Fees will be subject to review every three years.*
- *Those wishing to use Churches for weddings should be advised that this charge is for the use of the Church and associated administrative costs and is separate from the usual offering or 'stole fee' given to the celebrant for the support of Clergy.*
- *All stole fees are to be included in Pastoral Revenue returns, with the exceptions that: in the case of a Nuptial Mass, the celebrant may retain a stipend up to the value of one Sunday Mass supply (currently \$125); and a priest celebrating a wedding outside his parish and/or his usual duties may retain \$100 from the stole fee, with any remainder included in Pastoral Revenue.*

*+ Anthony Fisher OP*

Anthony Fisher OP  
Archbishop of Sydney

Notary

*Chris Mery*

Dated: *Holy Thursday 18 April 2019*