



# Memo

**Date:** September 29, 2025

**To:** Clergy

**From:** Rev. Michael Onyekuru, MS, judicial vicar, Metropolitan Tribunal

**Re:** Pastoral guidance on marriages celebrated outside a church

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Greetings in Christ,

The archbishop wishes to provide guidance to help priests faithfully assist couples requesting permission to celebrate their marriage in a place other than a church, while ensuring that the sacred nature of the sacrament of marriage is always preserved. **Requests must be submitted several months before the proposed wedding date.**

As canon 1118 §1 states, marriage may be celebrated in a “suitable place” other than a church, provided permission is granted by the ordinary. The archbishop relies on priests to make a careful pastoral assessment of the circumstances before requesting the archbishop’s permission.

Ordinarily, this permission **is not given for the marriage of two Catholics**, except in very unusual situations. For example, a parent or grandparent of one party may be in a serious medical condition that prevents traveling to a church.

Requests must include:

1. **A letter from you** describing the proposed venue. Include a photograph if possible.
2. Details on how the **religious character and sacredness of the marriage ceremony** will be preserved.
3. Assurance that **no inconvenience or financial burden** will fall on the officiating priest in order to celebrate the ceremony or provide coverage at his parish.

