

DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE



PASTORAL GUIDELINES FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION



THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE
Department of Pastoral Services

Date: June 12, 2015 - The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
To: Priests, Deacons, Parish Administrators, and Parish Life Coordinators
From: Department of Pastoral Services' Committee on Marriage Preparation
Subject: Guidelines for Marriage Preparation

The Committee on Marriage Preparation, in conjunction with His Excellency Bishop Edward K. Braxton, Ph. D., S.T.D., and the Department of Pastoral Services, is pleased to present this updated set of guidelines for the preparation of couples seeking to enter into either the Sacrament of Matrimony or valid Christian Marriage in the Diocese of Belleville. This revised edition is intended to bring into sharper focus the challenges facing today's engaged couples.

The Diocese looks to foster the theme of "One Diocese, one message" by standardizing our preparation for this beautiful vocation. As our American culture moves farther from the traditional views of "marriage", we find ourselves, as a Church, moved to reinforce the values and substance that make marriage a true covenant rather than just a legal contract. These guidelines are intended to help lay the basis for a strong marriage by encouraging discussion of the issues that all couples may face. Our role as facilitators of these discussions is to catechize on the teachings of the Church regarding this life-long commitment.

To that end, we are responsible for providing marriage preparation, not wedding planning. While planning the service (whether inside or outside of Mass) will surely be part of the conversations, providing the couples we work with an opportunity to look beyond that day to the many days after is our unique role and privilege. The Committee hopes that this resource provides you with the support you need to achieve the end of helping couples prepare for a strong future together.

Inside you will find the necessary information to guide your couples through the marriage preparation process. Following a basic format of Prenuptial Questionnaire/Witness Affidavit, Pre-Cana Day or Engaged Encounter Weekend, and PREPARE Inventory will allow the couple to identify those areas of their relationship that needs to be discussed and those that are already strong. This format will also provide you with the tools you need to guide those conversations.

We thank you for the time you take to work with your couples to help them be true reflections of Christ's relationship with his bride, the Church, inside of their covenantal relationships. A strong marriage, combined with a strong faith, fosters a stronger and more vibrant Church.

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PREFACE

Marriage is a sacred covenant. For individual persons, it is a moment of profound richness and dignity. For society, it is an institution that serves as one of the basic bonds that holds us together. For the Church, it is a sacramental event that gives a visible sign of God's presence and graceful intervention in our lives.

The Church has a rich tradition in its teaching on sacramental marriage and covenantal union. Throughout the Old Testament the authors speak of God making a covenant with the chosen people and promising them that they will never be forsaken. The authors of the New Testament speak of Jesus as the new covenant and compare the relationship of Jesus with the Church to the relationship of a husband and wife.

The sacredness of the sacrament of marriage, as upheld by the Church throughout the centuries, is central to marriage preparation. Many couples need guidance in grasping the concept that in marriage they are a sign of God's faithful love to one another and to the larger community. Their bond becomes the symbol of the covenant that unites God and God's people (*Familiaris Consortio*, 12) and, in this sense, each marriage belongs to the whole Church.

The Church believes that the sacred union of husband and wife is itself a **sacrament** and acknowledges God's unconditional love and presence in their relationship. The couple is assured of God's graces as they face the struggles and joys of a lifelong journey of faith together. The bride and groom are the ministers in this unique sacrament of marriage. For this reason, it is their responsibility to judge their relational readiness and personal faith. The Church is here to assist the couple in making a judgment concerning their readiness for marriage and to provide an environment of support and love in which the couple can succeed. Through marriage preparation the engaged persons are given an opportunity to review their decision to marry and their decision may be reinforced through the preparation.

These guidelines, commentaries, and resources have been written to provide support and direction for priests, deacons and pastoral ministers who prepare engaged couples for marriage. They have been written to express the concern of the Church, as a caring community, for the future marital happiness of engaged couples. The manual offers an important relational component (the premarital inventory) as well as an educational component in a marriage preparation process, which will allow a couple to fully explore their commitment before exchanging vows.

The marriage preparation process can provide teachable moments for the evangelization of couples who do not have a strong faith commitment. A caring response from the priest, deacon, pastoral minister and the parish community may be an invitation for a couple to take a deeper look at their faith. A positive experience of marriage preparation, wedding liturgy planning, and a concerned follow-up with couples living in the parish may provide a welcoming atmosphere which may lead the couple to become involved in their faith community and grow in their faith.

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Marriage preparation also provides a unique opportunity for the parish priest or deacon and the members of the parish to develop a deep and supportive relationship with engaged couples. This is very much in keeping with the exhortation of Saint John Paul II that “the Christian family and the whole ecclesial community should feel involved in the different phases of the preparation for marriage ...” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 66).

The vast majority of couples who come to the Church for marriage do so in the hope that they will continue to grow in love and that God will be present with them on their journey. However, the Church realizes that many couples “ask to be married in church for motives which are social rather than genuinely religious. This is not surprising” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). In some instances, a priest or parish community experiences frustrations when working with couples who do not practice their faith or who have little appreciation of the sacramentality of marriage. Other couples may be more responsive to parents or other persons who are making demands than to God’s invitation to make the moment sacred. Still others may lack the maturity needed to make such a commitment. This manual is offered to assist priests, deacons, pastoral ministers and parish communities in their efforts to prepare couples for marriage and to evangelize the couple when the need is indicated.

Finally, this manual has not been written to make it difficult to marry in the Catholic Church. Rather, it is intended to help couples realize the serious and sacred, yet joyful and life-giving nature of the sacrament of matrimony. It is hoped that the marriage preparation process established in these pastoral guidelines will enable couples to pray in the community of the Church, to be God’s witnesses in the world, and to “reach old age in the company of their friends, and come at last to the kingdom of heaven” (*Rite of Marriage, Nuptial Blessing* 3).

Throughout this manual reference is made to priests, deacons, and pastoral ministers. “Pastoral ministers” include Parish Life Coordinators, pastoral associates, married couples who give presentations to engaged couples or who administer the premarital inventory, PREPARE/ENRICH, and other people who assist in preparing engaged couples for marriage.

These guidelines and these resources are addressed to priests, deacons, and pastoral ministers in their ministry to couples preparing for marriage.

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I. Responsibilities of Clergy and Parish Community

Goals: To help prepare couples to enter into and to celebrate a sacramental marriage.

To encourage members of the parish community, along with the clergy and pastoral ministers, to become involved in preparing engaged couples for marriage, in celebrating marriage, and in providing opportunities for the ongoing support of married couples.

Guidelines:

Through pastoral counseling, enrichment and education, clergy and parish communities will support and assist engaged couples and their parents.

Clergy will involve appropriately trained and recognized members of the parish community by delegating some of the responsibilities for the preparation, celebration, and ongoing support of marriage.

Early Catechetical Preparation

Goal: To prepare young people for marriage and family living through the use of age-appropriate catechetical materials in preschool through grade twelve.

Guideline:

Catholic educational programs in preschool through grade twelve will include catechesis about marriage and family life. This catechesis will emphasize premarital chastity as leading to marital chastity.

II. Location of Preparation and the Wedding Liturgy

Goal: To provide an opportunity for an engaged couple to prepare for and celebrate their marriage in the parish where one of the partners has residence and is registered.

Guidelines:

Prior to beginning marriage preparation, if a Catholic is not a registered member of a parish in the area where he or she resides, he or she should be informed of the obligation to do so.

The couple's preparation for marriage and wedding liturgy are to take place in the parish in which at least one person is a resident.

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If the marriage will not take place at the parish where one or both of the engaged couple is registered, due to the location of family and friends, the pastor(s) of their parish(es) must be notified of the couple's plans for marriage. The pastor(s) must give permission for the wedding to take place in another church.

This guideline indirectly addresses the need to support and assist newly married couples. The most successful programs of support for newly married couples are those which are part of the parish's continuing ministry to marriage – those that begin with preparation for marriage and continue beyond the wedding.

When the marriage is not celebrated in the community of future residence, the priest, deacon or pastoral minister where the celebration takes place is responsible for instructing the engaged couple to contact the parish in which they will be living or contacting the future community directly.

III. Early Contact with the Parish

Goals: To allow couples adequate time to prepare for marriage and the wedding celebration.

To provide the clergy or pastoral ministers and the engaged couple an opportunity to develop a relationship with one another.

Guidelines:

Preparation for marriage will begin when the engagement is announced, even if that is a year or more before the proposed wedding date. A couple must contact the parish a minimum of nine months prior to the anticipated date of the wedding.

It is recommended that all formal preparation be completed at least six weeks prior to the anticipated date of the wedding.

Discussion:

Couples should be encouraged to contact the parish as soon as they announce their engagement. They need time to look at their relationship carefully, learn from the experience of Catholic tradition, and lay a solid foundation for a sacramental marriage. Experience has shown that it takes a minimum of six months to accomplish these goals. An even longer period is preferred.

It is strongly recommended that marriage preparation be completed at least six weeks prior to the wedding date. This time allows the couple those final weeks to focus on personal reflection and their last-minute preparations for the wedding.

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IV. The Marriage Preparation Process

A. The Initial Session

Goals: To show the concern of the Church for the success of the couple's relationship and marriage and for their personal happiness.

To encourage spiritual preparation for marriage.

To explain the Marriage Preparation Process.

To determine the couple's canonical and civil eligibility for marriage.

To explore the possibility for the sacrament of Confirmation of a Catholic who has not been confirmed.

To begin the instructional and sacramental process.

Guideline:

The initial session will occur as soon as the couple informs the parish that they have decided to marry.

The initial session begins the immediate stage of marriage preparation. During the initial session, it is recommended that the priest, deacon or pastoral minister complete the following steps.

1. Establish a rapport with the couple in order to support and counsel them in their preparation for marriage.
2. Give the couple an opportunity to discuss their relationship and their hopes for their marriage.
3. Explore the engaged couple's motives for marriage and any special circumstances that may affect their marriage, for example: age, cultural background, pregnancy, military service, physical or mental disability, levels of faith development, and religious issues. If any impediment or special circumstance arises, see the appropriate section of these guidelines.
4. Explain the canonical and liturgical procedures that will be required. It is recommended that the bride and groom complete the required canonical forms during this initial session in order to surface any canonical impediment that would prevent setting a wedding date. Instruct the couple in regard to Church and civil documents that will be required, such as: a) baptismal certificates, b) affidavits for freedom to marry, and in the event of a second marriage, c) a civil decree of divorce, d) and an ecclesiastical decree of annulment. If registration in a parish has not been discussed

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prior to the meeting, the priest or pastoral minister should explain the requirements of parish registration.

5. If no canonical impediment surfaces in the discussion during the first session, the wedding date may be set.
6. Arrange for the couple to begin their instructional and sacramental preparation. Set up the couples' PREPARE/ENRICH premarital inventory at www.prepare-enrich.com. This is a **mandatory component** of the process. Please use the **Catholic customized version** of PREPARE/ENRICH. (See Appendix A.)

B. Preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony

Goals: To present the essential Christian and human aspects of marriage so that the couple comes to a deeper understanding of all the dimensions of the marriage covenant.

To provide the engaged couple with concrete means to reflect on their relationship in light of the factors and issues that are usually involved in marriage.

Guidelines:

The relationship of the couple with each other and their readiness for marriage are explored through a premarital inventory.

The engaged couple participates in a required instructional program, either Pre Cana or Engaged Encounter. At the completion of this process, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister (with input from designated marriage preparation ministers) will proceed with the marriage planning unless a serious obstacle arises that might prevent the couple from entering a sacramental and permanent marriage.

Discussion:

It is recommended that the instructional and sacramental preparation begin as soon as the couple completes the initial meeting with the clergy or pastoral minister. Beginning the process immediately will allow adequate time to complete the premarital inventory as well as the instructional and sacramental program well in advance of the wedding.

The priest, deacon, or pastoral minister, in consultation with the engaged couple, will determine the order of the process. In some instances, circumstances may indicate that they begin with the Pre Cana or Engaged Encounter. In most instances, it would be more beneficial to start the engaged couple with the PREPARE/ENRICH premarital inventory. Pastoral discretion will be the determining factor for the order of the process.

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Facilitators of the PREPARE/ENRICH premarital inventory and the Pre Cana or Engaged Encounter programs need to provide ample time for the engaged couples to reflect and to discuss the content presented in these sessions.

PREPARE/ENRICH Inventory

The PREPARE/ENRICH inventory provides a process in which the engaged couple can better discover their feelings, their ability to communicate, their process of social growth and the religious faith present in their relationship. This section of the marriage preparation process includes the completion of PREPARE/ENRICH, a premarital inventory. In the Diocese of Belleville, this is a **mandatory component** of the process. Please use the **Catholic customized version** of PREPARE/ENRICH. (See Appendix A.)

The PREPARE/ENRICH premarital inventory is not a psychological test, nor is it an instrument to measure reliably the readiness of a couple for marriage. It is a means of allowing the couple, with the assistance of the marriage preparation minister(s), to strengthen their relationship with each other prior to marriage. Through this process the Christian community reaffirms its concern for the development of sound and lasting foundations for successful marriages.

Normally, it is expected that this phase of preparation will require two or three sessions as a minimum. The actual number of sessions with any given couple will be determined by the engaged couple and the facilitators of the premarital inventory. During the first session, the engaged couple will complete the premarital inventory which will be the basis for discussion in the following sessions. Priests, deacons, professionals or married couples trained to administer the premarital inventory are urged to utilize carefully the manuals that accompany each of the inventories.

Persons trained to facilitate the premarital inventory, other than the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage, will need to meet with the priest or deacon to give a verbal report, or to prepare a written report for the priest or deacon. In the event that serious questions arise that might indicate a delay in marriage, any decision to do so must be based on the overall observations drawn from discussions by the facilitators and the priest or deacon, not simply on the responses of the couple to the inventory questions.

Pre Cana/Engaged Encounter

Participation in an instructional program provided by parish or region is required of couples planning to marry. Parish or regional instructional programs are required to meet the criteria established in these diocesan guidelines.

The instructional program presents the essential Christian and human aspects of marriage so that the couple becomes aware of the full dimensions of marriage as a committed relationship and as a sacrament.

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There are a variety of instructional programs for marriage preparation in the Diocese of Belleville. Options that may be presented to couples include the following: 1) participating in a Pre Cana program; 2) participating in an Engaged Encounter weekend. The schedule for Pre Cana and Engaged Encounter offerings can be found on the Office of Worship website. (See *Additional Resources*.)

If a Pre Cana program or Engaged Encounter is completed either in the Diocese of Belleville or in another diocese, a certificate of completion is required.

C. Liturgical Preparation

Goal: To understand the Rite of Marriage and to prepare for its celebration.

Guideline:

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, and the engaged couple are to follow the Catholic Rite of Marriage and diocesan guidelines in preparing the wedding liturgy. In the Diocese of Belleville, these guidelines are provided through the Office of Worship.

In the event that the wedding liturgy will be celebrated in a church other than a Catholic church or chapel for a reasonable cause, the marriage preparation sessions are to be completed and a dispensation obtained by the Catholic priest or deacon.

In liturgical preparation, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister will assist the engaged couple in planning a celebration that is “simple and dignified, according to the norms of the competent authorities of the church...” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 67). It is also for the planners, in accordance with concrete circumstances of time and place, “to include in the liturgical celebration such elements proper to each culture which serve to express more clearly the profound human and religious significance of the marriage contract, provided that such elements contain nothing that is not in harmony with Christian faith and morality” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 67). Care and prudent consideration will determine what can be fittingly introduced from the traditions and cultures of individual people.

Since Christian marriage is a sacramental action of the Church, “the liturgical celebration of marriage should involve the Christian community, with full, active and responsible participation of all those present, according to the place and task of each individual” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 67).

V. Delay of Marriage

Goals: To emphasize the importance which the Catholic community places on the permanence and sacredness of marriage.

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To address reasons that may indicate a delay in marriage and to present the engaged couple with options when a delay is recommended.

Guidelines:

For a just cause a marriage can be delayed.

When a delay is recommended, the couple will be offered resources to help them resolve the cause(s) of delay, and will be advised on the process of appeal.

Discussion:

The Church believes that the right to marry is a natural right. The right to marry is rooted in Scripture and the tradition of the Church.

Conscious of a couple's right to marry, the revised Code of Canon Law decrees that "all persons who are not prohibited by law can contract marriage" (Canon 1058) but, before a marriage can be celebrated, it must be evident that "nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration" (Canon 1066).

Priests or deacons can refuse the sacrament of marriage only if the marriage will not be valid or licit. Impediments that may cause a marriage to be invalid or illicit include the following:

- A canonical impediment (until dispensed)
- Lack of freedom or sufficient use of reason
- Incapability to assume the essential obligations of marriage due to causes of a psychological nature
- An expressed intention by either party to deny the other's right to a permanent and exclusive union
- A decision by the couple or individual to prevent children permanently

Situations may arise in which the priest or deacon who is to witness the marriage cannot in good conscience proceed with the marriage even though the bride and groom believe that they are ready for marriage. A delay can then be recommended. It is difficult to give a comprehensive list of reasons for delaying a marriage. In addition to the special circumstances in Section XI of these guidelines, some of the more common reasons for delaying marriage include the following:

- Non-practice of the faith by the Catholic party or parties with no apparent intention of practicing the faith

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- Substantial lack of appreciation for the spiritual and sacramental aspects of marriage
- Refusal to cooperate with the marriage preparation guidelines
- Nonsupport of obligations to a person or children from a previous union

Delaying a marriage should be a pastoral judgment based on deep concern for the individuals planning to marry. A period of delay can be a time of evangelization and catechesis which will help the couple to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony “not only validly but also fruitfully” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). The priest or deacon who recommends a delay must inform the couple of the reasons for the delay and must offer to help the couple resolve the causes of the delay. The priest or deacon is advised not to recommend a civil union when a delay of marriage has been recommended.

If a couple does not agree with a priest, deacon, or pastoral minister’s decision to delay their marriage, the couple must be advised of the appeal process that is explained in the next section of these guidelines.

VI. Appeal Process

Goals: To protect the rights of engaged couples, priests, deacons, and pastoral ministers.

To provide diocesan personnel an opportunity to review the engaged couple’s case.

Guidelines:

If the marriage is delayed, the couple may ask to have their situation reviewed by the Tribunal.

The recommendations arising from the appeal process shall be referred to the bishop or his representative for final determination in a timely and strictly confidential manner.

Discussion:

The priest or deacon is the one who makes the decision to delay a marriage. As in all human situations, there is room for human error or mistaken judgment. The Church as a caring community must provide for a review of a decision to delay a marriage. For this reason, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister recommending a delay in marriage must inform the couple of their right to appeal the decision.

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The engaged couple who believe their marriage is unjustly delayed are to be given instructions on beginning the appeal process. Their first step is to contact the Office of the Tribunal (618) 212-0050 which will then coordinate the appeal procedure. This process is to be expedited in a timely and strictly confidential manner.

VII. Marriage between a Catholic and a Non-Catholic (Mixed Marriage)

Goal: To alert the couple to the influences that their religious convictions and values will have on their lives as a married couple.

Guidelines:

Attention needs to be given to the sacramental nature of marriage in the Catholic Church. The couple needs to be encouraged and guided through a discussion of their faith backgrounds which is usually discussed during the PREPARE/ENRICH premarital inventory review with the clergy and the couple.

Discussion:

When a Catholic plans to marry a person of another church, ecclesial community, or denomination, a dispensation is required. Both partners should be informed of the church's expectation that children will be raised with a basis in the Catholic faith.

VIII. Marriage of Non-practicing Catholics

Goal: To assist the non-practicing Catholic(s) in developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of their Catholic faith.

Guideline:

When one or both of the parties entering marriage is a non-practicing Catholic, the couple is encouraged to participate more fully in parish life and the celebration of the Sacraments.

Discussion:

Couples who are not practicing their faith, either one or both of the parties, often approach the Church for marriage. In these instances, Saint John Paul II states that "it is the primary duty of pastors to bring about a rediscovery of this faith and to nourish it and bring it to maturity" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). He states further: "But pastors must also understand the reasons that lead the church also to admit to the celebration of marriage those who are imperfectly disposed" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). The priest is to involve the pastoral staff and the faith community in bringing about the rediscovery of faith for those who are baptized in the Catholic Church but who were not raised in the faith or are not practicing their faith at the time of their engagement.

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It is recommended that the couple be advised of all religious education opportunities in the parish or perhaps introduced to the RCIA process.

IX. Special Circumstances in Marriage Preparation

Couples seeking marriage in the Church often find themselves in circumstances that may affect the validity of their marriage or the quality of their married lives. These special circumstances include the following:

- Absent Partner/Long Distance Relationship
- Dysfunctional Relationships
- Cohabitation
- Ethnic, Cultural and Racial Differences
- Serious/Infectious Diseases and Marriage
- Marriage of Persons Under Age 18
- Marriage of Older Couples
- Marriage of Persons with Disabilities
- Pregnancy
- Remarriage

A. Absent Partner/Long Distance Relationships

Goal: To provide formation and liturgical preparation for the engaged couple.

Guideline:

When the application of these guidelines is not possible due to absence or distance, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister will offer alternative ways to carry out the spirit of the guidelines. When suitable alternatives cannot be found, delay of the marriage may be appropriate.

Discussion:

Some couples requesting marriage in the Catholic Church are separated from their parish or from each other by long distances due to military placement, college attendance, employment, etc. Adequate preparation cannot be overlooked even in these cases. The preparation may be done through the online resources available through PREPARE/ENRICH premarital inventory and the Pre Cana program.

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B. Dysfunctional Relationships

Goal: To help the engaged couple assess their ability to form a relationship based on respect and equality.

Guideline:

In relationships where physical, chemical, sexual, or emotional abuse is evident, a marriage should be delayed until appropriate remedial action has been taken.

Discussion:

One basic element in dysfunctional relationships is the premise that one partner has the right to dominate the other partner. Any behavior which maintains an imbalance of power or creates fear is abusive. Some indicators of abuse include the following: a history of abusive behavior or witnessing abuse, rigid sex-role stereotyping, isolation, a history of poor or irregular employment, inability to handle frustration, or substance abuse without treatment. Most clergy and pastoral ministers are not certified counselors. Referrals are expected and encouraged.

C. Cohabitation

Goals: To explore the reasons for the Church's disapproval of cohabitation, while maintaining the couple's relationship with the community of faith.

To highlight the implications which cohabitation may have for the enduring stability of the marriage.

Guideline:

Priests, deacons, or pastoral ministers will explain and discuss with the couple the teachings of the Church regarding human sexuality and marriage, as well as the issues raised by cohabitation before proceeding with the marriage.

Discussion:

When a couple is living together and approaches the Church for marriage, an important pastoral opportunity is present. The priest, deacon, or pastoral minister must be conscious of the tension between the Church's moral directives and the couple's particular situation. When examining the couple's understanding of the Church's teaching, their own personal circumstances, their attitude toward marriage, and their readiness for sacramental marriage, great pastoral sensitivity must be exercised.

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It is very important to determine the couple's reasons for seeking marriage in the Church and thus rectifying their situation. The couple's parents and families may have difficulty with their cohabitation. The individuals themselves may feel personal anxiety regarding their situation, even if they have not admitted it to one another. The couple may choose to marry to escape the difficulties that stem from cohabiting. The priest, deacon, or pastoral minister needs to explore these issues with the couple as an important part of their marriage preparation.

Premarital sexual intercourse violates an objective moral code that the Church officially holds and teaches. The church condemns such behavior. For this and for other reasons, the Church rejects cohabitation as appropriate behavior for any couple preparing for marriage. However, cohabitation in itself is not a canonical impediment to marriage.

If a priest or deacon, however, cannot in conscience recommend sacramental marriage for a couple, he is asked to refer this matter to the Tribunal Office for determination as to what pastoral outreach and options might be available to such a couple.

D. Ethnic, Cultural and Racial Differences

Goal: To recognize and affirm cultural and ethnic diversity and richness, both in preparing for and in celebrating marriage.

Guideline:

These guidelines should be pastorally and sensitively interpreted in light of the couple's ethnicity, culture, and race.

Discussion:

Within the Diocese of Belleville there exist differing ethnic, cultural, and racial groups which include Native American, African American, Hispanic, Asian, as well as European and other groups. All contribute to the richness of the Catholic community.

Many cultural norms are harmonious with Catholic teaching, but others have been found questionable or even unacceptable. Marriage preparation ministers must make themselves aware of the marriage customs in the particular culture in which they minister in order to help the couple determine which customs are in harmony with the theology of the Sacrament of Marriage.

E. Serious/Infectious Diseases and Marriage

Goal: To provide pastoral guidance for persons with serious/infectious diseases regarding marriage and their natural right to marry.

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Guidelines:

While the present Code of Canon Law does not list disease as an impediment to marriage, it is essential that a couple who is dealing with serious illness receive proper counseling prior to any decision to marry.

Persons who are contemplating marriage must inform their prospective spouse of any serious illness.

Discussion:

Persons who suspect exposure to the HIV infection are encouraged to seek the necessary testing.

The Church understands a Christian marriage to be a covenantal relationship based on openness and honesty. Both people entering a marriage have a right to know information which will have major ramifications for their marriage. The marriage could be invalid on the basis of fraud if a person knew that he or she had tested positive to a serious/infectious disease and kept that knowledge from his or her spouse.

If a priest, deacon, or pastoral minister is working with a couple and it is revealed that one or both persons have a serious illness he or she should assist the couple in contacting a competent medical professional or marriage counselor.

F. Marriage of Persons Under Age 18

Goal: To inform the couple of the serious nature of marriage, of their responsibilities to each other and the community, as well as to help them understand the degree of maturity necessary for such a commitment.

Guideline:

If either party is not yet 18 years of age, additional meetings with the engaged couple and their parents are advised to determine if it is appropriate to proceed with the wedding at this time. Other professional counsel will be recommended if necessary.

Discussion:

Couples where one or both are 17 years of age or younger, face serious obstacles succeeding in marriage. It is commonly believed that the experience of living outside the protective atmosphere and security of the family home for a year can have a profoundly maturing and stabilizing effect on young persons. This experience prepares them to enter marriage with a fuller understanding and broader experience of life.

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Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, and parents should make every attempt to dissuade those under 18 years of age from entering marriage. The priest, deacon, or pastoral minister needs to stress that the Church is recommending this age for marriage out of support and concern for the individuals in the relationship. The purpose in urging a delay is to assure that their union and their love will be lasting and to prevent them from making irreparable mistakes.

After the initial interview, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister should meet with the parents before making a decision to begin the premarital inventory or the instructional section. If any of the parents disagree with the decision for marriage, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister should proceed with great caution (See Appendix C: *Guide for Interviewing Parents in Special Circumstances*.)

G. Marriage of Older Couples

Goal: To help older couples reflect on and incorporate their life experiences into their preparation for marriage.

Guideline:

The marriage preparation process should be adapted to the age and maturity of the couple, but marriage preparation should not be eliminated.

Discussion:

Age does not automatically mean readiness for marriage. Older couples have different marriage preparation needs than younger couples do. Couples of any age can benefit from a premarital questionnaire and the resultant communication.

The PREPARE/ENRICH premarital inventory is beneficial in working with older couples. A mature married sponsor couple can be most helpful in facilitating such an inventory with an older couple who are planning to marry. The Engaged Encounter program is another alternative. Instructions with older couples may include the issues of aging parents, adult children, independent living experiences, financial responsibility, understanding of commitment, and relationship adjustment.

H. Marriage of Persons with Disabilities

Goal: To provide spiritual guidance, support, and education to persons with disabilities, to their partners, and to their families.

Guideline:

While certain physical and mental disabilities render one canonically incapable of contracting marriage, persons with disabilities, in general, have

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the right to marry. Pastors and pastoral ministers should extend appropriate pastoral care.

Discussion:

The need for love and intimacy is common to all persons with or without disabilities. When a couple with disabilities requests marriage in the Church, the pastor, deacon, or pastoral minister must exercise great sensitivity while helping them to examine their reasons for marriage, their ability to carry out the responsibilities of marriage, their ability to make a permanent commitment, and the ability to live independently or in homes with supportive assistance.

The presence of a disabling condition is **not** reason to omit proper developmentally appropriate instructions and preparation for marriage.

I. Pregnancy

Goals: To help engaged couples in which a pregnancy is involved to reflect on their reasons for marriage, apart from the pregnancy.

To prepare engaged couples adequately when, a premarital pregnancy is involved, to make a responsible decision regarding marriage, as well as to explain the various programs and resources available to them.

Guideline:

Pregnancy of itself is not the determining factor in proceeding with or delaying a marriage, nor is it sufficient reason to omit the marriage preparation process.

Discussion:

There are many concerns that must be addressed when a premarital pregnancy occurs. In many cases, parents, society, and one or both of the individuals in the relationship exert pressure to proceed with marriage. In these instances, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister must make every effort to relieve the sense of urgency by centering attention on the good of the couple and encouraging them to look at a possible delay, not getting married, single parenting, and/or adoption. Marriage is not an automatic solution for the difficulties arising from a premarital pregnancy.

Since the cases involving pregnancies are especially complex, the couple should be advised to undertake professional counseling. The reasons for the pregnancy should be discussed, as well as the seriousness of each individual's commitment to marriage. It is important that the couple carefully consider their own best interests and the best interest of the child, not only in the present but for the future as well. No matter the age of the couple, key questions for the marriage preparation ministers include the following:

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1. Does the couple possess the minimal amount of maturity needed to consent validly to marriage?
2. Does the couple possess the emotional, intellectual, financial and spiritual levels of maturity needed to develop a marriage relationship?
3. Does the couple possess the necessary level of maturity needed to assume the responsibilities of parenthood?

Finally, priests, deacons, and pastoral ministers need to stress that there are positive and morally acceptable alternatives to marriage when a premarital pregnancy occurs. They need to help the couple make as free and informed a choice as possible in resolving their difficulties. If marriage is not chosen, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister must help both parties accept their moral responsibility in caring for the child.

J. Remarriage

Goal: To address the unique issues faced by people who were previously married and who now seek to marry again in the Catholic Church.

Guideline:

Preparation for remarriage includes a process to determine the couple's canonical freedom to marry and to implement the marriage preparation guidelines, while sensitively addressing the unique challenges faced by couples planning to remarry.

Couples approaching the Church for validation of their marriage must participate in an appropriate instructional and sacramental preparation process before the marriage is validated.

Discussion:

All people entering marriage, even if they have been previously married, are entering a new relationship. Persons who are remarrying need to evaluate anew their readiness to marry. In the event of a subsequent marriage, the complexities that must be addressed include the following: grieving the end of a prior marriage, establishing new bonds, blended families, the clarification of expectations of the new marriage, and the acknowledgment of legal obligations from the previous union.

A remarriage can be celebrated in the Catholic Church only if the previous spouse has died or if an annulment of the previous marriage has been granted by the Church. The priest, deacon, or pastoral minister must encourage persons exploring remarriage who have not had their previous marriage annulled to begin a petition for annulment. Couples can remarry in the Church only after an annulment has been granted. No date may be set until the canonical process has been completed. The setting of marriage dates presupposes a favorable decision on the part of the tribunal, a decision that cannot be presupposed. When

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a decree of nullity has been granted, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister must adhere to any cautions or conditions that may be attached to the annulment. Fulfilling these conditions can provide great assistance to the marriage preparation minister, particularly in discussions concerning the couple's readiness and intent to marry.

X. Validation of a Marriage

Goal: To insure adequate marriage preparation for couples seeking marriage validation.

Guideline:

Couples approaching the Church for validation of their marriage must participate in an appropriate instructional and sacramental preparation process before the marriage is validated.

Discussion:

A couple who approaches the Church to have their marriage validated often have complex motives. Regardless of age or motives, their desire should be viewed as a positive step. Their coming to the Church provides an opportunity for the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister to engage them in a process of evangelization. Empowering the couple to discuss and deepen their relationship with God strengthens their bond of marriage. The time, attention, and support given by the pastor, deacon, or pastoral minister can draw them into a new understanding of the Church as well as their role in the Church as they live out the Sacrament of Marriage.

A distinction should be made between unions that appear to be stable, long-standing ones and those of recent date. Exploration of a couple's motivation to seek a validation at this time should include an explanation of the reasons they chose to be married out of the Church originally. Particular consideration is to be given if a couple indicates that they are seeking a validation in hopes of curing a troubled marriage. The marriage validation, in itself, will not resolve the difficulties of a troubled marriage, and priests, deacons, and pastoral ministers are urged to give special consideration to their preparation before proceeding with the validation.

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XI. Pastoral Care after Marriage

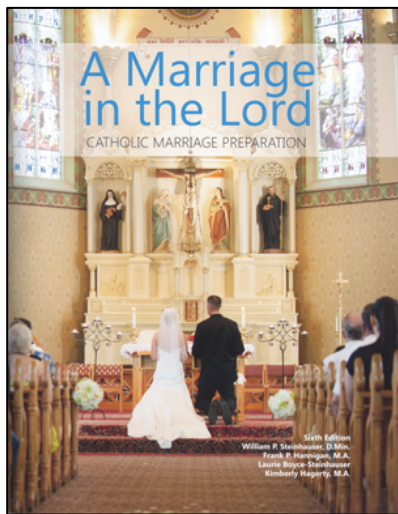
Goal: To provide parish support for married couples as they seek to strengthen and deepen their marriage relationship, thereby, strengthening family life.

Guideline:

Priests, deacons, and pastoral ministers are to take practical steps to ensure that the parish continues to support married couples as they seek to live out the sacrament of marriage.

Required Resources

These are the Marriage Preparation resources approved for use in the Diocese of Belleville effective April, 2014. If your parish needs to schedule training for Pre Cana facilitators, please contact the Office of Worship (618) 722-5038 for more information.



A Marriage in the Lord 6th Edition

The Catholic Marriage preparation workbook contains everything a couple need to prepare for a lifelong happy, healthy, and holy marriage. Newly revised and beautifully illustrated in full color to include topics and websites helpful to engaged couples; expanded sections on Theology of the Body, Sacrament of Marriage, NFP and Couple Prayer, as well as Threats to Marriage. One book per couple. \$6.00 (Quantity pricing is available)

Leaders's Guide to *A Marriage in the Lord* (Complimentary downloadable)

<https://www.familyministries.org/files/PDFLeadersGuidetoAMITL2014.pdf>



El Amor Nuestro y el Sacramento del Matrimonio

Manual, recientemente revisado, de preparación matrimonial y medio importante para parejas casadas. Los ejercicios, lecturas y reflexiones, están orientados para hacerle conciente de cómo vivir día a día el sacramento del matrimonio. \$7.00 (Quantity pricing is available)

El Amor Nuestro y el Sacramento del Matrimonio, Guía
(Descarga complimentary)

<https://www.familyministries.org/files/downloads/ElAmorguide.pdf>

Resources may be ordered from:

Marriage and Family Ministries Office, Archdiocese of Chicago
3525 South Lake Park Avenue
Chicago IL 60653-1402

Phone: 312.534.8351 Orders: 312.534.8340 Fax: 312.534.3858

http://www.familyministries.org/store/products.asp?category_id=8

Leader's Guide to *A Marriage in the Lord*

A Marriage in the Lord

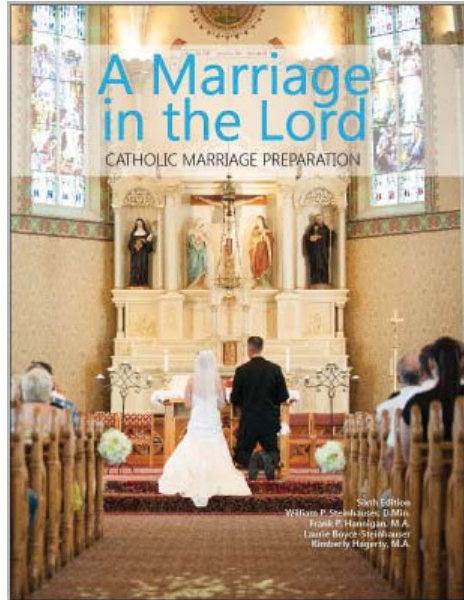
This Leader's Guide is for married couples and parish ministers caring for the engaged in individual parish and diocesan communities. Its purpose is to help you better integrate the workbook *A Marriage in the Lord* into the ministry your community offers to engaged couples. This will also help you to set up and present a marriage preparation program for your own parish or diocese.

A Marriage in the Lord is not intended to be the entire marriage preparation ministry offered to a couple. It augments the personal witness and challenge which the parish or diocesan minister brings to the ministry. Your involvement in this ministry is essential to the future of marriage and the Church.

A Marriage in the Lord is a catalyst for a couple's reflection and communication as well as a resource for their current and future use. It contains a learning process that fits easily into most marriage preparation programs: reflection as an individual and as a couple upon previous experiences, connection to skills and information from a variety of sources, and integration of these into the marital relationship to deepen the existing bond and strengthen the communication of the couple. Throughout the process, our Catholic faith and tradition, is woven through. This process is useful for actively drawing the engaged into their own marriage preparation and having them participate enthusiastically in the process.

Marriage Ministry

The formal period of marriage preparation begins at engagement. When the couple makes the decision to marry in the Church, they enter into discernment about their life together as a married couple open to God's grace. An important aspect of marriage preparation is to help the engaged further develop a relationship with the faith community. The Church's role in assisting the couple during this time may be the very first moment of their adult faith formation.



The effort to foster marital unions that are open to God's grace and reflective of God's love starts at birth and continues throughout life. It is not enough for marriage preparation to pass on the wisdom of previous

generations or the theology of marriage. The face of marriage changes year to year, as does the culture and society within which it is lived. There is no marriage program that has all the answers to questions married couples face daily. Marriage preparation must enable couples to acquire their own insights and skills.

The core of all these efforts remains the local diocese and parish offering marriage preparation that teaches skills, strategies, values, ethics, goals, ideas, and motivation. This learning, along with the example of a believing and caring community will enable a couple to do their own marriage preparation, maintenance, enrichment, and continuing education for the many years following the wedding ceremony.

Protecting Marriage

By choosing to marry in the Catholic Church, we believe the engaged couple is accepting God's call to the vocation of marriage. In creating their marriage, we help them to recognize that the Catholic community believes marriage happens with the help of the Lord and is a relationship that parallels the love of Christ for his people. It is a lifelong commitment to one other person and is a dwelling place of God's spirit.

What is important

The simple acronym **PEPP** can be used as a reminder of what is important in marriage: **primacy, empowerment, protection, and prayer**. We encourage couples to "put some PEPP" into their marriage.

Primacy

Marriage is a primary relationship. Primacy is the ability and the willingness to place the marriage relationship above all other relationships. Two have made a promise, and two will become one. The two must keep their "one" alive and thriving. It is easy to place marriage second to children, work, or other interests. A marriage needs two people to place it number one in their lives.

Empowerment

Marriage needs to be empowered, enacted and energized by the spouses. A strong bond is needed to weather the problems in life. One way to strengthen this bond is to continue dating, planing time alone together, as they did before the wedding. Another is by continuing to take marriage enrichment classes, to learn and grow together. Getting involved in a parish or volunteering for marriage ministry or community work together are other ways to strengthen marriage.

Protection

If marriage is to remain the most important relationship in their lives, it will need to be protected by those who created it. A husband and wife must be unified in protecting their relationship from other demands of life. The relationship to each other must mean more than any other relationship.

Prayer

Finally, for marriage to be primary, to be empowered, and for it to be protected, prayer needs to be part of the relationship. Married couples need the grace from the Sacrament of Matrimony as well as a strong prayer life to help keep the relationship solid through the difficulties of life. Regular attendance at Mass, reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and making an effort to pray together as a couple also strengthens the relationship.

Creating an enduring marriage is difficult to do without prayer or the Spirit of God that makes all things possible. Declaring marriage primary, empowering it for a lifetime, and protecting it from the many threats that occur each day is a daunting task. But with prayer and God's help, it will happen.



History of Catholic Marriage

Long before the advent of Christianity, monogamous marriage was present and thriving within society, but marriage was redefined and refocused by the birth of our faith community. During New Testament times, marriage was viewed as a secular act, an event of human experience that was more a part of civilization and society than of a faith community.

However, the early Christians believed that marriage took on an element of mystery, became a part of the whole effort of salvation when two individuals of faith entered marriage. Then this everyday event became something special and symbolic called “a marriage in the Lord.”

The Early Christian Era

Early Christians, especially St. Paul and St. Augustine, envisioned a saving dimension to marriage. They saw a deeper meaning in this secular act: marriage was a sign of the union which exists between Christ and his Church, a symbol of the permanence and fidelity that is integral to a loving relationship between a husband and wife, between Christ and his people. Permanence became a key element of Christian marriage.

Although today the various Christian Churches have different understandings of the notion of permanence, from its earliest roots, the Christian Church saw permanence as essential to marriage.

During the early centuries of Christianity, the faith community’s concern for an engaged or married couple was focused on the moral dimension of the relationship; with the good of the couple and the strength of the relationship. Marriage was a distinct and important decision in the life of a Christian, and the community tried its best to support the couple.

The Middle Ages

It was not until the Middle Ages, from the seventh to eleventh centuries, that there was a drastic change in the Church’s involvement with marriage. Until this time, marriage was essentially independent of both church and state. What was necessary for a valid Christian marriage was the mutual consent of two baptized individuals. The blessing or veiling, which might be done by the priest, did not have any effect on the civil contract that a man and a woman entered in front of their respective families. By the end of the Middle Ages, there would be one liturgical rite determining civil and ecclesial validity that was presided over by a priest.



During this period of time, the organizing bodies in society failed. Governments ceased to function, systems meant to serve and organize no longer did. Order gradually gave way to chaos. In its concern for the good of the people, the Church stepped in to fill the function which formerly belonged to civil order. This added responsibility had its price. The ministry of the Church had been one of teacher, exhorter, and supporter of marriage. The new responsibilities added the functions of arbiter, judge, and protector to the Church’s roles. Questions such as validity, jurisdiction, and legality became the focus of the Church’s involvement with marriage. It marked a shift from the ministry of marriage to the administration of marriage, one that would have a lasting effect upon the Church’s teachings and understanding of marriage as a sacrament.

History of Catholic Marriage

The Protestant Reformation

Juridical and legal concerns dominated the Church's writings and teachings about marriage for the next several hundred years. During the Protestant Reformation, it was a challenge to the Catholic Church's juridical role that resulted in a mandated legal form or ceremony of marriage for the validity of the sacrament. Later, the Church stated it had jurisdiction over matrimonial cases in all instances. This further



led to a declaration that all valid marriages between two baptized Christians were in fact sacramental, and, therefore, indissoluble.

The Early Twentieth Century

The evolution of the Church's teaching on marriage was influenced by societal

expectations. A similar evolution and growth was happening concurrently in society and culture, demonstrating a growing maturation in humanity's understanding of marriage. In the Catholic Church it meant a moving away from the contractual understanding of marriage to the notion and teaching of a covenant established between a man and a woman in order to create a community of life and love. Marriage was no longer viewed more as a function than as a relationship.

Post Vatican II

In the aftermath of Vatican II, which ended in 1965, the direction of the Church's involvement with marriage returned to the insights of apostolic times. While administrative responsibilities were still important, the

Church community sought to emphasize the importance of its ministerial obligations to marriage. As teacher, exhorter, and supporter of the vocation of marriage, the Church committed to walking with couples through their marital experiences. The Church recognized that the good of the spouses is equal to the procreative and nurturing responsibilities of marriage. This is evident in the concern that has been placed upon marriage preparation.

The revised Code of Canon Law states that it is the obligation of the parish community to adequately prepare a couple for marriage. You are a part of the faith community's response to the mystery and sacrament of "a marriage in the Lord." Your primary concern is the good of the partners, the health of their relationship, and the well being of the individuals embarking on the vocation of married life.

These are the years when many Catholics began to divorce in numbers almost as large as the rest of society. Marriage rates in the Catholic Church began to plummet.

The Late 20th Century

With the advent of the Marriage Movement in the 1990's, society started realizing the importance of what the Catholic Church had been teaching for decades; that marriage benefits everyone involved—men, women, children, society, and the Church. Marriage is an important social good, associated with an impressively broad array of positive outcomes for children and adults alike. Marriage is also an important public good, associated with a range of economic, health, educational, and safety benefits that help serve the common good.

Marriage in the 21st Century

Recently it seems that marriage is under attack—with fewer couples seeing the necessity

History of Catholic Marriage

or benefits of marriage. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has a committee for the defense and promotion of marriage and a website called Marriage Unique for a Reason to explain the Church's belief that marriage means the faithful, fruitful, lifelong union of one man and one woman. Couples marry later, if at all, and many bring children into the marriage. Most cohabit before marriage and the reality of step families brings an extra element of complication into marriage preparation.

Marriage ministers are on to help couples take care of many aspects of marriages, from communication skills and faith-building to continuing education, with the recognition that all stages of marriage can learn skills and attitudes to make their marriage a success.

The Church works on improving marriage preparation programs and meeting the couples where they are at. Most marriage prep

programs have added a premarital inventory to help the couples see what their strengths and weaknesses are, and there is an online program, www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com for couples separated by distance or who cannot attend a gathered event.

Welcome

Marriage rates in the Church continue to plummet. When a couple approaches the Church to be married, it is a chance for us to welcome them warmly to the parish. If they are not registered in the parish or regular churchgoers, we have the opportunity to build a relationship with them. We can reach out to them, have a caring conversation, let them know we are glad that they have decided to marry in the Church, and then start the education process to instruct them in what a marriage in the Lord really means.



Holistic Marriage Preparation

Couples approach the Church for marriage preparation with ideas and plans for a wedding that may not fit with the Church's understanding of marriage. This can be a time of great opportunity and teaching as well as a challenge for those preparing the engaged for the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Any parish marriage preparation program must be put together with the many other people involved in preparing couples for marriage; the parish priest, deacon, musician, or marriage coordinator.

Preparation for a marriage really begins at birth. As children grow, they experience interactions with family, friends, and neighbors, all whom may teach them about marriage. We must pay attention to the education our children receive from society, particularly the media. By the time of their engagement, most couples have already formed their perceptions of married life.

Church teaching is very specific on marriage. For a marriage to be valid it must have four qualities: **permanence, fidelity, openness to children, and consent.**

On the surface, these are simple enough concepts, yet in our culture the couple getting married may not really understand them. They may have experienced the divorce of their parents, relatives, and friends, and have not seen permanence in a marriage. They see celebrities stay in their

marriages for "as long as we both shall love" rather than "as long as we both shall live." Fidelity is a flexible term for many people. Casual sex on business trips may be seen as a recreational activity that is not emotionally binding, not as a violation of

Openness To Children
Permanence
Fidelity
Consent
Matrimony
Sacrament

commitment. Openness to children requires generosity and understanding of the sacramental nature of matrimony; a lot to ask of a couple in a me-centered culture.

How does the couple consent with understanding and acceptance if they are unaware of the shallow nature of their relationship or do not have a full understanding of their own self or their prospective spouse?

The breakdown in community due to the pervading influences of consumerism, materialism, and individualism may be obstacles to sustaining lifelong marriages. The teaching of the Church and her life of grace counters those influences and promotes stronger community bonds.

The invitation and welcoming of those seeking to marry in the Church is also an invitation into a supportive community that will strengthen marriage and family. and help the couple to develop their personal adult faith journey.

Steps to Marrying in the Catholic Church

The First Contact by the Engaged Couple

Most couples check the diocesan and parish websites to see how to get married in their diocese. The information needs to be easy to find and easy to understand. Couples coming to the parish for assistance in celebrating a marriage are the future families of the parish community. This is a great chance to make them feel welcomed and wanted.

By Canon Law, couples do not have to be registered parishioners to ask to be married in a parish, they just have to have lived in the boundaries for 30 days. It's not good to place restrictions or exclusions that go beyond Canon Law or diocesan policy upon couples seeking marriage.

The couple will then set up an appointment with a priest or deacon to discuss what needs to be done to prepare for receiving the sacrament.

Interview with the Couple

The first session is a time to get to know the engaged couple and ascertain their needs as they prepare for marriage. Ideally this conversation is held in a comfortable setting so the priest or deacon can establish rapport and begin to build a relationship with them, as well

as giving instruction on the theology and spirituality of marriage.

Initial meeting goals are to:

- Establish rapport and a relationship with the couple. The same person should oversee the whole process with them.

- Help the couple see the importance and value of marriage preparation, give an overview of the entire marriage preparation process, and help them choose the appropriate class.

- Help the couple begin to assess their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the marriage relationship.

- Explain the canonical requirements to celebrate a Catholic wedding in a Catholic Church.

- Choose a wedding date after determining there are no canonical impediments to the couple marrying in the Church.

Premarital Inventory Session

The next step is usually to have the couple take a premarital inventory. Taking it early in the process makes sure they are better prepared for the sessions with the priest or deacon and any couple-led programs

that follow.

A premarital inventory is an assessment of how often a couple would agree with each other when asked questions concerning communication, in laws, finances, sex, religion, children, marriage readiness and other important areas of married life.

The Catholic Couple

Checkup is the preferred inventory for the Archdiocese of Chicago (access at www.familyministries.org) and other inventories are used in other areas. Most are taken online, with the results available instantly as a PDF to the couple and the person preparing them for marriage as is the case of the CCC, or sent to a facilitator.



Steps to Marrying in the Catholic Church

After the inventory is completed the couple can be assigned to a facilitator who will meet with them and go over the results of the inventory. This should take place as soon as possible after the inventory has been completed.

If the inventory has uncovered major differences in critical areas between the couple, it can be suggested that the couple enter a period of discernment about how to proceed with the plans to marry. This may entail pastoral or psychological counseling. The couple can be referred to an appropriate professional counseling service. If there is no local professional counseling service, the local Family Life or Catholic Charities Office can provide counseling options.

Participation in a Marriage Preparation Program

The couple attends the appropriate marriage preparation program, diocesan, parish-based, or online. Trained volunteer married couples and priests or deacons may conduct these programs. Topics addressed should include such components as Marriage as a Sacrament, faith, effective communication, sexuality, Natural Family Planning, and the extended family. If available, a separate class in Natural Family Planning or Christian Sexuality can catechize the couple on the Church's teaching on sexuality and proper methods of regulating birth. While couples may appear to be quite sophisticated in their discussions of sexuality, their understanding of human sexuality has often been shaped by society rather than by Church teaching. An excellent presentation of the Church's teaching on sexuality is found in the addresses of Pope John Paul II in the book *The Theology of the Body*.

Follow-Up Sessions

In the follow up sessions after the couple has taken the marriage preparation class, issues that are important for the couple can be discussed.

Concerns noted in the initial interview are best brought out now.

Since couples attending the diocesan or parish programs may have received *A Marriage in the Lord*, you may want to discuss the exercises they completed and what new insights they have. The conversation could touch upon aspects of the marriage that may be worrisome or problematic. If the couple has been working at creating a relationship that has depth, insight, and maturity, be sure to compliment them.

If not already completed, the priest or deacon takes care of the necessary canonical papers that have been explained in the initial meeting. These papers invite a discussion on the Church's view of marriage. Although the canonical papers are to be filled out with the couple separated, the paper entitled, "The Declaration and Promise of the Catholic" should be completed and explained with both parties present.

This session might be spent in helping the couple understand their relationship with God and with the Church (or churches) and in assisting them to develop their own spirituality within marriage.

The conversation could center on the interaction of the couple with each other, with God, and with their respective church communities. Many couples will not display a well-developed faith life in their early-to mid-20s. They, like the rest of us, are in process. Perhaps evangelization is the most suitable approach to take with a couple that cannot articulate the movement of God in their lives.

The result of this discussion should feed the planning of the ceremony and tie directly with the expressed faith of the couple. Couples should be expected to take part in the liturgical planning for the wedding ceremony. This could include such things as selecting the readings and music for their wedding.

Steps to Marrying in the Catholic Church

The Rehearsal

The rehearsal is the time to deal with the ceremony details. Usually the priest, deacon, or parish wedding coordinator meets with the engaged couple, their parents, and the wedding party to run through the arrangements for the ceremony. Wedding rehearsals can also be evangelizing moments, as those in the wedding party may not have been involved in Church activities. At the rehearsal, those gathered can express their prayerful wishes for the couple, giving thanks for the ways that each of them has already manifested God's love.

The Celebration of the Wedding Ceremony

The liturgical celebration of marriage is an important occasion for the community and the couple. It is a time for the Church to celebrate the saving power of the Lord in the lives of those who have chosen matrimony. Special care should be taken that this liturgy be a reflection and celebration of the couple entering marriage and all those who have entered Christian marriage. Ideally the priest or deacon who prepared the couple for marriage will be either the celebrant for the ceremony or be liturgically involved.

Wedding presiders follow The Rite of Marriage, particularly with regard to the procession, the opening rites, and the exchange of consent. Couples could be encouraged to memorize their vows, if they are comfortable doing so, so that they speak for themselves and do not simply repeat after the presider. They can also be encouraged to face each other during their exchange of consent and not turn their backs on the congregation at other times during the liturgy.

Continuing Education

The ministry of the Church must extend beyond marriage preparation and planning the wedding

liturgy to support married couples as they seek to live out the Sacrament of Matrimony. While each married couple bears ultimate responsibility for the marriage, diocesan and parish support of their vocation can greatly assist them. A multifaceted strategy that includes regular ongoing opportunities for marriage education and skills building should be part of each parish or diocese's mission.

At every level of the Church's ministry to families, married couples should be encouraged to pray together and to make family prayer a feature in their home life. Many couples are unsure of the steps and unaware of the available resources that would help them strengthen their marriage.

The Archdiocese of Chicago encourages couples to attend continuing education classes in the early years of marriage. The cost is bundled into the PreCana fee. Each two-hour workshop focuses on some of the areas that research has shown to be the most difficult in the first years of marriage. There are five workshops all together, and couples can choose to attend any that interest them. Workshops focus on expectations, adjustments, sexuality, time management, finances, faith and God, communication, gender differences, conflict, forgiveness, and the Catholic view of marriage. Couples seeking education

Register for | Calendar

- **Ready, Married Workshop Session A** - Topics discussed are expectations, adjustments, time management, and building strengths.
- **Ready, Married Workshop Session B** - Topics discussed are finances and sexuality.
- **Ready, Married Workshop Session C** - Topics discussed are communication and gender differences.
- **Ready, Married Workshop Session D** - Topics discussed are resolving conflict and forgiveness.
- **Ready, Married Workshop Session E** - Topics discussed are prayer, faith, and sacrament and the Catholic vision of marriage.

opportunities can participate in programs and resources offered by their local parish as well as Marriage Encounter, Retrouvaille, couples' retreats, and other marriage enrichment, education, and skills programs.

Couples should also take the opportunity to connect with other married couples for Christian fellowship and mutual support.

Advice for Marriage Ministers

Often marriage ministry takes place in a group setting where you will be leading and facilitating the session. Some suggestions for you:

- Marriage Ministers are disciples of Jesus Christ and witness to this discipleship as it is lived in marriage.
- During the sessions, avoid sounding preachy. Using the second person “you” makes you sound more like a teacher than a fellow believer in the goodness of marriage. Generally “I or we” statements are heard and accepted better.
- Presenter couples should model a balanced relationship. One partner should not dominate the presentation; equal partnership in marriage is what should be modeled.
- Married couples in this ministry are called to reach out to engaged couples with honesty, openness, and a willingness to disclose the strengths and weaknesses of marital relationships. When sharing, try to be as open as possible, realizing that some topics should

not be shared with others because it could strain your own marital relationship. A PreCana is not the place to resolve personal problems and issues between facilitators. If a strong reaction or emotion is evoked when you are planning the session, you may be touching on an unresolved issue. This class is a service to the engaged. The married couple should recognize and resolve such issues before they meet with the engaged couples.

- Words such as “must,” “never,” “always,” and phrases such as, “A good marriage should...” tend to alienate rather than invite the engaged into a dialogue. When standards, such as forbidding physical abuse in the relationship, are evoked, they must be well thought out and tactfully stated.
- It is strongly encouraged that any presentations be conversational in nature and style, rather than read, which can be boring and deadly to the facilitation process.
- Be aware of time. Make sure that the session starts and ends on time.

Participant Communication Styles

Styles to Discourage

Dominating: The dominator talks a great deal, much to the chagrin of those who would like to speak and to the delight of those who would like to hide within the group. The dominator is generally a poor listener and resists giving up control of the group. This person needs to be stopped, or others will have no chance to participate and the group will get bored and resentful. The facilitator must step in and suggest, kindly, that they “hear someone else’s thoughts on the subject.” Most dominators are not sensitive people and most PreCana facilitators are. You may feel bad asking the dominator to let others speak, but dominators usually are not aware of the feelings of others, or they wouldn’t talk so much.

Dropping Out: Dropouts remove themselves from the flow of the conversation and watch passively from the sidelines. They may feel shy, or resentful or feel they already know what is being taught, so they drop out of the group. Invite dropouts to share their thoughts.

Blocking: A blocker does not control the discussion the way a dominator does. Instead, the blocker inserts irrelevant points of information at crucial junctures in the conversation. Blocking can often be unintentional, but it is detrimental and can prevent the discussion from reaching depth and important issues. The facilitator needs to jump in and bring the group back to the topic.

Distracting: The distractor appears nervous, taps a pencil or foot, plays with a set of keys, is always looking at the phone, or engages in other distracting and annoying habits. The distractor may be bored or preoccupied, but this behavior can frustrate group interaction. Sometimes

giving the distractor a job to do, like passing out supplies will bring them back to the group.

Styles to Encourage

These roles are often filled by the facilitators, but if the engaged take these on, let them! The group is usually very interested in learning from each other.

Building: A group member who encourages participation and helps individuals feel included within the group process is a builder. This person connects one idea to another and brings them together.

Gatekeeping: Conversational traffic can get congested if no one is acting as the regulator. The gatekeeper gives everyone an opportunity to contribute to the group and makes sure that no one person or idea dominates.

Harmonizing: Blessed are the peacemakers for they are needed in any exchange among people. Using patience and a whole array of peacemaking techniques, the harmonizer attempts to bring two divergent ideas together and allows opposing sides to speak and to listen to each other.

Encouraging: Not everyone is an extrovert, ready and willing to share every thought. Introverts may need encouragement to bring out their insights, which the encourager can do. Through sincerity and genuine support, this enables others to risk contributing to the group process.

Clarifying: It may be difficult for some to speak about emotions and values. A sentence such as, “What I heard you say was... Am I correct?” is a good clarifying statement.



Creating a Successful PreCana Program

A PreCana program must respond to the needs of the engaged of your community. Change, redesign, and reinvent yours as needed.

Connecting System

How do engaged couples find out about your marriage prep program? In the past, an ad in the parish bulletin reached the couples when they attended Sunday Mass, but many of today's engaged have little or no connection with the parish. Engaged couples expect to find information on the internet. A well planned and easy to follow page on the parish and diocesan website that has all the information they need to sign up is ideal.

We have found that couples have gone to a parish's website, seen that it says attendance at a Saturday PreCana is mandatory, and the couple thought they would not be able to be married in the Catholic church because they could not attend on that day. They got married elsewhere. Be sure to include a phone number and email on the website so you can be contacted with questions, and we recommend asking couples to call you directly if they cannot attend the gathered PreCana so you can offer them online or other options.

Couples also expect to be able to register and pay online. A downloadable brochure with info on the dates, locations, and who to contact is a must if you can't take registrations and payment online.

Program Coordinator

Coordinating a parish program is an important duty. Those willing to take on this responsibility need the support of the parish staff and perhaps one full-time person designated as the moderator for this ministry, as well as the cooperation of all in the parish or diocese conducting the initial interview with an engaged couple. The parish coordinator attends to the scheduling, material, checking and updating the website and emails, and acts as liaison with the full-time parish staff. The

diocesan coordinator would need the same attributes as a parish coordinator, but be able to work on a larger scale, with more staff and volunteers.

Scheduling

The sample program following is flexible by design. It can be implemented as a one day-long session, two half-day sessions, or three two-and-a-half hour sessions, with the choice depending on what is best for the engaged and presenting couples that are part of your program.

The times listed after the sections are suggested times. If the participants are young couples in their early twenties they will have different preparation needs from couples forming step families. Change the length of the sections to meet the needs of the participants.

How frequently a parish offers a marriage preparation program depends on how many couples will marry and at what time during the year. Generally, it is preferable to schedule programs four to six months ahead of the time couples will be celebrating the liturgy. In many parishes, the months of May and June are heavily scheduled for weddings. Therefore, January and February would be the months the marriage preparation program should be held.

A diocesan program will need to offer many more programs for the larger number of couples that will attend the large group PreCana.

Size of the Group

For parish-based marriage ministry, it is recommended that at least three or four engaged couples be part of each preparation program. Others recommend the ministry take place on a one-to-one level, which can be an effective manner in which to approach marriage preparation, but it is also good to have the engaged teach each other. The history of the Christian community is one centered on the gathering of its people to share their faith, and

Creating a Successful PreCana Program

to support and challenge each other. This can create a climate that is very conducive for marriage preparation and enrichment.

A diocesan program must provide for a larger number of couples. Experience has shown that a group of thirty to forty couples is an ideal size for a large group PreCana. A large group PreCana will always need more time than a small one. With a small group of couples, the program typically will be divided into individual exercises, sharing between the engaged couple, and then a discussion with the larger group. In a large group PreCana, there is an extra step in the process. The couples also need to be divided into small groups of four to eight couples, who will then report back to the group as a whole.

Ministry in the Group Setting

Some prefer a team of two couples to work with the engaged. In a one-on-one setting, as in a sponsor or mentor couple approach, personalities may not always mesh. Having four individuals present offers a variety of personalities with whom the engaged can interact. It also offers a second image of marriage that the engaged can explore as they develop and refine their own image of marriage. Having two team couples also takes some of the strain off one couple. If one couple experiences an “off day” and are finding it difficult to be at their best, the presence of another team couple can enable them to take a lower profile within the session. This same logic takes some of the pressure off of the issue of unplanned absences due to sickness, emergencies, or babysitting problems.

Accountability is greater if two couples work together, as they make time for planning and preparation. The opportunity for creating a marriage enrichment forum is present if there are married couples working together, sharing insights and concerns, enhancing each other's marriages, and supporting the efforts each one is making in this ministry.

On a diocesan level, it may be necessary to have one couple facilitate the session. Even with more than one couple facilitating, it is difficult to run a session well if there are more than forty engaged couples in attendance.

Special Notes

We recommended that the parish priest, deacon, or pastoral associate *not* be included as part of the personnel for this part of the ministry. This is when the married care for the engaged. Clergy can care for the engaged is before and after the parish marriage preparation program. This allows the engaged a different climate in which to discuss their concerns about marriage. The presence of the person who may have the final approval of their marriage may stop them from being comfortable, open, and honest.

It is also unwise for anyone to join the group after the first session, whether it is one of the full-time parish staff, a different trained married couple, or another engaged couple. The trust and openness that is built



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during a program is crucial to the environment necessary for proper marriage preparation.

Confidentiality

Couples may ask about confidentiality. Confidentiality is always a problem with groups and while it should be encouraged, there is no way to ensure it will be maintained. Talk to the couples about a balance between feeling free to share their thoughts in this setting, but caution them against sharing specific details they do not want others to know. Ask the couples that if they share with others what goes on in a session, they change the details enough so that the couples are not easily identifiable.

Qualifications for the Facilitating Married Couple

The hardest part of establishing a marriage preparation program is to find qualified married couples to facilitate the program. Leader couples need to be articulate, available, nonjudgmental, have generous spirits, with at least one member a practicing Catholic, and understand the teachings of the Church about marriage. They should be willing to grow in their own knowledge of marriage and faith, and while they do not need to be professional speakers, they should feel comfortable sharing their joys and struggles with others.

Some couples and individuals are just unsuited for this type of ministry. If ministry to the engaged is not the strength of a couple, broach the subject quickly and tactfully. One helpful suggestion is to have another compatible ministry in mind for the couple that can be offered as an alternative apostolic outreach.

Place and Setting

Where a parish marriage preparation program takes place may have as much to say to the engaged as the content. Once again, though, the needs demonstrated by the particular parish or community should be considered. Generally it is a good idea to have a small group preparation program take place in the comfort

and warmth of a team couple's home, with the same location for all sessions.

Care should be given to lighting, distractions, the presence of pets and family members, and all other incidentals that can make a session a success or a disappointment. Clear directions to the site, a warm welcome, nametags, comfortable chairs, refreshments, accessible washrooms, freedom from interruptions, and privacy all add to establishing a setting that fosters friendship and trust. Given a concern over credibility and sponsorship, the decision may be made that the program be held in one of the parish buildings. This clarifies any doubts that the parish community is sponsoring this ministry and is fully supportive of it. In this case, the same concerns over environmental details should be demonstrated.

Most diocesan PreCanas are held at parishes with a stipend paid to the site. Care must be taken to ensure geographical diversity as to location of the PreCana. A permanent locker at the site is helpful to store supplies and resources. Accessibility, parking, and ease of working with the parish personnel are also important considerations. It is good to tie the PreCana into a parish so the engaged see this as a ministry of the Church.

Who Should Not Attend

Once the program for marriage preparation has been established, there are some couples who will not profit from attending. Some may have needs that are too specialized and demanding to be easily included within a parish program. Most PreCanas are designed with the "average" engaged couple of the parish in mind. Couples who do not fit that description should be asked to participate in a specialized diocesan program, in an extended marital preparation-counseling group, in an online class (www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com), or in some other form of responsive ministry. Couples separated by distance, starting a second marriage, civilly married and seeking convalidation, or forming step families are the

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most frequently seen examples of couples with issues and concerns others may not be dealing with.

Large-group PreCanas can be subdivided into interest groups: special PreCanas for couples marrying with children, who cohabit, or are in an interfaith relationship.

Fees

Yes, you should charge the engaged couples for their marriage preparation!

Presenting any type of program incurs expense. It is strongly recommended that these costs be paid by the engaged couples. A set fee should be required. Not only does it help in meeting the expenses of the ministry, but it also convinces the engaged that what they are receiving is of worth and value. It may also keep the week-to-week return rate of the couples up. Having paid for something, they will want to get their money's worth.



If you feel uncomfortable about charging for marriage preparation, you can always let the couple know that if there is a financial problem arrangements can be made to attend at a reduced fee. Most of the time marriage ministers seem to have more problem charging for a program than do the engaged, who are usually spending a large amount of money to get married and have no difficulty paying for a hall, invitations, a bachelor or bachelorette

party in Las Vegas, the florist, photographer, cake, limousine service, wedding planner, chair coverings, etc. The average amount spent in 2012 on a wedding in the United States was \$28,500, yet parishes and marriage ministers worry about charging a reasonable amount for the most valuable service that the bride and groom will receive. Most costs are less than 1% of what the couple is spending on the wedding.

We must not apologize for the cost and let the couples know the tremendous bargain they are getting for their money. They will not think it is worth it if we don't. Our experience has been that most couples are very reasonable when the costs and benefits of the program are explained to them.

Bundling

Bundle the resources and continuing education into the marriage preparation fee. This should be part of what the Church does to support marriage. Parishes and dioceses that have raised the fee to include bundling materials receive no more complaints than before and have a much higher attendance rate at the continuing education workshops. For specifics on how your parish or diocese can bundle resources and continuing education, contact the Archdiocese of Chicago Marriage and Family Ministries Office, 312.534.8351 or familyministries@archchicago.org.

Administering the Program

Keep organized! Details do matter. Update the website; keep good schedules and records. Administration and paperwork allow marriage ministry to become reality. It is easier to begin the process of marital preparation with couples who are not angry because they were treated poorly on the phone, were lost on the way, did not know the starting time, or could not get into the most convenient session. Overcoming these obstacles is worth the effort and energy and should be recognized as valuable ministry.

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9 AM — 4:30 PM

Morning Session: 9 AM — 12:15 PM

Part 1: 9—9:20 AM Welcome and Introduction

Set up circles of eight to ten chairs, ideally with round tables. Try to limit the group to no more than forty couples.

Set up a greeting table near the entrance at which the couples receive *A Marriage in the Lord*, registration card, fee envelope, pens, and nametags. If they have not already done so, encourage the couples to read pages 4–5 together.

9:00 Greetings, Prayer, Introductions

As the couples enter, greet them and invite them to fill out nametags and sit. When all have arrived, you extend your best wishes to them for their upcoming marriage, make the Sign of the Cross, and in prayer, invite them to ask for the Lord's blessing. Use one of the following prayers or one of your own choosing.

"We offer this prayer for all engaged couples."

A Couple's Prayer

O Lord, all-knowing and eternal God, we give you thanks and we bless your holy name. You created man and woman in your image and blessed their union, so that each would be for the other a help and support. Remember these couples gathered here today. Protect and grant that their love may be in the image of the devotion and love of Christ for his Church. Grant them a long and fruitful life together, in joy and in peace, so that, through your Son and in the Holy Spirit, their hearts may always rise to you in praise and goods works. Amen.

or

Prayer for Understanding Love

Lord Jesus, grant that these couples may have a true and understanding love for each other. Grant that they may both be filled with faith and trust. Give them the grace to live with each other in peace and harmony. May they always bear with each other's weaknesses and grow from each other's strengths. Help them to forgive each other's failings and grant them patience, kindness, cheerfulness and the spirit of placing the other's well-being ahead of their own. May the love that brought them together grow and mature with each passing year and bring them both ever closer to you through their love for each other. Amen.

Practical issues: Turn off phones, washrooms, time, fee payment, etc. Introduce the team: name, parish or community, how long married, how long ordained.

9:10 Ice Breaker

Ask each woman to introduce her fiancé and herself, and share when and where they are getting married. Her fiancé can share where they met, or one word he would use to describe their relationship. Or each partner can introduce the other and state the most endearing quality observed during the

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day or the past week. This gives each person a chance to be heard in a positive way, to start feeling a connection with the group.

Define Your Role

Give the engaged a clear sense of your own roles, as one of facilitators and holders of certain knowledge. You are not there to give answers to the question “What makes marriage work?” but to share the ideas you have while encouraging others to do the same. The hope is that the wisdom of all who are present will be shared during the day. Encourage the engaged to be active participants and to set aside their wedding plans for a short time to plan instead for their marriage.

9:20 Discuss pages 4–5 as a context for today and their entire marriage. These two pages are emailed to the couples the week before their PreCana, but they may not have read it.

Part 2: 9:20—10:30 AM Marriage Foundation

9:25 Claiming My Family of Origin pages 7–10

“Claiming My Own Family of Origin” is an exercise that helps the couples spot light the main events and influential people of their lives. Once each individual has completed the exercise, have them compare their answers with each other and respond to:

“Are your backgrounds the same or are they different? How will your past help you in your relationship or do you think it will cause problems?”

Allow ten minutes for personal reflection and ten minutes for couple dialogue for this exercise.

The team should indicate that the time given to the couples for completely discussing the exercises will *not* be adequate. The exercises are meant to facilitate discussion. This should be repeated at the end of any exercise that is not fully completed during the day.

“In this first exercise we dealt with the past and the present. We are here today because of our future.”

9:45 Building Our Own Marriage pages 11 and 13

Have the engaged start filling out the Building Our Own Marriage exercise. This starts with individuals in private reflection listing the essential elements to a marriage; then the couple discloses and combines their answers, prioritizes them; then in a small group discuss and agree upon three essentials, prioritizing and defining. Finally, the small groups share their results with the large group. Record the answers on newsprint or whiteboard. This exercise helps the engaged bond into a group familiar with each other and will help them to arrive at an understanding of contemporary Christian marriage. Sample introduction:

“We started this class by asking you to reflect upon your own histories, experiences, and values and we would like to continue in this vein. Since the topic we are all interested in is marriage, let’s get a sense of what this group means by marriage. In your workbook is an exercise “Building Our Own Marriage” found

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on pages 11 and 13. Please remove these pages from the book and each of you take a page. Answer first for yourself as an individual and list what you consider to be the most essential elements to marriage. Love is considered a given, so don't list that. Don't discuss this with your future spouse yet."

After a few minutes, ask each couple to develop a common list of three essential elements from the two individual listings and prioritize them, with number one being the most important element. Insist the couples go beyond a single word description of the essential element. The definitions they provide deepen the exercise and challenge the assumptions of the couples.

After the couples have developed their "couple list" ask the small groups to come up with a listing of their own by polling the couples in the small group to discover the element most frequently mentioned, the second most frequently mentioned, and so on. Each of the small groups should appoint one couple to as the moderators. They can be chosen arbitrarily, perhaps whoever is getting married last in the small group. When it is time to pool the findings and place them before the large group, follow the same process described above by asking for the responses of the small group, with the designated couple acting as recording and reporting secretary. Again, be sure to seek the definitions and understandings of the essential elements. The wisdom of the small groups should find its way to the large group.

Working Definition of Marriage

The final step is to ask the come up with a working definition of marriage. Use large print paper or a whiteboard to record the responses, and request the answers in order from the reporting couples or groups, with the primary choices listed first, then the secondary. Be sure to ask about any other elements anyone might have. Again, it is important to list all the elements of a good marriage which the group supports and to define these elements in order to give the exercise depth and substance; #1 first, then #2, then #3 if not already mentioned.

Part 3: 10:20 AM – 12:15 PM Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills

10:20 Communication, Winning and Losing in Communication

The next segment examines in depth one of the essential elements of marriage: Communication. This is normal every day communication, not how you communicate when you're angry or upset.

Introduce "Winning and Losing in Communication," pages 12 and 14, by asking individuals to respond to the questions on the worksheet, naming that which strengthens or injures their communication as a couple. Tell them to just fill in the box, not to answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

Give the couples ten minutes to individually respond to the questions on the worksheet. When they have finished, ask them to share their answers with each other as a couple. Allow ten minutes for couple dialogue. Stress that pursuing the "why" question will enable them to identify the internal motivation for using one communication technique rather than another. For example, if a couple says that one of them uses the silent treatment, pursuing the rationale or motivation for silence might one is trying to punish the other through this awkward silence. This strategy is obviously an individual win tactic because one person only will win and the relationship will lose.

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10:40 Spend another ten minutes working as one large group collecting the ideas from couples which they believe best strengthen their communication, and those ideas which most negatively impact their communication. This large group recovery of the insights of the individual couples will resource all of the couples.

10:50 Once the group has adequately developed a listing of strategies which strengthen and tactics that injure communication in a relationship, move the group into an analysis of the elements of dysfunctional communication:

“Even in the best relationships, there are disagreements.”

“On the bottom of the exercise “Winning and Losing in Communication” are two questions. As an individual, please respond to the questions without consulting your future spouse: What was the subject of the last argument the two of you had as a couple? Was it resolved to mutual satisfaction? Again, please do not consult with each other.”

Once everyone has had an opportunity to answer the questions, have the couples compare their responses together. Take a quick hand survey of the group asking how many couples agreed on the subject of their argument, and how many *resolved* it to mutual satisfaction. Discuss what we know about disagreements and resolving disagreements based on the two questions and the hand survey.

11:10 Conflict Resolution; Role Play

We want to move the group into a process of understanding why developing sound communication skills is the best interest of their marriage and themselves:

“Winning and losing in marital communication depends on whether you as a couple are resolving your issues as they arise. You and your marriage are winning if you can resolve your arguments to mutual satisfaction; you and your marriage are losing if issues remain unresolved.”

“We are going to present a make believe argument between a married couple. What we want you to take note of in the following presentation is: What are the topics of the argument? What are the tactics used by the couple? What are the emotions that fuel the argument?”

Have the team couple present a staged argument. Be sure it is a made up argument, not a real issue in their own marriage. A good fake argument might be about where they will spend the holidays, too much time spent at work, or something that is a common problem early in marriage.

11:20 Fair Fighting; Forgiveness

After the role play, in the large group, discuss the topics, tactics, and emotions used, and record these for all to see. You may also want to develop rules for fair fighting, a sample of which can be found in “Communication and Conflict Resolution” on pages 15–16 in the workbook. Split the room in half with one side developing ways to resolve arguments and the other side coming up with ways to make arguments worse. Then share in the large group noting Win–Lose–Lose vs. Win–Win–Win ways of

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dealing with arguments. Try not to repeat the same concepts or ideas used in “Winning and Losing in Communication.”

Tell the couples that in presenting constructive conflict, they must be careful not to try to “win” at any cost. With some conflict strategies, the objective is to hurt the other person. These individual “win” strategies which will cause the relationship to “lose” because eventually resentment will build within the marital relationship. When we are injured we tend to protect ourselves and defend against and get angry with whoever has harmed us. This defensiveness and anger naturally turns to resentment for the one who has caused us pain.

All couples have about ten issues that they will never resolve. Happy couples and couples that divorce tend to fight about the same things. The difference is in the way that they disagree. Dr. John Gottman says that couples also need to learn skills to express admiration and appreciation for each other. Stress that conflict within marriage is natural and to be expected. There are healthy and unhealthy ways in which individuals respond to the various circumstances of conflict. The engaged are encouraged to integrate those skills and techniques that manage and resolve conflict, address any underlying, abusive tendencies they observe within the relationship, if any.

This is a good opportunity to point out the issue of abuse within marriage by calling the couples’ attention to the information contained within “Serious Threats to Marriage,” pages 45–47. Tell them to read this at a later time.

Remind the couples that to avoid “losing” tactics, it is good motivation to adhere to constructive conflict rules, but remind them to also be realistic. Individuals will need time to learn new ways to conflict and argue. Mistakes will be made. Forgiveness needs to be discussed in any conversation about fair and unfair fighting. Seeking and honestly granting forgiveness are essential elements of communicating to empower marriage! Discuss the five steps to reconciliation and forgiveness highlighted on pages 18–19.

11:40 Couple Prayer; Practical Considerations for Couple Prayer

Discuss overview on page 20. Ask the couples to individually fill out the exercise and then discuss as a couple the bottom half of page 22 or 24.

11:55 Love Letter pages 27–30

In order to end the communication segment on a positive note and to teach a very effective method of strengthening couple communication, present “Love Letter,” which uses the WEDS method of strengthening communication: write, exchange, dialogue, and select. The team couple may read a sample letter of their own as a catalyst for inviting the couples to write their own letter to each other in the closing ten minutes of this segment.

Separate the men and women and ask the couples to write a letter to each other responding to the statement: “The strongest feeling I have about our upcoming marriage is...” or one of the other sample starter statements. The couples should share their letters with each other during their lunch break. This is a very powerful exercise.

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12:15 Lunch. Remind the couples to bring *A Marriage in the Lord* back with them for the afternoon. The class starts at 1:15 PM. Collect the registration cards and fee envelopes..

Afternoon Session: 1:15– 4:30 PM

Part 4: 1:15–1:55 PM Finances and Daily Issues

1:15 Mirror Mirror; Welcome Back; Ceremony Planning

When the couples begin to return, invite them to begin “Mirror Mirror,” pages 31–34.

1:25 When all are seated, welcome them back and ask those who have not finished the exercise to do so at home.

This is also a good time to call their attention to the Ceremony Planning sheet on page 85 that they can plan with their priest or deacon. There is a good video available on the MarriageMinistries channel on YouTube.

1:30 Agree Disagree

“Agree Disagree” is found on pages 35 and 37. This large group participation exercise is meant to help the couples identify the many issues which impact their relationship. The facilitators choose several of the statements to read aloud and the couples stand if they agree with the statement or sit if they disagree. Ask several of the individual participants why they stood or sat as a way of explaining how individuals heard and interpreted the statements.

1:40 Money Matters, Managing Money, Stewardship, Goal Setting, Protecting Your Marriage

“Money Matters” on pages 36 and 38 is an exercise similar to “Agree Disagree” that covers issues related to marital finances. Tell couples to quickly respond to the statements and then to share their response with each other (five minutes for individual reflection and five minutes for couple dialogue). They can use “Managing Money,” pages 39–41 as a future reference for planning. Tell them that financial issues are one of the top three issues newly married couples argue about.

Stewardship p. 39

Catholics believe we are called to stewardship, to recognize that all that we have is gift from God, and that we are called by God to share our gifts with others. We have a responsibility to use our financial resources wisely. This can be achieved by donating to the parish and supporting the counter cultural call to help others through charitable donations of our time, our talents, and our money. Emphasize the importance of stewardship in keeping the church functioning. It costs money to run parishes, programs, schools, and ministries.

Many couples getting married did not grow up in families that regularly attended church and donated money to help fund the church, but this does not mean they are not very generous people. Some people set aside a certain percent of their income (called tithing) to donate to church and charities. Parishes depend on the generosity of parishioners to fund ministry.

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Goal Setting to Empower Our Marriage pages 42–43

This can be completed at home, or even after the wedding ceremony, if time is tight. It helps the couple set goals for themselves and their marriage.

Preventative Maintenance page 44

Briefly discuss the suggestions on the importance of continuing to work on their marriage.

Part 5: 1:55 - 3:20 PM Sexuality and Children

1:55 Sexuality, the Church, and Children

Provide an overview of how the rest of the day will take place.

“We have talked about keeping our marital relationship as the primary relationship in our lives. We touched upon the need to empower marriage with communication, and how we must protect it from the many pulls of our hectic lives. The next part of the day is devoted to two weighty topics: sex and God.”

Sexual and Spiritual Intimacy; Theology of the Body; Sexual Empowerment

Discuss pages 48–51. Key themes to emphasize for the Theology of the Body are the terms one flesh, equal partnership, and mutuality.

The couple fills out “Sexual Empowerment” on pages 51 and 53, and share their responses with each other for fifteen minutes. They alternate asking and responding to the questions: one reads the first one and the other responds to it. Then the responder follows by reading the second question and the partner responds to it until they complete all the questions. Encourage them to seek out an area of the room where they will have some privacy and to sit knee-to-knee with each other so that they can listen attentively.

2:15 Write the words “Stumbling Blocks” for the couples to see. Ask them to call out what they think might make a fulfilling sexual relationship for a married couple problematic, such as time pressure, being too tired, sickness, prior sexual experiences, etc. List their answers and discuss “why” as the engaged call out their answers.

Point out that page 57 deals with abortion. Remind them that sexual intimacy calls for openness and honesty. If this has been a part of their past, it needs to be discussed with their future spouse.

Many engaged couples do not see the relevance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to their lives. Now is a good time to invite the engaged to avail themselves of the sacrament before they get married. By linking it to the sensitive and important topic of abortion, God’s love for us and forgiving nature can be presented, and the need to start the marriage off with a clean slate in a state of grace stressed.

One Day PreCana Outline

2:25 Cohabitation; Adult Children of Divorced Families, Forming a Step Family

Give a brief overview of the information on page 63–64. Although divorce statistics are higher for couples who cohabit prior to marriage, it does not mean any individual couple is more likely to divorce or that this will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many couples live together to save money or to test out their relationship, not just to have a sexual relationship. They really think it is a positive step before marriage, and may be surprised to learn that the statistics do not bear this out.

The Catholic Church is opposed to cohabitation, as it violates the Church's teaching about sexual love being expressed only in marriage, yet the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) website reports that over half of the couples who come to be married in the church are already living together. Many marriage ministers are confused as to what to do about this situation. They try to strike a balance between being harsh and punishing, and condoning or ignoring cohabitation. Parents are often anxious that their children "normalize" or "make right" their situation of "living in sin," and look to the Church for help to get their children married.

In *Familiaris Consortio* (#81), Pope John Paul II wrote: "The pastors and the ecclesial community should take care to become acquainted with such situations and their actual causes, case by case. They should make tactful and respectful contact with the couples concerned and enlighten them patiently, correct them charitably and show them the witness of Christian family life in such a way as to smooth the path for them to regularize their situation." Encourage the couples to discuss the questions on pages 63–64 with each other and their priest or deacon.

Point out page 65 and 66 for couples where one or both come from families that involved a divorce and for engaged couples who will be creating a stepfamily when they marry. Encourage them to read and discuss the questions on their own time.

2:35 An Informed Conscience; Good News about Sexual Intimacy in Marriage; The Benefits of Natural Family Planning

The workbook contains important information about forming our conscience, pages 55–56; Good News about Sexual Intimacy in Marriage, pages 58–59; and Natural Family Planning. These are included to help the couples discuss these complicated issues. Obviously, the complexity and multiple dimensions of these issues demand more time than one marriage preparation program could ever give.

Natural Family Planning (NFP)

Transition to a discussion on the Church's teaching on Natural Family Planning (NFP). It is very important to carefully share teaching on the topic. Make sure to include these points:

When talking about the Church's teachings on sexuality and marriage, the main core of the teachings lies on the two inseparable aspects of the sexual act; the life-giving (procreative) and the love-giving (unitive) natures of marriage.

Here is a sample overview to introduce Natural Family Planning:

One Day PreCana Outline

“How can a married couple adhere to the Church’s teachings on openness to life and to responsible parenthood in their marriage?”

“Natural Family Planning, or NFP, reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of a child. By respecting the love–giving and life–giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife. By integrating NFP as a way of living into your marriage, you can deepen your understanding of God’s plan for human sexuality, through the phases of the woman’s cycle and using NFP in different stages of your life cycle. How you respond to and communicate about your own procreative powers is an extremely important element of your marriage. Natural Family Planning is unique among the methods of family planning because it is effective and it enables its users to work with the body rather than against it. Fertility is viewed as a reality to live, not a problem to be solved.

“Natural Family Planning is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve, postpone, or avoid pregnancies. These methods are scientifically researched and are based on observations of naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman’s menstrual cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid or achieve a pregnancy.”

Give each couple an NFP brochure. Encourage them to read the pages in the workbook and to discuss them with each other. Invite them to attend an NFP introductory class to learn more or to take the class online at www.learnNFPonline.com. It would be helpful for discussing Natural Family Planning for you to have read the encyclical *Humane Vitae*, especially points 12 and 13.

Occasionally couples ask what the difference between NFP and artificial contraceptives is from the Church’s perspective. Artificial contraceptives change the nature of sexual intercourse, blocking its unitive nature. Natural methods, while avoiding pregnancy by abstinence during the fertile time, are still open to the transmission of life.

2:55 Break. This can be an excellent time for recruiting couples that may make good speaker couples for future PreCanas.

3:05 Children

Write the words *Children: If, When, and How Many* for all to see. Point out that even if an engaged couple only has a surface level discussion about children, usually the If, When, and How Many questions are discussed, but there should be much more to the discussion. Ask them to call out any other issues they believe an engaged couple ought to think about when discussing the children they may have. Discipline, childcare, expenses, schooling, religious upbringing, infertility, and adoption may be mentioned.

Give the couples several minutes to discuss, between the two of them, which of the listed issues they still need to talk about. Briefly share how you have dealt with some of the children issues raised by the engaged. Some couples already have children and you ask them if there is anything they would like to add. Couples may complete the Children exercise on pp. 67–70 if there is time.

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Part 6: 3:20–4:30 PM Faith in God

3:25 Presence of God

This is not in *A Marriage in the Lord*, but it is a good foundation for “Echoes of Love” pages 73–76 and “Echoes of God’s Love” pages 77–78.

This is often the most impactful time of the day as the engaged, some for the first time, realize the presence of God in their daily lives. This segment is initiated by inviting couples to do some storytelling. Ask the couples to answer the following questions:

1. When was the last time I felt the presence of God in my life?
2. What did the experience feel like?
3. Were there any memorable sights, sounds, smells, or circumstances?

Five to ten minutes should be given to the group to respond to these questions. One of the team should call on those who want to speak, while the other should write, for all to see, the dominant images, feelings, and expressions contained in the narratives. It is important for both persons to listen closely to what individuals are saying; the first to affirm and thank the individual for sharing the experience, and the other for the key words, feelings, sights, smells, sounds, and names used. Remember to avoid words such as “good,” “great,” or any qualifying term which can be construed as judgments on the narratives. “Thank you” is sufficient and void of qualifiers. Presenters could also share their own examples.

Do not force anyone to share. When everyone who wants to has spoken and the images and key words have been recorded, ask another question of the group, by using the following:

“Remember back to the time when you first met your future spouse, that time you first laid eyes on that person. Who was the first to start the conversation and the relationship, and how was it received?”

3:50 Storytelling

After several individuals have told their stories of how their relationship started, invite the couples to reflect upon their relationship with each other and with God:

There is a story told of a lover and his beloved. He seemed to have some of the same troubles that many couples have. He would try to initiate a relationship, but too often was rebuffed. Again and again he received a “No,” or “Later,” or “Not today.” Sometimes others would speak for him, saying what a compassionate, just, and good person he was. These friends would implore the beloved, but often to no avail. He was a lover who would not be put off, though.

Finally, a “Yes” was given; tentative, but a yes nonetheless. And the rest is history. The lover loved his beloved beyond all telling. His love held no grudges, could forgive all transgressions, and was the source of life for his beloved.

The story is well known and has been told and retold in the books of the Bible. The names of the liaisons between the lover and his beloved are most familiar and now legendary: Moses, Isaiah,

One Day PreCana Outline

Ruth, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Mary, Elizabeth, Paul, John, and so many others throughout the ages.

The lover in the story is our Lord, and we, his beloved. He has pursued us throughout the ages with the sole intent of giving us his love. He asks that we be his people and he, our God. We may say, “No,” today, or “later,” and really mean, “Never,” but he will ask again, and he will not give up. Alike to a father standing alone on a hillside searching for his wayward son, does our God also seek us. And when we turn to him, when we say, “Yes,” his arms envelop us and the words rise, calling forth a great celebration. He is a generous lover, this God of ours who wants only to love us.

He still pursues us. The stories we told of those times we felt the presence of our God in lives are simply the stories of how the lover still beckons to us, his beloved. He calls to us in our frailty and in our strength, he reveals himself to us in the midst of nature and in the quiet of a church. He is present in the faces of those whom we love and in the solitude of a car on an open road.

Christians call marriage a sacrament because it echoes the love God has for his spouse, his people. When we first gathered, you described marriage as you would want it for yourselves. Many of the same qualities and attributes that were upon that sheet are mentioned again on the paper that describes the experiences of God we have had. Marriage is a sign, a sacrament of the love of God. You are a sign of unconditional love for each other; you embody the unconditional love God has for us.

3:50 **Echoes of Love, Echoes of God’s Love**

“In the following exercise, we invite you to respond to reflection questions which focus on different elements in your relationship. Those same five relational moments are presented with examples from scripture that reflect the relationship we have with the Lord.

“Individually respond to the questions contained in “Echoes of Love” pages 73 and 75. When you have completed your written responses, save your work sheets in the book and make a date with your future spouse to share your answers together. Then you can read ‘Echoes of God’s Love’ starting on page 77.”

4:05 Point out “When Christians Marry” on pages 79–80, “Managing Time” page 81 and “Making Time” on pages 82–83, and remind them to look at “Preventative Maintenance” on page 44. Encourage them to do these together at a later time.

Ask if the group has any final comments they would like to share from any of the topics covered in the class.

4:10 **Hand Outs, Evaluation Forms**

Distribute any handouts and resources, and ask the couples to tear out and fill out the evaluation forms in the back of *A Marriage in the Lord* to help improve the class for future participants. Tell them to write their email address on the bottom of the evaluation form if they would like to receive more NFP information.

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4:20 Closing Prayer Service

Once the evaluation form is completed, ask a team member to collect them. If desired, you can invite the engaged to take a glass of wine or cider for the prayer service. The service may follow this order:

1. Call to prayer. *"Let us put ourselves in the presence of God."*
2. A reading from John: The Wedding at Cana, page 25.
3. Closing prayer and toast: *"Our prayer for you is that fifty years from now, the love you have for one another will shine brighter and stronger than the love you feel for each other today. We pray that, guided by the Holy Spirit, you will always feel God's presence, and together you will be a reflection of God's unconditional love. We ask this, and all things, through Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen."*

4:30 PM Class ends. Distribute Proof of Attendance cards, one per couple.

El amor nuestro y el Sacramento del matrimonio

GUÍA



Para los Ministros de preparación matrimonial

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Oficina de Ministerios para la Familia
Arquidiócesis de Chicago.

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Introducción

Esta guía ha sido redactada con la intención de ayudarles a los Ministros de Preparación Matrimonial, a hacer un buen uso del Manual *“El Amor Nuestro y el Sacramento de Matrimonio”* y sacar así, el mayor provecho del mismo. Ciertamente, no hay sólo una manera de usar este manual. Cada diócesis o parroquia puede adaptarlo a su conveniencia y necesidades propias. Aquí sólo se sugiere una manera de usarlo que, de acuerdo a la experiencia, prueba ser provechosa.

Para efectos de esta guía, se designará como Ministros de Preparación Matrimonial -MPM- a aquellas parejas que facilitan el proceso de Preparación Matrimonial en las parroquias o diócesis. Estos ministros tienen como objetivo principal, guiar a las parejas que se preparan para el matrimonio, a un entendimiento claro, de lo que es un matrimonio cristiano. Su misión es la de crear un ambiente en el cual las parejas descubran su potencialidad y su habilidad para construir su propia relación matrimonial, partiendo de las circunstancias en las que ambos se encuentran.

Por tal motivo, toda pareja que quiera dedicarse a realizar este ministerio, debería recibir un entrenamiento adecuado, que le capacite para tan magna labor. El entrenamiento les dará pautas no sólo de cómo usar el manual, sino también de cómo alcanzar el objetivo antes citado. La Arquidiócesis de Chicago, a través de la Oficina de Ministerio y Familia, está a su disposición para entrenar a sus Ministros de Preparación Matrimonial en su diócesis o parroquia.

Se espera que esta guía complemente adecuadamente al manual *-El amor nuestro y el Sacramento del Matrimonio-* siendo una valiosa herramienta para los MPM en su diócesis o parroquia.

Ministros de Preparación Matrimonial (MPM)

Los equipos de MPM

Las parejas que facilitan el proceso de preparación matrimonial en las diferentes diócesis o

Parroquias, se denominan aquí con el nombre de Ministros de Preparación Matrimonial o MPM.

TESTIMONIOS Y EXPERIENCIAS.

Los testimonios de los MPM son de suma importancia. La finalidad es que las parejas que están recibiendo la preparación matrimonial, miren de cerca la realidad del matrimonio y entiendan que cada situación poco favorable se puede resolver y trae consigo la posibilidad de

crecimiento personal y matrimonial.

Se recomienda que los testimonios sean máximo de 3 a 5 minutos.

Es importante recordar aquí, que su audiencia está formada, en la mayoría de los casos, por parejas jóvenes. Por tanto, se debe hacer un esfuerzo para que los testimonios y experiencias reflejen la realidad actual, con la cual las parejas jóvenes se identifiquen.

Llamados al ministerio

Dios llama a las personas a realizar diferentes tareas dentro de la comunidad cristiana. Los MPM, son parejas que han sido llamadas a desempeñar una labor ministerial importantísima. El deseo que ustedes están sintiendo de ayudar a otras parejas a prepararse para el matrimonio, es la voz de Dios que les está llamando a hacerlo. Dios les llama a:

1. Modelar maneras prácticas de vivir el matrimonio sacramental.
2. Vivir en el amor, no sermonear acerca del amor.
3. Hacer visible *su Amor divino* en su matrimonial, a través del amor que se profesan.

4. Respetar y valorar a las personas y especialmente a las parejas- por lo que son.
5. Valorar el “*Ser*” antes que el “*hacer*”.
6. Motivar a las parejas a construir su matrimonio, partiendo de una experiencia de fe cristiana.

Ser congruentes con lo que dicen a las parejas y lo que viven en su matrimonio

Ministros de Preparación Matrimonial (MPM)

Funciones pastorales de los MPM

Conocimiento del manual. Su amplio conocimiento del manual, les dará confianza y seguridad.

- 1. La facilitación de los temas.** Estudien los temas y presenten las ideas más importantes, de forma natural y dinámica.
- 2. Ejercicios y dinámicas.** Asegúrense que las parejas hacen los ejercicios y dinámicas.
- 3. Diálogo comunitario.** Los diálogos comunitarios o plenarios, enriquecen a toda la audiencia.
- 4. Ambiente de confianza.** Las parejas necesitan de un clima de confianza, para que se abran y aprendan mejor.
- 5. Apertura al diálogo.** Su apertura y su deseo de compartir sus propias experiencias con las parejas, será la invitación para que ellas también, compartan las suyas.
- 6. Escucha y responde.** Escuchen con atención a los comentarios y preguntas y respondan solo cuando sepan la respuesta. Es siempre recomendable animarlos a hablar con un sacerdote o diácono.
- 7. Sensibilidad y flexibilidad.** Tenga en cuenta las necesidades específicas del grupo. ¿En qué área hay que poner más énfasis? ¿Qué modificaciones habría que hacer al programa, de acuerdo a lo que está manifestando este grupo? ¿Quién necesita atención o estímulo, con unas palabras en privado? etc.
- 8. Modelos.** Recuerden que ustedes son los modelos que las parejas jóvenes necesitan, para encaminarse exitosamente, hacia su jornada matrimonial.
- 9. Consciencia.** Sea consciente de las situaciones que se podrían presentar, en algunos individuos o parejas, en relación con la práctica de la fe católica y su concepto sobre el matrimonio cristiano.

Sobre el manual: *El amor nuestro y el Sacramento del Matrimonio*

El Amor Nuestro y el Sacramento del Matrimonio, presenta diez temas, cada uno de ellos orientado a explorar un área del Sacramento del Matrimonio. Cada tema está compuesto de sub-temas afines para facilitar su estudio y comprensión. Además, cada tema incluye ejercicios o dinámicas para ser realizados individualmente o en pareja.

Aparte de esos ocho temas, se presentan cuatro temas complementarios, orientados a ministrar mejor a las parejas, en el ámbito de la convalidación del matrimonio, la cohabitación, los matrimonios interculturales y los matrimonios mixtos.

Se presentan cuatro de las amenazas más actuales, que enfrentan los matrimonios en la actualidad. Por último, se incluye una guía para la planeación de la ceremonia y una hoja de evaluación para él y para ella.

SE SUGIERE EL PROCESO SIGUIENTE.

1. Breve presentación teórica.
2. Ejercicio, dinámica o cuestionario.
3. Diálogo de pareja, conforme lo requiera cada ejercicio.
4. Breve testimonio de una de las parejas de MPM.
5. Preguntas y comentarios finales.

TEORÍA

Se sugiere que los MPM estudien cada tema y lo reflexionen, para que puedan explicar los diferentes componentes del tema, en sus propias palabras.

EJERCICIOS

Algunos ejercicios o cuestionarios vienen repetidos con la intención de que las parejas

puedan trabajar en forma individual, y luego compartan las respuestas entre sí. Para este propósito, cada página del manual está perforada, lo que facilita la separación de las mismas.

Objetivos

Objetivo general del manual

Ayudar a las parejas que se preparan para el matrimonio, a entender la grandeza del Sacramento del Matrimonio, y a descubrir maneras prácticas para vivirlo, partiendo de su propia realidad.

OBJETIVOS ESPECÍFICOS

1. Que las parejas entiendan plenamente qué es el Sacramento del Matrimonio y cómo vivirlo en su vida cotidiana.
2. Iluminar el camino a las parejas participantes para que construyan el matrimonio que desean.
3. Motivar a las parejas a cultivar una relación profunda de confianza, respeto, comunicación afectiva y efectiva y amor, basada en la espiritualidad y el amor de Dios.
4. Estimular la reflexión en las parejas participantes, para que descubran maneras prácticas y apropiadas, para vivir el matrimonio cristiano.
5. Motivar a las parejas a la apertura y al crecimiento personal, en pro de una relación matrimonial que se encamine a la madurez, y sea capaz de producir y cultivar los frutos de su amor.

Agenda

08.30 a.m. – 09.00 a.m.	Llegada, inscripción y café
09.00 a.m. – 09.10 a.m.	Oración y presentaciones personales de los MPM
09.10 a.m. – 09.20 a.m.	I. Valores y raíces de mi herencia
09.20 a.m. – 09.30 a.m.	Ejercicio: Valores y raíces de mi herencia
09.30 a.m. – 09.50 a.m.	Ejercicio: Ingredientes para un matrimonio cristiano
09.50 a.m. – 10.00 a.m.	Descanso para tomar café
10.00 a.m. – 10.45 a.m.	II. El Sacramento del Matrimonio
10.45 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.	Ejercicio: La decisión de casarse por la Iglesia
11.00 a.m. – 11.20 a.m.	III. La oración conyugal
11.20 a.m. – 11.30 p.m.	Decidiendo cómo orar en pareja.
11.30 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.	IV. La comunicación conyugal
12.00 p.m. – 12.10 p.m.	Reflexión sobre la comunicación
12.10 p.m. – 01.10 p.m.	Almuerzo (lunch)
01.10 p.m. – 01.20 p.m.	Dinámica: Acuerdo - desacuerdo.
01.20 p.m. – 01.50 p.m.	V. Situaciones por resolver en el matrimonio
01.50 p.m. – 02.00 p.m.	Dinámica: Dios lo arregla todo (dinámica no en el manual)
02.00 p.m. – 02.30 p.m.	VI. El perdón
02.30 p.m. – 02.45 p.m.	Ejercicio de reflexión individual
02.45 p.m. – 03.15 p.m.	VII. Administración de las finanzas en el matrimonio
03.15 p.m. – 03.30 p.m.	Ejercicio: Preparando su presupuesto mensual
03.30 p.m. – 03.45 p.m.	Ejercicio: Revisando sus acuerdos financieros
03.45 p.m. – 04.00 p.m.	Descanso
04.00 p.m. – 04.30 p.m.	VIII. Sexualidad e intimidad espiritual
04.30p.m. – 04.45 p.m.	Revelando mi intimidad a mi cónyuge
04.45 p.m. – 05.05 p.m.	IX. Misión cristiana de la paternidad/maternidad.
05.05 p.m. – 05.20 p.m.	Revisando los acuerdos de su futura familia
05.20 p.m. – 05.25 p.m.	X. Planificación Familiar Natural - Dar información de contacto-
05.25 p.m.	Comentarios y preguntas finales
	Entrega de documentos:
	Certificados Cartas Recursos Evaluaciones

8.30 AM

Cuestiones prácticas

MESA DE INSCRIPCIONES. Se sugiere una mesa de inscripciones con los materiales y la lista de personas registradas.

LLEGADA. Si alguna pareja no aparece en la lista, toma los datos correspondientes en una hoja aparte.

MATERIALES. Los materiales que reciben las parejas en la Arquidiócesis de Chicago son los siguientes:

- a. Un manual “El Amor Nuestro y el Sacramento del Matrimonio”, que contiene también las evaluaciones, que deben ser llenadas al finalizar el día.
- b. Dos lapiceros.
- c. Dos Etiquetas para que escriban su nombre.
- d. Una tarjeta de información general (para los archivos de oficina).
- e. Un sobre para la donación.
- f. Folletos de información de los recursos que ofrece la oficina.
- g. Un calendario permanente “Gotitas de amor”
- h. Las parejas escogen uno de estos dos CD: “Despertando al amor” o “Cuando el pastel se acaba”.

NOTA

En el caso en que ella o él esté participando sin su pareja, solo los datos de la persona **presente**, deberán aparecer en la tarjeta de información general y en el certificado de conclusión. Se escribirá la palabra **ausente** en el espacio que le correspondería a la persona ausente.

BIENVENIDA. Es siempre bueno darles la bienvenida a las parejas y felicitarlas por su futura boda.

ORACIÓN. Los MPM pueden hacer la oración siguiente o cualquiera otra que ellos decidan hacer.

9.00 AM

Oración para nuevos matrimonios

*Dios bueno y bondadoso,
te damos gracias por nuestra vocación matrimonial,
por la oportunidad que tú nos das
de elegir a la persona con la que queremos vivir.*

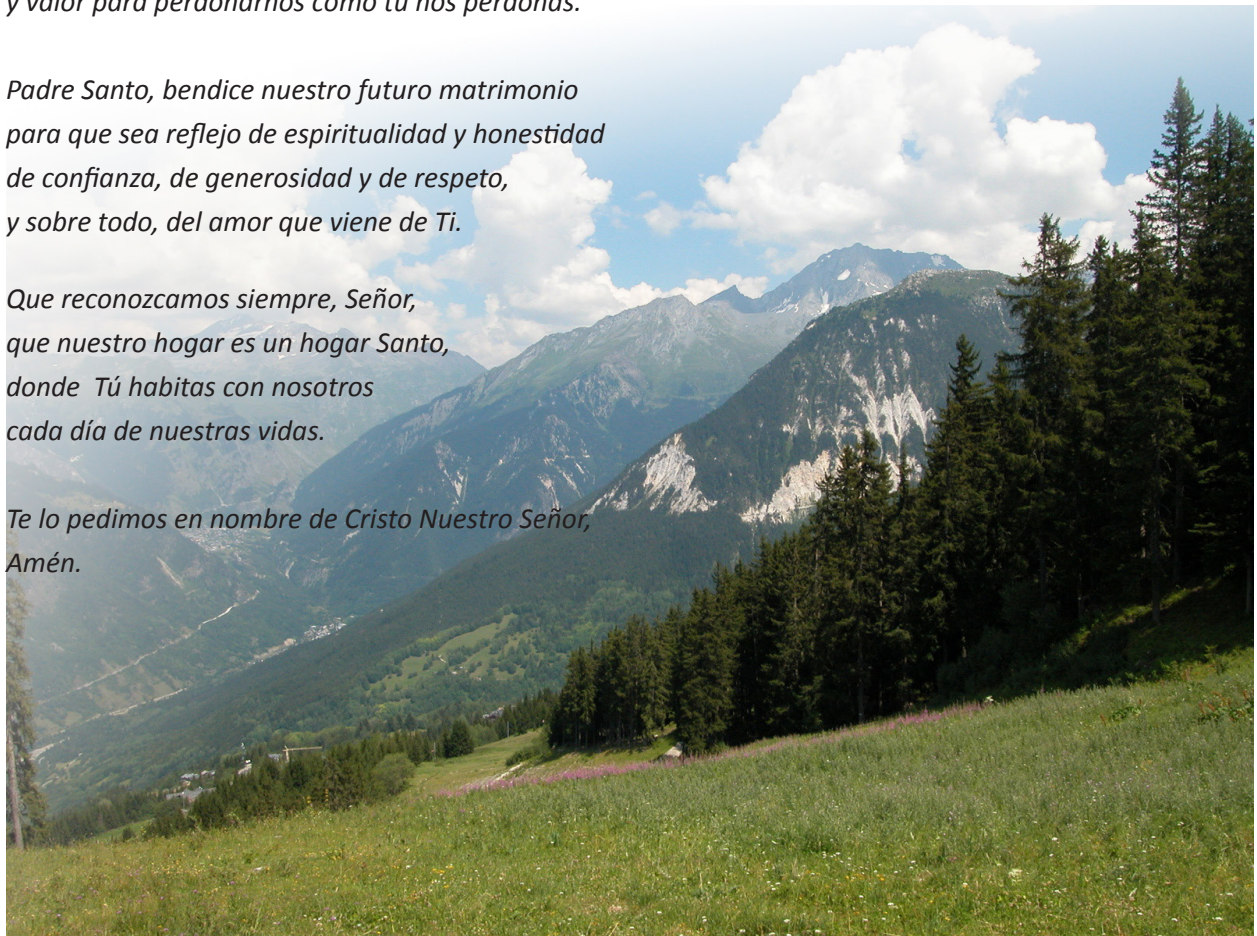
*Gracias por compartir nuestros anhelos,
nuestras alegrías y nuestro amor.
Danos un espíritu listo para acudir a ti en oración,
y fortalecer nuestro amor con tu amor santo.*

*Danos humildad para reconocer que no somos perfectos,
sabiduría para aceptar nuestros errores,
compasión para entendernos mutuamente,
y valor para perdonarnos como tú nos perdonas.*

*Padre Santo, bendice nuestro futuro matrimonio
para que sea reflejo de espiritualidad y honestidad
de confianza, de generosidad y de respeto,
y sobre todo, del amor que viene de Ti.*

*Que reconozcamos siempre, Señor,
que nuestro hogar es un hogar Santo,
donde Tú habitas con nosotros
cada día de nuestras vidas.*

*Te lo pedimos en nombre de Cristo Nuestro Señor,
Amén.*



9.05 AM

Presentaciones personales

Presentación breve del equipo de MPM. Si el grupo no es muy grande, se pueden invitar a las parejas participantes a que se presenten también.

Anuncios antes de continuar

- a. Mantengan sus celulares apagados o en silenciador.
- b. Hágales saber sobre la ubicación de los baños.
- c. El certificado de conclusión se les entregará solo a las parejas que hayan estado presente toda la clase.
- d. Si alguien está en la clase sin su pareja, el certificado de conclusión será válido solo para la persona presente.

9.10 AM

Desarrollo de temas

El desarrollo de temas sigue el proceso siguiente:

1. Teoría breve del tema
2. Ejercicios o dinámicas
3. Experiencia de pareja cuando sea apropiado.

I. Valores y raíces de mi herencia. Manual (20 minutos).

1. **Objetivo.** Que las parejas reflexionen en la herencia recibida en sus hogares de origen y hagan conciencia de su influencia en su manera de ser y vivir su matrimonio.
2. **Proceso: Teoría** (10 minutos).
 - a. Introducir tema brevemente, tomando como base la teoría de la página 6 del manual.
3. **Ejercicio individual** (5 minutos).
 - a. Instruya al novio para que arranque la página 7 y trabaje individualmente. La novia trabajará en el libro, página 9.
 - b. El novio y la novia comparten sus respuestas (5 minutos).

9.30 AM

Dinámica: Ingredientes para un matrimonio cristiano (20 minutos).

Proceso: Siga el proceso que presenta el manual en las páginas 8 y 10.

- a. Instruye a las parejas para que hagan una lista individualmente, de al menos 10 ingredientes. El novio trabaja en la página 9 que arrancó para el ejercicio anterior (5 minutos).
- b. El novio y la novia comparten la lista entre sí y escogen, de sus listas, los tres ingredientes que han seleccionado como los más importantes.
- c. Plenario. (10 minutos). Cada pareja comparte los tres que han escogido como los más importantes.

Nota

Tomen nota de los ingredientes que pronto comenzarán a repetirse. Al final, hagan una lista de los diez principales, poniendo como número 1, el que más se haya repetido. Esa lista reflejará lo que para ese grupo particular es importante en un matrimonio.

Recalca la importancia de Dios y la oración como los ingredientes más importantes en el matrimonio.

10 minutos de descanso

10.00 AM

II. El Sacramento del Matrimonio (60 minutos)

1. Objetivo:

- a. Que las parejas reflexionen en el significado del sacramento del matrimonio, lo que implica casarse por la Iglesia y la importancia de tener a Dios en sus vidas.
- b. Que las parejas sean conscientes de la importancia de estar conectados con la iglesia y la comunidad cristiana para el éxito matrimonial.

- 2. Proceso: Teoría** (45 minutos). Contesta para las parejas, las siguientes preguntas:
- a. ¿Qué es un Sacramento? ¿Qué es el Sacramento del Matrimonio? Página 11
 - b. ¿Cuáles son las gracias que Dios nos da en el Matrimonio? Página 12
 - c. ¿Cuáles son los símbolos visibles del Matrimonio? Página 12
 - d. La presencia de Dios es la que asegura el Sacramento del Matrimonio. ¿Qué puede hacer la pareja para asegurar esa presencia? Página 13
 - e. ¿Por qué se dice que el matrimonio es una vocación? Página 14
 - f. ¿Cuáles son las bendiciones y retos en el matrimonio? Página 15
 - g. ¿Cuál es el plan de Dios para el matrimonio? Página 16
 - h. ¿Por qué es importante que los matrimonios participen en una comunidad cristiana? **Página 16**
- 3. Nota:** La contestación a las preguntas anteriores puede hacerse involucrando a la audiencia. Sin embargo, algo a tener en cuenta es el tiempo. Recuerda que tienes aproximadamente 5.00 minutos para cada pregunta.
- 4. Ejercicio:** (7 minutos) Seguidamente, indique a las parejas que hagan el ejercicio -La decisión de casarse por la Iglesia- **página 17.**
- 5. Plenario:** (8 minutos). Algunas parejas pueden compartir, libremente, sus respuestas.

11.00 AM

III. La oración conyugal (30 minutos)

- 1. Objetivo**
Que las parejas entiendan la importancia de la oración en el matrimonio.
- 2. Teoría: Página 21** (10 minutos).
Explica a las parejas la importancia y los diferentes tipos de oración.
- 3. Experiencia de oración:** (5.00 minutos).
Comparta con las parejas la experiencia de oración que ustedes han tenido en tu matrimonio y cómo les ha ayudado en su matrimonio.
- 4. Ejercicio individual:** Decidiendo cómo orar en pareja, página 22 para ella y 23 para él (7 minutos).

Nota: La primera parte de este ejercicio es individual. Instruyan al novio para que despegue las páginas 22 y 23. Así, la novia trabajará en el libro y el novio en la hoja separada. Una vez que las parejas terminan la primera parte, van a la página siguiente para continuar en pareja el ejercicio.

5. **Ejercicio en pareja:** (8 minutos). Decidiendo cómo orar en pareja (página 24 para él y 25 para ella).

Nota: La segunda parte del ejercicio (página 24 para él y 25 para ella) es en pareja, aun cuando el libro la señala como individual. Las parejas platican y se ponen de acuerdo sobre el tipo o tipos de oración, la hora para realizarla y el día y la hora en que van a asistir a la eucaristía.

11.30 AM

IV. Comunicación conyugal *(40 minutos)*

1. **Objetivos**

- a. Que las parejas entiendan la importancia de la comunicación en la relación de pareja.
- b. Que hagan conciencia de los aspectos facilitadores de la comunicación.

2. **Proceso. Teoría, página 26 y 27** (30 minutos).

- a. Explique la importancia de la comunicación en el matrimonio (10 minutos).
- b. Explique los aspectos facilitadores de la comunicación (10 minutos).

4. **Testimonio** (5 minutos).

- a. Comparta un ejemplo de cómo ha sido la comunicación en su matrimonio

5. **Ejercicio individual, página 29 para él y 31 para ella** (8 minutos).

Nota

- a. Instruya al novio para que arranque la página 29, para que trabaje individualmente. La novia trabajará en el libro.
- b. **Compartir en pareja** (7 minutos).
El novio y la novia comparten y dialogan entre sí sobre sus repuestas.

12.10 PM

Disfruta de tu almuerzo

1.10 PM

Dinámica: Acuerdo – desacuerdo *(10 minutos)*

1. Objetivo

Que las parejas experimenten la importancia de hablar y ponerse de acuerdo, en diferentes situaciones.

2. Notas

- a. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. La respuesta que cada uno/a dé, solamente reflejará su propio punto de vista ante esa determinada situación.
- b. Si los puntos de vista son iguales, las parejas están de acuerdo en esa situación específica. Si son diferentes, deben hablar al respecto y llegar a acuerdos.

3. Dos modalidades para realizar esta dinámica

Primera modalidad

- a. Haga un grupo de hombres y otro de mujeres y colóquelos frente a frente, separados por una distancia de dos o tres metros uno del otro.
- b. Instruya a los grupos que quien esté de acuerdo con la afirmación que tú vas a leer (página 30 para ella y 32 para él), dé un paso adelante. Y quien esté en desacuerdo, se quede en su lugar.
- c. Lea primero la afirmación a los hombres y luego a las mujeres, o viceversa.
- d. Pídale que expliquen por qué están en desacuerdo o en acuerdo.
- e. Lea unas cuatro o cinco afirmaciones del libro.

Segunda modalidad

- a. Las parejas toman cinco minutos para dar sus respuestas, de forma individual (5 minutos).
- b. Él y ella comparten sus respuestas y hablan sobre aquellas en que no están de acuerdo (5 minutos).
- c. La pareja facilitadora, obteniéndose de dar su propio punto de vista, hace énfasis en la importancia de ponerse de acuerdos en cada una de esas situaciones, u otras similares que seguramente, saldrán en su convivencia matrimonial diaria.

V. Situaciones por resolver en el matrimonio *(40 minutos)*.

1. Objetivo

Que las parejas hagan conciencia de que las situaciones por resolver en el matrimonio son normales, puesto que somos seres limitados, y que con -Dios-, deseo de resolverlas, flexibilidad y apertura, toda situación se puede resolver.

2. Proceso. Teoría, páginas 33 y 34 (30 minutos)

- a. Explique los puntos de -Tomando decisiones en el matrimonio-, de la página 33 (10 minutos).
- b. Comparta los puntos que se sugieren en la página 34, sobre ganar – ganar (10 minutos).
- c. Mencione la importancia de un estado emocional relajado al resolver una situación, y de reconocer las emociones poco favorables y controlarlas inteligentemente (5 minutos).

3. Testimonio ¿Qué les ha ayudado a ustedes en su matrimonio? (5 minutos).

4. Dinámica: Dios lo arregla todo. Esta dinámica no está en el manual. Materiales: Filtros para café (10 minutos).

- a. Cada persona toma un filtro en sus manos, cierra sus ojos, y en un gesto de ofrecimiento, imagina que está poniendo su matrimonio en manos de Dios.
- b. Luego, abre sus ojos manteniendo las manos arriba, con el filtro, suelta el filtro y observa que baja -de la misma manera que baja el Espíritu Santo a ellos-, y antes de caer al piso, lo agarra. El Espíritu Santo llega a todo su cuerpo, a su cabeza, a sus hombros, a sus brazos, a sus piernas, a sus pies. Deja que el filtro se pose en cada una de las partes de su cuerpo.
- c. Una vez que lo han hecho, instrúyales para que tomen el filtro en sus manos, esta vez con el fondo hacia arriba, e imaginen que están poniendo en manos de Dios una situación matrimonial.
- d. Ahora, manteniendo las manos en posición de ofrecimiento, sueltan el filtro y observan cómo el filtro, antes de caer, se da vuelta. Practíquelo y compruébenlo varias veces.
- e. De la misma manera, Dios sabe arreglar toda situación matrimonial o personal, siempre que la pongamos en sus manos.

2.00 PM

VI. El perdón *(45 minutos)*

1. Objetivo

Que las parejas hagan conciencia de la importancia de pedirse perdón y perdonarse en el matrimonio, para que el amor crezca y se fortalezca.

2. Proceso. Teoría, pagina 35. (30 minutos).

- Explique a las parejas lo que se entiende por perdón y la importancia de pedir perdón y perdonar en el matrimonio (10 minutos).
- Hábleles sobre la importancia de corregir las actitudes y comportamientos, después de pedir perdón y ser perdonados (10 minutos).
- Explique la frase -Perdono pero no olvido- (10 minutos).

3. Ejercicio individual: El don del perdón, página 36 para ella y 37 para él (15 minutos).

- El novio arrancará la pagina 37 y trabajará el ejercicio individualmente. La novia trabaja en el libro (7 minutos).
- El novio y la novia comparten sus respuestas (5 minutos).

4. Testimonio.

Una de las parejas comparte un momento en el que, en el pasado, tuvieron que pedirse perdón y perdonarse (3 minutos).

2.45 PM

VII. Administración de las finanzas en el matrimonio *(45 minutos)*

1. Objetivos

- Que las parejas entiendan la importancia de compartir los bienes materiales en el matrimonio, logrando acuerdos, satisfactorios para ambos, sobre el manejo de sus finanzas.
- Que hagan conciencia sobre los cuidados en el uso de las tarjetas de crédito.
- Presentarles el presupuesto mensual, como una buena alternativa saludable para el manejo de las finanzas en el matrimonio.

2. **Proceso. Teoría**, páginas 39 y 40 (10 minutos).
 - a. Motive a las parejas para que hablen honestamente, sobre lo que cada uno trae a la relación matrimonial (deudas, cuentas por pagar, ingresos) y explica la importancia de unir todo sus bienes e ingresos, para bien del matrimonio (5 minutos).
 - b. Explica la importancia de organizar las finanzas en el matrimonio y el riesgo en el uso de tarjetas de crédito (5 minutos).
 - c. Explica en qué consiste el presupuesto mensual (5 minutos).
3. **Trabajo en pareja:** Preparando su presupuesto mensual, página 41 (15 minutos). Instruya a las parejas para que hagan su presupuesto mensual.

Nota: Si no cuentan con todos los datos que requiere el presupuesto, indíqueles que pueden terminarlo en su casa, para que los resultados sean correctos.
4. **Ejercicio.** Revisando sus acuerdos financieros, pagina 42 para ella y 43 para él.
 - a. El novio arrancará la pagina 43 y trabajara independientemente. La novia trabajará en el libro (5 minutos).
 - b. **Compartir respuestas.** El novio y la novia se unen para compartir sus respuestas y ver en qué áreas todavía no tienen acuerdos (5 minutos).
5. **Experiencia.** Una pareja comparte un testimonio relacionado con las finanzas (5 minutos).

3.45 PM

Descanso (15 minutos)

4.00 PM

VIII. Sexualidad e intimidad espiritual (45 minutos).

1. **Objetivos:**
 - a. Hacer conciencia en las parejas de que la sexualidad fue creada por Dios y por lo tanto, las relaciones sexuales dentro del matrimonio son buenas y santas.
 - b. Que entiendan que las relaciones sexuales dentro del matrimonio involucran a toda la persona y no sólo a la parte genital.

2. Proceso. Teoría, páginas 45 - 49 (30 minutos).

- a. Explica los siguientes conceptos (10 minutos).
 - i. Sexo
 - ii. Complementariedad,
 - iii. Participación en el don de la vida
 - iv. Sexualidad en el matrimonio
- b. Explique las cuatro dimensiones de la sexualidad (10 minutos).
- c. Explique por qué San Juan Pablo II dice que -El cuerpo tiene la capacidad de hacer visible lo invisible (5 minutos).
- d. Claves para la satisfacción sexual. Una posibilidad es que cada pareja lea una de las claves (5 minutos).

3. Ejercicio individual. Revelando mi intimidad a mi cónyuge, página 50 para ella y 51 para él (8 minutos).

- a. Instruya al novio para que arranque la página 51 y trabajen el cuestionario individualmente.
- b. Compartiendo las respuestas. El novio y la novia comparten sus respuestas y dialogan entre sí (7 minutos).

4. Tarea. Motive a las parejas para que lean en sus casas -La buena nueva sobre la intimidad sexual en el matrimonio- (páginas 53 - 54) y -La conciencia humana- (páginas 55 -57).

4.45 PM

IX. Misión cristiana de la maternidad y la paternidad (35 minutos).

1. Objetivos

- a. Qué las parejas sean más conscientes de la responsabilidad que implica la formación de una familia y conozcan los criterios a tener en cuenta.
- b. Que las parejas sean más conscientes que los hijos cambian la vida de la pareja y que se deben hacer ajustes a su llegado, para mantener la relación matrimonial y dar lo mejor a sus hijos/as.

2. Proceso teórico (20 minutos).

- a. Explica a las parejas en qué consiste la misión cristiana de la paternidad –maternidad página 58 (5 minutos).
- b. Explícales cuándo da inicio la responsabilidad parental y cuáles criterios usar en la decisión de cuándo iniciar la familia y cuántos hijos tener página 59 (7 minutos).
- c. Dales algunas sugerencias sobre la educación, el cuidado y atención que se debe dar a los hijos, página 60 y 61 (8 minutos).

3. Testimonio. Compartan uno o dos ejemplos de cómo los hijos cambiaron su vida de pareja (5 minutos).

4. Ejercicio en pareja. La paternidad y la maternidad, página 62, (10 minutos).

5.20 PM

X. Planificación Familiar Natural (5.00 minutos)

1. Objetivo.

Que las parejas sepan que hay métodos naturales para planificar su familia.

2. Proceso teórico (5 minutos).

- a. Digan a las parejas que:

Existen métodos naturales para que planeen su familia. Estos métodos son completamente saludables, científicamente probados y aceptados por la Iglesia Católica-.

- b. Para más información llama a:

- i. María García, Coordinadora de PFN en la Arquidiócesis de Chicago **312.534.8273** o la persona coordinadora en su diócesis o parroquia.
- ii. Curso de PFN en línea: aprendepfnenlinea.com Esta información está en la última página del libro (contraportada interna).

5.25 PM

XI. Entrega de documentos y certificado

1. Las parejas llenan la evaluación que está en las últimas dos páginas del libro. Hay una evaluación para ella y otra para él (página 81 y 83). Arrancan la página y la dan a la pareja o parejas presentadoras.
2. Mientras las parejas llenan la evaluación, hagan entrega de los siguientes documentos (en Chicago se entregan los siguientes).
 - a. Carta que certifica el lugar y la fecha en que hicieron el PreCaná y el número de horas que contiene.
 - b. Entregue uno de los dos CD: 1. Despertando al amor o 2. Cuando el pastel se acaba.
 - c. Un calendario permanente: Gotitas de Amor.
 - d. Folletos correspondientes.

5.30 PM

*Aproximadamente
Fin y despedida*



Your Wedding in the Catholic Church

Diocese of Belleville, Illinois — Office of Worship

INTRODUCTION

We, the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Belleville, offer you warm and heartfelt congratulations on your engagement! This is a wonderful and exciting time for you as you plan for your new life together. It can often be scary and overwhelming as you begin to look at all the preparation that goes into planning your wedding day. This guide is designed to assist you as you prepare to celebrate your marriage in the context of the Christian community. It is our hope that you will take the time to talk and pray together as you read and reflect on the material presented here.

VALUES VS. TRADITIONS

Many of us have dreamed of our wedding day since childhood. We have imagined the beautiful dresses, the white runner clothing the center aisle of the church, and that “special song” playing in the background as guests gather. While the thoughts are sentimental, the Church asks us to focus on faith and the lifelong sacrament you are about to celebrate. As a faith community, we often confront cultural customs and expectations that are contrary to the values we hold as Christians. You have chosen to be married in the Catholic Church. This choice means that you are being guided by the values embodied in the life of Jesus Christ - simplicity of life, honesty in relationships, care for the poor and needy. Societal pressures and consumerism should not have more influence on your celebrations than the Christian values we are all called to embrace.

The meaning of traditions is always important to understand. Some traditions derived from earlier centuries may not fit within today’s renewed liturgical understandings. If you have wedding traditions you would like to incorporate into your wedding liturgy, these should be discussed with the presider well in advance to determine their appropriateness. This applies, for instance, to Marian devotions and a unity candle. Do you as a couple have a special devotion to Mary? If not, to add something to the ceremony not originally prescribed may serve only to distract from the prayer and significance of the rites. The clear ritual symbols of the marriage rite are the bride and groom and the rings; there is no unity candle prescribed. A unity candle, if used at all, would fit more appropriately at the reception.

We can all name several other traditions associated with weddings: “It’s bad luck for the bride and groom to see each other before the wedding.” “The bride has to wear something

old, something new, something borrowed and something blue..." Many of these traditions are quite old, and their meanings have been lost. Some traditions portray attitudes toward the woman or man you may not want to associate with yourselves because they don't represent your values, or the mutuality of your relationship. When discussing traditions like the white carpet, children in wedding parties, or hiding from each other before the wedding, do some research. Find out why those traditions were started, and if they are traditions you wish to perpetuate.

THE MINISTRY OF MARRIAGE

You may not have thought of marriage as a ministry before, but that is indeed what it is. The faith and love you have for each other, grounded in God's unconditional and transformative love for you, is a tremendous gift, and cries out to be shared. Marriage is a call to allow your love to be a sign to the world of the intimate love of God for each of us. It celebrates a covenant relationship between husband, wife and God. The wedding liturgy is a sacramental event in which the Church witnesses to your vowed commitment and promises to pray for and support you in it. You are sent forth to be instruments of peace, justice, healing and love to each other, your children, and to the world.

YOUR WEDDING LITURGY AS THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

As you begin preparing your wedding liturgy, you will discover that it mirrors, almost exactly, the liturgy we celebrate as Catholics every Sunday. Therefore, the music and liturgical ministers you choose closely mirror what would be appropriate for any other liturgical celebration. This isn't simply "the bride's day," or "the couple's day," to do whatever they would like, but a day of celebration for the entire church. When you choose to marry in the church as a member of a parish community, you are asking your parish community to support you and celebrate with you, not only on your wedding day, but throughout the course of your married life.

MASS OR LITURGY OF THE WORD?

The first thing you need to do is determine whether you will exchange your vows during a Mass, or during a Liturgy of the Word service. Some points to consider:

- What is our relationship to the Sunday Eucharist?
- Do we regularly celebrate with our faith community on Sunday?
- Have we been away from the community's prayer? If so, have we committed ourselves to returning?
- Will most of our family and friends be able to participate in the Eucharist if we have a Mass?

In light of your answers to these questions, ask yourselves: Is Mass or a Liturgy of the Word the better context for our celebration of marriage? Some people think that a couple isn't really married unless they are married within a Mass. This simply is not true; the sacrament is just as valid with only the Liturgy of the Word. However, the celebration of Eucharist is the fullest sign of God's selfless love for us.

If one of you is not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church (and so will not be able to share in communion if the wedding is celebrated during mass), you may want to consider what this means.

Who will your guests be? Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them be with you and pray for you at your wedding? If many of your guests are not Catholic, you may wish to consider celebrating your wedding in a Liturgy of the Word.

Be open and honest with those from your parish who are helping you prepare for your marriage, and make the decision which will provide the best context for prayer and celebration.

LITURGICAL MINISTERS AT YOUR WEDDING LITURGY

Whether you choose to marry during a Mass or during a Liturgy of the Word service, it is imperative that the ministers you choose to proclaim the scriptures, lead the assembly in song, and distribute communion (during a Mass) are people with experience and training in those ministries. You may have family members or friends who are trained as Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, or Liturgical Musicians who would be happy to be of assistance to you on your wedding day. If not, check with your parish about ministers who would be able to help. The invitation to proclaim the readings, lead the assembly in song, or distribute communion should not be based solely on friendship or family ties, but on experience and training, so that these ministries are carried out comfortably and competently.

Hospitality Ministers

You have invited your guests to joyfully celebrate your marriage with you. It is important to set that spirit of joy and celebration early by warmly greeting and welcoming your guests. Choose ushers and greeters who are pleasant and hospitable. You may even choose to welcome your guests yourselves before the wedding. Also, consider how you seat your guests, since there is no liturgical norm for separating the bride's family from the groom's family.

The Bride and Groom

You, as bride and groom, have a special role in ministering to the assembly on the day of your wedding. Your guests, as the voice of the Church, share with you their wisdom and support as you begin your journey into marriage. It is your role to welcome this gift as you welcome them. This spirit is not reflected very well in the practice of the bride and groom not seeing each other before the wedding ceremony. This custom began at a time when families arranged marriages to cement family alliances. The bride and groom were seen as property rather than people, and kept apart so that the evil spirits would stay away from at least one of them and the marriage contract would be successful. Consider whether this is a tradition you wish to perpetuate. Instead, you may wish to set aside a special place to see each other before the wedding, and share a few moments together before greeting the guests you have invited to celebrate, support and pray with you.

The Assembly

Most of the guests you have invited to your wedding are people who have supported and encouraged you through various times in your life. Their presence with you on your wedding day is also one of faithful and joy-filled support. Your wedding liturgy belongs to more than just the two of you. It is a celebration of the entire church. The wedding liturgy isn't a "spectator sport" where your guests passively watch what happens. Rather, it is a joyous celebration that invites the full and active participation of the assembly that has come to support you. Be sure your wedding worship aid includes an outline, or order of service so people can easily follow and participate at the appropriate times. If possible, include the music that will be sung as well. More will be said about this later.

THE ORDER OF SERVICE

When choosing the readings, prayers and music for your wedding celebration, it is helpful for you to be familiar with each part of the service and how the rites and prayers all fit together. You will find planning sheets at the end of this booklet which will outline a ceremony for both a Mass and a Liturgy of the Word. After reading through the following sections, your presider and musicians can help you complete the form.

The Entrance Rite

The primary purpose for the entrance rite is to gather people together for worship. There are several ways this can happen. Often, liturgy (whether Mass or a Liturgy of the Word) begins with a greeting and gathering at the doors of the church, and followed by a procession to the sanctuary of the church. This is certainly true at a wedding. Questions you'll want to ask yourselves: Who will participate in the entrance procession? Will parents escort the bride and groom or will they enter as a couple? Will the attendants, lectors and presider also take part in the procession? Here is what the ritual prescribes:

...The ministers go first, followed by the priest, and then the bride and the bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses. (#20)

It is perfectly acceptable for the attendants to process two by two, rather than having the groomsmen wait in front and the bridesmaids enter by themselves. After the entrance procession there is often a gathering song which continues to unite the assembly, followed by a greeting from the presider. You, as a couple, may also wish to extend a few words of welcome.

The Liturgy of the Word

After coming together and being called to worship, the assembly is seated and the readings are proclaimed. The scripture readings tell of God's love and power at work in human history, and how we are to live as God's people. For this reason, readings from sources other than the scriptures are not permitted during the Liturgy of the Word. Again, a person or people who have been trained in their own parish should be selected for this ministry. The pattern of scripture readings is:

1. a selection from the Old Testament
2. a responsorial psalm (usually sung)
3. a selection from the New Testament
4. a sung Gospel Acclamation
5. a selection from one of the Gospels

It is also possible to have just one reading (from Old Testament, Acts of the Apostles or the epistles) followed by a responsorial psalm, Gospel acclamation, and Gospel. A list of appropriate scripture readings can be found at the end of this guide. The presider's homily follows the proclamation of the scripture readings.

The Rite of Marriage

The primary focus of this rite is the exchange of vows between two people. There is a variety of texts offered for this exchange to represent the Church's belief about marriage. You and your partner may wish to read through the various options and decide which one best suits you. These are available from your parish priest or deacon who will be presiding at your wedding.

The exchange of vows is placed in a special series of events. There is an introduction, a statement about your freedom and willingness to enter freely into marriage, and your willingness to bring up children. Next, you exchange your vows (there are two choices for how this may occur), then you exchange rings, and the marriage rite ends with the General Intercessions, which are prayers for the Church, for the world, for all married couples, and for the two of you. You may wish to compose your own intercessions. If so, you will need to work with someone from the parish to make sure they are in an appropriate format. Otherwise, use the ones provided in your wedding planning guide or in the wedding rite provided by your presider. Remember, that while we have much to be grateful for, intercessions are prayers of asking, not thanking.

The Eucharistic Prayer

If you are exchanging your vows during a Mass, then the service continues with the preparation of the gifts, and the Eucharistic prayer. While many couples don't take a collection during their wedding mass, you may want to consider including one, and donating the proceeds to your parish's social concerns committee, a local food pantry, or another favorite charity. Perhaps in your worship aid you can ask people to consider donating the amount they may spend on a beverage at the reception. In this way, you and your guests are reminded of Jesus' care and love of the poor and less fortunate.

There are parts of the Eucharistic prayer that are meant to be sung, just as at Sunday Mass. These parts include the Holy, Holy, the Memorial Acclamation and the Great Amen. Check with your musicians for appropriate and familiar settings of this.

The Lord's Prayer

Whether you are having a Mass or a Liturgy of the Word, this is a prayer in which the entire assembly participates. Some Christian traditions have the Lord's Prayer sung by a

soloist. In the Catholic tradition, however, it should be recited or sung by all.

The Nuptial Blessing

There are many forms for the nuptial blessing. The texts are both prayers of intercession as well as prayers of hope for the two of you. There are various forms this blessing can take; check with your presider and musicians to help you decide.

Communion

If you are exchanging your vows during a Mass, then you should select an appropriate communion processional song that can be easily sung by the assembly. Several suggestions are listed in the back of this guide. Music with a eucharistic theme, and a simple refrain are best.

The Dismissal

As the liturgy concludes, the couple and the assembly are blessed. This conclusion serves as the bridge between the marriage liturgy and any ceremony that follows. You may want to discuss how this transition will take place. Will you close with a hymn of praise, or an instrumental recessional in which the ministers depart?

MUSIC AT YOUR WEDDING LITURGY

Music is a basic and integral part of Catholic Worship, and therefore also for your wedding celebration. Whether you exchange your vows during a Liturgy of the Word or a Mass, music is not a frill, but an important and basic element that cannot be overlooked when planning your wedding ceremony. There are parts of the celebration that need to be accompanied by music, and the most important times are those for congregational song. Unfortunately in our recent history, this is usually the last type of music that couples consider. Allowing an organist, pianist or soloist to perform all of the music in your wedding is not compatible with Catholic Liturgy. **Planning music in which the entire assembly can take part is a vital requirement when planning music for your celebration.** It is important that the music fit the context of faith and dignity of the occasion. The texts should speak of a Christian concept of marriage, not focus on a romantic one. Every generation has its love songs, and some of them are great music. However, while they may have a place in your wedding day, they should be used outside of the wedding liturgy.

Liturgical Music is always performed live; therefore, recorded music is not appropriate for weddings.

It is also important to remember that your wedding day belongs to more than just the two of you. Those who have come to share the day with you want and deserve the opportunity to help you celebrate by lifting their hearts and voices in song. Let them be more than passive – let them celebrate with you, and select music to help them do that! Choose songs and refrains they can sing. By doing this, you give the assembly a sense that this is a celebration of joy where everyone can participate.

Selecting Your Musicians

Very often, parishes have a list of their own musicians who have been trained and will be happy to assist you in planning and ministering the music for your wedding. In accord with the primary focus of the celebration, all instrumentalists and vocal musicians should fulfill their roles as ministers of the liturgy, and their location in the church needs to reflect this. It is also important that those serving as musicians for your wedding be truly competent. This competency includes a thorough understanding of the structure of the Catholic wedding liturgy. Too often, friends or relatives of the couple are asked to serve as musicians out of friendship rather than competency. You will also need to check with your musicians as to what their fee is, and when they would like you to remit payment to them.

Selecting Your Music

The Church has set forth guidelines regarding the music in any liturgy, not just weddings, so the music you choose for your wedding should be evaluated in the same three areas: liturgical, pastoral, musical.

Liturgical: Is the music appropriate to the liturgy and celebration? Songs which are appropriate for the reception or dance, or songs that originate from movie soundtracks, Broadway shows or top 40 radio are seldom appropriate for liturgy.

Pastoral: Does the music allow for the assembly's participation when appropriate?

Musical: Is the music of quality and will it be done by competent musicians? Is it easily singable by the assembly?

Some music suggestions can be found at the end of this guide.

LITURGICAL ENVIRONMENT AND DECORATIONS

You may already have some ideas about decorations for your wedding, but be sure to check with the parish to see if they have any policies on decorations before you make your plans. There may already be plants, flowers, or other decorative objects in the church depending on the liturgical season and time of year. You will want to check with someone at the parish to find out what kind of environment will already be in place at the time of your wedding. Always bear in mind that the decorations in the church should complement the assembly's celebration, and not hinder or get in the way of it.

The placement of floral decorations is of utmost concern. There are to be no flowers or plants placed on the altar or ambo. Containers and stands should be placed in appropriate areas, so as not to obscure the altar, ambo or chairs for the presider and couple.

WORSHIP AIDS

Many couples prepare worship aids to help guide people through the liturgy. The main purpose of a worship aid is to assist the assembly's full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy. It is more than simply a theatre program displaying a cast of characters. The format and typesetting of the worship aid should be easy to read, and it should include

any music that the assembly will be singing. If the parish has a hymnal, you can list the titles and hymnal numbers. If not, check with your parish musician or music director for copyright information that will need to be included.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Most couples today choose to have photographers and/or videographers record their marriage. Many parishes have guidelines that your photographer and/or videographer need to follow, such as staying in one place throughout the ceremony, or whether or not a flash may be used. If you are having pictures taken before the ceremony, allow enough time before the wedding starts for relaxation and prayer. If you are having pictures taken after the ceremony, be sure that you are considerate of any other event that may be taking place after your wedding, such as an afternoon Mass, or another wedding. Be clear on the time limits for use of the church for your ceremony and photos.

MINISTERS OF THE LITURGY

Below is a list of people who will minister at the wedding ceremony. Make sure you have all the necessary people to allow your ceremony to proceed smoothly and prayerfully.

Ministers:

Priest/Deacon
Proclaimer of First Reading
Proclaimer of Second Reading
Reader of Intercessions
Organist/Pianist
Cantor/Soloist
Other Musicians
Ushers and Greeters

For Mass only:

Gift Bearers
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion — Body and Blood

FINAL THOUGHTS

We hope this booklet has assisted you in creating a liturgy that reflects both the prayer of the Church, as well as the festivity and commitment you want for your wedding. The following pages will help you select readings, music, and put together your order of prayer for your worship aid.

Best wishes to you as you honor the tradition of the Church and develop a wedding celebration that is uniquely your own!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament Readings

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a — *Male and female God created them.*

Genesis 2:18-24 — *They will be two in one flesh.*

Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67 — *Isaac loved Rebekah, and was consoled for the loss of his mother.*

Tobit 7:9c-10, 11c-15 — *May God join you together and fill you with blessings.*

Tobit 8:4-9 — *May God bring us to old age together.*

Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16a; 8:6-7a — *For love is strong as death.*

Sirach 26:1-4, 16-21 — *A good wife and a joyful husband.*

Jeremiah 31:31-32a, 33-34a — *I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah.*

Responsorial Psalm

(should be sung - when sung, verses may not be same as references given here)

Psalms 33:12, 18, 20-21, 22 — *The earth is full of the goodness of God.*

Psalms 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9 —
*I will bless the Lord at all times **Or** Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.*

Psalms 103:1-2, 8, 13, 17-18a —
*The Lord is kind and merciful **Or** The Lord's kindness is everlasting to those who fear him.*

Psalms 112:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8, 9 — *Happy are those who do what God commands.*

Psalms 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5 —
*Happy are those who fear the Lord. **Or** See how the Lord blesses those who fear him.*

Psalms 145:8-9, 10, 15, 17-18 — *The Lord is compassionate to all his creatures.*

Psalms 148:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14 —
*Let us all praise the name of the Lord **Or** Alleluia*

New Testament Readings

Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39 — *Who will separate us from the love of Christ?*

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 (or 12:1-2, 9-13) —
Offer to God your bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to him.

1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20 — *Your body is a temple of the Spirit.*

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8a — *If I am without love, it will do me no good whatsoever.*

Ephesians 5:2a, 21-33 (or 5:2a, 25-32) —
This mystery has many implications, and I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.

Colossians 3:12-17 — *Above all have love, which is the bond of perfection.*

1 Peter 3:1-9 — *You should agree with one another, be sympathetic and love.*

1 John 3:18-24 — *Our love is to be something real and active.*

1 John 4:7-12 — *God is love.*

Revelation 19:1, 5-9a — *Happy are they who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.*

Gospel Readings

Matthew 5:1-12a — *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.*

Matthew 5:13-16 — *You are the light of the world.*

Matthew 7:21, 24-29 (or 7:21, 24-25) — *He built his house on a rock.*

Matthew 19:3-6 — *So then, what God has united, no one must divide.*

Matthew 22:35-40 — *This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is similar.*

Mark 10:6-9 — *They are no longer two, therefore, but one body.*

John 2:1-11 — *This was the first of the signs given by Jesus; it was given at Cana.*

John 15:9-12 — *Remain in my love.*

John 15:12-16 — *This is my commandment: love one another.*

John 17:20-26 (or 17:20-23) — *May they be completely one.*

GUIDE TO PLANNING YOUR WEDDING MUSIC

In this section, we have provided a list of appropriate music for the various parts of your wedding liturgy. Before each segment is a brief explanation of what happens at that point in the liturgy.

The selections listed are accessible to all professional parish liturgical musicians. **This is not a comprehensive list!** Your parish music director will be able to assist in determining whether or not a piece not on this list is acceptable. You will also want to consult your parish hymnal, as it, too, has many songs that would be appropriate for your wedding celebration.

Processional/Recessional Music

The purpose of the processional music is to unite and focus the assembly's attention on the procession - the presider, any liturgical ministers, wedding attendants and the bride and groom. Only one processional song is needed; two may be used. Before the processional, you may want to select appropriate prelude music to be played and/or sung as your guests arrive. Suggestions for this can be found later in the section entitled *Solos and Other Assembly Songs*. The following suggestions are also appropriate for recessionals (leaving the church).

Allegro Maestoso – George Friederich Handel
Canon in D – Johann Pachelbel
Hornpipe (Allegro Maestoso) – George Friederich Handel
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring – Johann Sebastian Bach
Ode to Joy – Ludwig van Beethoven
Prelude to Te Deum – Marc-Antoine Charpentier
Rigaudon – Andre Campra
Rondeau – Jean Joseph Mouret
Saint Anthony Chorale – Attributed to Joseph Haydn
THAXTED – Gustav Holst
Trumpet Tune – Henry Purcell
Trumpet Voluntary – John Stanley

Gathering Songs

After the entrance procession, couples may choose to sing a gathering song to unite the assembly in prayer. While a gathering song isn't required, it is particularly helpful when families come from different Christian backgrounds, again as a unifying agent for the assembly.

All Creatures of Our God and King – LASST UNS ERFREUEN
All People That on Earth Do Dwell – OLD HUNDRETH
Canticle of the Sun – Marty Haugen
For the Beauty of the Earth - Traditional
Gather Us In – Marty Haugen

Gather Your People – Dan Schutte
Gathered in the Love of Christ – Marty Haugen
God in the Planning – BE THOU MY VISION
Hear Us Now, Our God and Father - HYFRYDOL
Joyful, Joyful We Adore You – ODE TO JOY
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling - HYFRYDOL
Praise to the Lord – LOBE DEN HERRN
Rain Down – Jaime Cortez
Sing of the Lord's Goodness – Ernest Sands
When Love Is Found – O WALY WALY
Lover of Us All – Dan Schutte
God is Love – ABBOT'S LEIGH
God, Who Created Hearts to Love - LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Responsorial Psalm

It is most appropriate that the responsorial psalm be sung. The Psalm follows the first reading, and is led by the cantor. The cantor intones the refrain, the assembly repeats it, and the cantor sings the verses. It is important that the text be a psalm; a solo or other sacred song may not be used. Refer to the above list for appropriate selections.

Gospel Acclamations

Before the Gospel is proclaimed by the presider, an alleluia is sung by the cantor and assembly. If your wedding takes place during Lent (not the usual practice), you will need a Lenten gospel acclamation that doesn't include an alleluia. Your musician will be able to suggest something appropriate.

Preparation of the Gifts

If your ceremony is taking place during Mass, then you may want to select a piece to be sung by the assembly or a soloist during this time. Bear in mind that without a collection, the time is short, so select a piece that can be ended easily. If you choose to take a collection for a local food pantry or charity, the piece may be longer.

Blest Are They – David Haas
Center of My Life – Paul Inwood
City of God – Dan Schutte
Here I Am, Lord – Dan Schutte
I Have Loved You – Michael Joncas
My Song Will Be For You Forever – David Haas
On Eagle's Wings – Michael Joncas
The Love of the Lord – Michael Joncas
We Are Called – David Haas
We Are Many Parts – Marty Haugen
We Have Been Told – Marty Haugen
We Will Serve the Lord – Rory Cooney
Wherever You Go - Weston Priors
Wherever You Go – David Haas

Eucharistic Acclamations and Lamb of God

If you are celebrating your wedding during a Mass, the Holy, Holy; Memorial Acclamation; Amen and Lamb of God will need to be sung by the assembly. Your cantor can assist the assembly in singing their parts, and additional instruments can also be used to add festivity to the organ or piano part. Check with your musicians or your presider to determine the best musical settings.

Communion Processional

If you are celebrating your wedding during a Mass, then you will want to choose a communion processional that can be sung by the cantor and assembly as they come forward to receive communion.

Eat This Bread - Taize
Taste and See – James Moore
Gift of Finest Wheat - Robert Kreutz
Table of Plenty – Dan Schutte
Song of the Body of Christ – David Haas
In the Breaking of the Bread – Bob Hurd
The Supper of the Lord – Laurence Rosania
Bread for the World – Bernadette Farrell
Bread, Blessed and Broken – Michael Lynch
One Bread, One Body – John Foley, S.J.
No Greater Love – Michael Joncas
Take and Eat – Michael Joncas
Pan de Vida – Bob Hurd

Solos and Other Assembly Songs

The following selections are a small sampling of other pieces that can be incorporated into your wedding liturgy at appropriate places, or used as a prelude.

A Nuptial Blessing – Michael Joncas
Ave Maria – Bach/Gounod
Ave Maria - Schubert
Covenant Hymn – Cooney/Daigle
God Is Love – David Haas
Love One Another – James Chepponis
May Love Be Ours, Lord – Michael Joncas
The Gift of Love – Hal Hopson
Ubi Caritas – Bob Hurd
Ubi Caritas – Chant
Now Thank We All Our God – NUN DANKET
This Day God Gives Me – Trad. Irish
There is One Lord – Taize
How Beautiful – Twila Paris

PUBLISHERS REPRESENTED IN THESE LISTINGS

If you reprint the words or music from any of these selections, you must include the copyright information. Your parish music director will be able to help you with this.

GIA Publications, Inc. — 7404 South Mason Avenue, Chicago, IL 60638.
1-800-442-1358 — giamusic.com

OCP (Oregon Catholic Press) — 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213
1-800-548-8749 — ocp.org

World Library Publications — 3825 North Willow Road, Schiller Park, IL 60176-2309
1-800-566-6150 — wlpmusic.com

Another good resource in planning your wedding and for your marriage is:
For Your Marriage (foryourmarriage.org) – An initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and, in particular, the members of the standing Committee on Music - Sister Carolyn McWatters, RSM, Orin Johnson and Dennis York – for the countless hours of work spent creating this wonderful resource.

June, 2013

WEDDING LITURGY PLANNING SHEET

Wedding Mass

Gathering Rites

Prelude

Music from "Proclamation/Recessional," and "Solo and Other Assembly Songs" sections of this booklet are particularly appropriate.

Proclamation

Music from "Proclamation/Recessional," section of this booklet is particularly appropriate.

Sign of the Cross and Greeting

Opening Song (optional)

Music from "Gathering Songs" section is particularly appropriate.

Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Old Testament options, typically

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading

New Testament options, typically

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel Reading

Gospel Reading options

Homily

Rite of Marriage

Declaration of Intent
Exchange of Vows
Exchange of Rings

Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts

Instrumental or music from "Preparation of the Gifts" or "Solo and Other Assembly Songs" sections are particularly appropriate.

Eucharistic Acclamations

Lord's Prayer
Nuptial Blessing
Sign of Peace

Lamb of God

Communion

Music from "Communion Processional" section is particularly appropriate.

Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rite

Blessing and Dismissal

Recessional

Music from "Processional/Recessional," section of this booklet is particularly appropriate.

WEDDING LITURGY PLANNING SHEET

Wedding Liturgy Outside Mass

Gathering Rites

Prelude

Music from "Proclamation/Recessional," and "Solo and Other Assembly Songs" sections of this booklet are particularly appropriate.

Proclamation

Music from "Proclamation/Recessional," section of this booklet is particularly appropriate.

Sign of the Cross and Greeting

Opening Song (optional)

Music from "Gathering Songs" section is particularly appropriate.

Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Old Testament options, typically

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading

New Testament options, typically

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel Reading

Gospel Reading options

Homily

Rite of Marriage

Declaration of Intent

Exchange of Vows

Exchange of Rings

Intercessions

Nuptial Blessing

Lord's Prayer

Concluding Rite

Blessing and Dismissal

Recessional

Music from "ProceSSIONal/Recessional," section of this booklet is particularly appropriate.

Notes

APPENDIX A

PREMARITAL INVENTORY

PREPARE/ENRICH (*Premarital Personal and Relationship Enrichment*), Dr. David H. Olson, PREPARE/ENRICH, Inc., Minneapolis, MN, 1977)

PREPARE/ENRICH is a customized couple assessment completed online that identifies a couple's strength and growth areas. It is one of the most widely used programs for premarital counseling and premarital education. It is also used for marriage counseling, marriage enrichment, and dating couples considering engagement. Based on a couple's assessment results, a ***trained facilitator*** provides 4-8 feedback sessions in which the facilitator helps the couple discuss and understand their results as they are taught proven relationship skills.

In the Diocese of Belleville, this is a **mandatory component** of the process. Please use the **Catholic customized version** of PREPARE/ENRICH.

What are the major goals of the PREPARE/ENRICH Program?

There are several goals of the PREPARE/ENRICH Program. In order to achieve these goals there are exercises designed to help couples improve their relationship skills. The program helps couples:

- Explore strength and growth areas
- Strengthen communication skills
- Identify and manage major stressors
- Resolve conflict using the Ten Step Model
- Develop a more balanced relationship
- Explore family of origin issues
- Discuss financial planning and budgeting
- Establish personal, couple and family goals
- Understand and appreciate personality differences

How do clergy and marriage pastoral minister(s) get trained to use PREPARE/ENRICH?

Facilitators must attend a PREPARE/ENRICH workshop. The Diocese of Belleville holds periodic trainings as the need arises. Please contact the Office of Worship, Diocese of Belleville (618) 722-5038 for details.

PREPARE ENRICH

• building strong marriages •

Catholic Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH

The following is an overview of the Catholic Version of PREPARE/ENRICH. If a facilitator trained in PREPARE/ENRICH wants the couple to take the Catholic version, they would pre-select this option for the couple as they are registered to take the inventory. This step means the couple will have several scales automatically included in their inventory including: *Catholic Spiritual Beliefs*, *Parenting Expectations and Sexual Expectations* (see sample scale items below). If the couple has different faith backgrounds, the facilitator can select an *Interfaith/Interchurch* version in place of the Catholic version.

Sample Catholic Inventory Items

Catholic Spiritual Beliefs

- I understand what the Church teaches about marriage as a sacrament.
- I embrace the teaching that marriage is a permanent commitment.
- It is important to me to go to Mass every Sunday.
- Prayer is an important part of my daily life.

Catholic Parenting Expectations (premarital)

- We have discussed how children should be disciplined.
- We agree on the number of children we would like to have.
- We agree to teach Catholic values to our children.
- It is important to me to send our children to Catholic school.

Catholic Sexual Expectations (premarital)

- I am comfortable talking with my partner about sexual issues.
- We have discussed and decided to use natural family planning.
- We have discussed and agreed on the boundaries of our premarital sexual activity.
- I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material (pornography).

Interchurch/Interfaith Couples

- Differences in our spiritual beliefs cause tension in our relationship.
- Despite our religious differences, we have found (or plan to find) a place of worship we can attend together.
- My family is concerned about our religious differences.
- We have discussed the challenges associated with raising children in an interfaith family.

PREPARE ENRICH

• building strong marriages •

Scales Selected based on Background Questions answered by the Couple

From a Catholic perspective, there are a variety of new scales that are automatically selected based on the background information the couple provides while taking the assessment. Note that some items are negative or unhealthy and the desired response is “disagree”. Many of these scales were developed in collaboration with our Catholic partners.

Sample Inventory Items

Cohabitation Issues (premarital couples)

- Living together has been more challenging than I had anticipated.
- Living together is a good test before committing to marriage.
- We have had more power struggles as a couple since we began living together.

Cultural/Ethnic Issues

- Even though we come from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds, we share very similar beliefs and values.
- It is very important to me that we find traditions, rituals, and holidays we can both feel good about observing.
- My partner is very sensitive and respectful toward my cultural background.

Forgiveness (married couples)

- My partner has done or said some things I may never be able to forgive.
- Tension remains in our relationship, even after we work through hurts and disappointments.
- I feel closer to my partner after we work through a disappointment.

Commitment Questions

- I believe my partner is committed to making our marriage last for a lifetime.
- I am open to doing whatever it takes to improve our marriage.

Previously Married:

- I am worried that past relationships will present problems for us.
- We have both had sufficient time to work out the issues and hurts from our past relationships.
- I now have a clear understanding of the reasons why previous relationships/marriages didn't work out.

PREPARE ENRICH

• building strong marriages •

Customized Version with Catholic Content Highlighted

	Dating	Engaged	Married
Correction Scale	Idealistic Distortion	Idealistic Distortion	Idealistic Distortion
Core Scales	Communication Conflict Resolution Partner Style & Habits Family & Friends Financial Management Leisure Activities Sexual Expectations Spiritual Beliefs Relationship Expectations Character Traits	Communication Conflict Resolution Partner Style & Habits Family & Friends Financial Management Leisure Activities Sexual Expectations Spiritual Beliefs Marriage Expectations Relationship Roles	Communication Conflict Resolution Partner Style & Habits Family & Friends Financial Management Leisure Activities Sexual Relationship Spiritual Beliefs Forgiveness Roles & Responsibilities
Couple & Family Map	Couple Flexibility Couple Closeness Family Closeness Family Flexibility	Couple Flexibility Couple Closeness Family Closeness Family Flexibility	Couple Flexibility Couple Closeness Family Closeness Family Flexibility
Relationship Dynamics	Assertiveness Self-Confidence Avoidance Partner Dominance	Assertiveness Self-Confidence Avoidance Partner Dominance	Assertiveness Self-Confidence Avoidance Partner Dominance
SCOPE Personality Scales	Social Change Organized Pleasing Emotionally Steady	Social Change Organized Pleasing Emotionally Steady	Social Change Organized Pleasing Emotionally Steady
Stress Scales	Personal Stress	Premarital Stress	Personal Stress
Customized Spiritual Beliefs Scales	Interfaith/Interchurch Catholic Spiritual Beliefs Protestant Spiritual Beliefs Jewish Spiritual Beliefs	Interfaith/Interchurch Catholic Spiritual Beliefs Protestant Spiritual Beliefs Jewish Spiritual Beliefs	Interfaith/Interchurch Catholic Spiritual Beliefs Protestant Spiritual Beliefs Jewish Spiritual Beliefs
Customized Parenting Scales	Parenting Expectations Becoming Parents Children & Parenting Intergenerational Issues Step Parenting Expectations	Parenting Expectations Becoming Parents Children & Parenting Intergenerational Issues Step Parenting Expectations	Parenting Expectations Becoming Parents Children & Parenting Intergenerational Issues Step Parenting Issues
Over 55 Customized Scales		Health Issues Role Transitions	Health Issues Role Transitions
Other Customized Scales	Cultural/Ethnic Issues Cohabitation Issues Commitment Previous Marriage	Cultural/Ethnic Issues Cohabitation Issues Commitment Previous Marriage	Cultural/Ethnic Issues Commitment

APPENDIX B

PRENUPTIAL FORMS (SAMPLES)

- **PRENUPTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE – Envelope**
- **PRENUPTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE**
- **WITNESS AFFIDAVIT – WITNESS I & WITNESS II**
- **DISPENSATION/PERMISSION**
- **PETITION FOR A DECLARATION OF NULLITY IN A LACK OF FORM CASE**

These forms may be obtained from:

*The Chancery – Diocese of Belleville
222 South Third Street
Belleville, IL 62220
618-277-8181*

GROOM _____ DATE OF MARRIAGE _____

BRIDE _____ PLACE OF MARRIAGE _____

PRIEST/DEACON ARRANGING _____

PRIEST/DEACON CELEBRATING _____

WITNESSES _____ and _____

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENT: _____

CONTENTS CHECKLIST: GROOM BRIDE

QUESTIONNAIRE _____

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE _____

CONFIRMATION CERTIFICATE _____

AFFIDAVITS _____

DISPENSATIONS, PERMISSIONS AND APPROVAL OF CHANCERY _____

MARRIAGE PREPARATION _____ REHEARSAL DATE _____ TIME _____

LICENSE SECURED _____ NUMBER _____ RETURNED _____

BAPTISMAL NOTIFICATION SENT _____ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT RECEIVED _____

PARISH MARRIAGE REGISTER: VOLUME _____ PAGE _____



Province of Chicago
PRENUPTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Diocese of Belleville

Each of the parties should be interviewed SEPARATELY and under oath. Please print the information and answer all the questions, even if you know the parties well. A recent baptismal certificate is required for each Catholic party. Certificates are to be originals with parish seals, not photocopies.

FOR CHANCERY USE ONLY

Groom _____ Bride _____
Legal Name Legal Name

Place of proposed marriage _____ Date of proposed marriage _____

Witnesses _____ and _____

Priest/Deacon arranging the marriage _____

Priest/Deacon witnessing the marriage _____

Delegation (if needed) given by _____ Date given _____

GROOM

Name _____ Social Security Number _____

Address _____
Street Apt. No.

City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date and place of birth _____ Occupation _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Religion _____ Rite (if other than Latin) _____

Date of baptism _____ Place _____
Church City State

Date of confirmation _____ Place _____
Church City State

Father's name _____ Religion _____ Rite _____

Mother's maiden name _____ Religion _____ Rite _____

Parish in which you now reside (for Catholic parties) _____ Length of residence _____

1. How long have you known each other? _____ How long engaged? _____
2. Do you regularly participate in the practice of your faith? Yes _____ No* _____
3. Have you ever been married before (either in church, civilly, or by common law)? Yes* _____ No _____
(If "yes," please give complete information on reverse side. A civil marriage being validated should also be indicated.)
4. Are you related to your fiancée by blood, marriage, or legal adoption? Yes* _____ No _____
(If "yes," please submit a diagram or explanation of the relationship.)
5. Are there any canonical impediments to your marriage (age, sacred orders, public perpetual vow of chastity, crime, public propriety, impotence?) Yes* _____ No _____
6. Have you seriously reflected on the obligations of a marital commitment and judged yourself capable of fulfilling them? Yes _____ No* _____
7. Have you or your fiancée experienced or been treated for any mental or emotional difficulty or any alcohol or chemical dependency? Yes* _____ No _____

8. Do you understand the nature and obligations of marriage and do you agree, without any condition or reservation:
- a) to enter a marriage that is for life;.....Yes _____ No* _____
- b) to give your spouse the right to have children;.....Yes _____ No* _____
- c) to accept the obligation of being faithful to your spouse;.....Yes _____ No* _____
- d) to give your consent freely and without force of any kind?.....Yes _____ No* _____
9. To the best of your knowledge, is your fiancée making this same commitment?Yes _____ No* _____
10. (for a person under 18) Do your parents consent to this marriage?.....Yes _____ No* _____
11. Do you swear to the truth of the statements you have made?.....Yes _____ No* _____

Signature of Groom

Date

If an answer appears where an asterisk () occurs, please give an explanation for the answer. Indicate the number of the question to which your comments are directed and use additional sheets of paper if necessary: _____

I, the undersigned priest/deacon, declare that the groom whose signature is affixed above appeared before me personally on the date given above; that I proposed to him individually all of the above questions under oath and personally recorded the answers given; that no one else was present during the questions; that I have on file all necessary documents; and that the groom has been instructed in accord with the law of the Church.

Signature of Priest/Deacon

Place

PREVIOUS MARRIAGE(S) OF GROOM

With whom?

(1) _____

Date of marriage?

(1) _____

Place (name of church or other site) where marriage was celebrated, as well as the city and state.

(1) _____

Before whom? (title of religious minister or civil official)

(1) _____

Is this marriage to be validated?

(1) _____

If the marriage was valid, how did the bond of marriage cease?

(1) _____

If a former spouse is dead, give date of death and include death certificate.

(1) _____

If a former marriage was dissolved or declared null by the Church, the official document from the Church court must be presented to the Chancery with these forms and its protocol number given here.

(1) _____

Did such a declaration of nullity indicate any restrictions on your freedom to enter a new marriage?

(1) _____

How are the natural obligations, arising from this prior union, toward another party or toward children being met? (c. 1071, 1,3°)

(1) _____

With whom?

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

BRIDE

Name _____ Social Security Number _____

Address _____
Street _____ Apt. No. _____

City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date and place of birth _____ Occupation _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Religion _____ Rite (if other than Latin) _____

Date of baptism _____ Place _____
Church _____ City _____ State _____

Date of confirmation _____ Place _____
Church _____ City _____ State _____

Father's name _____ Religion _____ Rite _____

Mother's maiden name _____ Religion _____ Rite _____

Parish in which you now reside (for Catholic parties) _____ Length of residence _____

1. How long have you known each other? _____ How long engaged? _____
2. Do you regularly participate in the practice of your faith? Yes _____ No* _____
3. Have you ever been married before (either in church, civilly, or by common law)? Yes* _____ No _____
(If "yes," please give complete information on reverse side. A civil marriage being validated should also be indicated.)
4. Are you related to your fiancé by blood, marriage, or legal adoption? Yes* _____ No _____
(If "yes," please submit a diagram or explanation of the relationship.)
5. Are there any canonical impediments to your marriage (age, sacred orders, public perpetual vow of chastity, crime, public propriety, impotence?) Yes* _____ No _____
6. Have you seriously reflected on the obligations of a marital commitment and judged yourself capable of fulfilling them? Yes _____ No* _____
7. Have you or your fiancé experienced or been treated for any mental or emotional difficulty or any alcohol or chemical dependency? Yes* _____ No _____
8. Do you understand the nature and obligations of marriage and do you agree, without any condition or reservation:
 - a) to enter a marriage that is for life; Yes _____ No* _____
 - b) to give your spouse the right to have children; Yes _____ No* _____
 - c) to accept the obligation of being faithful to your spouse; Yes _____ No* _____
 - d) to give your consent freely and without force of any kind? Yes _____ No* _____
9. To the best of your knowledge, is your fiancé making this same commitment? Yes _____ No* _____
10. (for a person under 18) Do your parents consent to this marriage? Yes _____ No* _____
11. Do you swear to the truth of the statements you have made? Yes _____ No* _____

Signature of Bride _____ Date _____

If an answer appears where an asterisk () occurs, please give an explanation for the answer. Indicate the number of the question to which your comments are directed and use additional sheets of paper if necessary: _____

I, the undersigned priest/deacon, declare that the bride whose signature is affixed above appeared before me personally on the date given above; that I proposed to her individually all of the above questions under oath and personally recorded the answers given; that no one else was present during the questions; that I have on file all necessary documents; and that the bride has been instructed in accord with the law of the Church.

Signature of Priest/Deacon

Place

PREVIOUS MARRIAGE(S) OF BRIDE

With whom?

(1) _____

Date of marriage?

(1) _____

Place (name of church or other site) where marriage was celebrated, as well as the city and state

(1) _____

Before whom? (title of religious minister or civil official)

(1) _____

Is this marriage to be validated?

(1) _____

If the marriage was valid, how did the bond of marriage cease?

(1) _____

If a former spouse is dead, give date of death and include death certificate.

(1) _____

If a former marriage was dissolved or declared null by the Church, the official document from the Church court must be presented to the Chancery with these forms and its protocol number given here.

(1) _____

Did such a declaration of nullity indicate any restrictions on your freedom to enter a new marriage?

(1) _____

How are the natural obligations, arising from this prior union, toward another party or toward children being met? (c. 1071, 1,3°)

(1) _____

With whom?

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

CERTIFICATION WHEN OFFERED BY PRIEST/DEACON

A priest/deacon may certify the correct intention and freedom to marry of the groom and/or bride by signing below. In this event, other witnesses are not required.

The undersigned is morally certain of the freedom to marry and the correct intention of _____

and/or _____ whose signature(s) appear on this form. This certainty I have from my own personal knowledge

or from personal investigation. Parents have been consulted for persons under 18 years of age.

Signature of Priest/Deacon



Provincia de Chicago
CUESTIONARIO PRENUPCIAL

Arquidiócesis de Chicago

St. Andrew's Archdiocese of Chicago
500 N. Dearborn Ave.
Chicago, IL 60610
Phone: (312) 321-1000
Fax: (312) 321-1001

Los interesados deben ser entrevistados individualmente y responder bajo juramento. Sírvase escribir con letra de imprenta la información requerida y conteste todas las preguntas aunque conozca bien a la pareja. Cada uno de los contrayentes deberá presentar una partida de Bautismo reciente. Los Certificados deben ser originales y no fotocopias, deberán tener los sellos correspondientes de la Parroquia.

SOLO PARA EL USO DE LA
CANCELLERIA

Novio _____ Novia _____
Nombre Legal Nombre Legal

Lugar de la Boda _____ Fecha de la Boda _____

Testigos _____ y _____

Sacerdote/Diácono encargado del arreglo matrimonial _____

Delegado (si es necesario) por _____ Fecha _____

NOVIO

Nombre _____ Seguro Social _____

Dirección _____
Calle Apt. No. Ciudad Condado Estado Zona Postal

Fecha y lugar de nacimiento _____ Ocupación _____

Teléfono/casa _____ Teléfono/trabajo _____

Religión _____ Rito (si diferente del latino) _____

Fecha de Bautismo _____ Lugar _____
Iglesia Ciudad Estado

Fecha de Confirmación _____ Lugar _____
Iglesia Ciudad Estado

Nombre del padre _____ Religión _____ Rito _____

Apellido de soltera de la madre _____ Religión _____ Rito _____

Parroquia actual (para los católicos) _____ ¿Desde cuándo? _____

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que se conocen? _____ ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que están comprometidos? _____

2. ¿Practica con regularidad su religión? Si _____ No* _____

3. ¿Ha estado Ud. casado anteriormente (por la Iglesia, civilmente o por ley común?
(Si su respuesta afirmativa complete la información en el reverso. Si el matrimonio civil es válido debe mencionarse) Si* _____ No _____

4. ¿Está relacionado a su novia por un vínculo familiar, matrimonial, o de adopción legal?
(Si es sí, explíquelo a través de un diagrama) Si* _____ No _____

5. ¿Existe algún impedimento canónico para su matrimonio (edad, orden sagrada, voto público de
castidad perpetua, crimen, propiedad pública, impotencia)? Si* _____ No _____

6. ¿Ha pensado Ud. Seriamente en las obligaciones del compromiso matrimonial y se siente capaz de
responder a las responsabilidades consecuentes? Si _____ No* _____

7. ¿Ha recibido Ud. o su novia algún tratamiento a causa de problemas físicos, emocionales, alcohólicos
o de cualquier dependencia química? Si* _____ No _____



8. ¿Entiende y acepta Ud. sin reserva alguna la esencia y obligaciones del matrimonio como son:
- a) que el matrimonio es para toda la vida?.....Si _____ No* _____
- b) que debe dar a su esposa el derecho de tener hijos?.....Si _____ No* _____
- c) que debe ser fiel a su esposa?.....Si _____ No* _____
- d) que da su consentimiento libremente sin ser forzado?Si _____ No* _____
9. ¿Usted cree que su novia está haciendo el mismo compromiso?Si _____ No* _____
10. (Para las personas menores de 18 años) ¿Tienen el consentimiento de sus padres para este matrimonio?Si _____ No* _____
11. ¿Puede Ud. jurar que es verdad el contenido de estas declaraciones?.....Si _____ No* _____

Firma del Novio

Fecha

* Todas las preguntas cuyas respuestas están marcadas por un asterisco (*) deben ser explicadas. Si es necesario use otras hojas indicando el número de la pregunta y añada la explicación: _____

Yo, el Sacerdote/Diácono, declaro que el novio cuya firma aparece arriba, se presentó ante mí en la fecha arriba indicada; declaro que yo personalmente le hice las preguntas una por una y que bajo juramento, firmó ante mí este documento. Declaro que ninguna otra persona estuvo presente durante la interrogación; que tengo en los archivos todos los documentos necesarios y que se explicó al novio la ley de la Iglesia sobre este asunto.

Firma del Sacerdote/Diácono

Lugar

MATRIMONIO (S) ANTERIORES DEL NOVIO

¿Con quién?

¿Con quién?

(1) _____ (2) _____

Fecha del Matrimonio

(1) _____ (2) _____

Lugar (Parroquia o localidad) donde el matrimonio fue celebrado, ciudad, estado

(1) _____ (2) _____

¿Ante quién se casaron? (Nombre del ministro religioso, u oficial civil)

(1) _____ (2) _____

¿Es este matrimonio válido?

(1) _____ (2) _____

Si el matrimonio fue válido, ¿cómo se disolvió el vínculo?

(1) _____ (2) _____

Si la esposa anterior murió, dé la fecha e incluya el certificado de defunción.

(1) _____ (2) _____

Si el matrimonio anterior fue disuelto o declarado nulo por la Iglesia, el documento oficial del tribunal de la Iglesia debe ser presentado a la Cancillería con el número protocolar correspondiente.

(1) _____ (2) _____

Dicha declaración de nulidad, ¿señaló algún impedimento para que Ud. pueda contraer matrimonio nuevamente?

(1) _____ (2) _____

¿Cómo está cumpliendo Ud. las obligaciones de su matrimonio anterior, en relación con su pareja o hijos?

NOVIA

Nombre _____ Seguro Social _____

Dirección _____
 Calle Apt. No. Ciudad Condado Estado Zona Postal

Fecha y lugar de nacimiento _____ Ocupación _____

Teléfono/casa _____ Teléfono/trabajo _____

Religión _____ Rito (si diferente del latino) _____

Fecha de Bautismo _____ Lugar _____
 Iglesia Ciudad Estado

Fecha de Confirmación _____ Lugar _____
 Iglesia Ciudad Estado

Nombre del padre _____ Religión _____ Rito _____

Apellido de soltera de la madre _____ Religión _____ Rito _____

Parroquia actual (para los católicos) _____ ¿Desde cuándo? _____

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que se conocen? _____ ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que están comprometidos? _____

2. ¿Practica con regularidad su religión? Si _____ No* _____

3. ¿Ha estado Ud. casado anteriormente (por la Iglesia, civilmente o por ley común)?
 (Si su respuesta afirmativa complete la información en el reverso. Si el matrimonio civil es válido debe mencionarse)..... Si* _____ No _____

4. ¿Está relacionado a su novia por un vínculo familiar, matrimonial, o de adopción legal? Si* _____ No _____

5. ¿Existe algún impedimento canónico para su matrimonio (edad, orden sagrada, voto público de
 castidad perpetua, crimen, propiedad pública, impotencia)? Si* _____ No _____

6. ¿Ha pensado Ud. seriamente en las obligaciones del compromiso matrimonial y se siente capaz de
 responder a las responsabilidades consecuentes? Si* _____ No _____

7. ¿Ha recibido Ud. o su novia algún tratamiento a causa de problemas físicos, emocionales, alcohólicos
 o de cualquier dependencia química? Si* _____ No _____

8. ¿Entiende y acepta Ud. sin reserva alguna la esencia y obligaciones del matrimonio como son:

a) que el matrimonio es para toda la vida? Si* _____ No _____

b) que debe dar a su esposa el derecho de tener hijos? Si* _____ No _____

c) que debe ser fiel a su esposa? Si* _____ No _____

d) que da su consentimiento libremente sin ser forzado? Si* _____ No _____

9. ¿Usted cree que su novia está haciendo el mismo compromiso? Si* _____ No _____

10. (Para las personas menores de 18 años) ¿Tienen el consentimiento de sus padres para este matrimonio? Si* _____ No _____

11. ¿Puede Ud. jurar que es verdad el contenido de estas declaraciones? Si* _____ No _____

Firma del Novio _____

Fecha _____

Todas las preguntas cuyas respuestas están marcadas por un asterisco () deben ser explicadas. Si es necesario use otras hojas indicando el número de la pregunta y añada la explicación:

Yo, el Sacerdote/Diácono, declaro que el novio cuya firma aparece arriba, se presentó ante mi en la fecha arriba indicada; declaro que yo personalmente le hice las preguntas una por una y que bajo juramento, firmó ante mi este documento. Declaro que ninguna otra persona estuvo presente durante la interrogación; que tengo en los archivos todos los documentos necesarios y que se explicó al novio la ley de la Iglesia sobre este asunto.

Firma del Sacerdote/Diácono

Lugar

MATRIMONIO (S) ANTERIORES DE LA NOVIA

¿Con quién?

(1) _____

Fecha del Matrimonio

¿Con quién?

(2) _____

(1) _____

(2) _____

Lugar (Parroquia o localidad) donde el matrimonio fue celebrado, ciudad, estado

(1) _____

(2) _____

¿Ante quién se casaron? (Nombre del ministro religioso, u oficial civil)

(1) _____

(2) _____

¿Es este matrimonio válido?

(1) _____

(2) _____

Si el matrimonio fue válido, ¿cómo se disolvió el vínculo?

(1) _____

(2) _____

Si la esposa anterior murió, dé la fecha e incluya el certificado de defunción.

(1) _____

(2) _____

Si el matrimonio anterior fue disuelto o declarado nulo por la Iglesia, el documento oficial del tribunal de la Iglesia debe ser presentado a la Cancillería con el número protocolar correspondiente.

(1) _____

(2) _____

Dicha declaración de nulidad, ¿señaló algún impedimento para que Ud. pueda contraer matrimonio nuevamente?

(1) _____

(2) _____

¿Cómo está cumpliendo Ud. las obligaciones de su matrimonio anterior, en relación con su pareja o hijos?

CERTIFICACION OFRECIDA POR UN SACERDOTE/O DIACONO

Un sacerdote/o diácono puede certificar la buena intención y libertad de contraer matrimonio por parte del novio y/o de la novia, con su firma al final de la hoja. En este caso no son necesarios otros testigos.

El que firma está moralmente convencido de la libertad y las buenas intenciones para contraer matrimonio de

_____ y/o _____ cuyas firmas aparecen en esta forma.

Tengo esta certeza por mi conocimiento o por investigación personal. Los padres han sido consultados de antemano al tratarse de menores de 18 años de edad.

Firma del Sacerdote o Diácono



Province of Chicago
WITNESS AFFIDAVIT

Diocese of Belleville

Witness I

Testimony of a Knowledgeable Witness for _____

to be married at _____

Church and City of Marriage

This form (in whole or in part) is to be used in the following cases:

1. To establish freedom to marry when either party is not known to the priest or deacon arranging the marriage.
2. To prove the baptismal status of either party when other proof is not available.

Witnesses must be interviewed SEPARATELY by the priest or deacon. Parents usually are preferred witnesses.

1. Name _____

A married woman should also include her maiden name

Address _____

Street

Apt. no.

City

County

State

Zip Code

2. How long have you known the person whose name appears above? _____

What is your relationship to this person? _____

3. Has this person ever been baptized? _____ In what religion? _____

Place of Baptism _____ Date of Baptism _____

Church

City, State

4. Has this person ever contracted or attempted marriage (in church, civilly, or by common law?) _____

How many times? _____ With whom? _____ When? _____

Where? _____ How ended? _____

For any invalid marriage(s) listed above, was there ever a validation before a Catholic priest or deacon? _____

5. Do you know of any canonical impediments to this marriage (age, family relationship, sacred orders, public perpetual vow of chastity, crime, public propriety, impotence?) _____

6. Is this person mentally and physically able to live a normal married life? _____

7. As far as you know, does this person intend to enter a marriage that is for life, to give his or her spouse the right to have children, and to accept the obligation of fidelity? _____

8. Is this person being forced in any way to enter marriage against his or her will? _____

9. (If the person to be married is under 18) Do the parents or guardians give their consent to this marriage? _____

10. Do you solemnly swear to the truth of the statements you have made? _____

Church Seal

Signature of Witness

Signature of Priest/Deacon

Date

Church and City

1987



Provincia de Chicago
DECLARACION DE TESTIGO

Arquidiócesis de Chicago

TESTIGO I

Declaración del testigo que conoce a _____

que va a casarse en _____

Parroquia y Ciudad del Matrimonio

Este formulario (ya sea en parte o totalmente) debe usarse en los siguientes casos.

1. Para establecer la libertad de casarse cuando ninguno de los contrayentes es conocido por el sacerdote o diácono encargado del matrimonio
2. Para probar el estado de bautizado de cualquiera de los contrayentes cuando dicha prueba no exista. Los testigos deben ser entrevistados por separado por el sacerdote o diácono. Usualmente los padres son los testigos preferidos.

1. Nombre _____

La mujer casada debe incluir su apellido de soltera

Dirección _____

Calle

Número de apto.

Ciudad

Condado

Estado

Zona Postal

2. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo conoce a la persona cuyo nombre aparece arriba? _____

¿Cuál es su relación con esta persona? _____

3. ¿Ha sido bautizada esta persona? _____ ¿En qué Religión? _____

Lugar del bautismo _____ Fecha de bautismo _____

Iglesia

Ciudad/Estado

4. Esta persona ha contraído o ha tratado de contraer matrimonio por la Iglesia, civilmente o por ley común?

¿Cuántas veces? _____ ¿Con quién? _____ ¿Cuándo? _____

¿Dónde? _____ ¿Cómo terminó el matrimonio? _____

Por cada matrimonio inválido, señalado anteriormente, ¿hubo algún reconocimiento del mismo, ante un sacerdote o diácono católico?

5. ¿Conoce algún impedimento canónico para este matrimonio (edad, relación familiar, orden sagrada, voto público de castidad perpetua, crimen, impotencia)? _____

6. ¿Es esta persona mental y físicamente capaz de vivir en matrimonio normalmente, conociendo su propósito? _____

7. ¿Le consta que esta persona intenta entrar en un matrimonio permanente, dar a su esposo/a el derecho de tener hijos y aceptar su obligación a la fidelidad? _____

8. ¿Se encuentra esta persona obligada a casarse, en contra de su voluntad? _____

9. (Si la persona es menor de 18 años) ¿Están sus padres o guardianes de acuerdo con el matrimonio? _____

10. ¿Jura que ha respondido con la verdad a todas estas preguntas? _____

Sello de la Iglesia

Firma del testigo

Firma del Sacerdote/Diácono

Fecha _____

Iglesia y Ciudad



Province of Chicago
WITNESS AFFIDAVIT

Diocese of Belleville

Witness II

Testimony of a Knowledgeable Witness for _____

to be married at _____
Church and City of Marriage

This form (in whole or in part) is to be used in the following cases:

1. To establish freedom to marry when either party is not known to the priest or deacon arranging the marriage.
2. To prove the baptismal status of either party when other proof is not available.

Witnesses must be interviewed SEPARATELY by the priest or deacon. Parents usually are preferred witnesses.

1. Name _____
A married woman should also include her maiden name

Address _____
Street Apt. no.
City County State Zip Code

2. How long have you known the person whose name appears above? _____

What is your relationship to this person? _____

3. Has this person ever been baptized? _____ In what religion? _____

Place of Baptism _____ Date of Baptism _____
Church City, State

4. Has this person ever contracted or attempted marriage (in church, civilly, or by common law?) _____

How many times? _____ With whom? _____ When? _____

Where? _____ How ended? _____

For any invalid marriage(s) listed above, was there ever a validation before a Catholic priest or deacon? _____

5. Do you know of any canonical impediments to this marriage (age, family relationship, sacred orders, public perpetual vow of chastity, crime, public propriety, impotence?) _____

6. Is this person mentally and physically able to live a normal married life? _____

7. As far as you know, does this person intend to enter a marriage that is for life, to give his or her spouse the right to have children, and to accept the obligation of fidelity? _____

8. Is this person being forced in any way to enter marriage against his or her will? _____

9. (If the person to be married is under 18) Do the parents or guardians give their consent to this marriage? _____

10. Do you solemnly swear to the truth of the statements you have made? _____

Church Seal

Signature of Witness

Signature of Priest/Deacon

Date

Church and City



Provincia de Chicago
DECLARACION DE TESTIGO

Arquidiócesis de Chicago

TESTIGO II

Declaración del testigo que conoce a _____

que va a casarse en _____

Parroquia y Ciudad del Matrimonio

Este formulario (ya sea en parte o totalmente) debe usarse en los siguientes casos.

1. Para establecer la libertad de casarse cuando ninguno de los contrayentes es conocido por el sacerdote o diácono encargado del matrimonio
2. Para probar el estado de bautizado de cualquiera de los contrayentes cuando dicha prueba no exista. Los testigos deben ser entrevistados por separado por el sacerdote o diácono. Usualmente los padres son los testigos preferidos.

1. Nombre _____

La mujer casada debe incluir su apellido de soltera

Dirección _____

Calle

Número de apto.

Ciudad

Condado

Estado

Zona Postal

2. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo conoce a la persona cuyo nombre aparece arriba? _____

¿Cuál es su relación con esta persona? _____

3. ¿Ha sido bautizada esta persona? _____ ¿En qué Religión? _____

Lugar del bautismo _____ Fecha de bautismo _____

Iglesia

Ciudad Estado

4. Esta persona ha contraído o ha tratado de contraer matrimonio por la Iglesia, civilmente o por ley común?

¿Cuántas veces? _____ ¿Con quién? _____ ¿Cuándo? _____

¿Dónde? _____ ¿Cómo terminó el matrimonio? _____

Por cada matrimonio inválido, señalado anteriormente, ¿hubo algún reconocimiento del mismo, ante un sacerdote o diácono católico?

5. ¿Conoce algún impedimento canónico para este matrimonio (edad, relación familiar, orden sagrada, voto público de castidad perpetua, crimen, impotencia)? _____

6. ¿Es esta persona mental y físicamente capaz de vivir en matrimonio normalmente, conociendo su propósito? _____

7. ¿Le consta que esta persona intenta entrar en un matrimonio permanente, dar a su esposo/a el derecho de tener hijos y aceptar su obligación a la fidelidad? _____

8. ¿Se encuentra esta persona obligada a casarse, en contra de su voluntad? _____

9. (Si la persona es menor de 18 años) ¿Están sus padres o guardianes de acuerdo con el matrimonio? _____

10. ¿Jura que ha respondido con la verdad a todas estas preguntas? _____

Sello de la Iglesia

Firma del testigo

Firma del Sacerdote/Diácono

Fecha _____

Iglesia y Ciudad



Diocese of Belleville

Please type or print the appropriate information on both sides of this form. Send the full prenuptial file to the Chancery with all requests for dispensations.

Name of Catholic/Non-Catholic party

Date: _____

NOTE: When a pastor or associate pastor gives the permission for a marriage of mixed religion, this is to be noted in the marriage register.

PROMISES TO BE MADE FOR ALL MARRIAGES INVOLVING A NON-CATHOLIC

I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ and, with God's help, intend to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church.

I promise to do all in my power to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics.

Signature of Catholic (if made orally, please indicate this preference.)

Certification of Priest/Deacon

The required declaration and promise have been made by the Catholic in my presence. The non-Catholic has been informed of the Catholic's declaration and promise.

Signature of Priest/Deacon

Date

DISPENSATION FROM CANONICAL FORM FOR A MIXED MARRIAGE

A dispensation from the canonical form of marriage is requested by:

_____, a Catholic, to contract marriage validly with _____, a non-Catholic.

Pastoral reason(s) for this dispensation:

- ☐ 1. To achieve family harmony or to avoid family alienation.
- ☐ 2. To obtain parental agreement to the marriage.
- ☐ 3. To recognize a significant relationship or friendship with the non-Catholic minister.
- ☐ 4. To permit marriage in a church of particular importance to the non-Catholic.
- ☐ 5. Other (Specify): _____

Information regarding the wedding ceremony:

Name of Minister	
Church or place of Marriage	
Address	
City	State Zip
Date of Marriage	
Signature of Priest/Deacon	
Date	

DISPENSATION FROM CANONICAL FORM

By virtue of the norm of canon 1127, § 2, the requested dispensation from canonical form is hereby granted.

It is not permitted to have two religious marriage services or to have a single service in which both the Catholic and non-Catholic marriage rituals are celebrated jointly or successively.

The pre-nuptial papers should be filed in the parish from which the application for the dispensation was made. Upon verification that the wedding has taken place, notation is to be made in the marriage register of that parish, and notification is to be given to the parish of the Catholic's baptism.

If this dispensation is not used within six months, this form should be returned.

Delegate of the Ordinary

Date

FOR CHANCERY USE ONLY:

Granted by: _____

Date: _____



Prot. No. _____

Diocese of Belleville

PETITION FOR A DECLARATION OF NULLITY IN A LACK OF FORM CASE

N.B. Records of baptism, marriage and divorce must be presented to the parish priest, but need not be forwarded to the Chancery.

PETITIONER

RESPONDENT

Full Name (maiden name)		
Present surname of woman		
Present address		
No. of marriage (1st, 2nd, etc.)		
Religion		
Baptism: Date Church Street City, State, Zip		

Above-named parties married at _____ date _____
(City and State)

In the presence of a _____
(Minister? Civil Official?)

Final divorce decree)
Civil annulment) obtained at _____
(Court, Jurisdiction, City, State)

_____ date _____

Was a Dispensation from Canonical Form ever granted, i.e., permission to allow this marriage to take place apart from a Catholic ceremony in a Catholic Church? _____

Was this marriage ever blessed in a Catholic ceremony? _____

If so, give details: _____

(Over)

AFFIDAVIT OF PETITIONER IN LACK OF FORM CASE

I, the undersigned, do hereby pledge my word of honor and solemnly swear that the foregoing information, to the best of my knowledge, is true, and I further solemnly swear that I have never contracted or attempted any marriage during my lifetime except as indicated herein. I further solemnly swear that permission was never given for this marriage to take place outside the Catholic Church and that the marriage(s) described herein was (were) never rectified (blessed) according to the laws of the Catholic Church. So help me God.

At _____ this _____ day of _____ 20____

A recent baptismal certificate is required. This is needed to provide proof of actual baptism and to indicate whether there were any recent notations.

A copy of the legal marriage license should be obtained, since it indicates who actually performed the ceremony.

The records of baptism, marriage and divorce have been personally seen by me:

(Signature of Priest)

(Church)

(City)

N.B. If the marriage took place **prior** to **January 11, 1949**, provide the following for the Catholic party(ies):

Date, place of First Communion _____

OR

Date, place of Confirmation _____

OR

Proof of Catholic Parentage _____



Province of Chicago
WITNESS AFFIDAVIT

Diocese of Belleville

Witness I

Testimony of a Knowledgeable Witness for _____

to be married at _____
Church and City of Marriage

This form (in whole or in part) is to be used in the following cases:

1. To establish freedom to marry when either party is not known to the priest or deacon arranging the marriage.
2. To prove the baptismal status of either party when other proof is not available.

Witnesses must be interviewed SEPARATELY by the priest or deacon. Parents usually are preferred witnesses.

1. Name _____

A married woman should also include her maiden name

Address _____

Street

Apt. no.

City

County

State

Zip Code

2. How long have you known the person whose name appears above? _____

What is your relationship to this person? _____

3. Has this person ever been baptized? _____ In what religion? _____

Place of Baptism _____ Date of Baptism _____

Church

City, State

4. Has this person ever contracted or attempted marriage (in church, civilly, or by common law?) _____

How many times? _____ With whom? _____ When? _____

Where? _____ How ended? _____

For any invalid marriage(s) listed above, was there ever a validation before a Catholic priest or deacon? _____

5. Do you know of any canonical impediments to this marriage (age, family relationship, sacred orders, public perpetual vow of chastity, crime, public propriety, impotence?) _____

6. Is this person mentally and physically able to live a normal married life? _____

7. As far as you know, does this person intend to enter a marriage that is for life, to give his or her spouse the right to have children, and to accept the obligation of fidelity? _____

8. Is this person being forced in any way to enter marriage against his or her will? _____

9. (If the person to be married is under 18) Do the parents or guardians give their consent to this marriage? _____

10. Do you solemnly swear to the truth of the statements you have made? _____

Church Seal

Signature of Witness

Signature of Priest/Deacon

Date

Church and City

1987



Province of Chicago
WITNESS AFFIDAVIT

Diocese of Belleville

Witness II

Testimony of a Knowledgeable Witness for _____

to be married at _____
Church and City of Marriage

This form (in whole or in part) is to be used in the following cases:

1. To establish freedom to marry when either party is not known to the priest or deacon arranging the marriage.
2. To prove the baptismal status of either party when other proof is not available.

Witnesses must be interviewed SEPARATELY by the priest or deacon. Parents usually are preferred witnesses.

1. Name _____
A married woman should also include her maiden name

Address _____
Street Apt. no.
City County State Zip Code

2. How long have you known the person whose name appears above? _____

What is your relationship to this person? _____

3. Has this person ever been baptized? _____ In what religion? _____

Place of Baptism _____ Date of Baptism _____
Church City, State

4. Has this person ever contracted or attempted marriage (in church, civilly, or by common law?) _____

How many times? _____ With whom? _____ When? _____

Where? _____ How ended? _____

For any invalid marriage(s) listed above, was there ever a validation before a Catholic priest or deacon? _____

5. Do you know of any canonical impediments to this marriage (age, family relationship, sacred orders, public perpetual vow of chastity, crime, public propriety, impotence?) _____

6. Is this person mentally and physically able to live a normal married life? _____

7. As far as you know, does this person intend to enter a marriage that is for life, to give his or her spouse the right to have children, and to accept the obligation of fidelity? _____

8. Is this person being forced in any way to enter marriage against his or her will? _____

9. (If the person to be married is under 18) Do the parents or guardians give their consent to this marriage? _____

10. Do you solemnly swear to the truth of the statements you have made? _____

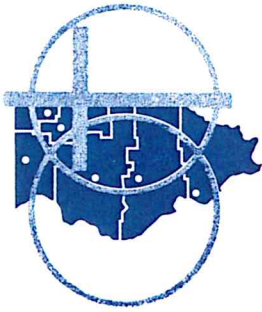
Church Seal

Signature of Witness

Signature of Priest/Deacon

Date

Church and City



Province of Chicago
DISPENSATION/PERMISSION

Diocese of Belleville

Please type or print the appropriate information on both sides of this form.
Send the full pre-nuptial file to the Chancery with all requests for dispensations.

Legal name of Catholic party	Legal name of Catholic/Non-Catholic party
Parish	Religion (and parish if Catholic)
City and State	City and State

A DISPENSATION is respectfully requested from the matrimonial impediment of:

- ☐ Disparity of Cult (one party not baptized) ☐ Affinity (c. 1092)
☐ Disparity of Cult ad cautelam (doubtful baptism of one party) Degree Direct Line: _____
☐ Consanguinity (c. 1091) (Describe the relationship between parties)
Degree collateral line: _____ (e.g., public propriety, adoption, etc.)
(Describe relationship between parties) ☐ Other (Specify): _____

PERMISSION is respectfully requested for:

- ☐ Marriage of Mixed Religion (c. 1124) (Both parties are baptized Christians, but only one is a Catholic.)
[Pastors and associate pastors have the faculty to permit marriages of mixed religion when there is proof of baptism for both parties and neither party has been previously married, even if invalidly.]

Canonical reasons for this dispensation/permission:

- _____ (1) Spiritual welfare of the faithful
_____ (2) Well-founded hope that the non-Catholic will enter full communion with the Church
_____ (3) Danger of attempted invalid marriage
_____ (4) Convalidation
_____ (5) Other (Specify) _____

If this dispensation was granted orally earlier, please indicate date and by whom _____

Priest/Deacon

FOR CHANCERY USE ONLY:

Granted by: _____

Date: _____

Province of Chicago
DISPENSATION/PERMISSION

Diocese of Belleville

Please type or print names as they appear on the left side of this paper

Name of Catholic party	and	Name of Catholic/Non-Catholic party
------------------------	-----	-------------------------------------

are hereby granted:

- _____ A DISPENSATION, in virtue of canon 1078, from the matrimonial impediment of:
☐ Disparity of Cult (c. 1086)
☐ Disparity of Cult ad cautelam
☐ Consanguinity (c. 1091)
Degree of collateral line: _____
☐ Affinity (c. 1092)
Degree direct line: _____
☐ Other: _____
_____ PERMISSION, in virtue of canon 1124, for a marriage of mixed religion.

Delegate of the Ordinary

Date

If this dispensation is not used within six months, this form should be returned to the Chancery.

NOTE: When a pastor or associate pastor gives the permission for a marriage of mixed religion, this is to be noted in the marriage register.

PROMISES TO BE MADE FOR ALL MARRIAGES INVOLVING A NON-CATHOLIC

I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ and, with God's help, intend to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church.

I promise to do all in my power to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics.

Signature of Catholic (if made orally, please indicate this preference.)

Certification of Priest/Deacon

The required declaration and promise have been made by the Catholic in my presence. The non-Catholic has been informed of the Catholic's declaration and promise.

Signature of Priest/Deacon

Date

DISPENSATION FROM CANONICAL FORM FOR A MIXED MARRIAGE

A dispensation from the canonical form of marriage is requested by:

_____, a Catholic, to contract marriage validly with _____, a non-Catholic.

Pastoral reason(s) for this dispensation:

- ☐ 1. To achieve family harmony or to avoid family alienation.
- ☐ 2. To obtain parental agreement to the marriage.
- ☐ 3. To recognize a significant relationship or friendship with the non-Catholic minister.
- ☐ 4. To permit marriage in a church of particular importance to the non-Catholic.
- ☐ 5. Other (Specify): _____

Information regarding the wedding ceremony:

Name of Minister	
Church or place of Marriage	
Address	
City	State Zip
Date of Marriage	
Signature of Priest/Deacon	
Date	

DISPENSATION FROM CANONICAL FORM

By virtue of the norm of canon 1127, § 2, the requested dispensation from canonical form is hereby granted.

It is not permitted to have two religious marriage services or to have a single service in which both the Catholic and non-Catholic marriage rituals are celebrated jointly or successively.

The pre-nuptial papers should be filed in the parish from which the application for the dispensation was made. Upon verification that the wedding has taken place, notation is to be made in the marriage register of that parish, and notification is to be given to the parish of the Catholic's baptism.

If this dispensation is not used within six months, this form should be returned.

Delegate of the Ordinary

Date

FOR CHANCERY USE ONLY:

Granted by: _____

Date: _____



Prot. No. _____

Diocese of Belleville

PETITION FOR A DECLARATION OF NULLITY IN A LACK OF FORM CASE

N.B. Records of baptism, marriage and divorce must be presented to the parish priest, but need not be forwarded to the Chancery.

PETITIONER

RESPONDENT

Full Name (maiden name)		
Present surname of woman		
Present address		
No. of marriage (1st, 2nd, etc.)		
Religion		
Baptism: Date Church Street City, State, Zip		

Above-named parties married at _____ date _____
(City and State)

In the presence of a _____
(Minister? Civil Official?)

Final divorce decree)
Civil annulment) obtained at _____
(Court, Jurisdiction, City, State)

_____ date _____

Was a Dispensation from Canonical Form ever granted, i.e., permission to allow this marriage to take place apart from a Catholic ceremony in a Catholic Church? _____

Was this marriage ever blessed in a Catholic ceremony? _____

If so, give details: _____

(Over)

AFFIDAVIT OF PETITIONER IN LACK OF FORM CASE

I, the undersigned, do hereby pledge my word of honor and solemnly swear that the foregoing information, to the best of my knowledge, is true, and I further solemnly swear that I have never contracted or attempted any marriage during my lifetime except as indicated herein. I further solemnly swear that permission was never given for this marriage to take place outside the Catholic Church and that the marriage(s) described herein was (were) never rectified (blessed) according to the laws of the Catholic Church. So help me God.

At _____ this _____ day of _____ 20____

A recent baptismal certificate is required. This is needed to provide proof of actual baptism and to indicate whether there were any recent notations.

A copy of the legal marriage license should be obtained, since it indicates who actually performed the ceremony.

The records of baptism, marriage and divorce have been personally seen by me:

(Signature of Priest)

(Church)

(City)

N.B. If the marriage took place **prior** to **January 11, 1949**, provide the following for the Catholic party(ies):

Date, place of First Communion _____

OR

Date, place of Confirmation _____

OR

Proof of Catholic Parentage _____

APPENDIX C

GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING PARENTS IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A. YOUR SON/DAUGHTER

1. What are your reasons for believing your son/daughter is ready/not ready to assume the obligations and responsibilities of marriage?
2. Does his/her attitude at home lead you to believe that he/she could manage a home?
3. In view of his/her age, is he/she able to bring up children well and does he/she love children?
4. If the couple are under the age of nineteen: Do you feel that, in light of his/her age, your son/daughter may find it difficult to adapt to married life while his/her teenage friends are still relatively free? Will he/she feel the need to make up for the teenage life that might have been missed? Does he/she have many close friends?
5. How would you characterize your son's/daughter's personality?
6. Has your son/daughter ever had any problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling, or abusive behavior? Have any of these been a part of your family?
7. Since your son/daughter is making a commitment for life, could you please comment on how well he/she understands that commitment? What problems do you foresee him/her having with his/her commitment?
8. Do you know in what ways your son/daughter practices his/her religion?

B. YOUR SON'S/DAUGHTER'S FIANCÉ(E)

1. Do you know his/her family well? How long have you known them?
2. How well do you know your son's/daughter's fiancé(e)? How would you describe his/her personality? Does your son/daughter see him/her in the same way?
3. Do you think the person your son/daughter plans to marry is the right person for him/her? Would you rather see your son/daughter marry someone else?
4. Do you think that your new son-in-law/daughter-in-law will feel comfortable with your family?
5. What qualities in your son's/daughter's fiancé(e) suggest to you that he/she is responsible? Relatively mature? Reliable? Economical?

APPENDIX C

6. Does he/she have a steady job?
7. If you are aware of their incomes, do you see the incomes as adequate for supporting them?
8. Do you think that you might be called upon to assist them financially? How do you feel about that possibility?
9. In what areas of handling money do you think they will do well?
10. Do you know if your son's/daughter's fiancé(e) has ever had any problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling, or abusive behavior? Have any of these been a part of his/her family of origin?
11. Do you know in what ways your son's/daughter's fiancé(e) practices his/her religion?

C. COURTSHIP

1. What kind of courtship did they have?
2. Have there been any arguments or breakups since the beginning of their courtship?
3. Do you feel that they know each other well enough?
4. What preparations have they made for marriage? Have they consulted anyone? Have they talked with you at any length?

D. IF THERE IS A PREGNANCY

1. Considering the pregnancy, what makes you believe the marriage will succeed? What prompts you to fear it may fail?
2. Do you think they would have planned to marry soon if there was not a pregnancy?
3. If there was not a pregnancy, would you consent to this marriage?
4. What alternatives had you considered to this marriage? What prompted you to drop those alternatives and consent to the marriage?
5. In a situation such as pregnancy, both parents and the couple often feel pressure to go through with the marriage as quickly as possible. How much pressure are you under? How is the pressure detracting from adequate preparation for marriage? How are these pressures diminishing the freedom of the couple to be able to make an honest choice for or against the marriage?

APPENDIX C

E. THE MARRIAGE

1. Why do you approve or disapprove of this marriage? Do you find these reasons to be good?
2. Do you think this marriage will last a lifetime?
3. Are you sure that marriage at this time is the best means to assure your son/daughter a happy life?
4. Please share the way in which you came to the decision to consent to this marriage. Do you think you have given this matter sufficient thought?
5. As far as you know, is your son/daughter completely free to enter into marriage? Are you aware of any fears, outside pressure, or influences that may be affecting his/her choice in this matter?
6. Since the happiness and future of your son/daughter are at stake, are there any doubts that are prompting you to reconsider your decision?

APPENDIX D

CANON LAW AND MARRIAGE PREPARATION

CANONICAL CITATIONS

- Can. 1057: §1. Marriage is brought about through the consent of the parties, legitimately manifested between persons who are capable according to law of giving consent: no human power can replace this consent.
- Can. 1058: All persons who are not prohibited by law can contract marriage.
- Can. 1063: Pastors of souls are obliged to see to it that their own ecclesial community furnishes the Christian faithful assistance so that the matrimonial state is maintained in a Christian spirit and makes progress toward perfection. This assistance is especially to be furnished through:
- 1° preaching, catechesis adapted to minors, youths and adults, and even the use of the media of social communications so that through these means the Christian faithful may be instructed concerning the meaning of Christian marriage and the duty of Christian spouses and parents;
 - 2° personal preparation for entering marriage so that through such preparation the parties may be predisposed toward the holiness and duties of their new state;
 - 3° a fruitful liturgical celebration of marriage clarifying that the spouses signify and share in that mystery of unity and of fruitful love that exists between Christ and the Church;
 - 4° assistance furnished to those already married so that, while faithfully maintaining and protecting the conjugal covenant, they may day by day come to lead holier and fuller lives in their families.
- Can. 1065-2 §2. It is strongly recommended that those to be married approach the sacraments of penance and the Most Holy Eucharist so that they may fruitfully receive the Sacrament of Marriage.
- Can. 1066: Before marriage is celebrated, it must be evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.
- Can. 1067: The Conference of Bishops is to issue norms concerning the examination of the parties, and the marriage banns or other appropriate means for carrying out the necessary inquiries which are to precede marriage. The pastor can proceed to assist at a marriage after such norms have been diligently observed.
- Can. 1071 §1. Except in case of necessity, no one is to assist at the following marriages without permission of the local ordinary:

APPENDIX D

- 1° the marriage of transients;
- 2° a marriage which cannot be recognized or celebrated in accord with the norm of civil law;
- 3° a marriage of a person who is bound by natural obligations toward another party or toward children, arising in a prior union;
- 4° a marriage of a person who has notoriously rejected the Catholic faith;
- 5° a marriage of a person who is bound by a censure;
- 6° a marriage of a minor child when the parents are unaware of it or are reasonably opposed to it;
- 7° a marriage to be entered by means of a proxy, mentioned in can. 1105.

Can. 1072: Pastors of souls are to take care to prevent youths from celebrating marriage before the age at which marriage is usually contracted in accord with the accepted practice of the region.

Can. 1077-1: §1. In a particular case the local ordinary can prohibit the marriage of his own subjects wherever they are staying and of all persons actually present in his own territory, but only for a time, for a serious cause and as long as that cause exists.

Can. 1084: §1. Antecedent and perpetual impotence to have intercourse, whether on the part of the man or of the woman, which is either absolute or relative, of its very nature invalidates the marriage.

§2. If the impediment of impotence is doubtful, either by reason of a doubt of law or a doubt of fact, a marriage is neither to be impeded nor is it to be declared null as long as the doubt exists.

§3. Sterility neither prohibits nor invalidates marriage, with due regard for the prescription of can. 1098.

Can. 1095: They are incapable of contracting marriage:

- 1° who lack sufficient use of reason;
- 2° who suffer from grave lack of discretion of judgment concerning essential matrimonial rights and duties which are to be mutually given and accepted;
- 3° who are not capable of assuming the essential obligations of matrimony due to causes of a psychic nature.

APPENDIX D

- Can. 1108: §1. Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local ordinary or the pastor or a priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who assist, and in the presence of two witnesses, according to the rules expressed in the following canons, with due regard for the exceptions mentioned in Canons 144, 1112, ‘2, 1116 and 1127, “2 and 3.
- §2. The one assisting at a marriage is understood to be only that person who, present at the ceremony, asks for the contractants’ manifestation of consent and receives it in the name of the Church.
- Can. 1115: Marriages are to be celebrated in the parish where either of the contractants has a domicile, quasi-domicile or month-long residence; the marriages of transients are to be celebrated in the parish where they actually reside; marriage can be celebrated elsewhere with the permission of the proper ordinary or pastor.
- Can. 1116: §1. If the presence of or access to a person who is competent to assist at marriage in accord with the norm of law is impossible without serious inconvenience, persons intending to enter a true marriage can validly and licitly contract it before witnesses alone:
- 1° in danger of death;
- 2° outside the danger of death, as long as it is prudently foreseen that such circumstances will continue for a month.
- §2. In either case and with due regard for the validity of a marriage celebrated before witnesses alone, if another priest or deacon who can be present is readily available, he must be called upon and must be present at the celebration of the marriage, along with the witnesses.

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APPENDIX E

Engaged Couple Blessings

Introduction

The revised *Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation* recommend an engagement blessing as a way for the family and the parish community to show their support of the engaged couple early in their preparation period.

There are several options for the time and place for these blessings (at the conclusion of the Sunday liturgy, at a private prayer service, in the home, etc.). The immediate family, friends, and the wider parish community could all participate.

Included in Appendix E are examples of blessings, which can be used in these various settings. Examples of longer and more formal blessings for engaged couples can be found in the following sources:

Book of Blessings (Liturgical Press)

Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers (United States Catholic Conference)

Prayerbook for Engaged Couples (Liturgy Training Publications)

Perhaps some of the married couples of the parish who are involved in ministry to the engaged could be responsible for the scheduling and other details of these blessings. If done at Sunday liturgies, the blessings could be given every 4-6 months for those engaged couples involved in preparation during that time span.

Parishes are strongly urged to use these blessings. The couple, family, and parish community will all benefit from the use of such a ritual.

APPENDIX E

A Simple Blessing of Engaged Couples *A short blessing to be used at the conclusion of a Sunday liturgy*

Priest/Deacon/Lay Minister:

We are very happy to take this opportunity to present to you several of the engaged couples in our community who are preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in the near future.

Couples, please come forward as I call your names.

_____ and _____ plan their wedding for _____ (date) _____

_____ and _____ plan their wedding for _____ (date) _____

etc.

The minister now addresses the couples as he/she names them:

_____ and _____, _____ and _____, *etc.* Today we the members of _____'s parish community welcome you! We care about you and are here to support you on your journey together towards God, the Creator of us all. You are a sign of God's love to each other and to all of us, and so we pray, . . .

Lord, God, rejoice with us today as we hold up to you the lives and love of these engaged couples. They are your children. They have committed themselves to each other and to you. Protect them, guide them, and help their love grow. Be with them now in their engagement time and always through the many trials and joys ahead.

Will all the members of the assembly please raise your hands as together we bless these couples:

Lord God of wondrous love,
 bless these engaged couples of our community.
Shower them with all the goodness, comfort, and strength
 you hold out to all your creatures.
In good times and bad, Lord, be with them
 and bring them and their families here to your table,
Where together, they can be a blessing to us all.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Please give a warm welcome to our engaged couples as they return to their places.

APPENDIX E

Engagement Blessing

*A blessing to be used at a Sunday liturgy,
in a private prayer service with the couple, or with the families.*

The sacredness of marriage is reinforced by the rituals that lead to it. Engagements are one of those rituals. Engagements should be more than a social act, they should also enjoy the beauty and grace of God, and the blessings of the faith community. An engagement ritual ought to enrich and strengthen, not burden the couple. The ritual can be done publicly, if mutually acceptable, at a Sunday Mass, or it can be done with family and friends present.

Prayer Leader: *(invites the engaged couple forward)*
With great joy we announce to you the engagement of ____ and _____. They have willingly and freely expressed their decision to be engaged to be married and come before you now seeking your blessing and support.

(speaking to the congregation)
Do you promise to walk with them in this journey toward marriage, so that they can feel your presence and be touched by your support?

All: We do!

Prayer Leader: Do you promise to surround them with your prayers during this engagement time so that they may enjoy the blessing of this community?

All: We do!

Prayer Leader: Do you promise to open your doors to them as they explore among you the realities of married life?

All: We do!

All: *(speaking to the couple)*
Do you promise to use the grace of this time and of our presence as an opportunity for growth, for it is in such searching that our community grows and develops?

Couple: We do!

All: *(extending hands toward couple)*
We praise you Lord, for your gentle plan that has drawn together ____ and _____. Strengthen their hearts, so that they will keep faith with each other, and in mind and heart work together as they prepare to celebrate the sacrament of marriage.

The congregation provides the couple with a sign of acclamation such as clapping.

APPENDIX E

Engaged Couple Blessing

*A blessing to be used by those preparing the couple for marriage, by the family or families,
or in another type of private prayer service*

Let us pray.

Loving God,
you have blessed us as your people
and have called us to serve you in love.
Listen to our prayers for _____ and _____
and bless them as they prepare for marriage.

Keep them holy and pure in their lives,
deepen their spirit of prayer and love,
and lead them in perfect joy.

Guard them from evil and guide them in your light,
so that they may enter their marriage in your love
and serve you faithfully at all times.

Bless their parents, families, and friends
as they help _____ and _____
by their prayer and example as they prepare to marry.

May almighty God bless you, _____ and _____.
May God grant you love and happiness,
peace and joy,
and strength in trials,
all the days of your life together.
May you remain always in God's love.

We ask this in Christ's name and in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
forever and ever. Amen.

This blessing is an adaptation of a prayer found in "A Book of Blessings" by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

PLEASE REPRODUCE THESE RESOURCE SHEETS FOR YOUR COUPLES TO USE.

The Pre Cana and Engaged Encounter schedule can be found on the Office of Worship website: <http://dps.diobelle.org/> This schedule is updated as vicariates and/or parishes make the Office of Worship aware of their Pre Cana.

For Your Marriage (Online Service) www.foryourmarriage.org

A comprehensive website about all things marriage. It includes many articles, book reviews, and resources for dating, engaged, and married couples to strengthen their relationships. Sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) it provides help for both Catholics and anyone interested in preparing, sustaining, or repairing their marriage.

Por Tu Matrimonio (Online Service) www.portumatrimonio.org

Spanish version of **For Your Marriage**

Why Get Married in the Church? The Lifelong Blessings of a Catholic Wedding by John Bosio.

Congratulations on your engagement! With so much to plan and do right now, it's sometimes easy to lose sight of the reason you've decided to marry: your love for each other. Remember, too, that God loves you. This book can show you how God lovingly seals and strengthens your marriage in the Catholic Church. Take a look: read it together with your fiancé. And discover the wonder, grace, strength, and mystery of your Catholic marriage. Only 16 pages long with Imprimatur by Bishop Edward Rice from the Archdiocese of St. Louis. <http://store.pastoralplanning.com/whygetmainch.html>

How to Survive Being Married to a Catholic by Rosemary Gallagher and Michael Henesy.

This publication uses a lively cartoon format and gives clear and honest answers to over 80 questions often asked by non-Catholic partners in interfaith marriages. 64 pages in length. Liguori Publications.

www.liguori.org

When the Cake is Gone: How to Get Married and Stay Engaged by Dr. Jim Healy

Dr. Healy's CD reveals the three types of intimacy needed to maintain a lifelong marriage. He speaks with humor and insight about ways to inspire couples to stay "engaged" in their marriage. Family Life Ministries, Archdiocese of Chicago. https://www.familyministries.org/store/start.asp?c_id=8&t_id=8

FIREPROOFMYMARRIAGE.COM

FireProof (movie) companion website particular to Catholic Marriages including Marriage Preparation.

Your source for great marriage resources and more. <http://www.fireproofmymarriage.com/catholics.php>

10GREATDATES.ORG

10 Great Dates website contains the **10 Great Dates DVD Curriculum** along with many other helpful resources. <http://www.10greatdates.org/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING WEBSITE: <http://dps.diobelle.org/nfp/home>

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO FAMILY MINISTRIES NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING WEBSITE:
http://www.familyministries.org/resources/index.asp?c_id=56&t_id=2

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE: <http://nfpandmore.org/>

CATHOLIC ENGAGED ENCOUNTER OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS WEBSITE: www.eeofs-il.org

CATHOLIC ENGAGED ENCOUNTER INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE:
[HTTP://CATHOLICENGAGEDENCOUNTER.COM/INTERNATIONAL.ASP](http://CATHOLICENGAGEDENCOUNTER.COM/INTERNATIONAL.ASP)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC FAMILY LIFE MINISTERS WEBSITE:
HOMEPAGE: <http://nacflm.org/>
RESOURCE GUIDE
<http://nacflmresourceguide.com/#toggle-id-11>

ONLINE MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAM - [HTTP://CATHOLICMARRIAGEPREPCCLASS.COM/](http://CATHOLICMARRIAGEPREPCCLASS.COM/)
This instructional program presents the essential Christian and human aspects of marriage so that the couple becomes aware of the full dimensions of marriage as a committed relationship and as a sacrament.

Participation in an instructional program provided by parish or region is required of couples planning to marry. Parish or regional instructional programs are required to meet the criteria established in the Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation. The interaction with other couples is a valuable component of the Pre Cana session.

This online option should only be used only for special circumstances. Please contact the Office of Worship (618) 722-5038 to discuss this option.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

REFERENCES

CHURCH DOCUMENTS:

- “Catechism of the Catholic Church”, nos. 369-373, nos. 1601-1666, and nos. 2331-2400. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000.
- “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)”, nos. 47-52. December 1965.
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. “Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognitions to Unions Between Homosexual Persons.” July 2003.
- Pope John Paul II. “On the Family/*Familiaris Consortio*”. December 15, 1981.
- Pope John Paul II. *Theology of the Body*. Most recent translation: “Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body”. Translated and introduced by Michael M. Waldstein. Pauline Books and Media, 2006.
- Pope Paul VI. “On the Regulation of Birth/*Humanae Vitae*”. July 25, 1968.
- Pontifical Council for the Family. “Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage”, May 13, 1996.
- USCCB. “U. S. Norms for Marriage Preparation (Canon 1067)”, approved in 2000.
- USCCB. “Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan”. November, 2009.

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