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*In the Spirit of  
Cana*

**Guidelines for Pastoral  
Outreach to  
Christian Marriage:  
Formation, Preparation,  
Celebration, and Continuing  
Education**

Presione aquí por

*En el Espíritu de  
Caná*

**Guías Pastorales Para el  
Matrimonio Cristiano:  
Formación, Preparación,  
Celebración y Educación  
Continua**



— *In the* —  
*Spirit of Cana*

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FORMATION, PREPARATION, CELEBRATION,  
AND CONTINUING EDUCATION



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## Preface

The following guidelines were developed to assist the Archdiocese of Chicago in its outreach to those in and aspiring to married life in Christ. This volume represents a development of significant departure from the “Guidelines for Marriage Preparation” implemented in 1979. That document focused exclusively on the engagement period and the related programs provided by parishes and the archdiocese for marriage preparation. This revised set of guidelines, however, looks at broader aspects of the Sacrament of Matrimony and takes a comprehensive view regarding ministry to the vocation of Christian marriage. Therefore, it is written for all who minister to Christian marriage in the Catholic Church—this includes catechists, parish secretaries, music ministers, and campus ministers, as well as priests, deacons, pastoral associates, and marriage preparation teams.

Rather than focus only on marriage preparation for the engagement period (proximate preparation), this document addresses the lifelong influences that shape attitudes and present learning experiences that affect Christian marriage. Those experiences have been delineated into four general categories: *Formation, Preparation, Celebration, and Continuing Education*. These four are distinct areas of opportunity for the Church to evangelize and catechize on the Sacrament of Matrimony. Presented in this document are opportunities for persons who are considering Christian marriage, their families, parishes, and the Archdiocese, to foster marital unions that are open to God’s grace and reflective of God’s love. This effort starts at birth and continues throughout life.

The Archdiocese of Chicago has been a pioneer in preparation for Christian marriage and has created and continues to sustain an effective outreach to the engaged. Dedicated volunteer married couples and clergy have established the various programs in this ministry since the 1940s. The quality of the marriage preparation programs and the dedication of the people who provide them give us a firm foundation from which we are able to build a comprehensive outreach to lifelong Christian marriage in the Archdiocese of Chicago. With the teachings of the Second Vatican Council as its foundation, these guidelines are designed for ministry in the Third Millennium. For resources in ministry to the vocation of Christian marriage, please contact our office or see our website, [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

I thank all the people, ordained and lay, who work in ministry to the vocation of Christian marriage, for their dedication to and care for those aspiring to live the sacrament. I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide all of us in this important work of the Church. May the Lord bless all who minister to the people of God.

In the Spirit of Cana,  
Frank Hannigan  
Director, Marriage and Family Ministries



# Introduction

Christian marriage is a symbol of the covenant that unites God and people (*Familiaris Consortio*, 12) and, in this sense, each marriage belongs to the whole Church. St. John Paul writes, “By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligations, they are penetrated with the Spirit of Christ, who fills their whole lives with faith, hope and charity” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 56). The Church’s hope for married couples is that they and the entire community of believers find in marriage a “specific source and original means of sanctification” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 56) with an assurance of peace, happiness, and permanence.

Vatican II states that:

Christian spouses, in virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony, signify and share in the mystery of that union and fruitful love which exists between Christ and the Church (cf. Ephesians 5:32). They help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and by the rearing and education of their children. And thus, in their state and way of life they have their own special gift among the people of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:7). For their union gives rise to a family where new citizens are born to human society, and in baptism they are made into children of God by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, for the perpetuation of God’s people throughout the centuries. Within the family, which is, so to speak, “the domestic church,” the parents should be first to preach the faith to their children by word and example (Lumen Gentium, §11).

The Catholic Church, on the basis of Scripture and Tradition, teaches “the permanence of the union until death” (*Letter to Families*, 1994); “the indissoluble character of marriage is the basis of the common good of the family” (*ibid.*).

Divorce is unacceptable. It is “a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other until death” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2383).

Having stated this, the Church recognizes that the vast majority of couples who come to the Church for marriage do so committed to grow in love and confident 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” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). In some instances, pastors or parish staffs experience frustration when working with couples who do not practice their faith or who have little appreciation of the sacramentality of marriage. Some 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 the kind of commitment expected in Christian marriage. These guidelines offer assistance to pastors, deacons, pastoral ministers, and parish communities in their efforts to prepare couples for marriage and to continually evangelize them.

Our Lord Jesus promises life in abundance (*John 10:10*) and invites us to be a people who build the kingdom of God based on values of truth, justice, and peace. We are called to be a holy people who live according to the covenant of love that God offered from the beginning of creation. The love of God for all creation is a beautiful thread woven into the fabric of human history and is reflected in the stories of our lives, which are our response to that gift of love.

In his letter to the Corinthians (*1 Corinthians 23:3 ff.*), Paul speaks of the many qualities of love we experience in day-to-day living. He also invites and challenges us to strive for the

perfection of this gift of love following the mission and ministry of Jesus himself. Throughout the centuries, the Catholic Church has reaffirmed the values of this gift of God and reaffirms the profoundly human and sacred vision of married love in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* of the Second Vatican Council:

For, God Himself is the author of matrimony, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes...Christ the Lord abundantly blessed this many-faceted love, welling up as it does from the fountain of divine love as structured as it is on the model of his union with the Church (*Gaudium et Spes* #48).

It is out of deep concern for the happiness and fulfillment of couples, as well as a serious concern for the important role which marriage plays in the life of the Church, that these guidelines for marriage ministry are presented. They are intended to promote and protect the sacredness of marriage by helping couples better prepare the foundations for and sustain stable and lasting marriages.

Marriage is a sacred relationship. For the couple, it is profound with richness and dignity. For the community, it is an institution that serves as one of the basic bonds that holds our society together. For the Church, it is a sacramental event that gives a visible sign of God's presence and grace-filled intervention in our lives.

Christian marriage expresses the new creation, redeemed and restored by Christ. In it a natural union is raised to a supernatural level. St. John Paul says:

*In Christ God takes up this human need (of communion), confirms it, purifies it and elevates it, leading it to perfection through the Sacrament of Matrimony; the Holy Spirit who is poured out in the sacramental celebration offers Christian*

*couples the gift of a new communion of love that is the living and real image of that unique unity which makes of the Church the indivisible mystical body of the Lord Jesus (Familiaris Consortio, 19).*

Aware of this special significance, the Archdiocese of Chicago has prepared these *Guidelines for Pastoral Outreach to Christian Marriage*. These guidelines are written in light of recent documents of the Church and in accord with the 1983 Code of Canon Law, which usefully synthesizes Catholic teachings as follows, "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament" (Canon 1055, 1).

These guidelines are also intended to be a resource for the pastoral marriage minister in the important work of marriage preparation. We call upon all members of the Church to strongly support the best possible programs of marriage preparation and pastoral care in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

#### ***Engagement: An Opportunity***

St. John Paul says, "The very preparation for Christian marriage is itself a journey of faith. It is a special opportunity for the engaged to rediscover and deepen the faith received in Baptism and nourished by their Christian upbringing. In this way they come to recognize and freely accept their vocation to follow Christ and to serve the Kingdom of God in the married state" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 51). While the proximate preparation period is an opportunity as such, engagement can be both exciting and stressful for couples. The excitement comes with the anticipation of formally committing themselves to each other in an intimate communion that is to last a lifetime. The stresses may come from fears about making a permanent commitment, the reactions of

others, and the preparations that are associated with getting married and beginning married life. At times couples may be tempted to use the engagement solely for planning the wedding. In these cases, the couple's agenda may not be that of the priest or deacon, for whom the formal marriage preparation period is in most instances an opportunity for the Church to evangelize and catechize those who come to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Christian marriage is a sacred vocation that "is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1603). It is a sacrament of the Church. While preparation for the wedding is important and often reflects a couple's willingness to proclaim and celebrate their love with their families and friends, the time of engagement has much more significance. Engagement is really the first season of marriage. Couples who use courtship to seriously prepare for marriage find their engagement to be a time of opportunity, deepened love, growth, and new understanding. It is an opportunity for adult faith formation. Those entering into Christian marriage appreciate the importance of this time because of the significance of the sacrament they will be sharing.

### ***The Community of the Church: Caring and Responsible***

Christian marriage has inherent challenges. It also has many opportunities to witness God's covenant. Marriage is important for the Church today as it endeavors to extend the life and love of Christ.

The Church encourages and assists those who have decided to be married in the Church to prepare for this vocation. To do this well, the Church promises, through its ministers, time and attention for the engaged. In return, the Church asks of every couple wishing to enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony to see marriage preparation as something important, valuable, and necessary for them.

With family and community, the Church has great hope for married couples, that they may experience marriage's transcendent dimension. Guided by faith and God's loving grace, they will grow together through each phase of life and be outward signs of that grace to others.

Parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago celebrate thousands of marriages each year. Each has the potential for growth and happiness or for separation and pain. The powerful witness of a caring, nurturing community expands the options for married couples to allow them opportunities for more successful courses of action. By hearing the stories of others they find hope for their marital journey. Additionally, because Christian marriage is sacramental, these stories also reflect the story of God's relationship with his people throughout the ages. The Sacrament of Matrimony causes grace, which perfects the human love of the spouses. When Christians marry, they become a sign of God's faithful, fruitful, abiding love, not only for themselves but also for the community.

The continued incidence of marital breakdown points to the difficulty of creating a marriage that is viable. Marriage is a partnership of "mutual submission." This equality is really about sharing power and exercising responsibility for a purpose larger than ourselves. The needs for adequate, effective marriage preparation and support are so evident that some states are passing laws intended to encourage good preparation for and deeper commitment to marriage.

Divorce and separation are more prevalent among newly married couples than people in their middle and later years of life. Recent health statistics indicate that 32% of all divorces in the U.S. occur in the first four years; 63% in the first ten years. The dissolution of marriage is frequently becoming the option of choice for couples who have trouble in their marital relationships. These societal trends indicate that modern marriage is fragile and vulnerable.

Therefore, appropriate responses from the Church that stress the importance of Christian marriage are warranted.

The Archdiocese offers this document as a guide to assist the Church in effective preparation and support of marriage. At times, there is confusion and a wide disparity of approaches among ministers and parishes, even within a geographical area. Thus, it is important that Archdiocesan norms provide direction. At the same time, because of the size and diversity of the Archdiocese of Chicago, it is important to apply any norms or standards with pastoral flexibility that give attention to and appreciation for the richness in that diversity.

The task of preparing couples for marriage and supporting them thereafter is a challenging ministry. It calls for bishops, priests, deacons, married couples, and the entire Catholic assembly to work cooperatively.

Pope Benedict has said about marriage: "If you are engaged to be married, God has a project of love for your future as a couple and as a family. Therefore, it is essential that you discover it with the help of the Church, free from the common prejudice that says that Christianity with its commandments and prohibitions places obstacles to the joy of love and impedes you from fully enjoying the happiness that a man and woman seek in their reciprocal love. The love of a man and woman is at the origin of the human family and the couple formed by a man and a woman has its foundation in God's original plan (cf Gen 2:18-25).

"Learning to love each other as a couple is a wonderful journey, yet it requires a demanding "apprenticeship." The period of engagement, very necessary in order to form a couple is a time of expectation and preparation that needs to be lived in purity of gesture and words. It allows you to mature in love, in concern and in attention for each other; it helps you to practice self-control and to develop your respect for each other. These are the characteristics of true

love that does not place emphasis on seeking its own satisfaction or its own welfare. In your prayer together, ask the Lord to watch over and increase your love and to purify it of all selfishness." (From an address on World Youth Day 2007).

St. John Paul says in the introduction of *Familiaris Consortio*, "Illuminated by the faith that gives her an understanding of all the truth concerning the great value of marriage and the family and their deepest meaning, the Church once again feels the pressing need to proclaim the Gospel, that is the 'good news,' to all people without exception, in particular to all those who are called to marriage and are preparing for it, to all married couples and parents in the world."

A couple's decision to marry is momentous. Their engagement begins a time of great anticipation and preparation. The Church has a responsibility to journey with them through every phase from their initial preparation for Christian marriage to their lifelong union in Christ. These *Guidelines for Pastoral Outreach to Christian Marriage* are offered with the hope that the various communities of the Catholic Church in Chicago will serve Christian marriage in a responsible and caring way. Through this comprehensive ministry to marriage, the Church will more effectively assist couples in recognizing the great hope to which they have been called and the great sign that they become for the Christian community.

# Chapter 1: Formation

*Marriage is a vocation, or divine call, as necessary and valuable to the Church as other vocations. Discernment of and preparation for marriage is a process that begins early in life and continues through the engagement period. Because marriage is for the good of the Church and the entire community, the Church and the state have an obligation to help support and sustain marriage. (Life and Love in the Divine Plan, USCCB 2010)*

## 1.1 Our Catholic Heritage

**P**reparation for a marriage begins at birth. As children grow, they experience interactions with family, friends, and neighbors, all whom may teach them about marriage. Experiences in their school years elaborate further on marriage and relationship building. We must pay attention to all 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.

Couples approach the Church for marriage preparation with ideas and plans for what they want, which at times are different from the Church's understanding of marriage. Therefore, this can be a time of great opportunity and teaching as well as a challenge for those preparing engaged couples for the Sacrament of Matrimony. As a couple works with the priest or deacon to plan the wedding, they should also receive their final phase of pre-marriage education.

The Catholic Church offers valuable teaching that emphasizes marriage as a sacrament which builds up the Body of Christ, who himself marriages are an outward sign of God's love for the community and for the persons themselves. According to the U.S. Bishops' pastoral statement, *Follow the Way of Love*, "When a man and woman pledge themselves to each other in the Sacrament of Matrimony, they join in Christ's promise and become a living sign of his union with the Church" (cf. Ephesians 5:32). This is prophetic. Church teaching on marriage

clearly signifies Christian marriage as a holy institution by including it as a sacrament.

In over 70 years of marriage preparation ministry, the Archdiocese of Chicago has provided valuable education for couples who marry in the Catholic Church. Education is essential to providing present and future engaged couples with the accurate information and the skills necessary to succeed in living their Sacrament of Matrimony. Catechesis is a process that occurs continually throughout life. It builds the necessary awareness and skills to live the whole of life in a Christ-like way, whether it occurs spontaneously at home or systematically in a Catholic school or a religious education program.

St. John Paul says, "The sacrament of marriage gives to the educational role the dignity and vocation of being really and truly a 'ministry' of the Church at the service of the building up of her members. So great and splendid is the educational ministry of Christian parents that Saint Thomas has no hesitation in comparing it with the ministry of priests: 'Some only propagate and guard spiritual life by a spiritual ministry: this is the role of the Sacrament of Orders; others do this for both corporal and spiritual life, and this is brought about by the sacrament of marriage, by which a man and a woman join in order to beget offspring and bring them up to worship God'" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 38).

The Catholic Church locally must provide many opportunities for this message to reach families. It is the pastoral care and sensitivity during the time of engagement and in their marriage

preparation that often creates a link for newly married couples to a life of permanent, loving marriage in the Catholic Church.

Marriage is by nature a demanding endeavor. It is intrinsically multicultural by virtue of the two distinct personalities journeying together for a lifetime. Cultural influences from families of origin, ethnicity, language, and various personalities present unique challenges and opportunities for married couples. Every married couple, a new, unique creation, needs and deserves a supportive community that values the richness in such cultural diversity. Those who teach about marriage must communicate the value of cultural pluralism.

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. Therefore, the invitation and the welcoming of those who seek marriage in the Church are also an invitation into a supportive community that will strengthen marriage and family. It is also an invitation to the couple to further develop their personal journey of faith as adults.

## 1.2 Responsibilities of the Archdiocese

**Goal: To recognize and promote the family as Domestic Church, “the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 66), and the most significant place for teaching about the Sacrament of Matrimony.**

Guideline: Provide resources for homilies during the year, which include theology of Christian marriage in catechesis at all levels. Specific resources will be provided for the

Feast of the Holy Family, during Family Month (November), and when particular, family-centered scripture readings are proclaimed.

Discussion: From connections made in homilies and catechetical programs to gospel readings and Church teaching, the basic responsibility for formation in the Catholic faith occurs in the home. We recognize this Domestic Church as the greatest influence in forming awareness of the presence of Christ in the family and the most basic way God gathers us and forms us (*Follow the Way of Love*, 1994). The Domestic Church is the most formative element for lifelong Christian marriage. St. John Paul spoke of this when he said, “It is to the majority of the faithful who struggle each day to live up to the demands of their Christian dignity in marriage and the family that pastoral efforts are principally directed...They look to their spiritual guides for the support of sound doctrine, the grace of the sacraments and the human empathy which will sustain them in the never easy mission of being a true ‘domestic church,’ the first community to be evangelized, so that it in turn can be the proximate and immediate evangelizer of its members” (*Ad Limina Apostolorum*, 1997).

**Goal: To assure that all members of the parish staff who interact with the faithful are knowledgeable about the Sacrament of Matrimony.**

Guideline: Provide continuing education to parish staff ministers and assistance to parishes to clearly educate all Catholics about the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Discussion: Workshops, enrichment programs, and resources on current teaching will be provided regularly. The need for acquisition of skills in conflict resolution, relationship skills, and other interpersonal components is helpful to self-knowledge and thus a solid

preparation for marriage. Suggesting programs and prayers that center on marriage and even problems in marriage will address the needs of the people choosing to be married in the Church. Parish staff who model and mentor marriage in the Catholic community will be more successful and feel more secure in their role when given opportunities to be nurtured through enrichments and other learning opportunities.

School curricula should reflect the understanding of marriage and the family and the recommendations mentioned here. The earlier a person is exposed to relationship skills, the better chance they will have to acquire and refine them. The hope is that, from entry into school until completion of college, age-appropriate education will be provided for relationship-building and maintenance.

When a person marries in the Catholic Church, it is very important to teach what it means. Cultural influences are strong and often impact the couple at the time of marriage. Catechetical reading materials provided in church bulletins and in the marriage preparation contact meetings can generate meaningful discussion with engaged couples. These materials will be available through pamphlets and Church documentation. The Archdiocese will provide materials that may be used in parish bulletins.

**Goal: To foster an atmosphere of support for Christian marriage through prayer.**

Guideline: Enhance an awareness of marriage as the foundation of successful family life through the Prayers of the Faithful and the celebrations of the marriage ceremony and milestone anniversaries. Thorough education for parish staff and clergy will help develop support.

Discussion: Public prayer at Mass for those in

married life or for those struggling with married life can be achieved through the Prayers of the Faithful at Sunday Mass (see Appendix J). It is important to invite all married persons to celebrate World Marriage Day and take part in parish and archdiocesan celebrations of marriage. The Archdiocese will provide information about World Marriage Day and special events and programs that celebrate marriage.

**Goal: To promote discussion about the essential elements of Christian marriage in religious education programs, grade schools, high schools, and colleges.**

Guideline: Provide guidance for dialogue among Catholic educators and encouragement for dialogue with non-Catholic educators concerning Christian marriage.

Discussion: Since marriages are living witnesses to God's love for his people, schools and religious education programs are encouraged to supplement their religious education texts with living examples of Christian marriage drawn from the community. Catholic religious educators should also be in dialogue with other educators regarding the elements of marriage we hold in common. The strengthening of marriage and family life also strengthens society, and is a common task for all of us.

**Goal: To provide materials to parishes for catechesis in bulletin articles and for homilies that teach about marriage.**

Guideline: Offer timely resources on a regular basis, through appropriate archdiocesan agencies, to assist parish staffs to teach about the vocation of marriage.

Discussion: The Archdiocese will review and forward to parishes information on materials to be used for educating

parishioners, children and adults, about Christian marriage. Often publishers and authors send new resources to the Archdiocese. Appropriate agencies review these materials and offer feedback. The Archdiocese will promote where possible and make known to parishes the best new materials.

### **1.3 Responsibilities of the Parish**

**Goal: To provide catechesis on the Sacrament of Matrimony at all levels.**

Guideline: Educate all members of the parish regarding Church teaching and practice on Christian marriage.

Discussion: The parish should make available workshops and continuing education opportunities for adults. Pastors should ensure that catechetical programs have relationship-building components and teach theology of Christian marriage. Parishes must also offer information on the consequences of divorce and provide resources for troubled marriages.

The parish will provide pamphlets, bulletin articles, and homilies in appropriate languages that teach about marriage. Parishes can offer speakers and programs for families that teach relationship, parenting, and marital skills. It is important for parishes to teach about consumer and media influence on families. It is also important to preach on marriage when the opportunity arises and provide family and marriage perspectives in homilies throughout the year.

### **1.4 Responsibility of the Christian Faithful**

**Goal: To explore and understand the various types of vocations in the Catholic Church in order to discern one's own particular vocation.**

Guideline: Understand what it means to be a baptized Catholic and discern one's vocation in the mission of the Church, whether in single, religious or married life.

Discussion: Faith is God's gift to us. Living that faith is an ever-unfolding journey that extends throughout life. Understanding one's faith does not occur once and for all. As we traverse the stages of life, we have experiences that inform our faith. New situations and circumstances often demand new and different responses. For example: challenges to one's faith as a grade-schooler are different than a high schooler. Entering adulthood presents a whole set of life issues that call for faithful reflection and discernment, a practice that is ongoing.

## Chapter 2: Preparation

*“More than ever necessary in our times is preparation of young people for marriage and family life. In some countries it is still the families themselves that, according to ancient customs, ensure the passing on to young people of the values concerning married and family life, and they do this through a gradual process of education or initiation. But the changes that have taken place within almost all modern societies demand that not only the family but also society and the Church should be involved in the effort of properly preparing young people for their future responsibilities.”*

–St. John Paul (*Familiaris Consortio*, 66)

### 2.1 Our Catholic Heritage

**F**or our purposes, the *formal* period of marriage preparation begins at engagement. For the validity of a marriage where one or both parties are Catholic, the marriage has to be contracted in the presence of the Ordinary, the parish pastor, the priest, or deacon deputed by either of them (Code of Canon Law, 1108). When the couple makes the decision to marry in the Church they enter into discernment about their life together as married persons who are open to God’s grace. The Church’s role in assisting the couple during this time is important. Perhaps this is the very first moment of adult faith formation.

This is a time for the engaged couple to assess, explore, and envision. They assess their own family histories and cultures, and all that has shaped them—their love relationships in the family; their faith; their attitudes about, and expectations of, marriage. They each bring to their marriage a predisposition that will shape it.

*This is why if the current psychological and cultural situation is taken into consideration, marriage preparation represents an urgent need. In fact preparation is educating for the respect and care for life which, in the sanctuary of families, must become a real and proper culture of human life in all its manifestations and stages...(cf. Evangelium Vitae, 6, 78, 105).*

During the preparation period the couple should explore the meaning of covenant, permanence, and indissolubility. They should search for ways to be good married partners to each other. They should become “students of marriage” who seek new learning in the practical ways to “work at the relationship.” An emphasis of effective marriage preparation is to help the couple distinguish the marriage from the wedding.

Though it may be what they know about themselves and each other that has brought them to the threshold of matrimony, there is so much they cannot know about their future together. This acting on faith demands hope and trust—a belief in a promised goodness that lies ahead of them and draws them beyond themselves. This is not for them to do alone. The action of Christ makes marriage beyond limited human imagination. With the assistance of the actual and sacramental grace guaranteed by the sacrament, the engaged couple needs the Catholic Church to help them live their marriage as a sacrament—God present in them.

Therefore, it is also important for the engaged couple to reflect on their relationship with the Catholic community. A purpose of marriage preparation is to help the engaged further develop a relationship with the faith community. Often it will be to renew a relationship with the faith community after a time of alienation, inertia, or indifference. To be in relationship with a community is to be open to and affected by it.

## 2.2 Responsibilities of the Archdiocese

**Goal: To provide a variety of marriage preparation opportunities that meet the needs of engaged couples.**

Guideline: Provide marriage preparation programs facilitated by competent members of the faith community who bear witness to a Christian vision of marriage.

Discussion: The couples who approach the Church seeking marriage are from a variety of cultures and speak a variety of languages. There is no single program that can fully address the rich cultural diversity that is present in the Archdiocese. It is important to respond to the “real life” issues faced by modern couples in an archdiocese as large and culturally diverse as Chicago.

Using up-to-date research from studies, the Archdiocesan programs for marriage preparation reflect current trends and needs. Ministry teams present programs centrally for the Archdiocese at sites throughout Cook and Lake Counties, and locally at parishes. The Archdiocese conducts training sessions for parish marriage ministers.

All engaged couples take a PreCana class, either in-person or online (only at [www.marriageministries.com](http://www.marriageministries.com)) if they are separated by distance and unable to attend a gathered event and they can now customize their experience by viewing supplemental videos and websites available through the Supplemental Videos link at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org). They can choose topics that apply to them, including Cohabitation, Children of Divorce, Forming a Stepfamily; and Second, Military, Interchurch, and African American marriages.

At the first session, once a rapport is established with an engaged couple, the priest, deacon, or pastoral associate should make arrangements for a premarital inventory. The premarital inventory helps the engaged couple recognize their strengths and weaknesses in important areas of married life. This tool is best used early in the preparation process, since it will enhance their experiences in subsequent steps.

After the premarital inventory, the couple and priest or deacon will decide in which of the marriage preparation programs they are to participate. Appendix D lists the various options of marriage preparation classes. Appendix E describes premarital inventories.

## 2.3 Responsibilities of the Parish

**Goal: To warmly welcome couples seeking marriage in the Church, to congratulate them on their decision to marry, and to offer the Church’s assistance in their time of preparation.**

Guideline: Educate and sensitize parish staff in proper and effective contact with anyone seeking marriage in the Church.

Discussion: The first contact is critical. It is an opportunity to evangelize and bring about a richer understanding of the sacrament. The staff person, whether it is the pastor, the secretary, or someone else who happens to answer the phone, should have the necessary skills and awareness to be a welcoming presence for the couple. No one should be refused marriage over the phone. Church law provides that anyone with a domicile, quasi-domicile, or even one month’s residence in a parish has a right to be married there. Note: The intention of

permanent residency establishes a domicile or quasi-domicile. The Archdiocese encourages parishes to establish pastoral guidelines for celebrating the weddings of parishioners' children who no longer live in the parish. It is important to note that a positive response to young adults who have no parish affiliation can be an opportunity of evangelization and catechesis.

**Goals: To ensure that the engaged have opportunities to prepare for marriage according to their particular circumstances and culture; To provide pastoral instruction and counseling from the pastoral staff to those seeking marriage in the Church; and To enlist the effective Christian witness to marriage from married couples as a necessary component of marriage preparation.**

Guideline: Take responsibility for preparing couples for the wedding day, and assist in their lifetime commitment of living a Christian marriage. The priest or deacon will recommend the appropriate marriage preparation program(s) in which the couple is to participate (*Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures* §401.4.1.).

Discussion: The Catholic Church is the spiritual home for those who seek to marry in the Church. The parish church is the particular setting in which many of the great sacramental moments of a person's life are celebrated. The same should be true for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The ordinary setting for weddings is the parish church. Whether a couple is registered in the parish should not be the sole criterion for determining if a marriage should take place in the parish. The theology of baptism is far more important than parish registration. For special circumstances (e.g., disparity of cult), refer to the "Special Circumstances" section 2.6.

The Christian community has the primary responsibility for preparing engaged couples for marriage (*Canon 1063*). This is done under the guidance of the pastor and the rest of the pastoral staff. The priest or deacon is ultimately responsible for directing the engaged couple's marriage preparation process. With guidance, the couple will find resources for a premarital inventory, register for a marriage preparation program, and explore pertinent faith issues. The priest or deacon can play a very important role in the life of a couple preparing for marriage. His continued interest in the couple and his willingness to give of himself are crucial elements in that role.

Others in the faith community share in the responsibilities of preparing the engaged for marriage. Married couples who model Christian marriage are important resources and should take part as presenters for marriage preparation programs. Married couples may become "mentor-couples" who serve as ambassadors of the parish and journey with the engaged and newly married couples. Marriage preparation is an opportunity for married couples to serve the parish and enrich their own marriages.

The bride and groom's parents, family members, friends, and the community of the parish share in this preparation, which in reality has gone on long before engagement. The parish should encourage family and friends to recognize the preparation period as a special time of discernment and to pray for and with the engaged couple.

Visiting priests or deacons who have a relationship with the engaged couple are encouraged to participate in this preparation, as well as in the celebration of the marriage. Because the pastor is ultimately responsible to ensure that marriages are celebrated properly in his

parish, he (or another member of the pastoral staff) should be consulted early in the marriage preparation process. Issues such as who is responsible for the necessary paperwork, marriage preparation, rehearsal, etc., should be discussed then. Ministers of other faiths can be welcomed and invited to participate according to the ecumenical guidelines of the Archdiocese (*Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures*, Book IV).

Because of the many tasks and demands on both the priest and deacon and the engaged couple, time can be a difficulty. Yet, the importance of marriage preparation requires the efforts of both parties. To deal with the realities of time and to provide sufficient preparation, it is very important to devote adequate time to the marriage preparation sessions. These sessions are divided into two complementary components:

- 1) Involvement with the parish priest, pastoral coordinator, deacon, or pastoral associate who guides the couple in their overall preparation for marriage.
- 2) Involvement with programs and sessions facilitated by trained teams that include married couples who witness Christian married life. The Archdiocese offers a variety of programs led by married couples and to which the priest or deacon may send the engaged for marriage preparation (see Appendix D). See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly.

**Goals: To establish norms within the Code of Canon Law to allow couples adequate time to prepare for the Sacrament of**

**Matrimony; to provide the pastor or deacon and the engaged couple an opportunity to develop a relationship with one another; and To use a pastoral approach in determining the amount of time needed for the marriage preparation process.**

Guidelines: Begin formal marriage preparation six to eight months before the anticipated date of the wedding. Archdiocesan policy requires at least four months preparation time (*Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures* §401.2.1).

No firm date for a wedding should be set until the conclusion of the couple's first meeting with the priest or deacon (*Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures* §401.3.1). No date for a wedding may be set unless the parties are free to marry in the Catholic Church (see "Canonical Impediments" in section 3.6.5). While someone else often handles the recording of a date, only a person with proper pastoral training is able to determine freedom to marry and select a wedding date with the couple. Parish and archdiocesan policies and procedures should be taken into account (see *Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures* §403.1.1).

Discussion: Couples are encouraged to begin formal marriage preparation with their priest or deacon as soon as possible after the announcement of the engagement. Sometimes this can occur almost one year before the anticipated wedding date.

To ensure that a couple has time to prepare in a serious way for their marriage, it is recommended that the preparation begin six to eight months before the anticipated date of the wedding. However, parishes should not impose this time frame

arbitrarily or without consideration of the circumstances. Pastoral responsibility lends toward cultural sensitivity and consideration of family situations when determining how much time is necessary for good marriage preparation. This is not a waiting period but a time of preparation and often a time of restoration. Therefore, it may be appropriate in some instances to determine a period of preparation that is other than the recommended six to eight months.

In some instances, this may change the practices or procedures of particular parishes. Nevertheless, it is a worthwhile change that can ensure a couple ample time to focus on and discuss the various facets of married life.

**Goal: To provide opportunities for the engaged couple to participate in the spiritual life of the Church.**

Guideline: The parish is where the engaged experience their relationship in the context of the Church. Therefore they should be invited to take part in the Mass and the other liturgical and devotional events and particularly to take advantage of the sacrament of penance as well as participating in the life of the parish. They should be included in prayers of the community. Inviting them to give witness to their commitment would serve the larger faith community.

Discussion: The period of engagement is a time of opportunity for the couple and the parish. It is an opportunity to evangelize and celebrate the engaged couple embarking on their faith journey of committed love. How the parish welcomes and includes the engaged is critical. However, that inclusion should be more than just good hospitality. The parish is where the engaged experience their

relationship in the context of a community of faith. Therefore they should be invited into the spiritual life of the parish. The parishioners should be aware of the couples who are preparing for marriage, so that they may pray for them and support them. This could be by including them in the prayers of the faithful, having a commitment ceremony for them, or blessing their engagement.

The parish can offer service opportunities, such as assisting in catechesis, working at a soup kitchen, serving as ushers, etc. In this way the engaged may serve the community together. This service is not just for the good of the community; it is also for the benefit of the couple. They experience transformation in their relationship and individually. With guided reflection by the parish minister, they derive meaning from their service experience that feeds their faith. This is an opportunity for adult faith formation.

**Goal: To present the parish as a resource that will assist the couple when they are facing difficult times in their marriage.**

Guideline: Despite the best efforts to marry well and offer support to married couples, divorce is a reality in our culture. Many of the couples getting married today have not seen a lifelong marriage in their own families. The daily challenges of being married often seem too much for the newly married couple.

Discussion: The greatest number of divorces occurs in the first five years of marriage. A couple in a troubled marriage often does not know what to do about it or they are too embarrassed to admit there are problems. The person who helps prepare them for this life together can also be available to them after the marriage. Letting the couple know during the time of preparation that there could be difficulties

as they learn to adjust to married life and their new “family culture” gives them a connection to their preparation time with the priest or deacon and will invite them to seek help if needed. The priest or deacon is a helpful resource to solving many difficulties before they become huge problems, and potentially a source of comfort to them.

Each parish can have a list of resources such as Retrouvaille, counselors, AA, and Al-Anon groups to offer to couples in trouble.

## 2.4 Responsibilities of the Engaged Couple

**Goal: To participate actively in the marriage preparation process, not just for the wedding day, but to live out their Sacrament of Matrimony.**

Guideline: Commit sufficient time and attention to the marriage preparation process.

Discussion: The engaged couple is expected to take advantage of the unique opportunity presented at their marriage preparation program to be among other engaged couples during their own time of engagement. Their intentions to enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony means that they understand that this moment will never happen again!

They should consider themselves “students of marriage” and be open to new learning. If the parish offers a mentoring program, the couple should be encouraged to participate. They should continue courting each other. The engagement period is a unique time of learning for the relationship; they shouldn’t focus only on the wedding day. The couple should begin to pray together, if they have not done so already, to nurture a common faith life.

The couple should be open to the invitations from the worshipping community to involve themselves in the life of the parish. They might consider taking on a service project together or consider getting involved *together* in one of the ministries of the parish. Perhaps they could volunteer at a parish-sponsored food pantry, homeless shelter, or soup kitchen.

The couple should also be introduced to the principles of stewardship. The priest or deacon could provide information about stewardship opportunities for couples.

**Goal: To reflect on their relationship to the Catholic community.**

Guideline: Explore what it means to be married persons in the context of the Catholic Church.

Discussion: The Sacrament of Matrimony calls for a new relationship with the Church. Engaged couples should envision the role they will play within the faith community as married persons. There should be an expectation of something different because of the sacrament that redefines and transforms them. The priest or deacon should discuss this with the couple, since each couple will relate to the parish community in a unique way.

Becoming married is both leaving and cleaving. To cleave to and become one with each other, the couple must also leave their families of origin. The redefining of their social roles as a couple has already begun. The wedding clearly marks this, and establishes their new life in Christ. The reshaping of relationships often begins within their families of origin, particularly with their parents, and extends to friendships.

Entering the community of marriage also begins a new relationship with the faith

community. The newly married couple cleaves to a redefined relationship with the Church. Becoming married is also a process of growing into their sacramental role with the Church.

This does not happen all at once. Though they will be *getting married* on a set date and time, their *becoming married* has already begun and will continue well into the marriage. The engagement period is a time to reflect on that becoming, the shifts and turns that are in progress, and the changes to be expected in their significant relationships.

Included in their reflections should be their role in the Church. Christian marriage is a public act of faith that speaks to the community. The engaged couple should ask themselves, "How will our marriage serve the people of God?" The engaged may need to discuss this with their priest or deacon or the married team at their marriage preparation program.

## 2.5 Preparation Process

The Archdiocese of Chicago recommends the following process for marriage preparation with optimum conditions and no special needs. It is presented as a guide to fashion an outline with each couple. Pastors may determine who has responsibility and how to manage these contacts.

Often the initial contact is a staff person other than a priest or deacon. This person should be hospitable and knowledgeable of diocesan and parish policies.

### **Contact I: Initial Meeting**

The priest or deacon is the person responsible at this first meeting. The basic role of the priest or deacon during this first session involves assisting the couple in assessing their own readiness for marriage. As the Church's witness

to marriage, the priest or deacon has a serious responsibility and should make sure in the first session that there are no serious obstacles, e.g., a previous marriage, to the creation of a Christian marriage. This could include processing any required canonical papers.

However, most couples possess the emotional maturity and faith for marriage. The priest or deacon's basic role, therefore, is to extend support and help a couple in their decision to marry. Included in that support should be instruction on the theology and spirituality of marriage.

In the initial meeting with the engaged couple, the goals of a priest or deacon are to:

- Establish a rapport and relationship with the engaged couple and show concern for them. The same person should oversee the whole process with the engaged couple.
- Create an atmosphere in which the couple can be motivated to sense the value of preparation and thus can commit themselves to it.
- Assist the couple in beginning to assess their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the marriage relationship.
- Help the couple examine their views and attitudes in light of the Gospel message. This is important for all and may be especially valuable for interfaith marriages where understanding each other's faith traditions is helpful.
- Explain to the engaged couple the canonical requirements to celebrate a Catholic wedding in a Catholic Church.
- Give an overview of what the entire marriage preparation process will involve.
- Explain the options available for marriage preparation programs, informing the couple what to expect from such a program, having informally assessed the needs of a couple.
- Arrange a date for the wedding, having

determined that there are no canonical impediments to the couple marrying in the Church.

### **Contact II: Premarital Inventory**

A premarital inventory (see Appendix E) is not a test or an instrument designed to measure the readiness of a couple for marriage. It is a means for allowing the couple, with the assistance of a trained coach or on their own, depending on the inventory, to explore and strengthen their relationship with each other before marriage. Couples are free to take a premarital inventory even before engagement. By denoting strengths and weaknesses in key areas, the premarital inventory can direct a couple to areas on which they may want to work in order to strengthen their relationship and build an even stronger marriage.

The premarital inventories used in the Archdiocese of Chicago are Catholic Couple Check Up or FOCCUS.

Couples taking the Catholic Couple Check Up take it online and receive a twenty page report on their relationship with a discussion guide tailored to their individual situations immediately after completing the inventory. They can discuss it themselves or meet with a marriage coach to go over it. They can also directly email a copy of the results to the priest or deacon. It can be accessed through the Marriage and Family Ministries website, [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

If your parish uses FOCCUS, set that up directly with FOCCUS Inc. [www.foccusinc.com](http://www.foccusinc.com).

### **Contact III: Premarital Inventory Discussion**

If the premarital inventory uncovers major differences in critical areas between the couple, it may be suggested to the couple that they enter a period of discernment about how to proceed with the plans to marry. This may entail counseling—pastoral or psychological—which may be beyond the abilities of the priest or deacon. In such cases the couple should be

referred to an appropriate professional counseling service. The Marriage and Family Ministries Office can provide options for counseling services.

Having completed the premarital inventory early in their preparation, the engaged couples bring a heightened awareness about their relationship to the other steps of their marriage preparation. Essentially, they are better prepared for the sessions with the priest or deacon and the couple-led programs that follow.

### **Contact IV: Marriage Preparation Program**

The diocesan marriage preparation or parish-based team directs this meeting. Preparation programs enable couples to concentrate more intensely on the many facets of married life so they may be more aware of all the dimensions of marriage. The program helps engaged couples explore and determine the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship in terms of their future life together.

The topics covered within the marriage preparation programs include such components as Marriage as a Sacrament, effective communication, sexuality, Natural Family Planning, and the extended family. Volunteer married couples and priests or deacons trained by the Archdiocese conduct these programs. Engaged couples may participate in the Archdiocesan class or their parish's marriage preparation program, or take it online at [www.marriageministries.com](http://www.marriageministries.com) (see Appendix D). It is presumed that the priest or deacon will explore some of these areas with the couple in greater depth.

### **Contact V: Natural Family Planning Class**

This contact is for the purpose of catechizing the couple to the Church's teaching on sexuality and proper methods of regulating birth. While some information may be presumed, a couple's 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 St. John Paul, contained in the book, *The Theology of the Body*.) This part of the preparation process "will present marriage as an interpersonal relationship of a man and a woman that has to be continually developed, and it will encourage those concerned to study the nature of conjugal sexuality and responsible parenthood, with the essential medical and biological knowledge connected with it" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 66).

They may take an Introduction to Natural Family Planning (NFP) class online at [www.learnNFPonline.com](http://www.learnNFPonline.com) or in person taught by a certified NFP teacher. For NFP resources, see Appendix F.

#### **Contact VI: Follow-up with the priest or deacon**

The priest or deacon is the responsible person for this session. This session reviews the areas already covered by the couple during their preparation. The priest or deacon can discuss with the couple any aspects of their relationship that might need further development. This is also a time to affirm the positive aspects of their relationship that have been observed thus far in their marriage preparation period.

If not already completed, time can be spent taking care of the necessary canonical papers which have been explained in the initial meeting. These papers invite a discussion on the Church's view of marriage. Finally, the priest or deacon and couple can devote time to more specific planning of the wedding liturgy.

#### **Contact VII: Rehearsal**

The priest, deacon, pastoral associate, or a volunteer leads this. See Chapter 3, "Celebration."

#### **Contact VIII: Wedding**

The priest or deacon is responsible for the wedding ceremony. See Chapter 3, "Celebration."

#### **Contact IX: Post-wedding follow-up**

A diocesan facilitator leads two post-wedding newly married workshops. First Years and Forever Workshop A, which can be taken in the first year of marriage, discusses expectations, adjustments, and building strengths. Workshop B discusses finances, faith, and sexuality. See Chapter 4, "Continuing Education."

#### **Contact X: Post-wedding follow-up**

A diocesan facilitator of the diocesan newly married follow-up workshops leads three post-wedding classes. They can be taken after Workshops A and B or in any order. Workshop C covers communication and gender differences; Workshop D is about resolving conflict and forgiveness, and E discusses prayer, faith, and sacrament. These workshops are part of the marriage preparation fee, so there is no additional charge for them. See Chapter 4, "Continuing Education."

## **2.6 Special Circumstances**

Part of what a successful marriage requires of a couple is to be mature, responsible, and free. Christian marriage requires that the dimension of faith also be present in a couple's relationship. Since each couple is unique, there is no single, objective standard by which one can judge a couple's readiness to marry, nor guarantee the success of their marriage. However, specific, identifiable special circumstances may be present which indicate a need for further assessment and growth before the final decision is made to proceed with the marriage. The following are considered special circumstances.

### **2.6.1 Marriage After a Previous Bond**

There are two situations possible:

- 1) One or both parties have had previous marriage declared null through the judicial process in a Tribunal; or
- 2) One or both parties have had a previous marriage which is invalid due to lack of

canonical form. *(Please note: Canonical form only applies to members of the Catholic or the Orthodox churches.)*

This section deals with situations where one or both parties have had a previous marriage that is invalid due to lack of canonical form.

It may be a temptation to breathe a sigh of relief when it is discovered that a previous marriage is invalid because of lack of canonical form. However, there are still certain issues that need to be considered. Divorce is no less traumatic for Catholics or the Orthodox who had married outside their respective churches than it is for those who married according to their proper form. While the ecclesiastical issues may be different, the emotional issues are the same. In addition, there may be certain moral responsibilities that remain toward a former spouse or toward children. These are responsibilities that cannot be “annulled” by any decision of the Church.

### Procedure

In dealing with couples preparing for marriage where one or both had previous unions that are invalid due to lack of canonical form, the following areas ought to be explored:

- How long ago did the civil divorce occur?
- Is the future spouse aware of what went on during the former marriage, and what factors entered into its breakdown? Was this information only from the future spouse, or has it come from other sources as well?
- Are there any continuing obligations toward children of that marriage? How are these being met? These obligations are not limited to financial obligations. They include all aspects of parenting and of raising the children in the faith.
- What will be done to cooperate in the religious upbringing of the children of a previous union?
- How does the party who has not been married before feel about issues of child support or alimony? About the terms of the visitation rights?

- Has the couple discussed how the presence of children from a previous marriage might affect any children they might have of their own marriage? For example, how will the exercise of visitation rights, the payment of child support or alimony, the cooperation in the educational and religious upbringing affect future family life?
- If a previous marriage involved physical, emotional, sexual, or substance abuse, how are those experiences affecting their present relationship?
- How will the couple handle discipline and decision-making for stepchildren and biological children?
- Did the person receive any counseling after the divorce? If not, are there areas of their present relationship that need further exploration?
- What fears does the divorced party bring to the new marriage?
- What fears does the party who has not experienced divorce bring to the new marriage?
- Are there issues of anger toward a former spouse that need to be resolved, either by the divorced person or by that person’s future spouse?
- **If the former spouse and children are living in another country**, it is especially important to ask how they are being supported. Many times the civil divorce, especially if it is obtained here, does not adequately address these issues. The Church has a particular responsibility to see to it that people are not forced into poverty due to the neglect of a former spouse.

It is especially critical that the issue of children from a previous marriage is discussed thoroughly. Sometimes this gets into thorny issues, such as “I don’t pay child support because she won’t let me see my kids.” Try to keep the court issues separate from the moral responsibilities. The courts can only decide

court issues. Moral responsibilities exist beyond the limits imposed by the courts.

One further note: The Church states that parents have the responsibility of providing a Catholic education for their children. This applies to children born of any union, since it is a parental responsibility. Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate to ask the Catholic party who has been married before and who has children from that union how he or she is providing for the Catholic education of their children.

### **Preparation**

The couple should be encouraged to take a premarital inventory and view and discuss the Second Marriages or Marrying with Stepchildren videos available at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org) in addition to the preparation you do with them.

### **Paperwork**

For the marriages of Catholics or the Orthodox that have taken place outside their respective churches, the form entitled “Declaration of Nullity for Marriage attempted outside the Church” should be used. The instructions are printed on the form itself. These forms are available from Mission Press (see Appendix G). After they are filled out, the forms should be sent to the Office for Canonical Services (See Appendix G).

Non-Catholics who were married to a Catholic outside the Catholic Church (and where no dispensation from canonical form had been issued) can also use this form. However, they must be able to prove the Catholic baptism of their former spouse, either through a baptismal certificate or the affidavits of people who know for certain about the Catholic baptism. The same holds true for marriages involving the Orthodox that took place outside the Orthodox party’s church.

## **2.6.2 Marriage After the Death of a Spouse**

When a widow or widower contemplates

remarriage, all the issues of a first marriage complicate the decision, along with other issues faced by those remarrying after a declaration of nullity.

### **Procedure**

Some of the more crucial questions are:

- How long has it been since the bereavement? Has the widow or widower done the necessary grief work? Did the new relationship interrupt that work?
- Are there children? Have they adequately mourned the death of the deceased parent?
- What is the status of the prospective spouse? If widowed, the above questions also apply.
- If the prospective spouse is divorced, is there a declaration of nullity?
- If there are children, what are their attitudes? Has the divorced person taken time to mourn the loss of the marriage?
- Will the new marriage require a geographical move? Have both partners considered the losses, physical, emotional, and spiritual, that moving will bring? Are both families prepared to accept those losses?
- Do the prospective partners share the faith? If not, what issues will the difference raise?
- Will one or both of the partners change employment because of the new marriage? Will there be a significant economic impact?
- Are children from the new relationship a possibility? A probability? Are both partners open to having more children?
- How will the couple handle discipline and decision-making for stepchildren and biological children?
- How does the party who has not been married before feel about issues of child-rearing and support?
- Was there substance abuse or domestic

- violence in either previous marriage?
- What fears does each person have for the new life ahead?

### **Preparation**

The procedure above states only a few of the concerns couples face when considering remarriage. These and many others make more education about remarriage essential. Use of a premarital inventory is highly recommended. A couple who has children should be encouraged to view the *Marrying with Stepchildren* and *Second Marriages* videos available at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org). However, a couple with children who resist the idea of remarriage for their parent might be well advised to consider family counseling involving all parties prior to remarriage.

Not every problem that may surface during a remarriage can be foreseen. Remarriage has very different realities and adjustments than first-time marriages. However, that which can be foreseen should be addressed prior to rather than after remarriage.

### **Paperwork**

No paperwork is required for this situation.

### **2.6.3 Marriage After a Declaration of Nullity from the Tribunal**

If the person has gone through a judicial marriage nullity process (through the Tribunal), some of the issues will have been dealt with through the Tribunal process.

However, the Church is still concerned about the responsibilities which one or both parties may have toward children of their previous marriage or toward their former spouse.

### **Procedure**

Since not all the issues may have been explored through the marriage nullity process, it would be important to ask the couple to discuss the following questions:

- How long ago did the civil divorce

occur?

- Is the future spouse aware of what went on during the former marriage, and what factors entered into its breakdown? Was this information only from the future spouse, or has it come from other sources as well?
- Are there any continuing obligations toward children of that marriage? How are these being met? These obligations are not limited to financial obligations. They include all aspects of parenting and of raising the children in the faith.
- What will be done to cooperate in the religious upbringing of the children of a previous union?
- How does the party who has not been married before feel about issues of child support or alimony? About the terms of the visitation rights?
- Have they discussed how the presence of children from a previous marriage might affect any children they might have of their own marriage? For example: How will the exercise of visitation rights, the payment of child support or alimony, the cooperation in the educational and religious upbringing affect future family life?
- How will the couple handle discipline and decision-making for stepchildren and biological children?
- If a previous marriage involved physical, emotional, sexual, or substance abuse, how are those experiences affecting their present relationship?
- Did the person receive any counseling after the divorce? If not, are there areas of their present relationship that need further exploration?
- What fears does the divorced party bring to the new marriage?
- What fears does the party who has not experienced divorce bring to the new marriage?
- Are there issues of anger toward a former spouse that need to be

resolved, either by the divorced person or by that person's future spouse?

- **If the former spouse and children are living in another country**, it is especially important to ask how they are being supported. Many times the civil divorce, especially if it is obtained here, does not adequately address these issues. The Church has a particular responsibility to see to it that people are not forced into poverty due to the neglect of a former spouse.

It is especially critical that the issue of children from a previous marriage is discussed thoroughly. Sometimes this gets into thorny issues, such as "I don't pay child support because she won't let me see my kids." Try to keep the court issues separate from the moral responsibilities. The courts can only decide court issues. Moral responsibilities exist beyond the limits imposed by the courts.

One further note: The Church states that parents have the responsibility of providing a Catholic education for their children. This is not limited to children born of a valid marriage; it applies to children born of any union, since it is a parental responsibility. Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate to ask the Catholic party who has been married before and who has children from that union how he or she is providing for the Catholic education of their children.

### **Preparation**

The couple should view and discuss the appropriate videos for their circumstances at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org): *Marrying with Stepchildren, Second Marriages or Children of Divorce* in addition to the preparation that the priest or deacon provides.

It may happen that the Tribunal has placed a **restriction** (sometimes called a **prohibition**, a **ridet**, or a **vetitum**) on the person. This means that issues came to light during the Tribunal process, which would indicate that the person is

at risk for entering into marriage. It could also mean that the person is not fulfilling his or her responsibilities toward the children, or that the person has demonstrated an understanding of marriage that is greatly at odds with the Church's teaching on marriage. This prohibition is stated in the final letter to the person as well as the decree from the Tribunal. It should also appear on the person's baptismal record.

If there is a **prohibition** attached to a decree of nullity, the person assisting the couple in marriage preparation must contact the Office of Canonical Services (see Appendix G) *no less than four months before the wedding*. In general, some sort of counseling is usually necessary in order for the prohibition to be lifted. This counseling may be either psychological or pastoral. The Tribunal never places prohibitions on people for trivial reasons, so the fact that a prohibition is attached to a decree of nullity should always be taken seriously.

### **Paperwork**

Regardless of whether a dispensation is needed, the marriage papers, including the decree of nullity, should be sent to the Office for Canonical Services for a *nihil obstat*.

Since it is possible that decrees of nullity can be forged, please note that the Chicago Tribunal always uses different color ink for its seal and for the judge's signature.

### **2.6.4 Children from a Previous (Non-Marital) Relationship**

It is not unheard of today for people who have never been married before to have children from previous relationships. Regardless of any uncertainties with legal responsibilities, there are certainly moral ones. The Church cannot neglect to remind people of their moral responsibilities, especially at a time when they are taking on new ones.

## Procedure

With this in mind, the following questions ought to be asked:

- Is the future spouse aware of the responsibilities you have from your previous relationship?
- How long ago did that relationship end?
- What is the current relationship with the parent of the son or daughter?
- Is the future spouse aware of what went on during the former relationship, and what factors entered into its breakdown? Was this information only from the future spouse, or has it come from other sources as well?
- How are the obligations toward the former partner and children being met? These obligations are not limited to financial obligations. They include all aspects of parenting and of raising the children in the faith. They also include issues of justice toward the former partner.
- What is being done to cooperate in the religious upbringing of the children of a previous relationship?
- How does the other party feel about the person's responsibilities toward the previous partner or children?
- Have they discussed how the presence of children from a previous relationship might affect any children they might have of their own marriage? For example: How will the exercise of visitation rights, the payment of money to support the child or the former partner, the cooperation in the educational and religious upbringing affect future family life?
- If a previous relationship involved physical, emotional, sexual, or substance abuse, how are those experiences affecting their present relationship?
- Are there any issues of anger or resentment toward the parent of your child that need to be resolved, either by

you or your spouse?

- **If the former partner and child are living in another country**, it is especially important to ask how they are being supported. The Church has a particular responsibility to see to it that people are not forced into poverty due to the neglect of a former partner.

It is especially critical that the issue of children from a previous relationship is discussed thoroughly. Sometimes this gets into very emotional issues. It might seem that this is none of the Church's business, since the party is now seeking to start life anew. However, there are issues of justice present here that cannot be neglected. The Church has every right to ensure that justice is being done, and that previous responsibilities are being fulfilled before new ones begin.

One further note: The Church states that parents have the responsibility of providing a Catholic education for their children. This is not limited to children born of a valid marriage; it applies to children born of any type of relationship, since it is a *parental* responsibility. Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate to ask the Catholic party who has a child from a previous relationship how he or she is providing for the Catholic education of their children.

## Preparation

The couple should view and discuss the appropriate videos for their circumstances at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org): Marrying with Stepchildren, Second Marriages or Children of Divorce in addition to the preparation that the priest or deacon provides.

## Paperwork

Canon 1071 §1,3° states "a marriage of a person who is bound by natural obligations toward another party or toward children, arising from a prior union," is to receive the permission of the local ordinary. Marriage papers should be sent to the Office for Canonical Services for a *nihil obstat* with a cover letter explaining how these

obligations are being met.

### **2.6.5 Canonical Impediments**

There are a number of canonical impediments to marriage, some of which are of divine law (and hence are not subject to dispensation), and some of which can be dispensed. Appendix A contains a detailed list of “Individual Diriment Impediments.”

#### **Procedure**

When an impediment is discovered, it will be necessary to explain to the couple that it is not possible to set a wedding date until the impediment is dispensed or otherwise ceases to exist. Please be aware that *any* indication on your part about a wedding date, no matter how tentatively you explain it (“pencil it in,” “hold the date,” etc.), can be misinterpreted by the couple to mean that their wedding will take place on that date. It may be difficult to inform a couple that they cannot set a date. Likewise, it may be difficult for the couple to accept. Nonetheless, it can save a lot of future difficulties, even legal ones, by not providing a date for people who are not free to marry in the Church.

#### **Preparation**

While waiting for the dispensation or cessation of the impediment, the couple can still engage in the marriage preparation program which most suits their situation (see Appendix D) and/or participate in counseling as necessary.

#### **Paperwork**

Impediments which are of ecclesiastical law (and which only affect Catholics) can be dispensed. Most of these dispensations can be given by the Archdiocese, although some are reserved to the Holy See (such as a dispensation from sacred orders or religious profession). Those dispensations, which can be granted through the Archdiocese of Chicago, are listed on the “Dispensations” form, which is available from Mission Press (see Appendix G). *Both the right and the left sides of the form should be*

*filled out.* After the form has been filled out, it is sent with all the other marriage papers to the Office for Canonical Services. For dispensations that are reserved to the Holy See, please contact the Office for Canonical Services for assistance (see Appendix G).

### **2.6.6 Cohabitation**

While cohabitation is not an impediment to marriage, it will require more intensive marriage preparation and perhaps an extended period of time for the preparation. St. John Paul, in his apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, has stated:

*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...*

Thus it would hardly seem possible to turn such couples away and close the door to any possibility of regularizing their situation. Rather, the Church must reach out to such couples, treat them with understanding, and gradually help them to understand how their situation is a contradiction to Church teaching.

It is not possible to have a “one size fits all” policy with regard to cohabitation, since the Holy Father has urged that each situation be assessed individually. Therefore, pastors are urged to treat each cohabiting couple as their unique situation deserves. This is not an invitation to compromise Church teaching on the subject. It is simply a reminder that we must apply that teaching with equity (which is justice tempered by mercy).

In discussing the matter with couples, it is important for everyone to deal honestly with

each other. The subject cannot simply be ignored, since this gives the impression that the Church condones cohabitation or at least is willing to tolerate it. It also prevents the couple from exploring their own relationship in light of the Church's teaching, and reflecting on what their new relationship "in the Lord" is going to be.

Marriage in the Lord is more than just a lifestyle; it is certainly more than just one lifestyle among many. It is a unique and permanent way of living which indicates the couple's relationship to the Christian community. While they are just living together, they are not that sign to the community of the faithful, fruitful, committed love of God in our midst. When they join themselves together in marriage, they become that sign. Therefore, they need to reflect even more upon the decision they are making to "marry in the Lord."

### **Procedure**

In discussing cohabitation with the couple, the following questions might be asked:

- How long have they known each other?
- What were the reasons that led them to cohabit? (If these reasons include escape from a violent, abusive, or otherwise dysfunctional home environment, the effects of this home environment may have some affect on the person's decision to enter into marriage, or their ability to do so. The person may wish to explore these issues with a counselor.)
- What has been their experiences of each other during the time they have lived together? In other words, how stable has the relationship been? Have there been any instances of infidelity, physical abuse, or substance abuse? Have there been times when they did not live together or wished they did not live together?
- How well do they understand that the way they are living is contrary to the Church's teaching and practice?

- What is it that made them decide that living together was not sufficient and that they wanted to get married?
- What is it that made them want to marry "in the Lord," rather than go through a civil ceremony?
- How will "being married" be different from "living together"?
- How are they going to mark that difference? (Living apart from each other until after the wedding? Together participating in or supporting a charitable organization? Any other ways that might mark the difference?)
- Is there any sense that being married will "fix up" a relationship that is going badly or "spice up" a relationship that has gone stale?
- Is there any pressure being exerted from family?
- Are there any immigration or naturalization considerations present in the decision to marry?
- Are there any fears that are driving their decision to marry?
- Are there any external factors that are driving their decision to marry (for example, a pregnancy, the need for life or health insurance, a job transfer, military deployment, etc.)?

### **Preparation**

The couple should attend PreCana in addition to the preparation that they receive with the priest or deacon. They couple can view and discuss the Cohabitation video at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

### **Paperwork**

There is no additional paperwork that needs to be submitted to the Office for Canonical Services, unless a dispensation from an impediment is necessary.

### 2.6.7 Persons with Mental Illness

Mental illnesses (not to be confused with mental retardation) are brain disorders of a biological nature that can alter mood or rational thought processes. The most disabling of these illnesses include schizophrenia, bipolar (also called manic–depression), and major depression. However, because of recent discoveries of very effective medications, many of those who suffer from these illnesses can now have successful, productive, and healthy lives that include marriage, with only mild to moderate effects of their illness remaining.

On the other hand, other, usually less disabling illnesses, such as phobias, obsessive–compulsive disorder, anxiety attacks, anorexia, personality disorders, and post–traumatic disorder vary in their severity and can seriously disrupt married life.

Because of past experiences of stigma, persons with mental illness may be reluctant to provide necessary information when asked about their illness. They need to be reassured at the very beginning that mental illness in itself is not an impediment to marriage. It still presents, however, many extra issues that can be challenging in a marriage. It is important to reassure couples that the Church’s only motive in asking is to be of support to them in their decision to marry. Failure to do so may likely result in their concealing their illness from the priest or deacon entirely.

#### Procedure

Since both marriage partners must be well–informed about the illness, its symptoms and its effects, the following questions would be appropriate:

- Are both partners well–informed about the illness and its symptoms?
- Is either in denial about the illness or about its effects on married life?
- How severe or persistent are the symptoms? How well do these respond to medical treatment?

- Even with the best of medical treatments, some of these effects may remain: fatigue, reduced motivation, social withdrawal, low self–esteem, impulsiveness. Is the couple aware of any of these, and how can they be of help to each other when and if these symptoms occur?
- Do both partners understand that even when feeling perfectly well, medical treatment must be adhered to strictly? What has been the history of compliance?
- Have they worked out a plan of what to do if the symptoms cannot be controlled? Will he or she allow the partner to be part of medical consultations and decisions?
- Are their expectations (job, future, marriage, children, etc.) realistic in keeping stress levels manageable?
- Does the person ever use street drugs or alcohol? Do they understand that alcohol and street drugs, even in relatively small amounts, can alter the effectiveness of their medications (even to the point of making it impossible to control the symptoms of their illness)?
- Because medical treatment for mental illness can be very costly, do they know specifically to what their total medical costs will amount? How will these medical costs impact their overall budget?
- How often has this person changed jobs? Is the partner willing to be the main provider should there be an interruption in employment? Could they manage on one salary?
- What are their views about God, faith, and the Church? Do they understand that this illness was not a curse or a punishment from God?

#### Preparation

In addition to discussing the above questions with the couple, the priest or deacon should

advise the couple to acquaint themselves with local professional mental health resources.

### **Paperwork**

On the pre-nuptial form, there is a question about mental illness. If one or both parties have been treated for such illnesses in the past, the priest or deacon should make note of the results of the above conversation. Unless a dispensation is needed, there is no need to send the papers to the Office for Canonical Services.

### **2.6.8 Weddings Taking Place in Other Dioceses**

In an increasing number of cases, couples are getting married outside of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Sometimes this is for practical reasons (their families live elsewhere and they wish to be married in the community where they were raised). At other times, it is because they wish to celebrate their marriage in a certain setting.

The importance of a community of faith needs to be explained to the couple. A wedding is not merely for the couple themselves. It is a statement to the faith community, and also a promise from that community. It is for this reason that the Church says that couples are to get married in either the parish of the bride or the parish of the groom. If they are going to get married elsewhere, their proper pastors need to give permission.

### **Procedure**

Marriage preparation would take place as usual, but it will be necessary to complete all the marriage papers as soon as possible. Couples should be made aware of the fact that requirements for marriage differ in other dioceses and other countries. It is the couple's responsibility to find out what will be required of them according to the civil law, diocesan regulations, and parish policies of the place where they are marrying. The Archdiocese of Chicago cannot demand that other dioceses conform to our policies; the couple must conform to theirs.

If the couple is getting married elsewhere in order to avoid a law in the State of Illinois (such as the law prohibiting the marriage of first cousins), they should check with a civil lawyer to see if there are any civil law consequences of their action.

If the couple plans to marry in a location where neither of their families lives, the following questions would be appropriate:

- Who is going to be able to attend the wedding ceremony?
- Are they making reasonable requests of family members or friends to attend the wedding?
- What do they imagine will be the effect upon the members of their families who will not be able to attend?
- What do they imagine will be the effect upon them if not all of the family is able to be present? Try to get the couple to imagine, not just the setting of their wedding, but taking this most important step in their lives with only a few people present. (Some couples have expressed disappointment afterwards when they realized they were getting married in a church that was nearly empty.)

It would also be appropriate to discuss the couple's relationship with the Church and their membership in a parish, since they will be getting married far from that community.

### **Preparation**

In addition to your own preparation with the couple, they should attend the marriage preparation program that best suits their situation (see Appendix D).

### **Paperwork**

All the requirements for marriage papers in the diocese where the marriage is to take place must be met. The fact that such papers are not required in the Archdiocese of Chicago does not mean they are not required elsewhere. If the couple is unsure of what is being asked for, you

can contact the Office for Canonical Services (see Appendix G).

The marriage papers must be sent to the Office for Canonical Services. The bishop of the Catholic party must grant any dispensations. The papers are then sent to the diocese where the marriage is to take place, which will review the papers and send them on to the parish where the marriage is going to take place.

*Please make copies of all the papers before you send them to the Office for Canonical Services.* Depending on the country where the marriage is taking place, it may be easier if the couple hand-carries the papers there when they go for their wedding.

At times, only one party is here; the other party either lives in another country or has returned there to make wedding preparations. In that case, you may only be filling out half of the pre-nuptial questionnaire, with the other half being filled out when the person arrives in the country where they are to be married. In that case, send the papers to the Office for Canonical Services for a *nihil obstat*. The papers will be returned to you so that the person can take them with them when they go for their wedding.

### **2.6.9 Convalidation (Re-Validation or “Blessing the Marriage”)**

There’s no right word for this phenomenon. Sometimes it’s called a convalidation; sometimes a revalidation; and couples usually call it “getting their marriage blessed.”

Most commonly, the situation is that a couple has entered into a civil union, and they now wish to exchange consent in the Church. Canonically, the Church does not recognize their prior exchange of consent, but there is *some sort of commitment* which they made to each other, and some sort of moral responsibilities which flow from that commitment.

Since according to the Church the couple is exchanging consent for the first time, all of the requirements for entering the Sacrament of Matrimony must be fulfilled. The couple must exchange consent anew (and not simply renew consent that was previously given), and they must have the proper knowledge, intention, and capacity for doing so.

For those raised in the Catholic Church, there may be an understanding that their “real” marriage is the one that takes place in the Church. For non-Catholics (whose churches require no particular form for marriage), the requirement for a new act of consent may not be obvious. In either case, the priest or deacon should explain this in detail.

If the other party does not see a need to give their consent again, and is adamant that their former consent was good enough, then it might be better to seek a *sanatio in radice*, rather than try to convalidate the marriage. (A *sanatio in radice* is a retroactive convalidation of the marriage, which does not require a new act of consent.) If this seems the preferable way to handle the situation, contact the Office for Canonical Services to obtain details about this.

*Please note: A convalidation cannot be used as a condition for baptizing the child of a couple not married in the Church. Marital consent has to have both internal and external freedom in order to be valid. The baptism of a child can only be postponed in the event that there is no hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic Church. There is no provision in Church law for refusal of baptism.*

### **Procedure**

Just like with any marriage, the couple must have the proper capacity, knowledge, and intention for entering into marriage. They also must be giving their consent freely. The fact that they have been living together for a period of time does not necessarily mean that they understand what Christian marriage is or that they are freely choosing it. Once their marriage

takes place in the Church, they will have a new relationship with the Christian community. It would be good to explore this aspect of their relationship further.

The other thing that happens in a convalidation is that the partners are bound to each other in a different way. This, too, needs to be explored with the couple.

It will also be necessary to explain to the couple that this is their one, true marriage. The other exchange of consent established something like marriage, but it is this marriage in the Lord that creates a true marriage bond.

Some other areas you might want to explore are:

- What were the events leading up to their marriage outside the Church?
- What contributed to their decision not to marry in the Church, but to marry elsewhere?
- How would they describe their marriage up to this point? Have there been any major arguments or break-ups? Were there any instances of infidelity? Were there any instances of physical abuse or substance abuse?
- If they have children, how would they describe themselves and how would they describe each other as parents?
- If they already have children, are they being raised in the Catholic faith?
- If they already have children, you will also need to explore issues regarding an intention against having more children. When couples convalidate their marriage, they must have the same intention as any other couple entering into marriage; that is, to enter into a faithful, fruitful, abiding relationship.
- Explore the issues of permanence, since this will be a commitment to a permanent relationship. Their marriage outside the Church was not necessarily a commitment to a permanent

relationship, since the state gives both parties the right to end the marriage at any time.

- What made them decide to enter into marriage in the Church? Were there any external factors present in their decision, such as parental pressure, the birth of a child, problems in the relationship that they believe “God’s blessing” will cure, etc.?
- What do they think will be different about their relationship after their Church marriage?

### **Preparation**

Couples who recently (up to six months) entered into a civil marriage should attend PreCana or take the class online at [www.marriageministries.com](http://www.marriageministries.com), in addition to your own preparation. Couples who have been civilly married for a longer period of time (more than six months) may wish to attend a Marriage Encounter or a similar marriage enrichment program in order to prepare for the convalidation of their marriage.

### **Paperwork**

All marriage papers should be sent to the Office for Canonical Services for a *nihil obstat*.

### **2.6.10 Marriage to a Member of Another Christian Church**

Marriages between a Catholic and a baptized Christian who is not in full communion with the Catholic Church (e.g., Orthodox, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, etc.) are called mixed marriages. Where two non-Catholics are both validly baptized, the Catholic Church considers such marriages to be sacramental. See Glossary: “Mixed Marriage.”

Marriages between Roman (Latin) Catholics and Eastern Catholics are **not** mixed marriages. See section 2.6.10.1 for information about Roman Catholic–Eastern Catholic marriages.

## **Procedure**

The difficulties of mixed marriage must not be underestimated. Differences about faith and the very notion of marriage but also different religious mentalities, can become sources of tension in marriage, especially as regards the education of children. The temptation to religious indifference can then arise (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1634).

If possible, the Catholic priest or deacon should take steps to establish contacts with the minister of the other church or ecclesial community. In general, mutual consultation between Christian pastors for supporting such marriages can be a fruitful field of ecumenical collaboration.

Since for validity where one or both partners are Catholic, the marriage has to be contracted in the presence of the Ordinary, parish pastor, the priest, or deacon delegated by either of them (Canon 1108), the Catholic canonical form is to be observed also for mixed marriages (Canon 1127). However the Ordinary of the place for grave reasons, and without prejudice to the law of the Eastern Churches, can dispense the Catholic partner from the observance of the canonical form in individual cases. See *The Ecumenical Directory*, 153, 154 (the reasons to justify such a dispensation are listed), and 155. If a dispensation from the canonical form has been given, it is still required for validity that there be some form of public celebration (see Canon 1127, 2).

If a dispensation from the canonical form has been obtained and if invited to do so, a Catholic priest or deacon may attend or participate in the celebration of a mixed marriage at another Christian church by offering prayers, reading from Scripture, or giving a brief exhortation. Alternately, if the Catholic priest or deacon will be presiding, he may, upon the request of the couple, invite the minister of the non-Catholic party to participate in the marriage ceremony. In any case there may be only one ceremony in which the presiding person receives the

marriage vows.

Mixed marriages ordinarily follow *The Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass*. The Eucharist is a symbol of unity, and celebrating a Christian marriage at Mass may make the celebration awkward for both parties by highlighting their differences in faith. If circumstances justify it and the non-Catholic party agrees to their having a Mass, *The Rite for Celebrating Marriage within Mass* may be used. However, it must be stressed that should there be a Mass, directives of *The Ecumenical Directory* (159/160) and the Code of Canon Law (Canon 844) concerning reception of the Eucharist are to be observed. Couples should consult with their priest about this delicate matter.

## **Preparation**

Those assisting with marriage preparation should be sensitive to the uniqueness of each denomination; a Catholic-Lutheran couple faces a different set of issues than a Catholic-Pentecostal couple. They can be encouraged to view and discuss the videos and resources about interchurch marriage found at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

## **Paperwork**

Whether the obligatory Catholic canonical form is being followed, or if a dispensation has been duly requested and obtained, (*Archdiocesan Policies and Principles*, Book IV, 404, 16.1) the marriage papers should be filled out in the Catholic party's parish as if the marriage were taking place there. A dispensation from canonical form should be requested (*Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures*, Book IV, §404.16.1).

In all mixed marriages, permission for a mixed marriage must be requested. The parish priest will assist in this simple procedure. To obtain permission, the Catholic party will be asked to affirm in some way (verbally or in writing) that he or she will do all in his/her power to see that the children of the marriage are baptized and

educated in the Catholic faith. The other partner is to be informed of these promises and responsibilities; the non-Catholic partner may feel a similar obligation because of his/her own Christian commitment. No formal written or oral promise is required of the non-Catholic partner. In carrying out this duty of transmitting the Catholic faith to the children, the Catholic parent will do so with respect for the religious freedom and conscience of the other parent and with due regard for the unity and permanence of the marriage and for the maintenance of the communion of the family. It is important that during the marriage preparation, both partners together discuss the Catholic baptism and education of the children they will have, and, where possible, come to a decision on this question before marriage (*The Ecumenical Directory*, 150).

#### **2.6.10.1 Marriage to a Member of an Orthodox Church**

Eastern Christianity differs from Western Christianity in more than just ritual. It represents a different theology, spirituality, and culture as well. The term “Orthodox Christian” includes two groups that are not in communion with the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Examples of Eastern Orthodox Churches are the Greek, Russian, and Serbian. Examples of Oriental Orthodox Churches are the Armenian, Coptic, and Malankarese.

As a general rule, Orthodox Churches require that their members marry with the blessing of an Orthodox priest and do not envisage a non-Orthodox service. Unless pastoral and human considerations indicate otherwise, a marriage between a Catholic and Orthodox Christian may take place in the church of the Orthodox party, provided a dispensation from canonical form is first obtained from the Catholic Ordinary, through the Office of Canonical Services.

However, although the obligation placed on the Orthodox person has to be taken into careful consideration and may be a reason to

recommend an Orthodox wedding to avoid obvious possible negative effects on the couple, this is not to be taken for granted. It is not an ecumenically valid motive for the Catholic pastor to recommend automatically a dispensation from the Catholic form of marriage. There are often very good reasons for prolonging the discussion of the location of the wedding ceremony (for instance cultural, national, familial, as well as religious factors). Moreover this situation may well foreshadow other difficulties that the marriage will encounter such as negative attitudes in families. Also it is Orthodox practice that the marriage normally take place in the parish of the groom. It is of greatest importance that the couple discuss the implications of where the wedding ceremony will take place with both of their pastors, Catholic and Orthodox.

#### **Procedure**

In the case of Catholic-Orthodox marriages, two booklets are available from the Office for Canonical Services, one written specifically for the couple and one for the priest or deacon. Please call the Office for Canonical Services (see Appendix G) for a copy of these booklets.

#### **Paperwork**

In the case of Catholic-Orthodox marriages, marriage papers should be filled out in the Catholic party's parish as if the marriage were taking place there. Should it seem advisable that the marriage take place in the church of the Orthodox party, then a dispensation from canonical form should be requested. Once the marriage takes place, it is to be recorded in the marriage register of the Catholic parish where the Orthodox Church is located or in the marriage register of the Catholic party's parish.

#### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage

preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

### **2.6.11 Marriage to a Member of a Non-Christian Religion**

Marriages between a Catholic and a member of a non-Christian religion (e.g., Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Mormon) are often called “interreligious” or “interfaith” marriages. The canonical term “disparity of cult” refers to a marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person.

Interfaith marriages vary greatly, due to the great diversity in non-Christian religions. A few distinctions to keep in mind: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are called “Abrahamic religions” because they share belief in the same one God and claim Abraham as their spiritual father. These religions have a very different worldview than religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

The Catholic Church does not encourage such marriages, and declares the difference of religion to be a diriment impediment. To be valid, a dispensation has to be obtained for such a marriage (see Canon 1086).

Note also that in cases where a baptism is not recognized, the procedure for non-Christian marriages should be followed.

#### **Procedure**

Consultation with religious leaders from both traditions is encouraged, not only to discuss the details of the wedding ceremony, but also to prepare for and continue support of the marriage.

For such a marriage, *The Rite for Marriage between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person* is to be used, except where dispensation from the canonical form has been obtained.

Double ceremonies are not allowed and the

vows are not repeated. In other words, the Catholic Church does not permit two religious celebrations of the same marriage to express or renew matrimonial consent. However, cultural or ethnic ceremonies can be added to the marriage ceremony, so long as the vows are not repeated (Province of Chicago Ecumenical Guidelines).

#### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

#### **Paperwork**

A dispensation for disparity of cult is needed. A dispensation from canonical form is also required if the couple will be having someone other than a Catholic priest or deacon witness their vows. To obtain the dispensation, the Catholic party will be asked to affirm in some way (verbally or in writing) that he or she will promise to do all in his/her power to see that the children of the marriage be baptized and educated in the Catholic Church. The other partner is to be informed of these promises and responsibilities; the non-Catholic partner may feel a similar obligation because of his/her own religious commitment. No formal written or oral promise is required of the non-Catholic partner. In carrying out this duty of transmitting the Catholic faith to the children, the Catholic parent will do so with respect for the religious freedom and conscience of the other parent and with due regard for the unity and permanence of the marriage and for the maintenance of the communion of the family.

### **2.6.11.1 Abrahamic Religion (Jewish or Muslim)**

When dealing with a marriage between a Catholic and a person of an Abrahamic religion, i.e., Jewish or Muslim, the priest or deacon should be aware of the sensitive issues facing Catholic–Jewish and Catholic–Muslim couples. In general, the Jewish community discourages Jews from marrying non–Jews. Islam permits Muslim men to marry Christians and Jews, but does not permit Muslim women to marry non–Muslims. Extra pastoral care prior to and following the wedding is essential.

### **Procedure**

*Jewish:* When the ceremony follows the Catholic form, a rabbi or a cantor can be invited to participate in the ceremony, but the Catholic priest or deacon officially witnesses the exchange of vows. Should a dispensation from the canonical form have been granted, a traditional Jewish celebration could take place at a synagogue or designated place.

*Muslim:* An imam or other Muslim could be invited to participate in the ceremony, but the Catholic priest or deacon officially witnesses the exchange of vows. Should a dispensation from the canonical form have been granted, an Islamic celebration could be planned. There is no traditional Islamic marriage rite other than the witnessing of the contract. Usually the marriage does not take place in a mosque.

### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

### **Paperwork**

A dispensation for disparity of cult is needed. A dispensation from canonical form is also required if the couple will be having someone other than a Catholic priest or deacon witness

their vows. To obtain the dispensation, the Catholic party will be asked to affirm in some way (verbally or in writing) that he or she will promise to do all in their power to see that the children of the marriage be baptized and educated in the Catholic Church. The other partner is to be informed of these promises and responsibilities; the non–Catholic partner may feel a similar obligation because their own religious commitment. No formal written or oral promise is required of the non–Catholic partner. In carrying out this duty of transmitting the Catholic faith to the children, the Catholic parent will do so with respect for the religious freedom and conscience of the other parent and with due regard for the unity and permanence of the marriage and for the maintenance of the communion of the family.

### **2.6.11.2 Non–Abrahamic Religion (Buddhist, Hindu, Bahai, Sikh, etc.)**

When dealing with a marriage between a Catholic and a person of a Non–Abrahamic religion, e.g., Buddhist, Hindu, Bahai, Sikh, etc., ministers should be aware of the often complex issues facing these couples and their families. The issues are due to not only more significant religious differences, but often also more marked cultural differences. Extra pastoral care prior to and following the wedding is essential.

Traditional customs should be encouraged and permitted except when they involve a credal affirmation on the part of the Catholic, or participation in rites of worship, which by their very nature would indicate membership in that faith community or involve worship of deities other than the God of Abraham, the one God of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. While the Catholic party could certainly be passively present for these rites, an active participation in them in such a way as to indicate credal affirmation would not be acceptable.

Thus, it is crucial that the pastoral minister inquire carefully into the religious significance of traditional wedding customs before

permitting them to be included in a Catholic ceremony. This becomes all the more important if a Catholic wishes a dispensation to marry in a non–Abrahamic wedding ceremony.

### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

### **Paperwork**

A dispensation for disparity of cult is needed. Should the couple desire to have someone other than a Catholic priest or deacon witness their vows, they have first to request also a dispensation from the canonical form for grave reasons. To obtain the dispensation, the Catholic party will be asked to affirm in some way (verbally or in writing) that he or she will promise to do all in their power to see that the children of the marriage be baptized and educated in the Catholic Church. The other partner is to be informed of these promises and responsibilities; the non–Catholic partner may feel a similar obligation because of their own religious commitment. No formal written or oral promise is required of the non–Catholic partner. In carrying out this duty of transmitting the Catholic faith to the children, the Catholic parent will do so with respect for the religious freedom and conscience of the other parent and with due regard for the unity and permanence of the marriage and for the maintenance of the communion of the family.

#### **2.6.11.3 Unrecognized Baptism**

When a party does not have a recognized baptism, a dispensation for disparity of cult would apply. Keep in mind that not all who profess to be Christians are baptized. Marriages

between a Catholic and an unbaptized person who claims to be Christian would also require a dispensation for disparity of cult.

### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

### **Paperwork**

In all cases, a dispensation for disparity of cult is needed. A dispensation from canonical form is also required if the couple will be having someone other than a Catholic priest or deacon witness their vows. To obtain the dispensation, the Catholic party will be asked to affirm in some way (verbally or in writing) that he or she will promise to do all in their power to see that the children of the marriage be baptized and educated in the Catholic Church. The other partner is to be informed of these promises and responsibilities; the non–Catholic partner may feel a similar obligation because of their own religious commitment. No formal written or oral promise is required of the non–Catholic partner. In carrying out this duty of transmitting the Catholic faith to the children, the Catholic parent will do so with respect for the religious freedom and conscience of the other parent and with due regard for the unity and permanence of the marriage and for the maintenance of the communion of the family.

#### **2.6.12 Non–Practicing Catholics**

It is not unusual for one or both partners of an engaged couple to approach a parish to be married in a Catholic Church yet not be practicing the Catholic faith. For our purposes, the term “non–practicing” refers to these

individuals whose practice of the faith is not evident when they present themselves for marriage.

While a certain level of frustration by the priest or deacon may be understandable, the counsel of St. John Paul provides guidance when ministering to non-practicing Catholics who are engaged. “The faith of the person seeking marriage in the Church can exist in varying degrees. It is the primary duty of pastors to facilitate a rediscovery of this faith, nourishing it and bringing it to maturity” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68).

While some evidence of faith is required for the reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony, the level of faith is not the question. Engaged couples must be accepted and instructed at their actual level. “As for wishing to lay down further criteria for admission to the ecclesial celebration of marriage, criteria that would concern the level of faith of those to be married, this would above all involve grave risks” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68).

### **Procedure**

While no further paper work is required when working with non-practicing Catholics, it is likely that it will be necessary to spend more time discussing their faith practice. Also likely is the need to discuss their understanding of the meaning of marriage and what it involves for Catholics. It could be helpful to develop, with the couple, a plan that will meet their formational needs. Hopefully, this will increase their familiarity with and participation in the life of the Church. Some suggestions that could be a part of the plan include:

- Attending the weekend Eucharist;
- Participating in the Sacrament of Penance;
- Participating in an adult formation program;
- Meeting with a mentor couple from the parish;
- Joining a prayer or scripture group; and

- Participating in some parish service opportunities.

In conclusion, unless the couple places a grave obstacle before you, such as an explicit act of repudiating the faith, it is necessary to pastorally reach out to them and work with their implicit faith and openness. The time of preparation is a concrete opportunity for evangelization and further faith development.

### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

### **2.6.13 Non-Registered Couples**

Canon 1115 states that a marriage is to take place in a parish where either of the parties has domicile, quasi-domicile, or merely a month-long residence. A person acquires a pastor (and hence a right to pastoral care) by living in a place (or joining a parish). Merely moving in with the intention of permanent residency establishes a domicile. The Code makes no distinction between living in a place and joining the parish; they are equivalent in the law.

### **Procedure**

From this it would seem that it would not be possible to create parish policies that take away the rights a person has under the laws of the Church.

On the other hand, since marriage takes place within a community of faith, it would be reasonable for the parish to require some

commitment on the part of the couple who wish to be married in that community.

Each situation has to be handled separately and delicately. The presumption of the Church is that people have a natural right to marry. Therefore, the Church is to provide a welcoming presence to couples, regardless of whether they are registered parishioners or not.

For those who are not, they could perhaps be encouraged to register in the parish and to make a commitment to the faith community in which they are to celebrate their marriage. They might also be expected to attend various liturgical celebrations in preparation for their marriage, if the parish wishes to develop a “catechumenal model” for marriage preparation. They could be welcomed in the Church bulletin, and perhaps prayed for in the Prayer of the Faithful.

The directives of *The Rite of Marriage* itself should always be kept in mind: “Priests should first of all strengthen and nourish the faith of those about to be married.”

#### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

#### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

#### **2.6.14 Cross-Cultural or Interracial Marriages**

Newly engaged couples encounter many challenges. Whether it is a young couple or a second marriage for one or both persons, psychological and cultural “baggage” will

inevitably play an important role in their future relationship. It is therefore crucial that marriage preparation assists the engaged to focus on these particular situations.

When individuals from different ethnic cultures enter the Sacrament of Matrimony, they may find married life even more complicated than might people of the same ethnic background. From a liturgical perspective, there might be differences in terms of the ecclesiastical issues and celebration of the traditional religious holidays (e.g., Christmas, Easter) and ethnic feast days (e.g., St. Joseph’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Feast of St. Nicholas, or Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe). Each culture is very rich in distinctive religious traditions and rituals, which are incorporated into daily life, sometimes even unknowingly. An engaged couple might simply assume that all of these traditions are well-known and practiced by all Catholics. For instance, in Eastern Europe, a traditional “wigilia” dinner, sharing of the “oplatek” (wafer), or attending a midnight Mass is the main focus during the Christmas season. Among African Americans, “Kwanzaa” is widely celebrated at Christmas time. During Easter, the blessing of the food baskets is a popular tradition especially among people of Polish descent. Sharing gifts on the Feast of St. Nicholas or wearing green for St. Patrick’s Day is also traditional among many Europeans. Hispanics enjoy celebrations that bring the entire family to faith, e.g., “Dia de los Muertos” (the Day of the Dead), where they gather in a festive manner at the cemetery to remember their deceased relatives, and the celebration of “Posadas” (reenactment of Mary and Joseph’s search for lodging in Bethlehem) is popular. Seniors and children all participate in reliving the great mysteries of our faith and their lives.

Good communication is an integral part of every relationship; therefore marriage preparation programs should put substantial emphasis on communication and compatibility between the engaged. Couples from different ethnic or racial backgrounds may have a

completely different understanding of the decision-making process or may represent completely opposite styles of communication. In some cultures, a highly emotive dialogue is a natural way of communicating, while other cultures prefer a calm and quiet approach. In some cultures, lack of emotional involvement in conversation from one of the parties could be perceived as a lack of respect or neglect of the other person and eventually could lead to more serious marital problems. For these reasons, it is important to recognize such differences in the early stages of the marriage preparation.

Compatibility in terms of marriage and family goals, vocational roles and interests, might influence the future of the marriage to a great extent. For example, in some societies women are expected to stay home and raise children, so professional careers for women are not anticipated. Although varying degrees of “machismo” may be found in all cultures, the concept of marriage as a true partnership is a growing trend and an economic necessity in most industrial societies. There might also be cultural differences regarding expectations toward children, i.e., their roles in family structure and educational possibilities, as well as religious upbringing. These and other related issues must be considered before entering into an inter-cultural marriage.

Racism is a reality of the world and intrinsic to American culture. In 1979 the Catholic Bishops of the United States said in their landmark pastoral letter, “Brothers and Sister to Us:”

*Racism is an evil which endures in our society and in our Church...Racism is a sin; a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father. Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of races. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. It mocks the words of Jesus: ‘Treat others the way*

*you have them treat you.’ Indeed, racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation.*

Interracial marriages fall under the category of “special circumstances” because of that reality and the social sin that permeates modern culture. Potential social and family difficulties place interracial marriages in particular peril. We the Church “are called not only to a radical conversion of heart but a transformation of socially sinful structures as well.”

### **Procedure**

Pastoral care from the ministers of the Church is even more critical for interracial marriages, which bear witness to God’s love that reaches beyond the human boundaries of race. Their love for one another calls the entire People of God to challenge sinful influences of racism and to work for the transformation of society.

Cardinal George’s pastoral letter on racism, “Dwell In My Love,” offers concrete ways for parishes to address the social sin of racism.

Some questions to ask may include:

- What is their ethnic or racial background, and how important is it to them?
- What cultural or religious traditions would they expect to practice in their new home? (What would their Christmas celebration be like?)
- In what language would they and their children pray?
- How would they resolve potential cultural clashes on religious matters?
- In planning their wedding celebration, do they plan to include certain ethnic or cultural traditions or rituals?

### **Preparation**

The Archdiocese has a distinguished history with programs that deal with particular cultural issues. PreCana in Spanish and Polish PreCana are programs that deal with the language and

cultural diversity of our local Church. See Appendix D for information about these and other marriage preparation programs offered in the Archdiocese of Chicago. There are now a variety of videos and resources, including one on African American marriage, available at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.com](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.com) .

### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

### **2.6.15 Immigration Issues**

There are several situations that can occur:

- A person is marrying in order to remain in the United States;
- A couple wants to marry, but one of them is in the process of gaining residency here through their parents;
- A couple wants to marry, but they are not here legally.

It is important in all these situations to understand the laws of the United States and the consequences of violating these laws.

### **Procedure**

Because of a potential clash with civil law, contact the Archdiocesan Office of Legal Services (see Appendix G).

### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

### **Paperwork**

Follow through should be in accord with the direction of the Office of Legal Services (see Appendix G).

### **2.6.16 Previous Abortion**

This is a very delicate and unfortunate area, which occurs with more and more frequency. There are some indicators that those who have had previous abortions are more at risk in terms of forming a stable marital relationship. There are also emotional factors in the person who underwent the abortion as well as the one who may have cooperated in the action that need to be dealt with honestly in order for the person to be ready to enter into a marital relationship. For Catholics, there is also the fact that according to the Code of Canon Law, the person may have incurred an automatic excommunication (see Canon 1398, and Canons 1321, 1323 and 1324 for mitigating circumstances). (A non-Catholic cannot be excommunicated from a Church to which he or she does not belong.)

### **Procedure**

If the fact of a previous abortion comes up, please encourage the person to contact the Respect Life Office or the Project Rachel hotline (see Appendix G).

Having had an abortion is not an impediment to marriage; but it does require special pastoral care. In most cases, the person may be reluctant to reveal this information to the priest or deacon. It might be something that can be discussed when meeting with the parties individually by simply asking a question such as, "Is there anything in your past that you think you need to keep hidden from your future spouse, or that you feel particularly ashamed of, or embarrassed by?"

You might also want to structure your discussion as follows: "As a couple going into a marriage, you should know that there are certain things that can interfere with the growth and development of your life together as a couple, with sexual intimacy and commitment. Sometimes unresolved emotions over events in your past can come back in unexpected ways and they may get in the way of your relationship's development.

“We have found, in particular, that if one or both of you have had to cope with either sexual abuse or an abortion in your past, that these experiences can leave wounds in your life that can cause problems later on. There are things you can do to find some resolution and heal these wounds, and there are good resources and people who can help you through these experiences. We might suggest contacting a sexual abuse counselor, getting in touch with Project Rachel (see Appendix G), and participating in the Sacrament of Penance.

“One of you might have an issue about these experiences that the other might not know about. It is important to tell the other about it. Being open with your future spouse and talking about these experiences can be the first step in finding resolution and peace, so I would encourage you to do so.”

Then when the priest or deacon is speaking with the couple individually, the following questions could be asked:

For the woman: Have you ever been pregnant? If so, what was the outcome? Have you shared this with your fiancé? Are you aware that there is assistance available to help you cope with this experience?

For the man: Have you ever been responsible for getting a woman pregnant? If so, what was the outcome? Have you shared this with your fiancée? Are you aware that there is assistance available to help you cope with this experience?

### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

#### **2.6.17 Health Concerns**

One’s ability to make a marriage commitment is *not* prohibited nor diminished for those persons who live with some debilitating disease or genetic anomaly (Muscular Dystrophy, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease, ALS, etc.). While some of the demands of married life may be a bit more stressful for them *and for their partners*, if one has the mental capacity to make a solemn (i.e., covenant) commitment, physical disabilities are not a *de facto* impediment. In helping to prepare such couples for marriage, a priest or deacon ought to listen as much as talk. The origins of their relationship, the story of how this disability has figured into their love (or not), and their candid thoughts on how they foresee their future together will be valid grist for their pre–marriage discussions and reflection. If they seek recourse to local support groups or agencies related directly to a specific disease or disability, referrals by local healthcare facilities and disability offices are readily accessible.

If the disability is mental, then one must tactfully deal with discerning their mental capacity to make and sustain a marriage commitment. Marriage between those with permanent mental disability must be evaluated on a case–by–case basis, taking into account mental and physical capacities, their family and support network, professional advice, etc. Be wary of societal, ethnic, or cultural bias creeping into the discussion. Procreation and the possibility of not wishing to conceive are special canonical concerns in such cases.

So too, in the case of any partner who has a serious sexually transmitted disease (e.g., herpes, syphilis, and gonorrhea, HIV/AIDS). There are questions concerning sexual intimacy and procreation which need to be dealt with honestly, tactfully, and on a case–by–case basis. Again, be careful of oversimplified or

presumptive moral, canonical, or pastoral responses. Whether through canonical exceptions, permanent abstinence, or some discussible moral interpretations of family planning techniques, these issues need not automatically preclude marriage for a given couple.

### **Procedure**

When a priest or deacon discovers that one or both persons have HIV or AIDS, additional resources and help should be offered. The Church must provide information and continuous support as they discern their decision to marry. It is essential that the couple explore the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual implications that HIV or AIDS will have on their relationship.

It would be very helpful to identify and list competent individuals to act as counselors and spiritual advisors for couples dealing with HIV or AIDS. These counselors and spiritual advisors must be well versed in HIV or AIDS ministry with a deep understanding of the Catholic Church's teachings, possess highly developed communication skills, and have a sincere regard for confidentiality.

After counseling, the couple will meet with the priest or deacon who began their marriage preparation. At this time the information the couple has gained from the process will be thoroughly discussed: the moral and practical issues involved, what they have learned, and their personal decision to proceed or not proceed with the marriage. Pastoral sensitivity and careful counseling are prerequisites throughout the entire process.

### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the

Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning. Pastoral counseling or a referral to psychotherapy may be appropriate.

### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

### **2.6.18 Marriage of Minors**

Adolescence is a special time of maturity. It can also be a period of tension and change. In a special way, persons 18 years of age or younger need to focus on issues relating to their own identity and orientation toward the realities of married life.

### **Procedure**

It is important not to downplay the young persons because of age or their request for marriage. They must be treated with respect and serious attention must be given to their intention and their affection for one another. However, due to the alarming failure rate of youthful marriages, the primary task of the pastoral minister is to challenge and raise significant issues about their relationship that may encourage the young couple to seriously consider their decision to marry. This challenge may lead to the young couple delaying, postponing, or thoroughly reconsidering entering marriage at this time.

If the couple persists, then they are to be directed through the normal marriage preparation process. More attention must be given to this couple beyond the usual marriage preparation to determine if they possess the physical, intellectual, and emotional capability to fulfill the responsibilities of marriage. This extra attention should include the following:

- The couple should be directed to see a counselor. Through the use of a "Release of Information" form, the counselor will be able to inform the priest or deacon of their judgment. If the counselor advises against the

marriage, then discuss this with the couple, inviting them to address the issues before any marriage is celebrated.

- Parents or guardians should be contacted and asked whether they are in favor of the marriage and the reasons for their position. If one of the parents is against the marriage, consider that a red flag and proceed with caution.

### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning. Pastoral counseling or a referral to psychotherapy may be appropriate.

### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

### **2.6.19 Pregnancy**

Pregnancy places the motivation for marriage under great stress. Marrying under pressure may indicate that a couple is getting married for the inappropriate reasons. Pressures can also preclude serious preparation.

### **Procedure**

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 or deacon 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 alternatives to marriage. Marriage is not an automatic solution

for the difficulties arising from a premarital pregnancy.

If the couple had decided to marry and were engaged prior to the pregnancy, preparations for marriage may proceed under the following conditions: 1) the couple has completed the required programs for marriage preparation, i.e., a premarital inventory (see Appendix E), one of the archdiocesan or parish-based marriage preparation programs, and adequate pastoral counsel (see Appendix C); and 2) the priest or deacon determines that the couple is sufficiently prepared for marriage.

The age of the couple may raise additional difficulties. For couples involved with a premarital pregnancy, for example, the issues raised with a couple who are 17 years of age are different than for a couple who are in their mid-20s or older. If either party is not yet 19 years of age and if the couple had not made a decision to marry prior to the pregnancy, every effort should be made to discourage the marriage before the birth of the child. It is further recommended that, in the event that either party is not yet 19 years of age, a meeting be held with the parents of both parties. The purpose of this session is to gather further information that will help determine the readiness of the couple for marriage before they proceed with marriage preparation (see 2.6.18).

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 are:

- Does the couple possess the minimal amount of maturity needed to validly

consent to marriage?

- Does the couple possess the emotional, intellectual, financial and spiritual levels of maturity to develop a marriage relationship?
- Does the couple possess the necessary level of maturity to assume the responsibilities of parenthood?

Finally, priests and deacons 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 or deacon must help both parties accept their moral responsibilities in caring for the child.

#### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning. Pastoral counseling or a referral to psychotherapy may be appropriate.

#### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

### **2.6.20 Extended Separation Before or After the Wedding**

There may be an insufficient opportunity for a couple to develop a mature relationship if there is an extended period of separation before or after the wedding. Good marriage preparation may not be possible and future adjustment to married life may be extremely difficult.

#### **Procedure**

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 referral and follow-up, or through participation in the online marriage preparation class recommended by the Archdiocese, [www.marriageministries.com](http://www.marriageministries.com) (see Appendix D).

Military chaplains, campus ministers, the parish where the couple now worships, and the local diocesan office of family ministry are resources to the home priest or deacon. Through collaboration, the necessary preparation can be provided without creating unnecessary difficulties for the couple. At the same time, it is critical that the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage remains a part of the couple's preparation. He should determine the specifics case by case. The couple should meet with their priest or deacon to establish rapport, document the preparation progress, and discuss the plans for the wedding liturgy. Refer to Appendix C for the prescribed ministerial contacts.

#### **Preparation**

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning. Couples can be encouraged to view and discuss appropriate videos (Military Marriage) found at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

See Appendix D for descriptions of the various marriage preparation programs offered through the Archdiocese. Most of the programs described in Appendix D are designed for the engaged couple's participation together. Special provisions may be necessary, coordinating the marriage preparation with a priest or deacon in the remote locale, and who will work individually with the person who is away. If the

couple have internet access they can take the online PreCana at [www.marriageministries.com](http://www.marriageministries.com) instead of participating in marriage prep individually.

### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

#### **2.6.21 Older Couple**

Age does not automatically mean readiness for marriage. Older couples have different marriage preparation needs. Some of the different elements to be addressed when older couples present themselves for marriage include a review of former marriages or relationships; compatibility with the future spouse (i.e., significant age differences); the financial situation of each person; the attitudes of their children toward the future spouse; and health. Are there any significant changes in their life—style that are expected beyond those usually associated with marriage?

### **Procedure**

Couples of any age can benefit from a premarital inventory and the resultant communication (see Appendix E). Other alternatives include PreCana or the online marriage preparation program, [www.marriageministries.com](http://www.marriageministries.com). See Appendix D for brief explanations of these programs. Instruction with older couples may include the issues of aging parents, adult children, independent living experiences, financial responsibility, understanding of commitment, and relationship adjustment.

With older widowed persons, it may be wrong to presume that since there was a long and “good” marriage previously, there is nothing more they can learn about marriage. Although one or both may have been married before, they have had no experience being married to each other.

### **Preparation**

Couples can attend PreCana and can be

encouraged to view and discuss the video and resources found at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org). See Appendix D for descriptions of these programs.

See Appendix C for the recommended outline to follow for optimum effective marriage preparation. This outline was designed for parishes with ample resources; not all parishes will be able to follow this exactly. Appendix E has information about the premarital inventories. See Appendix F for information about Natural Family Planning.

### **Paperwork**

No additional paperwork is necessary.

#### **2.6.22 Fulfillment of Requirements of Church Law**

The initial discussion may reveal that certain requirements of Canon Law have not yet been fulfilled. It may be necessary to delay making further wedding arrangements and any formal marriage preparation until these requirements are satisfied.

### **Procedure**

If any of the above special circumstances are present in a relationship (or if some reasonable question is raised concerning a couple’s readiness to marry), further consultation and evaluation are required before a wedding date can be set.

Further consultation can be a positive opportunity for a couple so that they become more realistic in understanding their reasons for getting married. This process might also be used as a means for growth in preparing for their future life together.

Obviously, the postponement of a desired wedding date will be very disappointing for a couple. Particular sensitivity and understanding on the part of the priest or deacon are critical. An attempt to be as fair and understanding as possible must be made. Helping the couple

comprehend why the marriage is being delayed, as well as aiding them in receiving further help, is important.

It is important for the priest or deacon to document the special circumstances and any concerns they have. This should be done in letter form, sealed for confidentiality, and kept in the couple's file.

### **Preparation**

If arrangements have been delayed, no preparation is required. However, it may still be beneficial for the couple to take a premarital inventory (see Appendix E).

### **Paperwork**

See section 2.7.

## **2.7 Process for Special Circumstances**

The following process is to be used when the priest or deacon feels that the special circumstances could seriously impede a couple's ability to enter into a successful marriage. The process attempts to offer assistance to the couple as well as add objectivity and fairness. No wedding date should be set until the priest or deacon is satisfied that the couple is ready for marriage

and free to marry. To assist in making this determination the priest or deacon may consult the Office for Canonical Services at the Quigley Pastoral Center (see Appendix G).

Upon consultation with a representative of the Office for Canonical Services, the parish priest or deacon can decide that:

- The special circumstance is not of a serious enough nature to impede a couple's ability to enter into a successful marriage. When such a decision is reached, the date of the wedding can be set and formal marriage preparation can continue.
- Additional information is needed. The parish priest or deacon will undertake a more in-depth assessment. No date for the wedding can be set until a positive decision has been made.
- The special circumstance is of a serious nature. In such instances, the couple will be offered assistance to help them overcome the reason for the delay. No date for a wedding can be set until the circumstance has been removed and a positive decision has been made.

To ensure that a couple's rights are respected, a couple must be informed of their right to appeal the decision to delay their wedding date to the local dean or Episcopal Vicar.

## Chapter 3: Celebration

*A marriage is established by the marriage covenant, the irrevocable consent that the spouses freely give to and receive from each other. This unique union of a man and woman and the good of the children impose total fidelity on each of them and the unbreakable unity of their bond. To make the indissoluble marriage covenant a clearer sign of this full meaning and a surer help in its fulfillment, Christ the Lord raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, modeled on his own nuptial bond with the Church.*

–*The Rite of Marriage*

### 3.1 Our Catholic Heritage

Through its liturgical rites, the Church celebrates what it believes. It is our participation in the dying and rising of Jesus. As a community, we do this in the liturgy by proclaiming the Gospel and by celebrating the sacrificial presence of Christ in the Eucharist (see Chapter 1 of John Paul II, *On the Eucharist*). We do this in our lives by works of justice, mercy, and reconciliation, as well as taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ.

Therefore, the way that we celebrate weddings has a great deal to do with what we believe about marriage. When we gather together for a wedding, we gather with a couple who wants to make their commitment public before God and the Church, and we rejoice in their promise as they become ministers of the Sacrament of Matrimony to one another and to the Church.

At the same time, the Church believes that the love of God is made visible in a special way through this particular couple who exchanges marital consent. Therefore, the wedding celebration reflects both the universal and the particular. Moreover, these two must be held in balance so that the ceremony is neither an anonymous ritual nor so individualized that the meaning of the day for the Church is lost. Weddings are both the celebrations of the Church and celebrations of the couple. It is necessary to maintain a healthy tension between the two.

The Church's ministers should know the principles of Catholic liturgy. However, couples that ask the Church to celebrate their marriage may not have that same knowledge. Even if they are regular churchgoers, the actual planning of a liturgy is more complicated than just attending a liturgy. For those who are not regular churchgoers, even the most basic liturgical principles might need to be explained. In either case, those who are working with couples preparing for marriage should have an understanding attitude toward the couple's knowledge of liturgy. This can be a time for education and formation.

### 3.2 Responsibilities of the Archdiocese

**Goal:** To assist those who witness marriages in the Church to utilize *The Rite of Marriage* with all its options, so that a more meaningful celebration of marriage might occur.

**Guideline:** Provide training for parish ministers on *The Rite of Marriage* so that they are familiar with the various liturgical options therein (see Glossary: "Rite of Marriage, The"), including principles of appropriate music.

**Discussion:** The Archdiocese will offer periodic workshops to priests, deacons, and parish liturgists on *The Rite of Marriage*. These workshops will be aimed at familiarizing ministers with the *Rite* itself and presenting various options within the *Rite* that will

assist those who celebrate marriages in the Church to make the celebration more prayerful, joyful, and appropriate for the occasion. This will also include general principles of liturgical music and the explanation of various ethnic customs.

The Archdiocese will utilize other methods of communication to educate those who preside at wedding liturgies, those who plan the liturgies, and the couples themselves about the liturgical meaning of the celebration, including the place of music within *The Rite of Marriage*.

The Archdiocese will also provide a list of resources that people involved in ministry to the vocation of marriage can go to for more information about the liturgy of marriage. The couples can be encouraged to view the video and resources about Ceremony Planning found at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

**Goal: To encourage engaged couples who will marry in the Church to utilize *The Rite of Marriage* and to consider appropriate options, so that a more meaningful celebration of marriage might occur.**

Guideline: Provide workshops for engaged couples on *The Rite of Marriage* so that they are familiar with the various liturgical options in *The Rite of Marriage*, including the selection of scripture readings and principles of appropriate music.

Discussion: The Archdiocese will offer periodic workshops for engaged couples to gain an understanding of *The Rite of Marriage*. Experts on Catholic liturgy will familiarize the couples with the various options. Stressing the role of the marrying couple as ministers of the Sacrament of Matrimony, the workshops will provide instructions on selecting scripture readings, music, and the order of the liturgy.

They can be encouraged to view the video and resources found at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

Planning a meaningful wedding liturgy is an important part of the couple's marriage preparation. Information about these workshops will be publicized and made available to parishes.

### 3.3 Responsibilities of the Parish

**Goal: To assist couples preparing for marriage to understand the wedding liturgy and to use the options that are available for a prayerful and joyful celebration of their marriage.**

Guideline: Commit to basic liturgical formation of engaged couples, understanding that many of them have limited knowledge of planning a liturgy. Make clear to the couple the different rites: marriage during Mass, marriage outside of Mass, and marriage with unbaptized (See Glossary: "Rite of Marriage, The"). This will allow the engaged to better understand what they will be celebrating when they marry in the Church.

Discussion: The parish could offer this assistance individually if there are a small number of weddings each year. However, many parishes would benefit from having various meetings scheduled throughout the year that couples are expected to attend as part of their marriage preparation. It might also be possible for this to be done on an inter-parish or deanery basis.

The content of these meetings would vary, based upon the type of parish. For some, it could be the presentation of liturgical principles and the meaning of the wedding liturgy. For others, it could take on the form of a discussion of the Scriptures used at weddings and their meaning in the lives of

the couples.

It would be important to include the pastoral musician in any of these meetings. This could be a separate meeting in which musical principles are discussed and various options presented; or, if the parish does not have a pastoral musician, it could simply be the discussion of the principles of pastoral music.

Attention should be paid in particular to the community dimension of marriage. Most of what the couple has learned about their wedding day from secular media stresses individualism. By celebrating their marriage with the Christian community, the couple is asking the community to rejoice in their commitment to each other, but also promising to be a sign to that community of God's own love. In whatever way possible, the parish should attempt to introduce couples to parish life and make the parish aware of the couples who are committing themselves in marriage. This could be through other celebrations leading up to marriage, such as periodic prayers of blessing for couples at the Sunday Eucharist, by asking them to stand before the community as an indication of their intentions and to receive the community's blessing and support. It could be the inclusion of couples preparing for marriage in the Prayers of the Faithful or in the parish bulletin. It could also include a "mentoring program" with married couples from the parish.

Each parish should have clearly articulated policies for the celebrations of weddings. These should include policies regarding visiting musicians, basic information about the parish church, policies regarding photographers and videographers, policies regarding florists and an environment the couple might want to create with respect to the liturgical season that is being celebrated, fees to the church and when

they are to be paid, donations which can be given to local charities, etc. Good policies, however, are always written positively, not only reflecting a desire to make the liturgy memorable, but also reminding couples of basic liturgical principles.

Parish policies should be available in printed form, online, and, when possible, in the appropriate language.

The couples can be encouraged to view the video and resources about Ceremony Planning found at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

Where it is appropriate, parishes should encourage the inclusion of ethnic customs in wedding liturgies. Since the Archdiocese is becoming an increasingly immigrant Church, we must recognize that many of these customs are held in the highest esteem by the Christian faithful, sometimes being seen as of equal importance to the exchange of consent. Without diminishing the importance of the exchange of consent, these customs should be included as much as possible.

Wedding rehearsals can be particular times of evangelization, since many times those in the wedding party have not been involved in Church activities for a while. Those who are responsible for wedding rehearsals should familiarize themselves with *The Rite of Marriage* so they know the various options that are available to couples (See Glossary: "Rite of Marriage, The"). These options can be "teaching tools" that allow those gathered for the rehearsal to think about what the Church means by marriage. Rehearsals can also be a time for prayer, and an opportunity for those gathered for the rehearsal to express their prayerful wishes for the couple, giving thanks for the ways that each of them have already manifested God's love.

Those who preside at weddings should 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 not simply repeat after the presider. They should 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.

### 3.4 Responsibilities of the Engaged Couple

**Goal: To have a fruitful celebration of their marriage in the Lord that reflects their own love, and also proclaims and dignifies the Church's teaching about marriage and demonstrates their willingness to become the living signs of God's love.**

Guideline: Participate in liturgical preparation for their wedding as part of their overall marriage preparation.

Discussion: 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 prayers from *The Rite of Marriage*. It could also include providing liturgical ministers for the ceremony, although these should be people who are properly trained and commissioned for that role. Since this is a parish event, however, the parish could consider providing its own ministers for the day, to emphasize that not only is this the couple's ceremony, but one in which the community participates and rejoices.

Even though pets can be part of family life, including pets in *The Rite of Marriage*, which is sacred, is inappropriate, with the only exception being to assist those with

impaired vision, i.e., Seeing Eye dogs. Family pets may not take part in the celebrations.

Couples can be encouraged to view the video and resources found at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

**Goal: To recognize their new role as members of the faith community and witness their role of service to the community.**

Guideline: Make their role in the marriage ceremony a model of service and hospitality. They should be a welcoming presence to the wedding guests.

Discussion: Though modern practice would have us think that the marriage ceremony focuses on the bride for the most part and secondarily the groom, the marriage ceremony is actually a time of service by the bride and groom together to each other and the wedding guests. Their gift of themselves to each other marks the beginning of their sacramental relationship that will be lifelong. Their gift of themselves as a couple at the wedding symbolizes to their guests their new sacramental role in the community—to be a living witness to God's presence.

# Chapter 4: Continuing Education

“Collaboration between the Christian community and the family is especially necessary in the contemporary social context in which the family institution is threatened on many sides and finds itself having to face numerous difficulties in its role of raising children in the faith.”  
—Pope Benedict XVI

## 4.1 Our Catholic Heritage

The *Code of Canon Law* requires pastors and their faith communities to provide assistance to all married couples so that the matrimonial state is maintained in a Christian spirit and makes progress towards perfection (Canon 1063). Therefore, the ministry of the Church must extend beyond marriage preparation and planning the wedding liturgy. Pastors and their staffs are to take practical steps, appropriate for their parish, to ensure the parish supports married couples as they seek to live out the Sacrament of Matrimony.

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. While each married couple bears ultimate responsibility to care for the marriage they have created, diocesan and parish support of their vocation can be of great assistance to them.

## 4.2 Responsibilities of the Archdiocese

**Goal:** To provide support to parish staff members to assist married couples to live out their vocation.

**Guideline:** Empower and encourage parish priests and deacons, and other staff and volunteers to become familiar with various direct and indirect ways of supporting married couples of the parish.

**Discussion:** Just as there are many different married couples in each parish, there are many different ways the Archdiocese and the local parish can provide support for married couples. Each parish needs to decide which means would be most effective for their situation, respecting the cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity that is a reality in most parishes. Most likely, employing a variety of strategies to support the married couples of the parish will prove most effective.

The Archdiocese will provide regular trainings and enrichments for parish ministers who minister to married couples. Bulletin articles that support marriage will be sent to parishes on a regular basis..

The Archdiocese will sponsor the annual Golden Wedding Anniversary Mass for Jubilarian couples of every parish. The Archdiocese, through the Marriage and Family Ministries Office, will make effective use of the internet, through a web page, social media, videos, and a monthly e-mail newsletter for newly married couples.

The Archdiocese can provide consultation, resources, and creative planning to individual parishes as they develop specific strategies to empower the married couples of the parish.

## 4.3 Responsibilities of the Parish

**Goal: To assist married couples of the parish as they live out their vocation of marriage.**

**Guideline:** Commit to developing a formalized strategy to assist the married couples to live out their vocation.

**Discussion:** Many couples are unsure of the steps and unaware of the available resources that would help strengthen their marriage. Therefore a multifaceted strategy that includes regular, ongoing opportunities for marriage education and skills building should be a part of each parish's mission. Offering resources and educational opportunities on a regular basis, in a variety of ways, will assist married couples to sustain their lifelong sacramental marriage.

- Parish priests and deacons should preach about the sanctity of marriage several times throughout the year when the readings are deemed appropriate. Bulletin announcements about marriage provided by the Archdiocese should be published in the weekly bulletin.
- Prayers for marriage and family should be included during the Prayers of the Faithful (see Appendix H).
- Marriage enrichment and education opportunities should be offered throughout the year. These offerings could be done in collaboration with other local parishes or on a deanery basis. The Marriage and Family Ministries Office offers "First Years and Forever" Continuing Education Workshops for the newly married. Couples may register online through the website (see Appendix G).
- Married couples, celebrating

significant anniversaries, could renew their vows or be blessed at weekend liturgies as a sign of the importance of lifelong marriage.

- Pro-marriage resources could be made available to married couples.
- A listing of local area Christian, pro-marriage counselors could be listed in the weekly bulletin.
- Publicity about Marriage Encounter and other reputable marriage enrichment programs should be listed in the weekly bulletin.
- A lending library that includes books, videos and magazines on faith development, conflict management, parenting, communication skills, spirituality of marriage, natural family planning, family of origin, etc., could be developed.
- The formation of marriage community through support groups, mentoring programs, and special celebrations could be strongly encouraged.

**Goal: To encourage parishioners, along with the pastor 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.**

**Guideline:** Recognize marriage as a vocation for the Church. Nurture the vocations of those who have entered married life. This can be done by inviting experienced married couples to mentor the engaged and newly married. Married couples should be invited to take part in the parish's marriage preparation process as PreCana presenters or mentor couples. Another way to nurture marriage is by encouraging the development of ongoing marriage support groups.

Discussion: Marriage is a lifelong process of becoming that begins at birth and continues throughout life. The parish can be a resource for marriage enrichment and education for couples as they “become married.” Opportunities for mentoring, spiritual “companionship,” and encouraging should be nurtured by parish leaders.

Inviting married couples to serve as marriage preparation ministers calls upon them to serve the Church in specific ways through their marriage. Having an ongoing outreach of married couples ministering to other married couples fosters a like-to-like ministry and a mutually supportive community of marriage. Archdiocesan resources are available to assist parishes in doing this.

#### 4.4 Responsibilities of the Married Couple

**Goal: To have a marriage relationship that is continuously strengthened and deepened as each couple lives faithful lives of mutual love and support.**

Guideline: Take steps to strengthen and deepen the marriage relationship.

Discussion: There is a difference between getting married and becoming married. Getting married is a pivotal event for a couple. It is the beginning of a new life, the culmination of a budding relationship. It is a profound profession of faith that publicly reveals love that is meant to last forever. Getting married is an achievement, an arrival, and a threshold to a promise.

Becoming married is another proposition. In their book, *Becoming Married*, Herbert Anderson and Robert Cotton Fite say, “We may fall in love or into marriage but we do not fall into becoming married. That requires self-conscious intent.”

In some ways it starts long before a couple even know each other. Perceptions of marriage that are shaped by the marriages around them, from birth to the present, are part of that “becoming.” Cultural influences, ethnic, regional, generational, and from their families of origin, inform (or misinform) them about marriage.

Becoming married also includes discerning the call from within to discover one’s vocation in life. It is discerning a life of faithful commitment. This is very important. Prayerful discernment about one’s vocation—responding to God’s call—leads to a life with passion and meaning. Marriages that are born of this kind of discernment are most promising because they are shaped by faith.

Becoming married takes a turn toward the particular when one man and one woman choose each other. Their prayerful discernment continues through the engagement period. The wedding becomes more of a crescendo than an achievement.

Their becoming continues well into the marriage. As they traverse the stages of life they continue to learn how to be committed to each other. At each stage there is new becoming—as new parents, with adolescent children, as empty nesters, through illness, in retirement, even when a spouse dies.

Essentially, becoming married is a journey that begins as a response to God’s call—a life of vocation, and extends throughout life. It is a journey of experiences of transformation and conversion.

The journey also includes taking the initiative to seek new learning. Yet, marriage education is an issue that is easily overlooked by couples who have numerous demands confronting them every day. However, because marriage is a primary

relationship, the couple must try to reserve the time and take the necessary steps to keep the marriage relationship alive and growing.

Couples should take it upon themselves to seek out education opportunities. These opportunities could include programs and resources offered by their local parish as well as participation in Marriage Encounter, Retrouvaille, couples' retreats, and other marriage enrichment or education programs.

Couples should also take the opportunity to connect with other married couples for Christian fellowship and mutual support. Programs for ongoing support and mentoring offered at the parish can be excellent resources. Married couples should use them.

**Goal: To seek outside help if difficulties arise in the marriage.**

Guideline: There is concern for problems that arise in the marriage. It is advised to ask for outside help to get a better perspective on the difficulties.

Discussion: Rarely does a couple, on their wedding day, expect to have any difficulties in their marriage. It is a time of joy, promise, and anticipation of a life together, forever.

Current research shows that marriages often get into trouble in the first few years and couples have little knowledge of what to do about it. They may be embarrassed or shamed and they struggle to make it work. Too many times the resolution becomes separation and divorce.

There are many fine books, programs, and strategies to help a couple grow into their marriage. It takes some extra work on their part, but it gives them the opportunity to

regain and renew their commitment to the marriage.

The priest or deacon who helped prepare the couple for marriage knows quite a bit about them and is the logical place to start for any help or discussion the couple may like to have about any difficulties they are having.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

**W**e live in a time when many marriages fail. Being raised by one parent is commonplace among children, and few are unaffected by the dissolution of a marriage. “No-fault” divorce has become an easy option for marriages stuck in disillusionment. Rarely do we hear or read good news about marriage in the secular media.

Yet, there is good news about Christian marriage when seen clearly with eyes of faith. Instituted by Christ, and a conduit of grace from God, Christian marriage embodies all the hopes of our Catholic faith. Marriage is a conversion journey that shapes married people and calls each into communion with another and with God. The journey has a “Paschal Mystery” character that joins the married couple with God.

The care and support of one another, children, parents, families, friends, and the community of the Church are vital for engaged and married couples. This concern is particularly necessary to enable the engaged to assess their readiness and prepare for marriage, and to support and encourage married persons to live in the hope that is promised in their union. This support is manifested in the sharing of experiences, gifts, and wisdom that will nourish the dreams and crystallize the realities of their love.

Participation in this care and support for engaged and married couples presents a great challenge for the Church. It is also an opportunity for building relationships, offering a sensitive presentation of the Church’s vision of marriage, participating in the joyful celebration of weddings, and deepening a continued bond with couples throughout their married life.

Every person who is married, considering marriage, preparing for marriage, or struggling to stay married should have the encouragement, care, and support of the faith community. Every person who is part of the Body of Christ is a source for this. The local Church, to accomplish this, provides direction in the form of these *Guidelines for Pastoral Outreach to Christian Marriage*.

Marriage is communal, and it takes a “village” to make it work. It is in the community that a man and a woman choose each other; it is in the community that they live out their purpose as sacrament; and it is in the community, with God’s grace, that they are sustained, encouraged, and protected.

As Paschal Mystery and “the most fundamental sacrament of adult vocation,” Christian marriage serves the couple, their family, and the entire community. The purpose of this document is to help us to meet the challenge to lift up, preserve, and protect marriage, and seize the wonderful opportunities to evangelize the world through the Sacrament of Matrimony.

By addressing marriage at all stages of life—*Formation, Preparation, Celebration, and Continuing Education*—this document is intended as a pastoral tool for all who interface with marriage, “from cradle to grave.” May this intentional outreach aid the Church in being a blessing to marriage, and marriage as a blessing to the Church.

## Appendix A: Individual Diriment Impediments

**Note:** Canon 11 states: “Merely ecclesiastical laws bind those

- baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it, and
- who enjoy the sufficient use of reason, and,
- unless the law expressly provides otherwise, have completed seven years of age.”

This means that some of the impediments do not bind non-Catholics (age, incest, affinity, sacred orders, religious profession, crime, public propriety, and adoption).

### A.1 Canon 1083 (Lack of age)

- §1. A man before he has completed his sixteenth year of age, and likewise a woman before she has completed her fourteenth year of age, cannot enter a valid marriage.
- §2. It is within the power of the conference of bishops to establish an older age for the licit celebration of marriage.

### A.2 Canon 1084 (Impotence)

- §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 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.

*Canon 14: “When there is a doubt of law, laws do not bind, even if they be nullifying or disqualifying ones. When there is a doubt of fact, however, ordinaries can dispense from them. In the latter case, if it is a question of a reserved dispensation, the ordinaries can dispense so long as the dispensation is usually granted by the authority to whom it is reserved.”*

*The British commentary explains: “**Doubt of law** arises when there is a positive and an objective doubt as to whether the law exists, as to what precisely it means, as to whom it intends to oblige, as to whether it may have been superseded, etc...**Doubt of fact**—which assumes that the law itself is not doubtful, but certain—arises when there is a positive and an objective doubt as to whether a given fact or set of facts falls within the compass or scope clearly envisaged by the law...”*

- §3. Sterility neither prohibits nor invalidates marriage, with due regard for the prescription of Canon 1098.

*Canon 1098 states: “A person contracts invalidly who enters marriage deceived by fraud, perpetrated to obtain consent, concerning some quality of the other party which of its very nature can seriously disturb the partnership of conjugal life.”*

### A.3 Canon 1085 (Prior bond or ligamen)

- §1. A person who is held to the bond of a prior marriage, even if it has not been consummated, invalidly attempts marriage.
- §2. Even if the prior marriage is invalid or dissolved for any reason whatsoever, it is not on that account permitted to contract another before the nullity or the dissolution of the prior marriage has been legitimately and certainly established.

#### **A.4 Canon 1086 (Disparity of cult)**

§1. Marriage between two persons, one of whom is baptized in the Catholic Church or has been received into it and has not left it by means of a formal act, and the other of whom is non-baptized, is invalid.

§2. This impediment is not to be dispensed unless the conditions mentioned in Canon 1125 and 1126 are fulfilled.

*Canon 1125: "The local ordinary can grant this permission if there is a just and reasonable cause; he is not to grant it unless the following conditions have been fulfilled: (1) the Catholic party declares that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of falling away from the faith and makes a sincere promise to do all in his or her power to have all the children baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church; (2) the other party is to be informed at an appropriate time of these promises which the Catholic party has to make, so that it is clear that the other party is truly aware of the promise and obligation of the Catholic party; (3) both parties are to be instructed on the essential ends and properties of marriage, which are not to be excluded by either party."*

*Canon 1126: "The conference of bishops is to establish the way in which these declarations and promises, which are always required, are to be made, what proof of them there should be in the external forum and how they are to be brought to the attention of the non-Catholic party."*

§3. If at the time the marriage was contracted one party was commonly considered to be baptized or the person's baptism was doubted, the validity of the marriage is to be presumed in accord with the norm of Canon 1060 until it is proven with certainty that one party was baptized and the other was not.

*Canon 1060: "Marriage enjoys the favor of the law; consequently, when a doubt exists the validity of the marriage is to be upheld until the contrary is proven."*

#### **A.5 Canon 1087 (Sacred orders)**

Persons who are in holy orders invalidly attempt marriage.

#### **A.6 Canon 1088 (Religious profession)**

Persons who are bound by a public perpetual vow of chastity in a religious institute invalidly attempt marriage.

#### **A.7 Canon 1089 (Abduction)**

No marriage can exist between a man and a woman abducted or at least detained for the purpose of contracting marriage with her, unless the woman of her own accord chooses marriage after she has been separated from her abductor and established in a place where she is safe and free.

#### **A.8 Canon 1090 (Crime)**

§1. A person who for the purpose of entering marriage with a certain person has brought about the death of that person's spouse or one's own spouse, invalidly attempts such a marriage.

§2. They also invalidly attempt marriage between themselves who have brought about the death of the spouse of one of them through mutual physical or moral cooperation.

*Note: The impediment of crime has been greatly simplified in the 1983 Code. Most of the categories from the previous Code have been removed, so that this impediment rarely occurs.*

### **A.9 Canon 1091 (Consanguinity)**

§1. In the direct line of consanguinity, marriage is invalid between all ancestors and descendants, whether they be related legitimately or naturally.

*Canon 108: “§1. Consanguinity is calculated through lines and degrees. §2. In the direct line, there are as many degrees as there are generations of persons, not counting the common ancestor. §3. In the collateral line, there are as many degrees as there are persons in both lines together, not counting the common ancestor.”*

§2. In the collateral line of consanguinity, marriage is invalid up to and including the fourth degree. (Note: The concept of consanguinity and affinity have been greatly simplified in the present Code. The most common designation of “consanguinity in the fourth degree in the collateral line” is “first cousins.” This impediment, in the collateral line, can be dispensed.

*However, the Archdiocese will not issue a dispensation for a marriage which is taking place contrary to civil law. In the State of Illinois, first cousins may not marry unless they are of a certain age. Therefore, the Archdiocese will not issue a dispensation for first cousins to marry. This only applies to marriages for which a civil marriage license must be obtained. It does not apply to convalidations where a civil marriage has already taken place.*

### **A.10 Canon 1092 (Affinity)**

Affinity in the direct line in any degree whatsoever invalidates matrimony.

*Canon 109: “§1. Affinity arises from a valid marriage, even if not consummated, and exists between a man and the blood relatives of the woman and between the woman and blood relatives of the man. §2. It is so calculated that those who are blood relatives of the man are related in the same line and degree by affinity to the woman, and vice versa.”*

### **A.11 Canon 1093 (Public propriety)**

The impediment of public propriety arises from an invalid marriage after common life has been established or from notorious or public concubinage; it invalidates marriage in the first degree of the direct line between the man and the blood relatives of the woman, and vice-versa.

### **A.12 Canon 1094 (Legal adoption)**

They cannot validly contract marriage between themselves who are related in the direct line or in the second degree of the collateral line through a legal relationship arising from adoption.

*Canon 110: “Children who have been adopted according to the norm of civil law are considered as being the children of the person or persons who have adopted them.”*

## Appendix B: Pastoral Aid to Enhance Dialogue with an Engaged Couple

### A Reflection for the Engaged

It is not unusual for young adults to critically evaluate the significance of the religious faith in which they were raised and to question its meaning. It is a normal part of maturing in one's faith life. This is a process that is not completed in an instant but unfolds over time. It is understandable that you may not have completed this process at this point in your life. However, because you have asked to be married in the Catholic faith, it is important that you consider what role a strong active faith life will play in your life in the years to come.

The early years of marriage are unique and crucial because during these years a couple develops patterns and habits that will continue throughout their marriage. Since many human beings are creatures of habit and established patterns, in all probability, what you are doing now is exactly what you will be doing twenty years from now. *For this reason it is imperative that the patterns and habits you want to be present in your marriage twenty years from now are fostered in these early years of marriage.* If you want to have a strong faith relationship in your life and in your family, then you must begin to lay the foundation *now*. This is the time to look ahead at what you want your relationship to be in the future, with God and with the Church.

Your relationship with the Lord is both personal and communal and implies an active relationship with a faith community. A faith community, such as your local parish, is important to you for many reasons.

- You will find it easier to live the values that are important to you when you worship with people who share the same values.
- You will discover a partnership with the parish faith community in raising your children. It takes a Christian faith community to raise a child in faith. But before a parent can understand what the community can offer, they must first be a part of that community.
- Parents cannot give to their children what they do not possess. A parish faith community can assist parents to understand, clarify and deepen their faith.

With this in mind, we are inviting you to consider during this time of your marriage preparation not only your relationship with each other, but also your relationship with the Lord and the Church. You are being asked to wrestle with the attached reflective questions. These questions have been designed to assist you in seriously considering the role of faith in your own life and your life with each other so that you may discover that religion can be a source of strength in your marriage.

## Pastoral Aid to Enhance Dialogue

*“Thus a man and a woman, who by the marriage covenant of conjugal love ‘are no longer two, but one flesh’ (Mt. 19:6), render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions. Through this union they experience the meaning of their one and attain to it with growing perfection day by day.” –Vatican II, “The Church Today, #48.*

In a certain and real sense, your marriage is a time when you reflect on your life goals, as an individual and as a couple. In many ways it is a new beginning. Please reflect on the questions below, share your responses with one another and be prepared to share your discussions with the priest or deacon preparing you for marriage.

- What do you understand as the difference between marriage as a sacrament and a covenant relationship and marriage as a legal relationship?
- What is your understanding of the relationship between an active practice of your faith and the stability of marriage and family life?
- As the quote at the top of the page indicates, in marriage spouses vow to be of “mutual help and service” to one another. How do you see yourself as contributing to the spiritual strength and development of your partner?
- What are the reasons that you are asking to celebrate your marriage in the Catholic Church?
- Do you have any concerns about exchanging your marriage vows in the Catholic Church?
- What are your plans for participation in a faith community after your marriage?
- How will you approach the baptism of your children? How do you plan to pass on your religious beliefs and values to your children?
- What can the Church do to assist you to grow in your faith life?
- What obstacles have kept you from being active in Church life?
- Do you pray or read the Scriptures together as a couple?
- What issues do you need to address right now so that the practice of your faith will have the positive influence on your marriage and life that you wish it to have?

## Appendix C: **Recommended Outline for Marriage Ministry Contacts**

- Contact 1 Initial meeting at parish with priest or deacon.  
Pre-nuptial Inquiry and necessary documentation.
- Contact 2 Couple takes premarital inventory.
- Contact 3 Go over results of inventory with couple depending on the inventory.
- Contact 4 Participate in appropriate marriage preparation program.
- Contact 5 Take a Natural Family Planning class either online at [learnNFPonline.com](http://learnNFPonline.com) or in person.
- Contact 6 Pastoral consultation with priest or deacon.
- Contact 7 Wedding rehearsal.
- Contact 8 Wedding takes place.
- Contact 9 and 10 Couple attends two or more of the five First Years and Forever Newly Married Workshops for continuing education.

## Appendix D: **Marriage Preparation Programs**

### **PreCana**

PreCana is usually a one–day program presented by a trained married couple. PreCana employs the techniques of individual reflection, couple dialogue, and group discussion. Couples can also view and discuss a variety of optional segments on topics that apply to their situation (children of divorce, cohabiting, military couples, African American couples, interchurch marriage, etc.) which can be seen at [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

### **Online Marriage Preparation Program** [www.CatholicMarriagePrepClass.com](http://www.CatholicMarriagePrepClass.com)

This online course covers all the topics of a gathered PreCana, with additional emphasis on couple prayer, the Theology of the Body, and the spirituality of marriage. Couples can also view a variety of optional segments on topics that apply to their situation (children of divorce, cohabiting, military couples, African American couples, interchurch marriage, etc.). It has an Imprimatur and was developed as a joint program with The Marriage Group and the Marriage and Family Ministries Office of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The Catholic Couple Check Up is included with this class as well as worksheets and downloadable resources.

### **PreCana Hispana**

A team, which includes married couples and sometimes a priest, presents PreCana Hispana. It is offered to Spanish–speaking couples and utilizes the dynamics of the English PreCana, with cultural adaptations.

### **PreCana Hispana Especial**

PreCana Hispana Especial is designed for Spanish–speaking couples married civilly and seeking convalidation. The program is presented by a team, which includes married couples and sometimes a priest, and utilizes the dynamics of a regular PreCana. However, more emphasis is placed on those areas of married life that are culturally–specific.

### **Polish PreCana**

Polish PreCana is presented in Polish and addresses the blending of Polish and American cultures within marriage.

### **One in Christ**

One in Christ seminar helps couples learn the Church’s teaching in relation to marriage. It starts with basic catechesis on the Catholic Faith and interweaves it throughout the seminar to reinvigorate the couples’ faith life within the context of marriage preparation. Rooted in Scripture, Catholic Tradition, the lives of the saints and Papal Encyclicals, this three day seminar prepares couples to see how God and His grace are the remedies and the quintessential means to a happy, healthy, holy and lasting marriage. The first class is on a Saturday from 8 AM to 4 PM, the second on a Sunday from 1 to 5 PM, and the third on the following Saturday from 1 to 5 PM.

### **Parish Marriage Preparation Program**

The Parish Marriage Preparation Program is parish–based and conducted by one or two married couples. It is designed for the engaged of that parish community. The Archdiocese trains married couples to conduct the discussion–oriented program over a period of at least three weeks.

### **Programs for Couples Seeking Convalidation**

Special sensitivity should be extended to couples seeking convalidation. The final decision as to what would best meet the needs of these couples is left to the priest or deacon, depending on the circumstances.

- Couples who have been married civilly for less than six months and are seeking convalidation may attend a PreCana.
- Couples married civilly for more than six months should attend a Marriage Encounter weekend or other marriage enrichment program.

***If a couple is unable to attend any of these marriage preparation programs it is expected they will meet for three additional sessions with the priest or deacon to discuss those elements that are normally incorporated within the preparation classes.***

The Archdiocese, through the Marriage and Family Ministries Office, will provide leadership training for couples to serve as marriage preparation ministers for the engaged and mentors for the newly married.

The Archdiocese, through the Marriage and Family Ministries Office, will provide ongoing education and formation opportunities for parish and diocesan marriage ministers.

The Archdiocese will provide a proven effective premarital inventory for those who minister to the engaged in the diocesan and parish-based programs.

The Archdiocese, through the Marriage and Family Ministries Office, with the necessary collaboration of other diocesan agencies, will make marriage preparation materials available in appropriate languages.

## Appendix E: Premarital Inventories

A premarital inventory is not a test or an instrument designed to measure the readiness of a couple for marriage. It is a means for allowing the couple to explore and strengthen their relationship with each other before marriage. Couples are free to take a premarital inventory even before engagement. By denoting strengths and weaknesses in key areas, the premarital inventory can direct a couple to areas on which they may want to work in order to strengthen their relationship and build an even stronger marriage.

The premarital inventories used in the Archdiocese of Chicago are Catholic Couple Check Up or FOCCUS .

Couples taking the Catholic Couple Check Up take it online and receive a twenty page report on their relationship with a discussion guide tailored to their individual situations immediately after completing the inventory. They can discuss it themselves or meet with a marriage coach to go over it, and a copy can be sent directly to the priest or deacon. It can be accessed through the Marriage and Family Ministries website, [www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org).

If your parish uses FOCCUS, you set that up directly with FOCCUS Inc. [www.foccusinc.com](http://www.foccusinc.com).

If the premarital inventory uncovers major differences in critical areas between the couple, it may be suggested to the couple that they enter a period of discernment about how to proceed with the plans to marry. This may entail counseling—pastoral or psychological—which may be beyond the abilities of the priest or deacon. In such cases the couple should be referred to an appropriate professional counseling service. The Marriage and Family Ministries Office can provide options for counseling services.

Having completed the premarital inventory early in their preparation, the engaged couples bring a heightened awareness about their relationship to the other steps of their marriage preparation. Essentially, they are better prepared for the sessions with the priest or deacon and the couple-led programs that follow.

## Appendix F: Natural Family Planning

*“Love is essentially a gift; and conjugal love...does not end with the couple, because it makes them capable of the greatest possible gift, the gift by which they become cooperators with God for giving life to a new human person.”* –St. John Paul (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981)

Parenthood is an awesome and joyful vocation, yet bringing children into the world and into a relationship is never an easy decision because of the tremendous responsibilities that being a parent brings. How couples respond to and communicate about their own procreative powers is an extremely important element of their marriage. Thanks to all the research that has been done, with the modern methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP), couples now have the ability to understand and better communicate what it fully means to have the power to create life. Natural Family Planning is unique among the methods of family planning because 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 based on scientific research and are based on observations of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman’s menstrual cycle. Couples using NFP to postpone a pregnancy abstain from intercourse during the fertile phase of the woman’s cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid or achieve a pregnancy. 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.

There are different methods of NFP, but the most modern and common methods are the Billings Ovulation and the Sympto–Thermal. The Billings Ovulation Method uses a technique of Natural Fertility Awareness, based on the woman’s understanding of the cervical mucus changes. With this knowledge, the couple is able to identify the days of infertility, possible fertility, and maximum fertility. With the Sympto–Thermal Method, couples are instructed to recognize the signs to cross check. These signs include the changes in basal body temperature, cervical mucus, and the cervix. When couples are taught by competent teachers, understand the methods, and are motivated to follow them, NFP is up to 99% successful in spacing or limiting births.

NFP programs vary, offering classes and or personalized instruction. The Archdiocese of Chicago, through the Marriage and Family Ministries Office, offers NFP classes monthly at various locations. Online classes for the Billings Ovulation Method are also available at [www.LearnNFPonline.com](http://www.LearnNFPonline.com).

## Building Better Marriages through Natural Family Planning

**N**atural Family Planning allows couples to integrate their fertility with their family planning intention and to remain faithful to God's design for human sexuality. It also respects God's design of the marital act to be fully human, permanent, faithful, exclusive, and fruitful.

Benefits of using NFP:

- Can be used to achieve, postpone, and avoid a pregnancy.
- Gives couples better understanding and appreciation of fertility.
- Safe, reliable, and healthy.
- Increases intimacy.
- Increases communication.
- Couples share family planning responsibility.
- Causes no harm nor has any side effects.

Couples that are married by a justice of peace: 50% of marriages end in divorce.

Couples married by the Church: 33% of marriages end in divorce.

Couples married by the Church and attend Church together: 2% end in divorce.

Couples using NFP: 2–5% end in divorce.

Couples married by the Church, pray together, and use NFP – .001 – 1% end in divorce.

*Statistical information from "The Practice of Natural Family Planning Vs. the Use of Artificial Birth Control: Family, Sexual and Moral Issues" by Mercedes Arzu Wilson, in Catholic Social Science Review, Vol VII, Nov. 2002.*

## Appendix G: Resources

### **Marriage and Family Ministries Office**, Archdiocese of Chicago

3525 S Lake Park Ave, Chicago, Illinois 60653 312.534.8201

[www.marriageandfamilyministries.org](http://www.marriageandfamilyministries.org)

PreCana programs	312.534.8201
Spanish PreCana	312.534.8240
Natural Family Planning	312.534.8273
Catholic Couple Checkup	312.534.8351
Counseling referrals	312.534.8351
Stepfamilies	312.534.8202
Online marriage prep	<a href="http://www.marriageministries.com">www.marriageministries.com</a>
Online marriage prep for deaf and hard of hearing	<a href="http://www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com/captioned">www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com/captioned</a>
Online marriage prep in Spanish	<a href="http://www.preparacionmatrimonialcatolica.com">www.preparacionmatrimonialcatolica.com</a>
Learn NFP online	<a href="http://www.LearnNFPonline.com">www.LearnNFPonline.com</a>
NFP online in Spanish	<a href="http://www.aprendepfnenlinea.com">www.aprendepfnenlinea.com</a>

### **Catholic Charities**

[www.catholiccharities.net](http://www.catholiccharities.net)

*Holbrook Center for Counseling and Psychotherapy* 312.655.7700

### **Metropolitan Tribunal**, Archdiocese of Chicago

835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611 312.534.5325

[tribunual@archchicago.org](mailto:tribunual@archchicago.org)

**Mission Press**, 1146 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60607 312.738.7570

[www.missionpress.com](http://www.missionpress.com) info@missionpress.com

### **Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs**, Archdiocese of Chicago

835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611 312.534.5325

[eia@archchicago.org](mailto:eia@archchicago.org)

### **Office for Canonical Services**, Archdiocese of Chicago

835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611 312.534.5307

### **Office of Legal Services**, Archdiocese of Chicago

835 North Rush Street Chicago, Illinois 60611 312.534.8239

[legalservices@archchicago.org](mailto:legalservices@archchicago.org)

### **Respect Life**, Archdiocese of Chicago

3525 S Lake Park Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60653 312.534.5355

[www.respectlifechicago.org](http://www.respectlifechicago.org)

Project Rachel 312.337.1962

## Marriage in General

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)  
Many resources for marriage

**National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers, (NACFLM)** [www.nacflm.org](http://www.nacflm.org)

**Successful Stepfamilies** Resources for Christian stepfamilies [www.successfulstepfamilies.com](http://www.successfulstepfamilies.com)

**Worldwide Marriage Encounter** [www.wwme.org](http://www.wwme.org)

**Retrouvaille** [www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org)  
Program to help couples heal and renew their own marriage relationship.

**The Third Option** [www.thethirdoption.com](http://www.thethirdoption.com)  
Non-denominational ongoing support group with educational components.

**Recovery Marriage Encounter** [www.rmem.org](http://www.rmem.org)  
Program to help 12-step couples in recovery to build communication

## Books

*For Better For Worse For God* by Mary Jo Pederson

*10 Great Dates Before You Say "I Do"* by David and Claudia Arp

*Five Love Languages* by Dr. Gary Chapman

*The Smart Stepfamily* and *The Smart Stepmom* by Ron Deal

*Take Back Your Marriage* by Dr. William Doherty

*Not "Just Friends"* by Dr. Shirley Glass

*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by Dr. John Gottman

*His Needs, Her Needs: Building an Affair-Proof Marriage* by Dr. Willard Harley, Jr.

*Living Together and Christian Commitment* and *Spirituality and Religion in Your Marriage* by Dr. James Healy

*Hold Me Tight; Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love* by Sue Johnson

*The Couple Checkup* by Dr. David Olson

*What I Wish Someone Had Told Me About the First Five Years of Marriage* by Roy Petrifils

*Marriage: It's a God Thing* by Dr. William Roberts

*The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* by Ronald Rolheiser

*A Marriage in the Lord* and *A Ministry to Marriage* by Marriage and Family Ministries Office, Archdiocese of Chicago

*You Don't Have to Take It Anymore* by Dr. Steven Stosny

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

*Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*

*A Guide on Catholic–Orthodox Marriages for Catholic Clergy and Other Pastoral Ministers.*

*Faithful to Each Other Forever: A Catholic Handbook of Pastoral Help for Marriage Preparation.*

*Follow the Way of Love*

*Oriental Orthodox–Roman Catholic Interchurch Marriages and Other Pastoral Relationships.*

## Appendix H: Prayers and Blessings

### Anniversary Blessing of a Married Couple Renewal of Marriage Promises

*Celebrant:* (Name) and (Name), remember the day of your marriage and the joy with which you, in God's presence, promised your lives and your love to each other. Today, again in God's presence, affirm the promise you made on that day.

*Husband:* Gracious God, I took (Name) to be my wife and promised with your grace and blessing to be her loving husband.

*Congregation:* May God bless you and keep you.

*Wife:* Gracious God, I took (Name) to be my husband and promised with your grace and blessing to be his loving wife.

*Congregation:* May God bless you and keep you.

*Couple:* We thank you, loving God, for your blessing upon our marriage and for sustaining us with your faithful love through our good times and our challenges. Let us, as our life together continues, support each other, respect each other, and cherish each other. Keep us grateful for your many blessings. Let us remain always mindful of the promises we made in your presence and grant us the grace to keep them every day for as long as we live.

*Celebrant:* May God grant you continued joy in your marriage, peace in your home, and love in your hearts. May God comfort you when you are sad and uphold you in prosperity. May you know His loving presence all the days of your lives. May God bless you and keep you and let His face shine upon you, now and forever.

*Congregation:* Amen.

### Prayer of the Engaged

God our Father, in your own good care and wisdom, we have come to know each other. We have come to discover something of the mystery of each other. Pour out your blessings on us as we love each other for the rest of our lives: blessings for safety, for strength, for joy.

Help us, as we form a family together, to find a new way to love the families who have loved and nourished us until now. In these hectic weeks and afterwards, help us laugh when small plans don't work out, and make us willing to support each other in real problems.

Let us stay always secure in one another, secure in you, and secure in prayer. Grace our relationship with the gift of your Holy Spirit, so that, day by day, our affection may grow into self-sacrifice, our passion into deep human caring, and our warm feeling into lasting commitment. Bring to fulfillment the wonder of your ways that you have begun to reveal to us. We pray this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## **Prayers of the Faithful**

For newly married couples...that their love for each other will grow stronger as they learn to live, work, serve and pray together.

For couples expecting a child...that they will find joy and fulfillment in sharing their lives and their love.

For couples experiencing infertility...that they may find peace and hope.

For couples who are anticipating adoption...that they may be patient and hopeful as they await the fulfillment of their dream.

For couples who are struggling in their marriage...that they may work and pray to resolve their differences.

For couples who are parenting children with special needs...that they may have patience and appreciation for the gifts this child brings.

For couples who are sending children to school for the first time...that they may rejoice in this opportunity for growth.

For couples who have children going away from home for the first time...that they may let go with grace and trust God.

For couples who face an "empty nest" ...that they may appreciate the gifts of this new stage in their life together.

For couples who find themselves parenting their grandchildren...that they may have courage and strength.

For couples who are celebrating wedding anniversaries...that they will look back with joyful nostalgia and look forward with joyful hope.

For couples who face the debilitating or terminal illness of one of the partners...that the faith and love they have built will sustain them.

For all married couples...that they will remember always why they chose each other and put God and each other above all else.

For couples who have made every attempt to save their marriage and have not succeeded...that they may part without forgetting that each of them is a child of God and is loved.

For couples whose marriages have ended...that each may have the wisdom to deal with each other respectfully and to refrain from using the children against each other.

For couples caring for aging parents...that they may have courage, fortitude, and patience and that they may remember to honor each other as they honor the elderly.

## Appendix I: Glossary of Terms

### –A–

*Abortion*: Deliberate termination of pregnancy by killing the unborn child. Such direct abortion, willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law. The Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication to this crime against human life.

*Absolution*: An essential element of the Sacrament of Penance in which the priest, by the power entrusted to the Church by Christ, pardons sin(s) of the penitent.

*Administrator (Parish)*: A priest who is appointed in a temporary capacity to perform the duties of a pastor in a parish.

*Adultery*: Marital infidelity, or sexual relations between two partners, at least one of whom is married to another party. The sixth commandment and the New Testament forbid adultery absolutely.

*Affinity*: The relationship of one party to the blood relatives of his/her spouse.

*Annulment*: A declaration that a marriage, which at first appeared to be valid, was really canonically defective from the beginning.

### –B–

*Baptism*: The first of the seven sacraments, and the “door” which gives access to the other sacraments. Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist constitute the “sacraments of initiation” by which a believer receives the remission of original and personal sin, begins a new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and is incorporated into the Church, the body of Christ. The rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water, or pouring water on the head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*Blessing*: A blessing or benediction is a prayer invoking God’s power and care upon some person, place, thing, or undertaking. The prayer of benediction acknowledges God as the source of all blessing. Some blessings confer a permanent status: consecration of persons to God, or setting things apart for liturgical usage.

*Body of Christ*: (1) The human body which the Son of God assumed through his conception in the womb of Mary and which is now glorified in heaven; (2) This same body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ are sacramentally present in Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine; (3) The Church is called the mystical Body of Christ because of the intimate communion which Jesus shares with his disciples; the metaphor of a body, whose head is Christ and whose members are the faithful, provides an image which keeps in focus both unity and the diversity of Church.

### –C–

*Canon Law*: The rules (canons or laws) which provide the norms for good order in the visible society of the Church. Those canon laws that apply universally are contained in the Codes of Canon Law. The most recent Code of Canon Law was promulgated in 1983 for the Latin (Western) Church, and in 1991 for the Eastern Church (*The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*).

*Canonical form*: The requirement that a Catholic be married in the presence of a properly delegated Catholic priest or deacon and two witnesses.

*Catechesis*: An education of children, young people, and adults in the faith of the Church through the teaching of the Christian doctrine in an organic and systematic way to make them disciples of Jesus

Christ. Those who perform the ministry of catechesis in the Church are called “catechists.”

*Catechism:* A popular summary or compendium of Catholic doctrine about faith and morals and designed for use in catechesis.

*Catechumenal model:* A method of marriage preparation that resembles in its structure the sacramental preparation used in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in which persons (*catechuminate*) are prepared to become members of the Church.

*Chastity:* The moral virtue which, under the cardinal virtue of temperance, provides for the successful integration of sexuality within the person leading to the inner unity of the bodily and spiritual being. Chastity is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

*Christian faithful:* Those incorporated in Christ through baptism, constituted as the people of God, sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and royal office. The term, “lay faithful” refers to the laity, all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church.

*Civil law:* The body of laws of a secular government.

*Collateral:* The blood relationships between persons outside the direct line, such as siblings, cousins, aunts, etc.

*Conference of bishops:* A permanent institution consisting of the grouping of the bishops of a given nation or territory whereby, according to the norm of law, they jointly exercise pastoral functions on behalf of the Christian faithful of their territory.

*Consanguinity:* The blood relationship between people.

*Consent:* The action indicating the free choice or decision of one party to enter into marriage.

*Consummated:* A marriage in which the partners have willingly and mutually performed the act of intercourse.

*Convalidation:* An act of making valid the marriage consent that has been previously exchanged invalidly.

*Conversion:* A radical reorientation of the whole life away from sin and evil, and toward God. This change of heart or conversion is a central element of Christ’s preaching, of the Church’s ministry of evangelization, and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

*Covenant:* A solemn agreement between human beings or between God and a human being involving mutual commitment or guarantees. The Bible refers to God’s covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses as leaders of the chosen people, Israel.

*Credal affirmation:* The traditional wedding ceremonies in some other religions include rites which in effect would constitute joining another religion (*communicatio in sacris*). For a Catholic to participate in such rites would be considered a credal affirmation. For this reason a priest or deacon should inquire carefully into the religious significance of traditional wedding customs before permitting them to be included in a Catholic ceremony. This becomes all the more important if a Catholic wishes a dispensation to marry in a non–monotheistic religion’s ceremony. In some cases, the dispensation may not be possible.

–D–

*Diocese:* A portion of the people of God that is entrusted for pastoral care to a bishop with cooperation of the priests.

*Diriment:* Causing to become wholly void; nullifying, an impediment to a valid marriage. Canon 1073 states, “A diriment impediment renders a person incapable of validly contracting a marriage.”

*Disparity of cult:* Marriages between a Catholic and an unbaptized person (e.g., Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Mormon) are often called “interfaith” marriages. The canonical term is disparity of cult. In all cases as such, a dispensation is needed. A dispensation from canonical form is also required if the couple will be having someone other than a Catholic priest or deacon witness their vows. To obtain the dispensation, the Catholic party will be asked to affirm in some way (verbally or in writing) that he or she will promise to do all in his/her power to see that the children of the marriage be baptized and educated in the Catholic Church. The other partner is to be informed of these promises and responsibilities; the non-Catholic partner may feel a like obligation because of his/her own religious commitment. No formal written or oral promise is required of the non-Catholic partner. In carrying out this duty of transmitting the Catholic faith to the children, the Catholic parent will do so with respect for the religious freedom and conscience of the other parent and with due regard for the unity and permanence of the marriage and for the maintenance of the communion of the family.

*Dispensation:* The relaxation of an ecclesiastical law in a particular case by the competent authority.

*Divorce:* The claim that the indissoluble marriage bond validly entered into between a man and a woman is broken. A civil dissolution of the marriage contract (divorce) does not free persons from a valid marriage before God; remarriage would not be morally licit.

*Domicile:* The place where a person lives for an indefinite time. In law it is acquired by residence within the territory of a certain parish or at least of a diocese, which is joined either with the intention of remaining there permanently unless called away or when the person has actually lived there for five complete years.

–E–

*Ecclesiastic/Ecclesiastical:* Pertaining to or of the Church (Greek/Latin: *ecclesia*). Hence ecclesiastical government is Church government; an ecclesiastical province is a grouping of Church jurisdictions or dioceses; an ecclesiastic is a Church official.

*Ecclesiastical law:* As opposed to divine law from God, those laws that are the creation of the appropriate Church authority.

*Ecumenism:* Promotion of the restoration of unity among all Christians, the unity which is a gift of Christ and to which the Church is called by the Holy Spirit. For the Catholic Church, the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council provides a charter for ecumenical efforts, and the Directory on Ecumenism (1993) gives important practical orientations.

*Eucharist:* The ritual, sacramental action of thanksgiving to God which constitutes the principal Christian liturgical celebration of and communion in the paschal mystery of Christ. The liturgical action called the Eucharist is also traditionally known as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is one of the seven sacraments of the Church; the Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life.

*Evangelization:* The proclamation of Christ and his Gospel (Greek: *evangelion*) by word and the testimony of life, in fulfillment of Christ’s command.

*Excommunication:* A severe ecclesiastical penalty, resulting from grave crimes against the Catholic religion, imposed by ecclesiastical authority or incurred as a direct result of the commission of an offense. Excommunication excludes the offender from taking part in the Eucharist or other sacraments and from the exercise of any ecclesiastical office, ministry, or function.

–F–

*Faith:* Both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God who invites his response, and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed. It is this revelation of God which the Church proposes for our belief, and which we profess in the Creed, celebrate in the sacraments, live by right conduct that fulfills the twofold commandment of charity (as specified in the ten commandments), and respond to our prayer of faith. Faith is both a theological virtue given by God as grace, and an obligation which flows from the first commandment of God.

*Fornication:* Sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. Fornication is a serious violation of the sixth commandment of God.

*Fruits of the Holy Spirit:* The perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the “first fruits” of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church identifies 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity, and generosity.

–G–

*Gifts of the Holy Spirit:* Permanent dispositions that make us docile to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The traditional list of seven gifts of the Spirit is derived from Isaiah 11:1–3: Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude, and fear of the Lord.

*Gospel:* The “good news” of God’s mercy and love revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is this *Gospel* or good news that the Apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the entire world. The Gospel is handed on in the apostolic tradition of the Church as the source of all-saving truth and moral discipline. The four Gospels are the books written by the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John which have for their central object Jesus Christ, God’s incarnate Son: his life, teachings, Passion and glorification, and his Church’s beginnings under the Spirit’s guidance.

*Grace:* The free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to our vocation to become his adopted children. As sanctifying grace, God shares his divine life and friendship with us in a habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that enables the soul to live with God, to act by his love. As actual grace, God gives us the help to conform our lives to his will. Sacramental grace and special graces (charisms, the grace of one’s state of life) are gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us live out our Christian vocation.

–H–

*Homosexuality:* Sexual attraction or orientation toward persons of the same sex and/or sexual acts between persons of the same sex. Homosexual acts are morally wrong because they violate God’s purpose for human sexual activity.

*Human person:* The human individual, made in the image of God; not some thing but some one, a unity of spirit and matter, soul and body, capable of knowledge, self-possession, and freedom, who can enter into communion with other persons—and with God. The human person needs to live in society, which is a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them.

–I–

*Impediment:* An obstacle that makes a person ineligible for performing an act or receiving a sacrament, e.g., Holy Orders or Matrimony.

*Indissolubility:* An essential property of marriage indicating that the bond of marriage may never be dissolved or ended.

–L–

*Laity:* The faithful who, having been incorporated into Christ through Baptism, are made part of the people of God, the Church. The laity participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ. Laity are distinguished from clergy (who have received Holy Orders) and those in consecrated life.

*Law:* An ordinance of reason for the common good, made by that person who has care for the community, and promulgated to that community (Thomas Aquinas).

*Life:* Both God's gift of created human life and His divine life given to us as sanctifying grace. Beyond its ordinary meaning of human life, Jesus used "life" to signify a share in his own divine Trinitarian existence, which becomes possible for those who respond to his invitation to turn away from sin and open their hearts to God's abiding love. Eternal life signifies that this gift will last forever in the blessedness of heaven. This gift of God begins with the "life" of faith and "new life" of Baptism, is communicated in sanctifying grace, and reaches perfection in the communion of life and love with the Holy Trinity in heaven.

*Ligamen:* A prior bond of marriage (Canon 1085).

*Liturgy:* In its original meaning, a "public work" or service done in the name of or on behalf of the people. Through the liturgy, Christ our high Priest continues his work of our redemption through the Church's celebration of the Paschal mystery by which he accomplished our salvation.

*Local ordinary:* All those who are mentioned under the category of "ordinary" except superiors of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. See *Ordinary*.

–M–

*Marriage:* A covenant or partnership of life between a man and woman, which is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children. When validly contracted between two baptized people, marriage is a sacrament.

*Matrimony:* See *Marriage*.

*Mercy:* The loving kindness, compassion, or forbearance shown to one who offends (e.g., The mercy of God to us sinners).

*Ministry:* The service or work of sanctification performed by the preaching of the word and the celebration of the sacraments by those in Holy Orders, or in determined circumstances, by laity. The New Testament speaks of a variety of ministries in the Church; Christ himself is the source of ministry in the Church. Bishops, priests, and deacons are ordained ministers in the Church.

*Mixed Marriage:* Marriage of a Catholic to a member of another Christian church. Canon 1124–25 states, "Without the express permission of the competent authority, marriage is prohibited between two baptized persons, one of whom was baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it after baptism and has not defected from it by a formal act, the other of whom belongs to a Church or ecclesial community not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

"The local Ordinary can grant this permission if there is a just and reasonable cause. He is not to grant it unless the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. The Catholic party is to declare that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of defecting from the faith, and is to make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power in order that all the children be baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church;
2. The other party is to be informed in good time of these promises to be made by the Catholic party, so that it is certain that he or she is truly aware of the promise and of the obligation of the Catholic party.
3. Both parties are to be instructed about the purposes and essential properties of marriage, which are not to be excluded by either contractant.”

“Mixed marriage” is a loose term for a Catholic and non-Catholic wedding. Mixed religion is a term for a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic wedding. Disparity of cult is a term for a marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person.

*Mystagogy*: A liturgical catechesis which aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ. In a more specific sense, the catechetical period following immediately after the reception of Baptism by adults.

–N–

*Nihil obstat*: The verification that “nothing stands in the way” of something happening. In terms of marriage, it means that there are no impediments or any other reasons why a couple would be prohibited from entering into marriage.

*Nuptial blessing*: Prayers for the blessing of a couple being married, especially of the bride.

–O–

*Obedience*: (1) The submission to the authority of God which requires everyone to obey the divine law. Obedience to the Church is required in those things that pertain to our salvation; and obedience is due to legitimate civil authority, which has its origin in God for the sake of the common good and the order of society. The fourth commandment obliges children to obey their parents. (2) *Obedience of faith*: The first obedience is that of faith: to listen and freely submit to the word of God. (3) *Obedience of Christ*: Jesus Christ substituted his obedience to the will of his Father even unto death, for the disobedience of sin, in order to bring us the grace of justification and to satisfy for our sins. (4) *Vow of obedience*: In imitation of this obedience of Jesus, as an evangelical counsel, the faithful may profess a vow of obedience; a public vow of obedience, accepted by Church authority, is one element that characterizes the consecrated life.

*Ordinary*: A person who has been placed over a particular church or over a community that is equivalent to it, as well as those who possess ordinary general executive power in said churches and communities, namely vicars general and episcopal vicars; and likewise for their own members the major superiors of clerical religious institutes or pontifical right and of clerical societies of apostolic life of pontifical right, who possess at least ordinary executive power.

*Orthodox Churches*: The Eastern Christian Churches that separated from full union with the Catholic Church.

–P–

*Parish*: A stable community of the faithful within a particular church or diocese, whose pastoral care is confided by the bishop to a priest as pastor.

*Paschal Mystery/ Sacrifice*: Christ’s work of redemption accomplished principally by his Passion, death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension, whereby “dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our

life" (1067; cf. 654). The paschal mystery is celebrated and made present in the liturgy of the Church, and its saving effects are communicated through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which renews the paschal sacrifice of Christ as the sacrifice offered by the Church.

*Pastor/pastoral office:* The ministry of shepherding the faithful in the name of Christ. The Pope and bishops receive the pastoral office which they are to exercise with Christ the Good Shepherd as their model; they share their pastoral ministry with priests, to whom they give responsibility over a portion of the flock as pastors of parishes.

*People of God:* A synonym for the Church, taken from the Old Testament people whom God chose, Israel. Christ instituted the new and eternal covenant by which a new priestly, prophetic, and royal People of God, the Church, participates in these offices of Christ and in the mission and service which flows from them.

*Prayer:* The elevation of the mind and heart to God in praise of his glory; a petition made to God for some desired good, or in thanksgiving for a good received or in intercession for others before God. Through prayer the Christian experiences a communion with God through Christ in the Church.

*Prohibition* (Sometimes called a **prohibition**, a **restriction**, a **rider**, or a **vetitum** on the person): Issues that came to light during the Tribunal process which would indicate that the person is at risk for entering into marriage. It could also mean that the person is not fulfilling his or her responsibilities toward the children, or that the person has demonstrated an understanding of marriage that is greatly at odds with the Church's teaching on marriage. This prohibition is stated in the final letter to the person as well as the decree from the Tribunal. It should also appear on the person's baptismal record.

*Proxy:* A marriage in which at least one of the parties is represented by another person who has been officially designated by the party for this purpose.

*Putative:* An invalid marriage that has been entered into by at least one of the parties in good faith.

–Q–

*Quasi-domicile:* Part-time residency within the territory of a certain parish or of a diocese that is acquired by the intention of remaining there at least three months unless called away, or by actual residency in the territory for three months.

–R–

*Racism:* Unjust discrimination on the basis of a person's race; a violation of human dignity, and a sin against justice.

*Ratified:* A valid marriage that has been entered into by two baptized persons.

*Restriction:* See *Prohibition*.

*Rider:* See *Prohibition*.

*Rite of Marriage, The:* There are three options for The Rite of Marriage:

1. *The Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass:* A Nuptial Mass, which is a Mass that includes the celebration of the sacrament of marriage. This form is normally used when two Catholics marry. It has special readings and prayers suitable to the Sacrament of Marriage. The Sacrament of Marriage between two baptized Catholics should normally be celebrated within Mass.

If the situation warrants it and the local bishop gives permission, a Nuptial Mass may be

celebrated for a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized person who is not a Catholic, except that Communion is not given to the non-Catholic since the general law of the Church does not allow it. In such instances, it is better to use the appropriate ritual for marriage outside Mass. This is always the case in a marriage between a baptized Catholic and a non-baptized person.

2. *The Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass:* The second form is normally used when a Catholic marries a baptized non-Catholic. This form is preferred since the wedding liturgy is a time to stress the unity of two families. The wedding liturgy outside of Mass might be more familiar to non-Catholic families and guests and current Church regulations prohibit non-Catholics from receiving communion at Mass.
3. *The Rite for Celebrating Marriage Between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person:* The third form is used when a Catholic marries someone who is not baptized, either a catechumen or a non-Christian.

*Rites:* The diverse liturgical traditions in which the one catholic and apostolic faith has come to be expressed and celebrated in various cultures and lands; for example, in the West, the Roman and Ambrosian (Latin) rites; in the East, the Byzantine, Coptic (Alexandrian), Syriac, Armenian, Maronite, and Chaldean rites (1201–1203). “Rite” and “ritual” are sometimes interchanged, as in “the sacramental rite” or “the sacramental ritual.”

–S–

*Sacrament:* An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. The sacraments (called “mysteries” in the Eastern Churches) are seven in number: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance or Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

*Sacrament of Reconciliation:* The sacramental celebration in which, through God’s mercy and forgiveness, the sinner is reconciled with God and also with the Church, Christ’s Body, which is wounded by sin.

*Sanatio in radice:* A retroactive convalidation of the marriage which does not require a new act of consent.

*Scandal:* An attitude or behavior that leads another to do evil.

–T–

*Tradition:* the living transmission of the message of the Gospel in the Church. The oral preaching of the Apostles, and the written message of salvation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Bible), are conserved and handed on as the deposit of faith through the apostolic succession in the Church. Both the living Tradition and the written Scriptures have their common source in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The theological, liturgical, disciplinary, and devotional traditions of the local churches both contain and can be distinguished from this apostolic Tradition.

*Tribunal:* Those courts established by the church to decide issues presented to it for resolution; most of the work of a tribunal involves cases for the determination of the invalidity of a marriage.

*Trinity:* The mystery of God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The revealed truth of the Holy Trinity is at the very root of the Church’s living faith as expressed in the Creed. The mystery of the Trinity in itself is inaccessible to the human mind and is the object of faith only because it was revealed by Jesus Christ, the divine Son of the eternal Father.

–U–

*Uniate*: Eastern Catholic Churches. One in favor of the union of the Greek and Roman Catholic churches. A Christian of a church adhering to an Eastern rite and discipline but submitting to papal authority. Note: This is a pejorative term used by Orthodox, and objectionable to Eastern Catholics.

*Unity*: An essential property of marriage that indicates complete monogamy and faithfulness.

–V–

*Valid*: A canonical description that signifies that a particular act has its intended consequences due to its fulfillment of the requirements of the law.

*Vetitum*: See *Prohibition*.

*Vocation*: The calling or destiny we have in this life and hereafter. God has created the human person to love and serve him; the fulfillment of this vocation is eternal happiness. Christ calls the faithful to the perfection of holiness. The vocation of the laity consists in seeking the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. Priestly and religious vocations are dedicated to the service of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.

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