

# Marriage in the Lord

## Marriage Preparation Leader Training Handouts

Sponsor Couple  
Remarriage  
Pre-Cana Team



### MARRIAGE and FAMILY ENRICHMENT

Division of Evangelization and Catechesis  
Department of Catholic Education Ministries  
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# INTRODUCTION

## GOAL OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION

"So that the 'I do' of the spouses may be a free and responsible act and so that the marriage covenant may have solid and lasting human and Christian foundations, preparation for marriage is of prime importance."

— CCC, 1632

## SACRAMENT PREPARATION

Before Catholics celebrate any of the sacraments, personal preparation — including education, reflection and prayer — is provided. Such a process of preparation is required for the Sacrament of Matrimony. Engaged couples are invited to experience the meaning of Christian community through the witness and example of the sponsor and team couples.

Married life is an intense process that requires couples to have a realistic awareness of both joys and trials. A marriage grows and matures as a couple works through the challenges of life.

We who offer ministry to the engaged, hope and pray that they will use the time of preparation well. Dialogue during the preparation process helps the couple address personal issues and their readiness for marriage.

The marriage preparation sessions can be a time for personal and couple retreat and reflection in the busy time before the wedding.

Each session offers time for prayer, dialogue, and inquiry. Further communication and study outside the sessions are important components of the program.

## **COUPLES APPRECIATE MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

A recent national study examined the impact of marriage preparation in the Catholic Church. It found that marriage preparation was rated as a valuable experience by the vast majority of those who participated in it.

- Marriage preparation was seen as helpful through the first 5 years after the wedding.
- The mandatory nature of marriage preparation does not get in the way of couples valuing it highly.
- It was perceived as most valued when presented by a team of clergy and lay leaders.
- The intensity of a program impacts its evaluation — too few and too many sessions limit its value.
- Rated most helpful were the 5 C's: communication, commitment, conflict resolution, children, and church.
- Attitudes toward marriage preparation are colored by a sense of belonging to and participation in church practice.
- Interfaith couples come to marriage preparation with lower levels of church involvement and lower expectations of the program. They are more likely to drift from church practice.

(Source: MARRIAGE PREPARATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: *GETTING IT RIGHT* (Center for Marriage & Family, Creighton University, 1995.)

# MARRIAGE PREPARATION MINISTRY

Sponsor, Remarriage and Group Program Team Couples are involved in marriage preparation because they care about the engaged couple and believe in the sanctity of marriage.

As a leader for marriage preparation, the most important ingredient you can bring to the engaged is your own Christ-centered marriage.

This manual is designed to provide direction for you and assist you in your ministry.

## SPONSOR & REMARRIAGE COUPLE'S ROLE

You host engaged couples in your home. Your role is two-fold: Facilitators and Teachers.

As **Facilitators**, you help couples interpret the results of their FOCCUS, encouraging communication between them. This facilitating mode allows the couple to deal with their own issues and struggle with them.

Your task is to help the couple listen to each other, share thoughts and feelings, and work toward solutions. See **COMMUNICATION SKILLS, 24**.

At other times, you act as **Teachers**. You share what the Church teaches and instruct in useful relationship skills. You should not move into the teaching mode too early, however. Become the teacher only after helping the couple to discuss an issue thoroughly and look for their own solutions. This will be the appropriate time to inform the couple of the Church's teaching on an issue.

You may quote other reliable sources ("Let me give you an example of how others handle this."). You might tell of a time when you faced and resolved this issue in your marriage ("I'll never forget the time when we ..."). Be sure that you and your spouse agree on which personal information to share. See **SHARING FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, p. 7**.

Be sensitive to the ethnic and cultural background of the participants. Each person has his or her own individual and unique frame of reference - some positive and some negative. Indeed, all of us bring to our ministries the riches of our own cultural heritage, personal experiences, and gifts of faith, hope and love. See **ADULT LEARNING, pp. 16-18**.

*See also FOCCUS Manual, p. 8-9, for more about your two roles.*

## GROUP PROGRAM TEAM COUPLE'S ROLE

The Group Program team has the same task as the Sponsor Couple, but use a different format. You work with the married couples on your team to call the engaged couples to seriously reflect on Christian marriage and family life.

Presenting couples need to work on their individual presentations and take part in the critique and evaluation during team meetings. You are also part of the hosting process, arriving early and greeting the participants

The presenting couples also act as discussion leaders for small group discussion, when this is part of the program.

## SHARING FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE

Marriage preparation ministry is a **like-to-like ministry** to the engaged. Sponsor/Group Program couples are not expected to be marriage counselors, psychologists or theologians. They are experts, however, on the subject of their own marriages and what it takes to make them work. Each Sponsor/Remarriage/Group Program couple teaches indirectly by sharing their personal experiences with the engaged. Where appropriate, the leader couple transmits the teaching of the Church with clarity and sensitivity.

Remember that the couple will not relate to abstract principles. In the years to come, what the couple will remember is you and how you shared the joys, trials, successes and failures of your own marriage with them. Very often, the relationship between the married and engaged couples grows into a caring and committed friendship.

Sharing is a **gift of yourself** to the couple, i.e., who you are, how you feel, your attitudes, your joys, your hopes and your present struggles in marriage. It is your caring attitude and willingness to share your marriage which leads the engaged couple to experience "Church" in its most fundamental form. See SHARING YOUR STORY.

The engaged couple will be observing your interaction as a married couple very closely. Be sure to **demonstrate kindness and respect** for one another. Joking comments and negative humor about your spouse or married life can cancel out your words. Allow your loving regard for your spouse and your family to be a goal for the new couple.

The needs of your family must come first. If there is an emergency or one of your children

needs your attention, please excuse yourself and go to aid your family. These sessions are to reflect Christ-centered family life.

## Sharing Your Story

Share a personal experience of God's grace in your marriage in one or more of the following areas:

### Kindness

Overcoming selfish pride, anger, pouting, sarcasm, or belittling.

### Growth

Appreciating changes and development in the other; ways we are invited to constant re-discovery of each other.

**Acceptance of partners as they are** Changes coming through love, not nagging, and willingness to see ourselves as we really are.

### Respect for each other

Valuing the spouse as a unique and wonderful child of God. "Humbly consider the other as superior to yourself."

(Philippians 2:4)

## Life-giving Stories...

- Look to the future, rather than dwell on the past
- Have power to release us from destructive habits
- Promote truth, not error
- Enable us to refrain from violence
- Contain a sense of the tragic, but with a promise of hope
- Are characterized by justice and hospitality

## NOURISH YOUR FAITH

As soon as you learn the names of the couple with whom you will be working, begin to pray for them and for yourselves. Pray with your spouse for guidance, understanding, a non-judgmental attitude, and an openness to respond to the engaged as directed by the Holy Spirit.

Seek opportunities for retreat and faith development, available at your parish and throughout the Archdiocese. Take advantage of adult education classes to keep your knowledge of Catholic ministry and adult learning current.

**Contact the Division of Evangelization and Catechesis for schedules of Adult Education and Faith Formation Programs, 410-547-5403.**

**Pray for the engaged** couple that they might hear what God wants for them as a couple. Ask that God give them a deep sense of what the Sacrament of Matrimony will truly mean for them.

You may be an interfaith couple. Whatever your faith tradition — Catholic, Christian, Jewish or simply someone who has a belief in God — don't be afraid to share it with the engaged. There has probably been a time when something happened to you that you recognized as God working in your life. Share those instances and the effects that it had on your relationship. The engaged need to know how to recognize God working in their lives.

Challenge them to have an excellent marriage. If you witness a sign of impending trouble in the couple's ways of relating, call it to their attention. This is done only after you and your spouse have discussed it (after the couple has left your home for the evening).

One way to **approach explosive issues** is to tell a story about yourselves or "another couple" with the target problem. See **PLAY SOLOMON**, *Perspectives Workbook*, p. 33.

## REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHURCH

At the conclusion of the program, marriage preparation leaders issue a **CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION** to the couple, which they give to their clergyman.

You are **partners** with the priest/deacon who will witness their vows, part of the "ministerial team" (so highly rated in the recent marriage preparation survey).

Your guests will also carefully watch **your relationship with the Church**. Allow the same love, respect, and mercy to show when you relate Church teaching and your experiences as active Catholics. This is not a time to share personal disagreements or disappointments. The engaged couple has the right to see the Church as Christ sees her: holy and beautiful.

## REFERRALS TO CLERGY

If something is mentioned that might be an impediment to marriage, ask the couple to speak to the officiating priest or deacon about the subject before your next session. See **IMPEDIMENTS**, p. 44.

When the couple returns to your next session, ask them if they have in fact spoken to the officiating priest or deacon. If they have not done so, then tell the couple that you must speak to the officiating priest or deacon. Be supportive of the clergyman's instructions to the couple.

The engaged couple must always have the opportunity to first speak with the officiating priest or deacon to maintain confidentiality.

# References for Referrals & Enrichment

## **Associated Catholic Charities**

320 Cathedral Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410-547-5508  
Emmitsburg 301-447-6740  
Frederick 301-694-6654  
Provides counselors for area parishes & access to variety of services for families.

## **Pastoral Counseling Services of Maryland**

410-433-2241 or 1-800-427-4027  
1-800-833-SEEK  
Using the insights and principles of religion and behavioral sciences for the achievement of wholeness and health of individuals, couples, families.

## **NEW LIFE Treatment Centers**

1-800-227-LIFE  
Professional, in-hospital Christian Care for people suffering from emotional, psychological and physical problems.

## **FAMILY PLANNING**

### **St. Agnes Hospital NFP Program**

Personalized instruction to couples on use of methods approved by the Archdiocese. Classes available at a variety of locations. (410) 368-2810

## **FAMILIES IN CRISIS**

### **Retrouvaille**

A Christian peer ministry for troubled marriages. [www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org). 301-468-6764

## **Family Crisis Resource Center**

302-759-9244  
24 hr. hotline or 911

## **First Call for Help**

Health and Welfare Council  
22 Light Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
410-685-0525  
1-800-492-0618  
An information and referral service for all residents of Maryland. 24 hrs/day, 7 day/wk. For children, adolescents, adults.

## **Family & Children's Services of Central Maryland**

410-838-9000

## **Narcotics Anonymous**

Baltimore 410-947-8028  
Frederick 301-694-1775

## **National Institute on Drug Abuse Treatment Referral Hotline**

1-800-662-HELP  
Spanish 1-800-66-AYUDA

## **National Office of Post Abortion Reconciliation and Healing**

1-800-5WE-CARE

## **Project Rachel**

1-800-286-4224  
A ministry of healing and reconciliation to men and women suffering from the trauma of abortion.

## **Sexual Assault Recovery Center**

Hotline: 410-366-7273  
24 hr hotline, advocacy & referral  
H.E.L.P. fund, community & professional education.

## **Survivors of Incest Anonymous**

410-433-2365

## **National STD Hotline**

1-800-227-8922

## **Parents Anonymous**

1-800-421-0353  
410-243-7337 (MD)  
24 hr. hotline on child abuse for frustrated or abusive parents

## **Consumer Credit Counseling Service**

Baltimore Area 410-747-6803  
Outside Baltimore 1-800-642-CCCS  
A non-profit community service agency to help people help themselves solve their debt problems.

## **VITA**

1-800-829-1040  
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program offering free tax assistance to the elderly, handicapped, non-English speaking adults, low-income individuals and others who need help filling out their tax returns.

## **Rainbows**

Peer support groups for children & adults of all ages who are grieving a death, divorce, or other painful family transition.  
Contact Nancy Iden. 301-229-9688  
1-888-610-9804 [www.rainbows.org](http://www.rainbows.org)

## **Foundations**

Newsletter for Newly Married. Website includes interactive quiz and "Short Course for Happy Marriage."  
[www.foundationsnewsletter.com](http://www.foundationsnewsletter.com)

## **Extraordinary Marriages**

[www.CoupleBiz.com](http://www.CoupleBiz.com)  
410-461-1362  
Newsletter, family/couple counseling and group presentations. Ellicott City, MD

## **Stepfamily Association of America**

800-735-0329  
[www.stepfam.org](http://www.stepfam.org)  
Offers a variety of educational resources aimed at preparing couples for marriage and remarriage.

## **Background Data on Marriage**

The National Marriage Project  
<http://marriage.rutgers.edu>  
Source for latest statistics and discussion on marriage and divorce from a Catholic perspective.

## **Marriage & Family Enrichment**

Archdiocese of Baltimore  
for the latest resources & active web sites for marriage preparation and enrichment.  
[www.archbalt.org](http://www.archbalt.org)  
410-547-5420

# GENERAL PREPARATIONS

## For Sponsor Couple & Remarriage Programs

### PREPARING YOUR CHILDREN

It will surely be valuable for the engaged couple to see how much children have enriched your marriage. Be aware, however, that children could be a distraction to them.

Be sure that your sessions will have the quiet and privacy needed for answering questions and couple dialogue.

If your children are old enough, explain the program to them. Encourage them to suggest how they can help assure the success of the sessions in your home.

### PREPARING THE HOUSE

The reason for having the couple into your home is so they can see marriage as you really live it. Try not to stress about cleaning and preparing the house. You may serve light refreshments if you prefer. Please do not serve nor offer alcoholic beverages.

Set up a prayer table in the room where you meet with the engaged couple. Place on it a Bible, a candle (perhaps your wedding candle) and something that has a special importance to you as a couple. Share its significance with the engaged couple.

### CHOOSING PLACES FOR WRITING AND SHARING

The couples should be apart, ideally in separate rooms, for most writing exercises. This way, only two rooms of the house are required for the sessions.

It may be helpful during the writing time for the husband to be in the same room as the man, and the wife in the same room as the woman. Each can rejoin the partner for private couple sharing, and the two couples can reconvene for two-couple sharing and teaching.

The married couple serve as role models for the engaged and are available to answer questions.

**No. 2 Pencils** will be needed for completing the FOCCUS. Partners must write separately and be unable to observe each other.

### MANAGING TIME

Please begin on time and finish on time. It is important to keep the session on track and this will not occur if you begin late. Two hours is usually sufficient time for a session.

**Choose a timekeeper:** It is helpful to decide between you who will keep an eye on the clock. Allow for a short stretch break at the end of an hour.

### PLANNING THE SESSIONS

The host couple and the engaged couple identify discussion topics meriting special attention by the couple. The first meeting will consist of getting acquainted and explaining and administering the FOCCUS Pre-marital Inventory. See **PLANNING SESSIONS, 55**.

To tailor the sessions to the needs of the engaged couple, use their FOCCUS report as a guide. See **PLANNING SESSIONS, 55**.

# SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE SESSIONS

## FACILITATING PRAYER

Marriage preparation gives the engaged couple an opportunity to become more comfortable praying together and with others. Interfaith couples can discover ways to include prayer in their new home. Show them how you pray at home when they visit for their sessions.

Before you begin each session, invite all to a **quiet attitude of prayer** (“Before we begin, let us recall that God is with us and pray.”). Begin with thanksgiving (“We thank you, God, for this week.”). Invite their participation, as they become more comfortable with you (“Is there someone that you would like to remember in our prayer tonight?”).

A reading from **Scripture** is appropriate at the beginning or end of the visit. Read the passage slowly, allow a few minutes for silent reflection, and share insights with each other.

To conclude a prayer time, you may ask God to bless the couples present, both engaged and married couples, as well as their families and those whom they love. Also, ask God to be their constant companion as they journey together through life.

## FACILITATING DIALOGUE

Assure confidentiality. Stress these points about privacy:

- You consider the couple's written answers to be strictly private. You will neither collect them nor discuss them with anyone outside the group.

- Any information you share with the engaged couple about your life and marriage is also to remain in the group. You expect them to keep what you tell them in strictest confidence.
- It is their priest/deacon who is responsible for judging whether they will be permitted to marry in the Church. Your aim is to help them think through some basic points about married life.

## STARTERS FOR DIALOGUE

“How did it feel to share your worksheet answers with each other?”

“How do you feel about sharing your responses to questions with us?”

“What new information did you learn about your partner?”

“Which of the items did you find the most helpful (troubling, etc.)?”

## Follow-up Ideas

After the last meeting, you may be able to maintain some kind of contact that will benefit both you and the couple, to continue sponsoring them into the life of Christian marriage.

- Share a meal with the couple.
- Attend weekend liturgy with them.
- Be with the couple at their wedding.
- Share wedding pictures.
- Send a wedding anniversary card.

# LEADING PRAYER

Prayer before and after each session teaches the couple valuable skills of praying together and introduces them to new ways of communicating.

## Gathering to Pray

Traditional Catholic prayers are a good way to start. Personal expressions may be added in later meetings, as people become more comfortable. Read aloud one of the prayers provided, or use your own favorites. You may follow this plan:

- Read a selection from Scripture. (*Demonstrate this skill.*)
- Take a minute for all to silently reflect:  
    “What is going on in my life that this reading calls to mind?”
- Invite anyone to comment on the reading or ask for prayers for any intention.
- Close the prayer time with the Sign of the Cross.

## Closing with Prayer

- Wrap up your session with an invitation to prayer.
- “Let us thank God for bringing us together today, and for ....”  
    (allow participants to express themselves here, if they wish.)
- Close the prayer time with a word of blessing or other prayer of your choice.

## *Traditional Catholic Prayers and Blessings*

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**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive  
us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver  
us from evil,

Amen.

## **Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

L. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.  
R. And kindle in them the fire of your love.  
L. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.  
R. And you will renew the face of the earth.

*Let us pray:*

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit help us to relish what is right, and always rejoice in your consolation.  
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women and blessed is  
the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sin-  
ners, now and at the hour of our death.  
Amen.

+++

## An Irish Blessing

May the road rise up to meet you,  
May the wind be always at your back,  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
May the rains fall soft upon your fields,  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

+++

## Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek to be con-  
soled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying  
that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.

— *St. Francis of Assisi*

+++

## Prayer of St. Ignatius

Lord, teach me to be generous:  
Teach me to serve You as You deserve:  
To give and not to count the cost,  
To fight and not to heed the wounds,  
To toil and not to seek for rest,  
To labor and not to ask for reward save  
That of knowing I am doing Your will.

— *St. Ignatius Loyola*

+++

## Prayer from Scripture

Hear, O Lord, the sound of my call;  
have pity on me, and answer me.  
Of you my heart speaks; you my glance  
seeks;  
Your presence, O Lord, I seek.  
You are my helper: cast me not off;  
forsake me not, O God my savior.  
I believe that I shall see the bounty of  
the Lord in the land of the living.  
Wait for courage; be stouthearted, and  
wait for the Lord.

— *Psalms 27:7-8; 13-14 NAB*

“See, the eyes of the Lord are upon those  
who fear him, upon those who hope for his  
kindness.... Our soul waits for the Lord, who  
is our help and our shield, for in him our  
hearts rejoice; in his holy name we trust. May  
your kindness, O Lord, be upon us who have  
put our hope in you.”

— *Psalms 33:18, 20-22 NAB*

“... I kneel before the Father from whom  
every family in heaven and on earth takes its  
name; and I pray that he will bestow on you  
gifts in keeping with the riches of his glory.  
May he strengthen you inwardly through the  
working of his Spirit. May Christ dwell in  
your hearts through faith and may charity be  
the root and foundation of your life.”

— *Ephesians 3: 14-17 NAB*

# Scripture Resources

The following Scripture citations might be appropriate at specific points in your sessions. Read the passage aloud slowly. Allow a few minutes of silent reflection, and share insights with each other. Add other personal favorites as you discover them.

**Lifestyle expectations:** Exodus 17: 3-7

**Friends & interests:** Exodus 20: 8-11; Sirach 6:6, 14-17

**Personality match:** Romans 12: 10-12; Ephesians 4: 1-6

**Personal issues:** Romans 14: 19; 2 Corinthians 4: 8-10; Philemon 4: 6-7

**Communications:** 1 Corinthians 13: 1-8a; Colossians 3: 12-17; James 1: 19-20; James 3: 13-18

**Problem Solving:** Galatians 5: 22-26; Ephesians 4: 30-32

**Religion, values, & marital spirituality:** Matthew 11: 28-30; Matthew 18: 19-20; John 13: 34-35; 2 Corinthians 4: 6; Ephesians 4: 1-6; Ephesians 5: 19-20; 1 Timothy 4:12

**Parenting Issues, family life:** Luke 2: 41-50; Ephesians 3: 14-19; 1 John 4: 7-12

**Extended family issues:** Exodus 18: 13-24; Ruth 1: 3-18; Mark 1: 29-31; Mark 6: 1-5

**Sexuality:** Genesis 2: 18-24; Tobit 8: 6-7; Mark 10: 6-9; Eph 4: 1; 1 Tim 4: 12

**Finances:** Isaiah 55: 1-3; Matthew 6: 19-34; Matthew 22: 15-22; 1 Timothy 6: 6-10

**Marital readiness:** Psalm 139: 1-12; John 15: 12-13

**Marriage Covenant:** Deuteronomy 7: 6-9; Hosea 2: 21-22; Jeremiah 31: 31-33; Mark 10: 6-9; Hebrews 8: 6-10; 1 John 4: 7-12

(Source: Mary Ann Paulukonis, *Partners in Preparation: Training Married Couples for Marriage Preparation Ministry*, Liturgical Press, Chicago, 1995.)

# ADULT LEARNING & FAITH FORMATION

Every couple is unique, and we must seek to discern their particular attitudes, expectations and needs. Both young adults and older couples prepare for marriage in our programs.

## THE YOUNG ADULT

As we prepare a couple for the sacrament of matrimony, it is important that we know to whom we are ministering. In many cases those seeking marriage preparation are young adults (age 19-35). It follows that we, as marriage preparation leaders, are ministering to young adults.

As ministers to young adults, it is our mission to help connect these young adults to Jesus, the Church and the mission of the Church in the world. (*Sons and Daughters of the Light — A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults*, USCC.)

In order for us to be better prepared to work with young adults, we have compiled below a list of things you should know and/or think about as you prepare to minister with young adults. (List adapted from *Trainer's Kit for Developing Ministry with Young Adults*, Center for Ministry Development, 1999.)

**Young Adults work in a society characterized by the increasing complexity of everyday life.**

- Many young adults feel that the pace of life will only increase as we move further into the new millennium.

*How will this affect the family that they will soon become?*

**Young Adults today live in the first truly multimedia age.**

- They have grown up in an image culture.
- They think and communicate visually — in images.

*How does this impact how they will relate to you as instructor, to each other as a couple, and to their children as parents?*

**Young Adults live and work in an information age** where information is an integral fact of life.

- They are the first of the generations that exhibit fluency and comfort with the new technologies.

*How will this affect what and how you communicate with them? Do you have an email address?*

**Young Adults experience a very different family life** from the safe, child-centered, two-parent home of the past. They've experienced:

- Smaller families
- Dual career parents, both going to work outside of the home
- Day care as pre-schoolers
- Divorce at twice the rate of the previous generation

*How does this impact young couples' expectations of what they are committing to?*

**Young Adults experience difficulty in the current workforce** that has changed from an industrial age to an information age, from manufacturing to a service-based economy.

- It is difficult today to support a family on one income.
- Educational requirements for one to obtain a good job have increased.

*What kinds of things would be helpful for these folks to hear as they prepare to start their own family in this new age?*

**Young Adults today are redefining their relationships with their family of origin**, due in part to their own childhood experiences and in part to the changing economy.

- 46% of single young adults in their 20's are still living with mom and/or dad.
- They are insecure about their financial future and are cautious about relationships as a reaction to parental divorce.
- They are under little pressure from parents to move out.
- Young adult women do not expect to be supported by their husbands, so they are under less financial pressure to find a husband early.

*What kinds of things will be valuable for young adults to hear as they are now not only preparing for their marriage but may be leaving the nest for the first time?*

**Marriage for young adults will probably not mean the formation of another, totally separate, nuclear family.**

- They are more comfortable with the extended family of relatives, step-relatives and friends that has developed through their single lives.
- 71% agree with the statement that a family is any two or more people who love and care for each other.

*How does this impact what you will share with them about your family and experience?*

**Young Adults today have a more pragmatic philosophy of life.**

- They are persuaded by what works rather than what ought to be.

- They are more concerned for the person and the community.
- They are more comfortable with change than previous generations.
- They tend to adopt a flexible stance toward life.

*How will this ideology be helpful for a young couple preparing for marriage? How will this be a hindrance?*

**Young Adults are fairly consistent in naming the conditions they need to have a good life.**

- Good health
- Close personal relationships
- Living comfortably
- Being known as a person of integrity
- Having a close relationship with God

*How can we connect these wants to what the church teaches about marriage?*

### **Key Factors in Adult Learning**

#### **Motivation**

Determine their needs and interests and develop relevant programs.

#### **Activity**

Adults learn better when they participate actively and fully in the learning process.

#### **Participant Interaction**

Adult learners learn not only from the content addressed, but they also learn from others' points of view.

#### **Problem Solving**

Challenge adults to work on solving problems, not merely to learn about subjects. Problem solving tasks equip adults with skills which they can use in future problem situations.

## MIDDLE ADULT YEARS

Middle adulthood represents the age span from 35 to 65 years of age. During this span of thirty years, we find a great number of changes in many areas of our lives.

Many people begin to think about "how much time do I have left?" Individuals begin to reexamine their lives, their relationships, their work, and even to question the meaning of life.

Romantic love such as physical attraction, romance and passion are strong in early adulthood. **While romantic love may not decline, affectionate or companionate love increases** during middle adulthood where emotional interest, security, and loyalty are far more important.

Intimacy patterns will vary across individuals and couples. The rekindling of romance may come from being older and more relaxed with this new person.

### **Middle adulthood is a time of change and development.**

Two of the most noticeable changes occurring in the physical and biological realm are hearing and seeing.

Other changes occur in height. Some people seem shorter as they age. When changes such as graying hair, wrinkling skin and body sagging take place, some adults strive to make themselves look younger by having plastic surgery, dying their hair, or joining fitness programs. Overall, there will be a general loss of energy and more health concerns.

Another major problem that has an effect on health is stress. One continuing mid-life challenge in a marriage relationship is

dealing with extended and blended families. Leisure is a key to helping adults deal with stress and other life experiences.

### **By the time most individuals reach the ages of 40-45, there is a noticeable change in how they view their careers.**

Most have ceased to advance up the career ladder. Job satisfaction, in general, tends to be high and continues to increase into their sixties.

The adjustment from idealistic hopes to realistic possibilities and attainable goals is dependent on how much time is left before retirement.

Other problems that may interfere with retirement can cause extra financial burden, such as caring for aging parents and children returning home. For some, retirement planning becomes a major area of financial concern.

### **There is a great amount of variation among individual lifestyles.**

Some have never been married and are bringing children into this relationship, while others are becoming parents for the first time (late parenting). Some will be experiencing the empty nest syndrome and/or experiencing and enjoying grand-parenting.

These reassessments may lead to stress and sadness over unaccomplished goals, which for a small few may lead to a midlife career change. In response to these growing financial needs and greater free time, due to their children getting older, many women enter or re-enter the workforce.

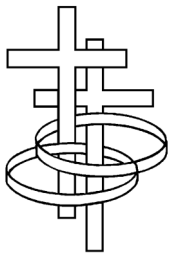
### **In short, this tends to be a time of career and financial adjustment and planning for both men and women.**

# **Marriage Preparation Leader's Tool Box**

## ***Background for Teaching* Five C's for Marriage Preparation**

- . Commitment**
- . Communication**
- . Conflict Resolution**
- . Children**
- . Church**

# Vocation to Love for Life



Love must be the foundation for a successful marriage; love for God and love for your spouse.

Husbands and wives are called to love one another in the same way God loves each person.

When Jesus followers asked him what their first priority should be, He set a high standard:

Jesus said to him: 'You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' — Mt 22: 37-39, *NAB*

Grounded in mutual respect and dignity, married love places the other person first. Since earliest Christian times, the believers have been counseled and challenged by the words of the First Letter to the Church at Corinth.:

Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish.

Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries.

Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.

Love never fails.

—1 Cor 13:4-8a, *NAB*

## Love is a decision, not an emotion

The couple is asked to enter into a covenant, a promise to seek an uncompromising, limitless love for each other.

This kind of pledge vows forgiveness before the fact, pledges faithfulness in the face of difficulties and growth, and commits oneself to investing in a new commitment to each new phase of married life.

- Marital commitment is a bond that results in the fullness of love.

## Three forms of love

### EROS Love

- Sexual love or desire
- Self-preservation or continuation of the species

### PHILOS Love

- Brotherly/sisterly love
- Friendship

### AGAPE Love

- Giving love
- Altruistic, seeks the highest good for the other
- Watches out for the needs of the other
- Motivated by respect and consideration

All three kinds of love are required in marriage. In mature partners, these are not as much different kinds of loving, as they are diverse expressions of God's love.

# Social Changes Impacting Marriage

## *High Hopes, Low Success*

(Excerpts from National Marriage Project: *The State of Our Unions: Social Health of Marriage in America*, 2001)

“A special report on young adults in their twenties, based on a national survey conducted by the Gallup Organization, finds that young single adults today are looking for a spouse who will be **their soul mate for life.**”

- “Young adults today are searching for a deep emotional and spiritual connection with one person for life.”
- “Along with their ambitions for a spouse who meets their needs for emotional closeness and intimacy, these twenty-something singles also aspire to a marriage that lasts a lifetime.”
- “Less than half of young singles agree it is important to find a spouse who shares their own religious faith.”
- “Marriage is gaining popularity as a Super-Relationship, while other bases, such as economic partnership or parental partnership, have receded or disappeared.”
- “Young men and women define their economic lives and future in individual terms rather than as part of a marriage partnership.”
- “Young women may prefer to invest in portable assets, like education and career development, rather than put all their trust in marriage.”

## LIVING TOGETHER

Real challenges often lead couples to live together before marriage, including:

- Desire to avoid divorce
- Desire for economic security
- Stability for raising children
- Testing the relationship

Many couples approaching the Church for marriage today are already living together. We are glad that they have decided to join their relationship to the Church. Still, these couples should be made aware of the problems that cohabiting can present for them in the future.

## BENEFITS OF NOT COHABITING

(from *Faithful to Each Other Forever*, Bishop's Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices, NCCB, 1989)

### **Increased marital satisfaction**

Cohabitation may reduce the possibility of eventual marriage. Cohabitation is, also, the cause of greater marital dissatisfaction.

### **More openness and truthfulness in marriage**

To maintain the cohabiting relationship, couples often hide from each other important aspects of their lives.

### **More healthy relationship, less anger and serious conflicts**

Cohabiting couples may tend to speak and behave cautiously to avoid criticizing each other and to repress anger, lest the relationship disintegrate.

### **More stable financial planning**

The handling of finances during cohabitation and after marriage may be quite different and a source of discord.

### **Less pain and conflict with family members**

Relationships with members of their families and with others may be strained during the period of cohabitation.

### **More inner peace with self and God**

Violation of their religious tradition may produce a guilt that, whether acknowledged or repressed, disturbs inner peace and can surface later in other destructive ways.

### **More secure in knowing you are marrying this person for the right reasons**

The absence of unique marital graces bestowed by God through the sacrament of matrimony, will weaken, even if in intangible fashion, their efforts to build a stable relationship.

## **STATISTICS SHOW MARRIAGE AT RISK**

New data on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the United States show that 43 percent of first marriages end in separation or divorce within 15 years, according to a report released in July 2001 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The report, "First Marriage Dissolution, Divorce, and Remarriage: United States," also shows that one in three first marriages end within 10 years and one in five end within 5 years. The findings are based on data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, a study of 10,847 women 15-44 years of age.

Separation and divorce can have adverse effects on the health and well-being of children and adults," said CDC Director Jeffrey Koplan. "Past research has shown that divorce is associated with higher rates of mortality, more health problems, and more risky behaviors such as increased alcohol use.

The study also showed that:

Duration of marriage is linked to a woman's age at first marriage; the older a woman is at first marriage, the longer that marriage is likely to last. For example, 59 percent of marriages to brides under 18 end in separation or divorce within 15 years, compared with 36 percent of those married at age 20 or over.

About 97 percent of separated non-Hispanic white women are divorced within 5 years of separation, compared with 77 percent of separated Hispanic women and only 67 percent of non-Hispanic black women.

Younger women who divorce are more likely to remarry: 81 percent of those divorced before age 25 remarry within 10 years, compared with 68 percent of those divorced at age 25 or over.

Non-Hispanic black women are less likely than other women to remain in a first marriage, to make the transition from separation to divorce, to remarry, and to remain in a remarriage.

These data offer an important glimpse into the social fabric of this country," said Dr. Edward Sondik, director of CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, which conducted the study. "The implications of divorce cut across a number of societal issues: socioeconomics, health, and the welfare of our children.

(Source: Center for Disease Control website, May 24, 2001.)

# PASTORAL CARE OF COHABITING COUPLES

Marriage preparation is a “teachable moment” for couples. Along with their priest or deacon, the leader couples inform the couple about the implications of living together before marriage.

It may be helpful to the marriage preparation leaders to prepare some ways of expressing the Church’s concerns in a sensitive way. Here are some suggestions:

**“We want your marriage to last forever.”**

"Human reason leads one to see that (‘trial marriages’) are unacceptable, by showing the unconvincing nature of carrying out an ‘experiment’ with human beings, whose dignity demands that they should be always and solely the term of a self-giving love without limitations of time or of an other circumstance." (John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 80, 1984)

**“We believe that you want to honor the essential commitments of marriage in the Lord.”**

Express confidence in the couple’s efforts to return to the Church and create a Catholic home.

**“Allow yourself the space needed to be more objective about your relationship.”**

Pastoral leaders encourage cohabiting couples to separate until marriage (if possible), and to abstain from sexual contact until marriage.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR A LASTING MARRIAGE**

**Consider not living together at all before marriage.**

There is no evidence that if you cohabit before marriage you will have a stronger marriage than those who don't. Some evidence suggests that if you live together before marriage you are more likely to break up after marriage. Recent statistics reveal that couples who lived together before marriage have a 50% higher divorce rate than couples who did not.

**Limit cohabitation to the shortest possible period of time.**

The longer you live together with a partner, the more likely it is that the low-commitment ethic of cohabitation will take hold. This is the opposite of what is required for a successful marriage.

**Do not cohabit if children are involved.**

Cohabiting parents break up at a much higher rate than married parents, and the effects of breakup can be devastating and long lasting.

Also, children living in cohabiting unions are at a higher risk of sexual abuse and physical violence, including lethal violence than are children living with married parents.

(Source: THE NATIONAL MARRIAGE PROJECT, "Should We Live Together?" by David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, January, 1999.)

# SOURCES OF MARRIAGE EXPECTATIONS

- |                      |                                 |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Parental Models      | Economic Background             |
| Personality Types    | Previous Experience             |
| Parenting Styles     | Ethnic Background               |
| Personal Preferences | Religious Practices             |
| Family Traditions    | Personal Strengths & Weaknesses |
| Sexual Differences   | Cultural Models                 |

## Communication Skills

### Give focused attention

- Attending to a person demonstrates readiness to listen.
- Eliminate distractions.
- Sit squarely or at a 140 degree angle the speaker.
- Assume an open body posture: relaxed, arms uncrossed, feet on the floor, and head or trunk leaning slightly forward.
- Establish eye contact.
- Avoid annoying personal habits.

### Use reflective listening

- Show that the listener is hearing the message.
- Label feelings.
- Verbal and nonverbal cues come through the five senses.
- A feeling should be expressed as “I am \_\_\_.” but never as “I think \_\_\_.”

### Identify context

- Context is the experience or behavior that produced a feeling.

### Respond with Empathy

- Show the speaker you have heard and understand what they said.
- Try not to be judgmental.
- Do not try to solve problems hastily.
- Remain neutral; do not take sides immediately.
- Question for clarity, not curiosity.
- Empathy can be phrased with this formula: “You feel \_\_\_ because \_\_\_.”

#### ***LISTEN WITH ALL YOUR SENSES***

- 7% of communication is the spoken word.
- 38% of communication is body posture and gesture.
- 55% of communication is voice tone and inflection.

## LISTEN; CLARIFY; RESPOND

- ◆ Share your feelings by first owning them. Begin by making "I" statements, e.g., "I feel angry when you ...".
- ◆ Paraphrase and restate to be sure you heard correctly before responding, e.g., "I hear you saying you feel angry when I..."
- ◆ Give the other person a chance to say what they really mean. Clarify and ask questions, e.g., "Is this what you meant when you said ...?"
- ◆ Be sensitive to non-verbal clues.
- ◆ Recognize the importance of body posture, tone of voice, and eye contact when speaking or being spoken to.
- ◆ "KISS" - "Keep It Short and Simple". It is possible to give the listener a chance to ask for clarification and/or to comment.
- ◆ Do not offer your opinion or thoughts until you get the floor to speak.
- ◆ Listen and concentrate on what the speaker is saying. Don't prepare your next point while the speaker is speaking.
- ◆ Validate/affirm your partner by letting him/her know that you understand what he/she is saying. You don't have to agree.

## Technique for Active Listening

### “10-10” Model of Communication

1. One person talks (10 minutes).
  - About an issue...
  - About ideas...
  - About wants and needs..., etc.
2. The other listens.
3. The listener repeats (rephrases) issues...ideas... feelings.
  - Checks out for accuracy
  - Comments on non-verbal signs
4. Reverse the process: one talks; one listens.

“Words are not the only way you convey messages, so be alert to the other forms of communication.”

“When you do talk, think about what you’re really communicating. Too much honesty — especially all at once — can be more hostile than caring.”

“If it’s going to work, communication must be clear and positive.”

(Source: Carrie Hansen, LCSW, and Rev. Vince O’Brien, S.J.)

## POSITIVE & NEGATIVE COMMUNICATION

**Complaint** - is specific and limited to one situation, a wish that something was different. A specific complaint lets your partner know exactly where you stand on an issue.

**Contempt** - adds insult to criticism. Includes name-calling and accusing spouse of stupidity, incompetence, etc. Tone may be condescending, indicating that your partner is a simple child who needs to be shown, by you, what to do.

**Criticism** - is general and includes blaming your partner. Usually it will include words like "never" and "always." Everything is your partner's fault.

**Withdrawal** - occurs after excessively demanding, hostile or nerve-wracking relationships have become unbearable to handle; includes ignoring, not caring, apathy. One tends to withdraw from the emotional situation to avoid being hurt again.

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## Validate Your Spouse.

Put yourself in your partner's shoes and imagine his/her what he/she is feeling now.

Letting your spouse know that you understand him/her in many little ways, is a powerful tool for healing your relationship.

Accept the feelings of your spouse and consider them valid, even if you don't share them.

## Take responsibility for your actions.

Acknowledge that your actions might have provoked your partner's response. Take responsibility for communicating. The first person to realize that your conversation is getting out of control should be the first person to take steps to change the tone of the conversation.

- ◆ Lower your tone of voice.
- ◆ Change the selection of words.
- ◆ Call a time-out, if necessary.

## Apologize.

You can simply say, "I see what you mean." After all, we all can learn something new from the other. At the least, you are sorry that this is a source of disagreement between you. Say so.

## Compliment.

Find something good to say. Reminding your partner that you really admire him/her can have a very powerful, positive effect on your communication and relationship.

## Keep trying.

A way of showing love for a future spouse is responding to potential problems early, before the wedding, if possible, and throughout the marriage.

## Attack the issue, not the person.

The goal must be mutual satisfaction, not to proclaim a winner and a loser. Aim for a *win-win* outcome.

## Staying in Touch with self, spouse, God

### Each evening before you go to sleep, ask yourself:

- Where do I find life in my own personal life?
- Where do I find life in our married life?
- Where/what are the areas in which I do not find life?
- Where do I see myself losing life?
- What am I doing that I really do not want to do?
- What are the "shoulds" I can delete?

**Pray that you will not repeat the same mistakes tomorrow.**

**Share your reflections with your spouse.**

# Decisions, decisions...

Living Together

Career Changes

Education

Transportation

Religious Practice

Finances

Role Expectations

Time Alone

Career

Parenthood

Childcare

Family-Planning

Parenting

Care of

In-Laws

Aging Parents

Wedding Plans

Other?

Housing

## Following Conscience

In making decisions of conscience, we assume Catholics and “all people of good will” will make a serious effort to make truly informed decisions. Studying the best information available is a critical starting point. For Catholics this will include learning what the Catholic Church teaches about a given issue, e.g. capital punishment, family planning, social justice, etc. This study will serve as the foundation for making authentic decisions of conscience (Rev. Robert Ruhnke, C.S.S.R., *For Better and For Ever*, 1998).

## **MAKING GOOD DECISIONS —** *A Process In the Catholic Tradition*

- ◆ **Identify needs and wants.** These may not be identical.
- ◆ **Define the desired outcome.** What do you want the end result to be? Do we agree on what we want?
- ◆ **List the alternatives.** Is there another option? Can we wait?
- ◆ **Gather information.** Get all the facts about the subject at hand - as much information, from as many sources as possible.
- ◆ **Evaluate.** Weigh and compare the accumulated information and list each fact as a pro or con.
- ◆ **Discuss honestly.** What does each of us expect the outcome of this discussion to be? What does each person think and feels is important?
- ◆ **Pray about your decision.** Pray throughout the entire process, separately and as a couple.
- ◆ **Make an informed decision.** Once you have thought it through, you can make the decision with confidence.
- ◆ **Share with your spouse.** You tell me what we have decided, and then I tell you what we have decided. If our decision is not the same, we begin again.
- ◆ **Review your decision periodically.** As time goes by, we may decide differently, or we may affirm our choices.

# FINANCIAL CONCERNS

## MAJOR FACTORS CAUSING DIFFICULTY IN MARRIAGE

- Attitudes - expecting material good to bring satisfaction and fulfillment
- Mismanagement
- Procrastination - putting off sound financial planning
- Irresponsible buying
- Inflation
- Taxes
- Unemployment
- Lack of financial resources

## FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

**Often, there will be tension and problems making ends meet.**

- Don't overcompensate the situation.
- Develop an overall policy.
- Recognize your goals.
- Use rational thinking.

**Work as a team in attaining your realistic goals.**

- Don't overestimate how far your money will go.
- Include entertainment plans in your budget; you will need the time together.

- Establish credit, but be careful not to over-extend, check interest rates.

## Define responsibilities.

- Even if one is in charge of the budget, both are responsible for living within the budget.
- Share with one another how the money is being spent.

**Get sound advice before setting budgets and goals.**

## Sharing your wealth

**Don't forget to share your income with Church & others.**

Make giving a priority, not just an option when you have a surplus.

(A tithe is a percentage of your income, sometimes 5 to 10%, given to one's church and/or to charity.)

- Share your time, talent and treasury with others, especially the poor.
- God gives us an abundance, not to keep, but to share with the needy.
- Community involvement is another way of giving back what you have been given.
- You can't out-give God, whose generosity and wisdom will be proven to you over time.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The issues of Alcohol, Drug and Physical Abuse will not apply to every couple but must be addressed.

Simply raising the issue during marriage preparation may lead an individual or a couple to seek assistance.

**Be Available to Talk** Make it clear that either of the couple is welcome to contact you privately if he or she needs help. He or she may need to reach out individually. Give both partners your phone number as part of your ordinary hospitality to facilitate this private contact.

**Refer** You are not obliged to intervene personally. Your role is one of referral. See **RESOURCES FOR REFERRALS**, p. 9, for more contacts.

## VIOLENCE HAS NO PLACE IN MARRIAGE

In Isaiah 43, God says, "I created you, and formed you...and called you by name: you are mine...You are precious in my eyes and glorious, and ...I love you." Because you are precious in God's sight, then you owe it to God who loves you, to reject any abusive treatment, regardless of the kind or type of abuse. — *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence against Women*, USCCB

The American Catholic Bishops, in their pastoral statement, *When I Call For Help*, roundly condemn the use of the Bible to condone abuse. Scripture, correctly interpreted, calls us to relationships based on mutuality and love.

## TYPES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

### Physical Abuse

An act such as hitting or slapping with the hand or striking with another object, resulting in an injury as minor as a bruise or as devastating as death.

### Emotional Abuse

Acts of emotional abuse include threatening the partner, the partner's children and/or pets, and forcing the victim to watch while his/her pet is harmed or killed.

This kind of abuse may be more harmful than physical because the wound does not heal as quickly as cuts or bruises.

### Psychological Abuse

The psychological abuser attacks his/her victim's self-worth, telling him/her they are stupid, ugly, can't do anything right.

This undermines the victim's self-confidence and increases the dependence on the abuser and maintains dominance and control over the victim.

### Sexual Abuse

The acts may be verbal — making demeaning remarks or jokes about men/women or saying suggestive things, or behavioral — involving marital or date rape, sadistic sexual acts, pornography, or insistence on sexual acts (including the wearing of certain clothing) that the victim finds distasteful.

### Economic Abuse

Isolates the spouse financially; he/she is forbidden to work outside the home, kept on an allowance, or denied any access to or knowledge about family finances.

## INSIGHTS INTO PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse happens among all classes and races, regardless of their income, occupation and education levels. **Responses to the FOCCUS inventory may disclose that one or both partners see this as a problem.** Make it clear that help is available.

It is more serious and widespread than many realize. The physical abuser can be that "nice guy or gal" who lives next door.

Violence in the home usually becomes more frequent and serious over time. It is part of an escalating pattern that begins with threats, insults, explosive tempers, and attempts to isolate or overpower the other.

Children from violent homes learn to regard violence as an acceptable means of control and a normal way of responding to disappointment and frustration. When they grow up, these children are very likely to become either victims of abuse or abusers themselves.

\* One out of every four women in this country suffer from some kind of violence at the hands of her husband or boyfriend.

\* Women kill men at approximately the same rate as men kill women in "spousal" homicides. (David Garrod, Purdue University, 1994)

\* A woman is abused in the United States every fifteen seconds.

\* Of every 100 families, 3.8 experience severe husband-to-wife violence - but 4.5 experience severe wife-to-husband violence.

\* More women are injured by physical abuse, or battering, than by car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.

\* When children are murdered, 61% of the time it is by the mother. (*Murder in Families*, Dept. of Justice, July 1994)

\* Very few will tell anyone about the abuse— not a friend, a relative, a neighbor or the police.

\* Victims of domestic violence come from all walks of life — all cultures, all income groups, all ages, all religions.

\* All share feelings of helplessness, isolation, guilt, fear and shame.

### PREVIOUS OR CURRENT SEXUAL ABUSE

Previous traumatic sexual experiences (rape, molestation, etc.) can cause difficulty building intimacy with the current spouse.

Contacts are also listed in **REFERENCES FOR REFERRALS**, p. 9, in the event that one of the partners should confide in you about these issues.

### Alcohol & Drugs

Abuse of substances is a deep-seated problem which will not go away by itself. Especially if their FOCCUS indicates that this is an issue for a couple, the marriage preparation leader can help them begin to deal with it now.

# Family — *School of Love, Domestic Church*

"The family is a community of life and love. It educates and leads the members to their full human maturity, and it serves the good of all along the road of life."

"In its own way, it is a loving image and historical presentation of the mystery of the Church."

"The future of the Church passes by way of the family."

(Source: *A Family Perspective in Church and Society: A Manual for All Pastoral Leaders*. NCCB, 1988.)

## THE FAMILY SYSTEM

A family is never just a group of individuals with some connections to each other. Every family is a network of persons who are powerfully interconnected to each other.

Even if a person leaves a family (including by death), that person may continue to have powerful effects on all the members of the family.

The family background of each couple will influence their expectations of marriage. It is important for them to realize this and to be aware that they bring all of their past experiences into this new relationship.

### Three distinct families united

- Yours in-the-making
- Her family
- His family

### Extended family can either support or hinder new relationships

- Cultivate healthy relationships with relatives and in-laws
- Recognize the personal limitations of relatives and in-laws
- Share with your future spouse the feelings and experiences about the past

## BLENDING FAMILIES

### *After a divorce*

- Don't compare your future spouse with your former spouse.
- Don't involve your future spouse with issues regarding your former spouse.
- Be clear and direct with the former spouse.
- Former in-laws may want to maintain the former relationship with you.
- Recognize new family configurations.
- Grandparents may want visitation rights.
- Avoid past issues.

### *After the death of a spouse*

- Former in-laws may want you to remain an important part of their family.
- Recognize your new family configurations.
- Your new spouse may not feel comfortable being "son/daughter" to your former in-laws.
- Grandparents may want visitation rights.
- Avoid bringing up past issues.

## HEALTHY FAMILIES

- ◆ Communicate & trust
- ◆ Affirm & support
- ◆ Respect others & teach morals
- ◆ Share time & reach out
- ◆ Respect privacy
- ◆ Foster responsibility
- ◆ Enjoy traditions
- ◆ Share religion
- ◆ Get help when needed

## RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

Married couples must harmonize their mutual love with the responsible transmission of life. Parenthood is an act of reason and responsibility.

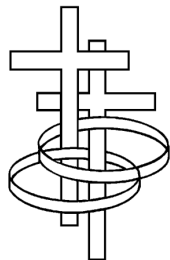
A couple may choose to suspend their role as co-creators of life for a period of time.

Neither the Church nor Sacred Scripture have indicated the number of children a couple should have. Both have blessed large families that were the result of responsible parents exercising generous love. Large families are good, all things being equal, but all things are not equal for every couple.

Because of certain modern conditions, some married couples "find themselves in circumstances where, at least temporarily, the size of the family should not be increased" (*cf. Humanae Vitae — On the Regulation of Birth*, Pope Paul VI, 1968).

"If, then, there are serious motives to space out births, which derive from the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife, or from external conditions, the Church teaches that it is then licit (permitted) to take into account the natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions, for the use of marriage in the infecund (infertile) periods only, and in this way to regulate birth without offending the moral principles...."

— *Humanae Vitae*, 16



## Regulation of births

*In a few words:*

In partnership with God, couples who decide to postpone childbearing are called to restrict their love-making to the infertile days of the woman's cycle.

Sometimes couples face serious difficulties living in accord with this teaching of openness to new life.

The Church understands and encourages all couples to find support in prayer and not lose confidence in the mercy and love of God.

Awareness of fertility enhances communication between husband and wife and may be employed to achieve pregnancy, as well.

# Family Planning Decisions

*Every couple should consider and discuss:*

What is our total attitude about our family life?  
Is it generous and loving?

Can our health bear and support a child at this time?

Can we mentally and psychologically "afford" another child at this time?

What about the needs of children already born?

How will this affect our relationship with each other?

Are there marital problems and adjustments that should be resolved first?

How would we manage the extra financial costs?

Are we capable of preparing a child to take his/her place in society?

Have we prayed together and alone about welcoming a child into our family?

Have we re-evaluated our decision periodically?

# NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

Natural family planning, or periodic continence, is the practice of achieving or avoiding pregnancy through an informed awareness of the fertile and infertile phases of the woman's cycle. When pregnancy is to be avoided, abstinence is used during the fertile time.

## HOW NFP WORKS

During each cycle, a woman naturally becomes fertile as ovulation approaches, then infertile. The male, on the other hand, is always fertile. The woman's body gives her signs which indicate whether she is fertile or infertile.

The primary signs for her are changes in the cervical mucus secretions before ovulation, and the rise in basal body temperature after ovulation.

Couples can learn to observe and record these signs and use the information for family planning purposes.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NFP

A couple's motivation determines how effective NFP will be in helping them to avoid pregnancy, if that is their intention.

Studies have shown that NFP is at least as good as the barrier methods, (condom, diaphragm, etc.) and can be as effective as the pill when used by motivated couples.

## THE OVULATION METHOD (OM)

The Ovulation Method teaches a woman to observe her cervical mucus that changes in consistency and sensation several days before ovulation occurs. The mucus changes again

around ovulation, so the woman can identify her fertile and infertile time.

## THE TEMPERATURE METHOD

A woman's resting temperature changes throughout her menstrual cycle, remaining lower in the time before ovulation, then rising and remaining elevated after ovulation has occurred. Daily temperature readings can confirm that ovulation has occurred.

## THE SYMPTO-THERMAL METHOD (ST)

The Sympto-Thermal Method combines the mucus and temperature methods, along with observations of other fertility signs such as changes in the cervix, abdominal pain, and spotting.

## NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING RESEARCH

Research and improvement of these methods continues, in a dedicated effort to help couples live the Church's teachings on responsible parenthood.

## USE OF THE METHODS

For a couple to use NFP successfully, the couple should attend classes together and learn to chart and interpret the woman's cycle.

Because of the need for abstinence when avoiding pregnancy, the cooperation and support of the man is essential. NFP is the only method of family planning that shares the responsibility equally between the husband and wife.

## PROGRAMS FOR NFP

Successful use of natural family planning depends on instruction and follow-up by trained instructors.

After their initial instruction, the couple will be asked to participate in follow-up to insure their proper understanding of the methods.

## HOW CAN NFP AFFECT MARRIAGE


Couples rarely begin to practice natural family planning out of a desire to improve their marital relationship. However, if they are going to practice NFP harmoniously, they soon find that they have to communicate more fully with each other and practice abstinence creatively.

They do not ignore each other at times when they choose to avoid intercourse; rather, they develop alternative and non-genital ways of expressing their love and affection.

As a result, couples have reported either a positive gain or no detriment in their marital relationship, although they had no such expectation when they made the decision to use only the natural methods of family planning.

In addition, the use of natural methods of family planning helps develop the same character strengths that are necessary for marital fidelity and life-long marriages.

Cooperating in Creation



An Introduction to  
Catholic Teaching  
about Welcoming  
Children and Family  
Planning

See NFP Introduction  
Presentation & Video

Marriage Preparation & Enrichment 1

# Fertility

## Awareness:

### Key to Natural Methods

Man is fertile 24 hours a day

- ❖ 365 days a year, until old age

Woman's fertility is cyclical

- ❖ from menarche to menopause
- ❖ fertile for only a short time each cycle

Fertility consists of  
Sperm + Egg + Cervical Mucus

Whenever a woman is fertile, there is a characteristic mucus discharge from the cervix -- Observable at the opening of the vagina.

A slight shift in body temperature can be observed once ovulation has occurred and the fertile phase has passed.

## OBJECTIONS TO OTHER FORMS OF FAMILY PLANNING

- Sterilization would violate the physical integrity of the person.
- Withdrawal (to spill the semen) would violate the integrity of the marital act.
- Any mechanical or chemical method — diaphragm, spermicide, condom, intra-uterine device — would not be open to life, and may be an abortifacient.
- Abortion deliberately destroys another life.

## DISADVANTAGES IN THE NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING METHODS

- The lack of medical professionals instructed in this method
- Requires the couple to abstain from sexual intercourse for specific periods of time
- Natural Family Planning must have the cooperation of both spouses. It is not the responsibility of one partner alone.

## CONCERNS ABOUT INFERTILITY

Alternative means of conception (*in vitro* fertilization, surrogate mothers, donor sperm, cloning, and other emerging technology) are not respectful of the marriage covenant, and are not an option for Catholic couples.

Some acceptable drug and surgical therapies are available, however.

Natural family planning methods can assist couples wishing to conceive. By working with a trained instructor and physician, many

couples have reported success in having a child.

When this is not possible, the couple should be reassured that their marriage can be fruitful when they are open to life. Anything that is life-giving and life-supporting is open to life.

## Life-Giving Ways:

Giving birth

Adoption

Working with children

Foster parenting

Visiting the sick  
& lonely

Volunteering

Public service

Taking care  
of the elderly

Advocating justice

Healing relationships

# PARENTING TIPS

## Remember, parents are people, too

- Your marriage relationship comes first.
- Children need to see that their parents love one another.

## Parenting works best as a partnership

- Share responsibility rather than divide it; but don't "pass the buck" in the correction of children, lest one partner "become the heavy."
- Be open to suggestions and alternatives, from each other and from the children
- Discuss things with your children as they grow older. Start to make joint decisions.

## Call in arbitrators if there is a serious disagreement

- Remember, no one person knows it all. *Sometimes talking things through is the best answer.*
- Ask advice from your pediatrician or a trusted, understanding person who has experience with children
- Consult professional counselors or parish staff if you are unable to resolve difficulty.

## Learn from past mistakes

Don't assign blame or credit. *Your decision as a couple must be mutual.*

## Effective Parenting

Set standards and limits of behavior.

Expand limits as children grow older.

Be consistent in enforcing rules.

Be fair and respectful when punishing infractions of rules.

Treat children with the dignity due each human being.

Take each person's rights and responsibilities into account.

Provide children with freedom to make choices.

## Remain Calm

- Never discipline a child while you are in a state of anger.
- Unacceptable forms of discipline: violence, threats, verbal abuse, deliberate lowering of the child's self-esteem, name-calling, shouting, disrespectful language.

# STEP-PARENTING GUIDELINES

*A couple can facilitate growing relationships with a willing spirit and an attitude of openness, patience, flexibility, prayer.*

## **Be prepared for change**

Remember that old rules and expectations based on a first marriage experience usually won't apply to this new family situation.

## **Take time to "court" the stepchildren with family activities**

This will give the children an opportunity to get to know each other and begin a bonding process. Your new friendship and role will be different than that of the natural parent.

## **Respect the natural parent**

The natural parent should continue to be the primary disciplinarian, if possible.

## **Present a united front to the children**

Treat each other with respect and never criticize or discount your partner in front of others, especially the children.

## **Let the children know what you would like to be called**

Generally, first names for step-parents are preferred to "Mom" or "Dad". If you bring up the subject, it will save a lot of embarrassment and discomfort.

## **Invite their respect for your marriage**

Be clear that the decision to remarry is your decision and not theirs.

## **Help children to recognize the change of roles in this new relationship**

The children may feel that the new stepparent is trying to push them out. Give the children permission to be children. Let them know that they do not need to assume the role and duties of protector of the natural parent.

**Your couple relationship is primary** and may be a positive model for the children. Arrange private time together to nourish your relationship.

## **Don't try too hard!**

Recognize and accept that creating a healthy, happy, and successful stepfamily takes lots of patience, love, preparation, flexibility, acceptance, and time.

## **Keep praying**

All of this must be wrapped in lots of prayer. Expect to see some fruits of your efforts in about three to five years.

## **CHILDREN FROM FORMER MARRIAGES**

Children have a tendency to want things to return to "normal". This relationship, regardless of how loving and supportive, is not normal to them. Their family of origin is the "normal" relationship.

Accept responsibility and maintain relationships with children from a former marriage, even if they do not live with you.

Encourage your new spouse to maintain a relationship with his/her children.

## Marriage & Sexuality In Scripture & Tradition

*Close your heart to every love,  
but mine;  
hold no one in your arms but me,  
Love is as powerful as death;  
passion is as strong as death itself.  
It bursts into flame and burns  
as a raging fire.*

— *Song of Songs 8:6, NAB*

“Young husbands should say to their wives: I have taken you in my arms and I love you and I prefer you to life itself. For the present, life is nothing and my ardent dream is to spend it with you in such a way that we may be assured of not separating in the life reserved for us.... I place your love above all things and nothing would be more bitter or painful to me than to be of a different mind than you.”

— *St. John Chrysostom, 4th century*

**"Marriage is not instituted solely for procreation.** Rather, its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons...demands that the mutual love of the spouses, too, be embodied in a rightly ordered manner, that it grow and ripen.

Therefore, marriage persists as a whole manner of communication of life, and maintains its value and indissolubility, even when offspring are lacking, despite rather often, the very intense desire of the couple."

—Vatican II, *Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*, No. 50

### *Ever Better Lovers...*

- ◇ Practice tenderness & appreciation.
- ◇ Nourish intimacy by a sensuous and satisfying sexual relationship.
- ◇ Develop a sexual relationship beyond sexual intercourse.
- ◇ Include sensitivity to one another's total needs
- ◇ Become aware of the needs of the other at any given time.
- ◇ Protect the sacredness of their sexual relationship from becoming public.
- ◇ Are willing to try new ways of expressing their sexual love for each other.
- ◇ Know that forcing is contrary to the goal of lovemaking.
- ◇ Maintain the displays of affection that they showed when dating.
- ◇ Show affection and thoughtfulness.
- ◇ Keep their friendship alive.
- ◇ Give their spouse emotional support.
- ◇ Give their spouse respect and honor.

"Married love...becomes a power which enriches persons and makes them grow and, at the same time, it contributes to building up the civilization of love. But when the sense and meaning of gift is lacking in sexuality, a 'civilization of things and not of persons' takes over, 'a civilization in which persons are used in the same way as things are used. In the context of a civilization of use, woman can become an object for man, children a hindrance to parents..."

— *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, Pontifical Council for the Family, 1995

### Sexual intercourse between spouses is

- Both open to life and a bond uniting the couple in love
- Good, enjoyable and designed by God
- A beautiful gift from our Creator
- The ultimate form of communication between married couples
- An act of trusting our new spouse and ourselves

### *The “Spice” of Life*

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul

— CCC, 2332

S—spiritual

P—physical

I—intellectual

C—creative, communicative

E—emotional

## Gender & Identity

Sexuality influences our thought, feelings and behavior, and even spills over into our basic beliefs and values.

In fact, the integrating of love, trust and commitment into our sexuality is what truly humanizes it.

**Today, differences between the roles of men and women are not as rigidly defined as in the past.**

Still there remain sexual differences that are profound — and make life more interesting. Studies still show differences in ways of relating and approaches to problem solving between men and women.

While it is almost impossible to set down a list of differences which are without exception, it is safe to conclude that there are important distinctions between the sexes.

**Differences are best worked out through interaction and communication between a particular man & a particular woman.**

(See David Thomas, *Beginning Your Marriage*, ACTA Publications, 1994.)

# Sacrament of Marriage

The Catholic Church calls couples to relationships that are lifelong, faithful, & open to life.

We believe that security, stability, and long-lasting love result from commitment & trust.

Christian Marriage is a promise to love & honor. Life-long commitment cannot be "practiced".

## God's Vision for Marriage

At the beginning of creation, God made them male and female; for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two shall become as one. They are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore let no man separate what God has joined

— Mk 10: 6-9, *NAB*

### *Leave*

- Stop being dependent on parents and siblings
- Assert mature individuality
- Move toward interdependence with your spouse
- Establish your own family unit

### *Become as One*

- Melded together in love
- Total commitment
- Sacrifice selfish preferences for the other's good

### *One Flesh*

- Joined mentally, spiritually and emotionally
- Physical, sexual union

# Holy Matrimony

## *In Scripture and Tradition*

Catholic Tradition sees the love, commitment and fruitfulness of marriage as living signs of Jesus' covenant with his Church.

### *In Scripture:*

“ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cling to his wife, and the two shall be made into one.’ This is a great foreshadowing; I mean that it refers to Christ and his Church. In any case, each one should love his wife as he loves himself, the wife for her part showing respect for her husband.

— Ephesians 5:31-33, *NAB*

“You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve to be his help and support.... You said, ‘It is not good for a man to be alone; let us make him a partner like himself’.... Call down your mercy on me and on her, and allow us to live together to a happy old age.”

— Tobit 8:6-7 *NAB*

“Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.”

— Psalm 127:1a, *NAB*

### *In Canon Law:*

Marriage must be indissoluble and monogamous (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 1056).

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 toward 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.

— *Code of Canon Law*, 1055 § 1; cf. GS48 § 1; CCC, 1601

### ***In Documents of Vatican II:***

"God himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and with various ends in view; all of these have a very important bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of every member of the family, in the dignity, stability, peace, and prosperity of the family and of the whole human race.

By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory. Thus the man and woman, who 'are no longer two but one' (Mt. 19:6), help and serve each other by their marriage partnership; they become conscious of their unity and experience it more deeply from day to day.

"The intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable unity between them." — Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, 48

### ***In US Bishops' Pastoral Documents:***

"God, in creating every woman and man as a totally distinct and different person, nevertheless, wishes those who enter marriage to become one in body and spirit, likewise bonded by an absolute love for each other. The divine love of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is unconditional, committed, irrevocable, and exclusive or faithful; God's plan is that human marital love will be the same." — *Faithful to Each Other For Ever*, NCCB/USCC, 1989

### ***In the Catechism of the Catholic Church:***

"The covenant which spouses have freely entered into entails faithful love. It imposes on them the obligation to keep their marriage indissoluble." — CCC, 2397

"(Jesus) himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to 'receive' the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ." — CCC 1615; cf. Mt. 19:11

### ***In Papal Encyclical Letters:***

"Marriage between two baptized persons is a real symbol of the union of Christ and the church, which is not a temporary or "trial" union, but one which is eternally faithful." — Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 80, 1984

"Married love is first of all fully human, that is to say, of the senses and of the spirit at the same time....

It is not then a simple transport of instinct and sentiment, but also and principally an act of free will, intended to endure and grow by means of the joys and sorrows of daily life, in such a way that husband and wife become one only heart and one only soul, and together attain their human perfection."

— *Humanae Vitae*, 9

## IMPEDIMENTS TO SACRAMENTAL MARRIAGE

### Lack of Commitment

- Either party states that if the marriage fails they can get out of it.
- If they have a "**prenuptial agreement**" which has conditions about the termination of the marriage.

"Marriage cannot be validly contracted subject to a condition concerning the future." — *Code of Canon Law*, 1102§1

"If a condition concerning a future event is attached to the consent, the law gives no effect to the consent; there is no marriage." — *Marriage in Canon Law*, Ladislav Orsey, S.J., 1988

### Lack of Freedom to Marry

- Either of the parties has been previously married, for whatever length of time, either civilly or in any religious ceremony, unless a declaration of nullity has been received.

Following the final divorce decree(s), previously married party must consult the Office of the **Tribunal** of the Archdiocese of Baltimore before a date may be set for the new marriage.

### Intention to Not Have Children

- Either party states that they positively do not want and will not have children.

"For matrimonial consent to exist, it is necessary that the contracting parties be at least not ignorant of the fact that marriage is a permanent partnership between a man and a woman, ordered to the procreation of children through some form of sexual cooperation." — Canon 1096.1

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

*God Heals Broken Hearts and Broken Dreams: An Explanation of the Church's Annulment Process*, Arch. Of Baltimore, 1999, 410-547-5533, [www.archbalt.org/Tribunal](http://www.archbalt.org/Tribunal).

## Christian Marriage: A Sign of God's Commitment

Every marriage is a legal contract. Christian marriage is that and more. It is a *covenant* — a sacred promise — for life-long, exclusive, fruitful love between a man and a woman.

### Contract

- ◆ Deals with Things
- ◆ Engages the services of people
- ◆ Stated time-limit of effectiveness
- ◆ Guaranteed by civil law
- ◆ Can be made by any person of legal age
- ◆ Can be broken with loss to contracting party
- ◆ Best understood by lawyers
- ◆ Can be coerced

### Covenant

- ◆ Deals with people
- ◆ Engages persons
- ◆ Forever
- ◆ Guaranteed by God
- ◆ Can be made only by emotionally, mentally & spiritually mature adults
- ◆ Cannot be broken
- ◆ If violated, results in broken hearts
- ◆ Best understood by lovers
- ◆ Requires free consent

# Married Spirituality

**Each person should consider:  
“What does my faith  
mean to me?”**

As you begin or continue your family life, invite God into the relationship.

Learn to pray together regularly.

Pray about:

- Your lives, needs and hopes
- The people dear to you
- Critical questions facing you as a couple
- Determine occasions, times of day, or week, when you can pray together

Maintain a healthy interdependence in your relationship.

Develop your personal talents and gifts. You'll be a more interesting partner.

Develop a joy of sharing and being with one another.

Support one another in times of both joy and sorrow.

Forgive one another.

Take time to rest and reflect alone and renew your spirit.

Build rich religious traditions and rituals into your family customs.

## *Journey of Faith*

Our faith is shaped by parents, siblings, spouse, children, peers, and society.

Partners religious attitudes & behaviors may vary widely.

We might recognize the need for God as an integral part of married life, praying together, truly calling on God for assistance in marital difficulties, viewing ourselves as partners with God on life's journey.

We might attend church faithfully and follow church rules, but praying to God is only a Sunday activity.

Some of us may be active in parish events but do not have a strong spiritual base.

Others may want to be married in church due to family or social pressure, though they choose to participate in religion occasionally or not at all.

We may have been raised in another faith that promotes religious prejudices. The extended family may oppose the union.

Many people possess a rich internal spiritual life, but speak little about their personal faith journeys.

While some people have no religious tradition, they may be curious about religion and open to learning more.

## Praying Together

Throughout their years of marriage, a couple shares themselves. When we pray together, it opens up a new and deeper level of sharing. By praying together, we consciously bring God into our lives and our love.

Together we put our lives and love into the hands of the Creator. It is a way of listening and being open to God's word, and to make us available to do His will. With this kind of awareness, prayer together as a couple should be much richer and easier.

## Personal Faith

Each person has a unique faith. It could be said that every marriage is "interfaith", even when both are from the same denomination. Each couple must respect the other's faith experience and relationship with God.

## Develop Spirituality in Marriage

- Foster interdependence
- Pray together
- Challenge each other
- Support each other
- Respect each other
- Forgive one another
- Loving share your sexuality
- Remain faithful (fidelity) to your spouse
- Maintain courage in doubt and sorrow
- Know that God is present to make this marriage work

## *Why are Catholic Weddings celebrated in a church?*

Sacraments have both a personal and Church dimension. While the wedding surely has deep personal meaning for the bride and groom and their families, the wider church has a stake in their marriage. Their sacrament builds up the whole Body of Christ.

When we celebrate a wedding inside a church, we do so in a space where God most frequently and powerfully interacts with the community of believers. We celebrate the most sacred events there—our sacraments, rituals in which we believe we encounter Christ most intimately. Because marriage is one of our sacraments, it deserves a sacred space.

"When you marry in the Catholic Church, your marriage takes on a spiritual dimension that enjoys the support of a community of believers. This limits some of your choices, such as place, but it gives you the church's assurance that the God we worship together will be an intimate part of your union."

— Fr. Paul Turner, *The Catholic Wedding Answer Book*, Resource Publications, 2001

"Only the following marriages may be held in some place other than a parish church or approved Catholic chapel:

- A) A marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person
- B) The validation of a marriage
- C) When a close member of the family would be unable to attend for reasons of health or grave inconvenience if the marriage were celebrated in a church (Canon 1118) — Archdiocese of Baltimore, *Pastoral Handbook*, 1986, Policy 4.2G.19

*Requests for permission in situations other than stated above should be directed to the Chancery Office.*

## INTERFAITH WEDDINGS

The minister or rabbi should be made welcome to participate in the wedding ceremony when it is held in the Catholic Church.

The priest or deacon will normally accept the invitation to participate in the wedding when it is held in the church of the other party.

Even where permission has been granted for a couple to be married in the church of the non-Catholic party, all of the steps in the sacramental policy of the Archdiocese must be observed.

The celebration of marriage between Catholics and non-Catholics should be celebrated outside Mass. The ceremony will be planned to emphasize especially the Word of God, where all Christians find a source of unity and strength.

Marriage between Catholics and non-Christians will require special planning to ensure sensitivity to the traditions represented.

Since there is such divergence among interfaith couples — from non-religious to active — the priest or deacon assisting them will make every effort to understand their faith commitment as individuals and as a couple. He will make them aware of the opportunities to find common ground to grow together in faith in the special situations they may face coming from different religious traditions.

Couples should be helped to seek, explore and enhance the areas of common truth and practice in which they agree.

## *Advice for Interfaith Couples ...*

- Attend each other's worship services occasionally.
- Use prayers from each other's tradition, or write your own.
- Consider the religious customs and rituals that can be woven into your family and become part of your own tradition.
- Become involved as a couple in social groups or study clubs from your individual congregations.
- Encourage your spouse in his or her religious practices.
- Under no circumstances should either partner feel forced to change religion.

## *Interfaith Families ...*

- Face the issue of the religious upbringing of your children, honestly, before your marriage.
- The child has a right to a religious education. This is a part of the covenant and commitment of marriage.
- The Church recognizes that the religious education of the children is the right and responsibility of both parents.

### **Responsibility of Catholic Spouse**

The Catholic partner makes the following promise at the priest/deacon interview:

“I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ and with God’s help intend to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church. I promise to do all in my power to share the faith I have received with my children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics.”

The non-Catholic partner affirms that they are aware that their partner has made this promise. — Archdiocese of Baltimore, Pastoral Handbook, 1986

# SACRED SIGNS

## *in the Wedding Liturgy*

Several “signs” are present in the marriage celebrated in the Catholic Church.

- The **Marriage Vows** are a public sign of an interior change.
- The **Wedding Rings** symbolize the deeper implications of this commitment to love and honor until death.
- The **Husband and Wife** become a sign of the giving-receiving relationship with God. God gives, they accept; God loves, they respond.
- The **Witnesses** represent the community, to whom the new couple are a sign of God’s faithful love for humanity.

In the dioceses of the United States, the following form of the statement of consent may be used (others are available):

“I N., take you N., to be my husband (wife). I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.”

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF VOWS

The Liturgy of Marriage offers several options for the wording of the vows, from which the couple may select one formula. (See *Together for Life*, by Joseph Champlin, Ave Maria Press, 1997, p. 72-73.) All forms for vows include the following elements:

- The man and woman must be free to contract marriage and freely express their consent (cf. CCC, 1625, cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 1057§2).
- The vows must include a statement about the relationship being 'permanent and exclusive.' "The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility" — *Code of Canon Law*, 1056

## Promises for Life

“I”... my name; who I am; a total gift of myself; with all my talents and limitations.

“take you”...by name and no other; accepting and freely choosing you.

"to be my husband/wife".... my partner; sharing goals and values.

“I promise”...a pledge made freely, in conformity with civil and church law.

“to be true to you”...with fidelity of body and of heart; trusting and trustworthy.

"in good times"....in prosperity, abundance of property and friends.

"and in bad".... scarcity, grief, loss, loneliness, fear, conflict, failure.

"in sickness"....suffering, physical and mental illness, and impending death.

"and in health"....vigor and strength, beauty and passionate love.

"I will"....a firm decision not based on romantic attraction alone.

"love"... wanting only the best for you, believing, forgiving, enduring.

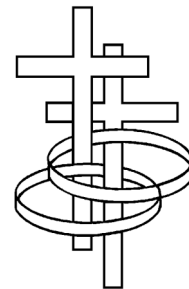
"you"...the unique and beautiful creation made in God’s image.

“and honor you”... affirming and respecting; not belittling or controlling.

"all the days of my life.".... discovering new delight in you until death separates us.

## Planning Your Catholic Wedding -- A Checklist

- Announce Engagement**
- Meet with Priest or Deacon**
- Reserve a Wedding Date on the parish calendar.**
- Pray, individually and together.**
- Register for Marriage Preparation.**
- Contact church of your baptism to secure baptism certificate, dated within six months of the proposed marriage.**
- Make guest list.**
- Make arrangements for reception, honeymoon, clothing, travel.**
- Invite any attendants and liturgical ministers.**
- Complete Marriage Preparation.**
- Meet with your priest/deacon again (number of meetings will vary).**
- Select Scripture readings and other prayers for wedding.**
- Investigate Natural Family Planning methods.**
- Make arrangements with church musician(s).**
- Secure marriage license from city or county where the marriage is to take place.  
*Give to clergyman before the wedding.***
- Schedule rehearsal with the church.**
- Make time for personal prayer and reflection throughout this preparation time.  
*The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are valuable sources of grace and healing.***
- Rehearsal and dinner**
- Go to church and marry your beloved.**
- Celebrate.***
- Live.**



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# Planning Sessions

# USING WORKBOOKS & OTHER RESOURCES

## USING WORKBOOKS

The *Perspectives on Marriage* workbook and *To Trust Again* re-marriage workbook (ACTA Publications, 1998) contain many good exercises to bring home the main points that the engaged couples need to discuss. Remarriage couples also use *Once More with Love*, by Bobbi Coyle Hennessey (Ave Maria Press, 1993).

Only one workbook is needed for each couple, since exercises are provided in duplicate and perforated for easy removal.

Expanded introductions to each worksheet and suggestions for use are contained in the *Perspectives* and *To Trust Again Leader's Guides*.

There are more exercises and outlines presented in the workbooks than you will need during the marriage preparation sessions. You, as the lead couple, are asked to choose which exercise(s) the engaged couple needs to use during the session. The other exercises can be assigned as homework and you are encouraged to do so, as needed.

Invite the engaged couple to complete any additional pages that interest them before or after the wedding.

Before each session, decide which workbook pages you will have the couple complete.

You and your spouse will find it helpful to complete the worksheets yourselves before the session. Your first-hand experience with the exercise will give you a place to begin discussion.

## USING INFORMATION FOLDERS

Prepackaged folders for the engaged couple will be assigned to you from your parish office, parish coordinator or the Marriage Preparation and Enrichment Office of the Archdiocese. As topics unfold during the program, introduce the printed materials provided in the Couple Packet.

Remind the couple to bring the Workbook back to each subsequent session.

These materials are not to be placed on a table for them to pick up. Not only has the couple paid for the materials but also, they may wish to read the materials more closely later.

## USING VIDEOS

Short video presentations can be useful discussion starters. Be sure that any materials you show are in keeping with your role as a Catholic catechist and teacher of the faith. The parish religious education office, as well as the Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation office, are good sources for videos.

## ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

Be sure all materials you use are in accord with Catholic tradition. Many other good programs are available to sponsor couples and Pre-Cana teams. Some can even be used in correspondence with a marriage preparation leader/clergy representative. This is often helpful when the partners are living in distant locations.

<b>FOCCUS Category</b>	<b>Perspectives Workbook</b>	<b>El Matrimonio en Perspectiva</b>
Life-Style Expectations <i>Metas y ambiciones en la Vida Matrimonial</i>	Clue Each Other In Please Listen to Me Great Expectations	Entradas y salidas de dinero Escúchame, por favor Grandes expectativas
Friends & Interests <i>Intereses Personales y Amistades</i>	Our Favorite Things Beat the Clock	Conociendo el territorio El Mantenimiento de un Coche
Personality Match <i>Compatibilidad entre las Parejas</i>	Discovering Each Other	Conocerse mejor
Personal Issues <i>Cuestiones Personales</i>	NUDEL Alcohol & Drugs	Rango de importancia El alcohol y las drogas
Communication <i>Comunicacion</i>	Read the Future	¿Qué nos guarda el futuro?
Problem-Solving <i>Resolviendo Problemas</i>	Play Solomon	Hagamos como el Rey Salomón
Religion & Values <i>Religion y Valores</i>	Sharing the Faith Vision	Compartiendo la misma fe
Parenting Issues <i>Cuestiones Paternales</i>	Now's the Time Are we ready?	Este es el momento ¿Listos?
Extended Family Issues <i>Cuestiones de Familia</i>	My/your/our family	Mi familia/tu familia/nuestra familia
Sexuality Issues <i>Cuestiones Sexuales</i>	Sex & Sexuality	Las relaciones sexuales
Financial Issues <i>Cuestiones de Finanzas</i>	The Dollar Almighty? Knowing the Territory Your First Year Budget	¿Que papel juega el dinero en nuestra vida? Gastos Su primer presupuesto
Readiness Issues <i>Cuestiones para la Preparacion Matrimonial</i>	Look before you leap	Piénselo bien antes de la boda
Marriage Covenant <i>Alianza del Matrimonio</i>	Living the Sacrament	Viviendo el sacramento
Key Problem Indicators <i>Claves de Problemas</i>	The Bells are Ringing On Our Worst Behavior	Suenan las campanas Cuando nos portamos de lo peor
Family of Origin <i>Familias de Origen</i>	Where We Come From	¿De dónde venimos?
Dual Careers <i>Parejas Trabajando Fuera de Casa</i>	Take this Job	Quehaceres domésticos
Commitment <i>Compromiso</i>	Toward Intimacy	Preparándose para conocerse mejor
Interfaith Marriages <i>Parejas de Diferentes Religiones</i>	Two Faiths, One Love	Dos Culturas, un amor
Remarriage <i>Matrimonio Previo</i>	Remarriage	Casarse por segunda vez
Cohabiting Couples <i>Parejas Viviendo Juntos Antes de Casarse</i>	Living Together	Viviendo bajo el mismo techo

# PLANNING SPONSOR COUPLE SESSIONS

## The First Evening

- Prayer, at all sessions
- Get acquainted; offer a warm welcome.
- Introduce FOCCUS.
- Administer FOCCUS.
- Homework: Talk about completing the FOCCUS. Do Personality Survey (in folder).
- Set the date for next sessions. Allow time for FOCCUS processing.
- Closing Prayer.

## Designing Meetings Two through Five

If desired, follow the program outlines in *Perspectives* and *To Trust Again Leader's Guides*.

Review the couple's FOCCUS report and make note of key areas for discussion.

Plan questions to prompt discussion of the FOCCUS statements.

Select one or more workbook pages, as needed. Select any homework assignments.

Address the Five C's: Communication, Commitment, Church, Children, Conflict resolution.

## General Outline of Session Two

- Prayer, at beginning and end of sessions
- Inquire about conversation sparked by last session
- Invite responses to homework.
- Review the FOCCUS statements with the couple.
- Praise the areas of Strength.
- Facilitate areas of discussion. Use FOCCUS manual for question ideas.
- Assign any pertinent homework.

## Sessions Three, Four and Five

Inquire about conversation sparked by last session. Invite responses to homework.

Discuss another category area, according to your plan.

Couple completes evaluation and receives Certificate of Completion at last session.

# REMARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAM

A couple who is marrying again prepare by meeting in the Remarriage Couple’s home. The program may also be conducted with a small group. One additional session of training will prepare sponsor couples to assist in this important ministry.

*To Trust Again* (ACTA Publications) and *Once More with Love* by Bobbi Coyle-Hennessey, are provided to the Remarriage Couple for use in the program.

As with the Sponsor Couple program, Remarriage sessions may be tailored to the couples’ needs **using the FOCCUS results.**

## Leaders’ Guide – A Framework for New Remarriage Couples:

For completeness and assistance in presenting the Five C’s in each program, refer to the **Leader’s Guide** of *To Trust Again* “Outlines of Key Talks”, p. 19, as a guide.

These presentation outlines could provide a framework — “talking points”— for the sessions as you gain experience working with the engaged.

## Using Additional Resources

Appropriate reading and exercises are available in *Once More with Love*.

- Remarriage ..... Chapters 1 & 2
- Communicating..... Chapter 5
- Intimacy ..... Chapter 4
- Potential Problems ..Chapter 3
- Family Blending ... Chapter 6

## Recognizing the FIVE C’S in Remarriage Preparation

### REMARRIAGES – Commitment

- Contrasting First Union & Remarriages
- Acknowledging Good/Bad from the Past
- Celebrating Remarriage as a Commitment
- FOCCUS Pre-marriage Instrument

### COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

- Expectations We Bring to Marriage
- Communication Skills
- Problem Solving/Decision Making

### POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

#### – Conflict Resolution

- Problems and Challenges
- Conflict Resolution
- Finances
- Career and Work
- In-Laws
- Former Spouses and Children from previous relationships

### INTIMACY – Children/Commitment

- Sexuality
- Married Sexual Relationship
- Family Planning
- Children

### FAMILY BLENDING – Children

- The “Blended” Family
- Impact on Your Marriage
- Step-Parenting
- Facilitating Growing Relationships

### TRUSTING GOD – Church

- Covenant and Sacrament
- Commitment/Cohabitation
- Relationship with God
- Interfaith Marriage
- Marriage Vows

# Play Solomon -- *Remarriage Situations*

(Play Solomon for Sponsor Couple and Pre-Cana -- See *Perspectives Workbook*, p. 33.)

1 Jennifer and Bob were recently married. Their family is a blended family and consists of three children. Jennifer's has two daughters from a previous marriage, Amy (age 7) and Sally (age 10). Bob has one son from my previous marriage Christopher (age 11).

Jennifer and Bob have decided that as a new couple they need "their" time together, to talk, go out, or just relax. They have told the kids to give them "parent's time" and mom and dad will make time for each child. Jennifer and Bob's basic rule is, that if the kids see them relaxing or talking, that the kids should say excuse me, to see if it a good time to interrupt them.

Well lately, when Jennifer and Bob wanted to be alone, their youngest child, Amy, keeps hanging around and constantly interrupts them or looks for Jennifer where ever she goes in the house. Amy often cries when Jennifer goes out. Amy has been told that, "this is mom and dad's time", and in a little while, mommy will be spending time with Amy.

How can Jennifer and Bob get their own time? Couple's time is important, but Amy seems to need more time? What is troubling Amy?

2 Amanda has two children, Tim (age 11) and Susan (age 7) from a previous marriage. John has no children, and has never been married. Amanda and John are recently married, and have agreed to let either parent discipline their two children. John, the steppar-

ent, is home alone with the children. Tim acts up and pick on Susan. John asks Tim to settle down and leave Susan alone. Tim doesn't listen, and continues to tease Susan. John gets upset and punishes Tim by sending him to his room. A while later, Amanda, the children's biological mother, comes home. John tells her what went on. Amanda goes to Tim's room and he tells his side of the story. Amanda bursts out of Tim's room and starts arguing with her husband, John, accusing John of over-reacting and punishing her son.

Should Amanda have acted that way? Is it all right to allow the stepparent to discipline children that aren't his or hers? What should they do to prevent further arguing?

3 Hal has been married before. He has two children from a first marriage. Karen has never been married, but her and Hal have been dating for over 7 years. They finally decided to get married. Karen knows little about Hal's previous marriage, but has spent time with Hal's children. Karen would like a family of her own, and wants to be a mother to Hal's children. Hal has to work three jobs to support himself, his previous wife and children, and that leaves him little time to spend with Karen. Hal likes to spend time with his children from his first marriage. Karen and Hal are in love, and are sure they can make their marriage work.

How can Hal and Karen budget their time, and money to support their marriage? What understandings do you

think Karen and Hal should make before they are married? What should Karen's role be with Hal's children.

4 Tom and Mary are newly married. They have three children. Tom is divorced and has one daughter, while Mary has a son and daughter by a previous marriage. All three children are living with them on a regular basis.

Mary's divorce agreement states that she shares joint custody with her ex-husband. Mary takes her kids to their biological dad's house every other weekend, every holiday except Christmas, and 5 weeks in the summer.

Mary and Tom want to build their blended family by sharing holidays, vacations, and making their own family traditions. Tom is very upset with Mary's divorce agreement, and thinks it is unfair for their new family.

How could Mary and Tom promote family bonding in this new family? What about Mary's divorce agreement?

5 Sally and Fred are newly married. Fred is a widower with two children from a previous marriage. Sally is divorced with two children from a previous marriage.

Fred has maintained a good relationship with the family of his deceased wife. Fred, on occasion, attends holiday parties, or takes his children to visit their grandparents. Fred and his children also remember their deceased wife/mother. Fred's children are always comparing Sally to their mom, criticizing Sally for not doing things the same way.

Fred is torn between this marriage with Sally

and his children's wishes to keep memories of their family alive. Sally is getting upset with Fred.

How can they promote harmony in their new family? Who's traditions should they follow? What are the issues here?

6 Mike and Sue are recently married. Sue is divorced with two children (ages 4 and 7). Mike has never been married. Mike married Sue because he loves her and wants to help her better provide for the children. Mike and Sue must both work to pay all their bills. Day-care for the children has always been expensive, since no relatives live in town.

Sue's divorce agreement states joint custody of their children from the previous marriage. Mike has a better job opportunity in another town 50 miles away. Mike starts commuting 1 ½ hrs per day one way to his new job, while the family remains in their current town. Sue is expected to travel sometimes with her job.

After 6 months, Mike asks Sue if they can move to a town closer to his work. Sue asks her ex-husband to reconsider their custodial agreement for the children to permit her to move out of town to be closer to her new husband's job. Sue's ex-husband refuses to change the joint custody agreement. Mike and Sue want to build their new life together, have enough money, and raise a family.

What are the issues here?

(Thanks to Jean Ann Finan, Warren & Karen Snyder, Jerry & Kathy Church, Beth & John Gregrich, John & Dee Papania, Steve & Kathy Beard.)

# GROUP PREPARATION PROGRAMS

## IDEAS & SUGGESTIONS

Depending on the number of couples participating in the marriage preparation workshop, divide the number equally among the Team Couples. **You might think of the team couple as “sponsors” for their group of participants.** This idea can add a personal touch to your program.

The team members can act like “godparents” would for Sacraments of Initiation. This relationship can take the form and depth that each couple chooses.

### *Add a Personal Touch*

- Send a note to “your couples” before the program begins, introducing yourselves & assuring them of your prayers and support.
- Greet your couples personally at the first session.
- Sit with your couples at table discussions.
- Continue to keep in touch with your special couples.
- Send Anniversary Cards.

## FOCCUS IN GROUP SESSIONS

When Group Programs administer the FOCCUS pre-marriage inventory, FOCCUS results are sent to the person(s) trained to facilitate an individualized discussion.

FOCCUS results should be discussed privately with a facilitator, rather than distributed to couples in the group. A brief look at the report can cause misunderstanding or discouragement. Discussing the statements privately with a trained facilitator is much more helpful.

Teach the couples about the FOCCUS categories they encountered in the inventory. Urge them to discuss topics of concern with their FOCCUS facilitator when they meet.

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

Group leaders can lead a general discussion of the FOCCUS categories. They can build their presentations around these topics. See pp. 56-57, 60.

### **FOCCUS FACILITATORS FOR COUPLES IN GROUP PROGRAMS**

If group team members are trained to facilitate the FOCCUS, divide participating couples among the team members, review FOCCUS for their couples, and prepare interpretations.

Specific information about couples’ FOCCUS reports should be kept confidential, but general categories can be highlighted by presenters.

Allow a “facilitation time” in one or more workshop sessions, during which the sponsors can meet individually with their couples. Plan an alternate activity for couples waiting for their turn with the team couple.

## GROUP PROGRAM TEAMWORK

Build a team of married couples work together presenting your program. Neighboring parishes can collaborate to provide marriage preparation in a region. Ideally, one couple should present one topic, with an extra couple on each team to manage hospitality. Parishes could recruit several teams to share the schedule.

Gather as a team to plan and to pray together. Provide opportunities for formation and enrichment. Making a retreat together would be appropriate. Seek on-going education. Visit Division of Evangelization and Catechesis, [www.archbalt.org](http://www.archbalt.org) for current course offerings.

## PROGRAM WRAP-UP

In last session, ask couples to complete an evaluation. A shared prayer or blessing ceremony with participants, team, and clergy would be appropriate

Later, gather the team to celebrate and review the program for future improvement. Set a date before the next program for a team meeting. Review evaluations of the previous program together.

## HOSPITALITY

Involve your parish in ministry to marriage. Encourage parish couples to join in marriage preparation ministry in ways other than presentations. Invite young couples to serve as greeters, table discussion leaders, and refreshment servers.

Enlist members of the parish as prayer partners, and let participants know who is praying for them. Young people of the parish, in school, religious education, and youth ministry can contribute artwork, notes, and cards to support the engaged couples.

## PLANNING PRESENTATIONS

- Check *Perspectives Leader's Guide* for Presentation outline suggestions.
- Review *FOCCUS Manual* for your topic.
- Spend time together in prayer and reflection about your topic.
- Think about uplifting stories from your marriage to share.
- Choose one or more workbook (or other) activities the enhance your presentation. Complete worksheets yourselves.
- Review the background information.
- Identify information packet resources that apply to your topic. Show during talk.
- Review this manual for resources to copy and give.
- Gather materials for prayer and discussion.
- Copy resources for them to take home.
- Pray for the couples.

# HOW TO BENEFIT FROM SMALL GROUP PROCESS

## SPEAK USING THE FIRST-PERSON “I”

This allows you to own your statements and to avoid speaking in general statement.

## AVOID SPEAKING FOR OTHERS.

Don’t say things like, “Most people feel . . .”

## SPEAK DIRECTLY TO OTHERS.

When someone speaks to you, look at them and answer them instead of speaking to the group or to the facilitator. However, when expressing an idea or feeling meant for all, look at the whole group, including all in your eye contact.

## SPEAK FROM YOUR HONEST FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS.

Don’t say things because you think it is what others want to hear.

## BE AWARE OF YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELING OF THE MOMENT.

## BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY POSITIONS AND MESSAGES.

Are you sweating? Are you blushing? Is your heart pounding?

## BE AS SPONTANEOUS AS POSSIBLE.

Don’t plan your comments, speak to what you are thinking and feeling at the time.

## BE AWARE OF THE ROLES YOU TAKE WITH OTHER PEOPLE.

We often act the same way in similar situations. Look for patterns.

## BE AWARE OF HOW PEOPLE IN THE GROUP REMIND YOU OF OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE.

If someone in the group acts or looks like someone you know, try to recognize this. It can often be helpful in resolving old or new problems.

## LISTEN TO OTHERS IN THE GROUP.

Pay attention and don’t jump to conclusions. If necessary, ask for clarification.

## EXPECT SOME PERIODS OF SILENCE.

Use this time to be aware of what is happening inside you.

## KEEP GROUP INFORMATION IN THE GROUP.

What is said in this group process must be kept confidential in order to create a safe environment for everyone to feel free to share their thoughts and feelings; to explore their relationships in a climate of trust and openness.

(Adapted from “How to Benefit from Group Process”, Carrie Hansen, LCSW, and Rev. Vince O’Brien, S.J.)