



MARRIAGE PREPARATION HANDBOOK



MAY 2013

A guide for priests and deacons of the
Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas

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THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

June 7, 2013

Dear Fathers, Deacons and Lay Faithful engaged in marriage preparation:

"At a moment in history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family... and thus, contributing to the renewal of society and of the people of God." These words by Blessed John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, ring ever true even some 30 years after he wrote them. If anything, marriage and family are under greater attack than ever. We have a mission as the Church to support, strengthen, and defend the beauty and dignity of God's plan for marriage.

It is my hope that as we invite those preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony to embrace all that God has in store for them, they will be aware of the noble vocation they are answering; for we know that only in Christ will their deepest desires for happiness and marriage come to fulfillment. The time of a couple's engagement is an opportune moment to introduce them to the Good News of the Sacrament. It is our duty and honor to paint a vision for Catholic marriage, inspire the engaged to freely choose God's plan for marriage, and offer them the skills to live out this vision.

We cannot guarantee that every couple will embrace this vision of life, but we cannot be afraid to joyfully proclaim what God offers them in the Sacrament. We must always trust in the power of His grace to transform and aid them in their calling to make Christ's presence manifest in the world. In light of this truth and in consideration of the hostile culture toward family life in which we live, this manual is part of a larger effort to address the needs of the modern engaged couple through enhanced marriage preparation.

In this manual, you will find step-by-step procedures for marriage preparation, along with a descriptive guide and aid to selecting one of the approved marriage prep programs that best meets the needs of the engaged couple. It also contains references to specific pastoral concerns and the available resources with which to address them, as well as relevant marriage preparation forms. **Additionally, you will find in this binder a copy of the revised *Archdiocesan Norms and Guidelines for Marriage* that, after having heard the Presbyteral Council and allowing several months for review of a Study Edition, I with this letter formally promulgate with an effective date of July 1, 2013.** I pray that you will find this manual to be helpful in your efforts to evangelize the engaged, and I know that your efforts to bring Christ to the engaged are of great importance to the Church. Thank you for all you do and may the Lord bless and strengthen you in your service.

Sincerely yours in Jesus, the Lord of Life,

Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann
Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas

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TRANSITIONING TO THE NEW MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

- The new Archdiocesan approved marriage preparation program is entitled “**Preparing to Live in Love**”. Other Archdiocesan approved marriage preparation programs will also be described in this manual.
- The Archdiocesan marriage preparation program that has been in use for many years, “Today and All the Days of Your Life” may still be used until all lead couples have had the opportunity for training in the new marriage preparation programs. The Office of Marriage and Family Life will notify you when this process is complete and therefore when “Today and All the Days of Your Life” has been formally discontinued.
- Couples seeking marriage should schedule an initial meeting with their pastor, priest or deacon as soon as they decide to get married so that they can be assigned to a marriage preparation program and begin the proximate phase of preparation.
- The prescribed 4-6 month preparation period barely allows sufficient time to internalize the components of formation, but hopefully will afford sufficient time to attend an introductory session in Natural Family Planning (NFP) and even receive training in some specific method of NFP. All methods of NFP suggest at least two months of observation and charting of the women’s markers of fertility to gain the understanding and confidence necessary for successful use of NFP.
- The USCCB also recommends that the last six weeks before the wedding be dedicated to “more direct spiritual preparation, i.e., pastoral sessions with the priest or deacon, planning their wedding liturgy and prayer.” (USCCB An Analysis of Diocesan Marriage Preparation)

Facilitating the transition: How can priests and deacons help?

- *Familiarize yourself and parish staff with new marriage preparation options.*
- *Encourage current and potentially new lead couples to attend a “Living in Love” retreat (the first step to being trained to give the new program).*
- *Offer to host a “Living in Love” retreat at your parish if resources allow.*
- *Begin requiring engaged couples to attend NFP introduction sessions offered by the Archdiocese or by local NFP providers.*
- *Begin using new procedures with couples as soon as possible.*

STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURES FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Special note to priests and deacons

“For many couples, marriage preparation is the first time that they have any personal contact with a priest or deacon. Many engaged couples arrive more or less un-evangelized, and lack an understanding of the great importance of marriage in the Church and society. Couples are often unaware not only of Church teaching about marriage, but even the core notions of the Catholic faith and the basic expectations of Catholics. The participation of the priest or deacon in marriage preparation is a key chance to evaluate and set in place remedial actions to get the faithful on track and begin to focus them on married life.”

Rev. Jay Biber, Pastor, St. John the Apostle Parish, Richmond, Virginia, in a hearing before the USCCB on the role of clergy in marriage preparation.

■ STEP ONE: INITIAL MEETING / 4-6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

The couple should approach the Church at least 4-6 months before they plan to get married. This time should be viewed as a time for preparing for marriage, not for waiting. They should not consider their wedding date reserved until this initial meeting takes place and not completely final until after marriage preparation is completed. **At this meeting, the priest or deacon should:**

- Welcome the couple and affirm their decision to marry in the Church
- Get to know the couple and the issues in their relationship
- Introduce the basic expectations of Catholic marriage
- Begin the prenuptial investigation form (refer to “Notes on Completing Prenuptial Investigation” at the end of this section)
- Give the **FOCCUS** or **Prepare/Enrich** inventory. *(If the inventory was taken by the couple before meeting with the priest or deacon, review the results. If they are taking it during this first meeting, a follow up meeting will be needed as part of this step to review the results).*
- Explain the marriage preparation process to the couple
- Schedule future meetings
- Nothing in this manual is intended to prevent priests or deacons from meeting with engaged couples as often as they see fit. Clerics are encouraged to collaborate with marriage prep lead couples so that the interaction between engaged couples and clergy is maximized.

Immediately following the initial meeting, please send the Marriage Preparation Registration Form to the regional marriage preparation coordinator, indicating which marriage preparation course you suggest that the couple complete. Completing this step as soon as possible insures that the couple has ample time to complete their preparation course.

NOTE: It is highly recommended that the pastor or his delegate choose the marriage preparation course that best serves the needs of each couple. The course should be clearly noted on the Marriage Preparation Registration Form which is to be sent to the regional marriage preparation coordinator. Approved courses are listed and outlined in the next section entitled, "Choosing the Right Preparation Course for Your Couples."

■ STEP TWO: PREPARATION PROGRAM / 4-6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

As soon as possible after their initial meeting, the engaged couple should be contacted by the regional marriage preparation coordinator with details about their selected marriage preparation option. Once the course is completed, they should receive a certificate. **The goal is for marriage preparation courses to be completed at least 3 months prior to the wedding.**

■ STEP THREE: NFP INTRODUCTION / 4-6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

It is the responsibility of those preparing couples for marriage to encourage engaged couples to be generous in their openness to children throughout their marriage. For many couples, this openness begins when they embrace Natural Family Planning (NFP). NFP has a 99% effectiveness rate in avoiding pregnancy and can also be highly effective in helping couples conceive who have had fertility challenges. The main methods of NFP currently being offered are Sympto-Thermal (Couple to Couple League), Creighton Model (Fertility Care Centers), Billings Ovulation Method and the Marquette Model. Given the benefits of Natural Family Planning, we owe it to our couples to present this often misunderstood teaching in a compelling way. Therefore, each engaged couple will now be required to complete an approved NFP introductory session. Approved options are:

- Archdiocesan offered or parish based NFP general introduction course
- Completion of a specific NFP method course or an introductory session for one of the methods mentioned above (see resource section for NFP instructors' contact information)
- *NOTE: "School of Love" attendees do not need to complete this step, as Introduction to NFP is included in the "School of Love" curriculum*

It is highly recommended that clerics begin requiring this step as soon as classes are available in their area. **This step is mandatory for couples beginning preparation after July 1, 2013.**

■ STEP FOUR: FINAL MEETINGS / 1-3 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

Clerics should meet with the engaged couple again after they have experienced steps 2 and 3. The number of additional meetings is left to the discretion of the priest or deacon. At this meeting or meetings, the priest or deacon should:

- Discuss with the couple their experiences in steps 2 and 3
 - What have they learned? What questions do they still have?

- For cohabitating and/or sexually-active couples, discussion of the material in the marriage preparation program can be a good introduction to challenging the couple to make a good confession and do what is necessary to live chastely before the wedding
- Follow up on any difficult portions of the **FOCCUS** or **Prepare/Enrich** inventory
- If it has not already been done, review with them the Church's Theology of Marriage
- Review elements of Theology of the Body that they should have discussed in their prep program
- Discuss and plan the wedding liturgy
- Finish and submit the prenuptial investigation and any other required paperwork to the Chancery (see "Notes on Completing the Prenuptial Investigation" at the end of this section)
- Encourage the couple, as they enter their final weeks of preparation, to stay focused on the sacrament they are about to celebrate
- Work with the couple to embrace prayer, individually and as a couple, as a vital part of the immediate phase of preparation for marriage
- Make an effort to connect the engaged couple to the life of the parish, through ongoing programs or by introducing them to others in the parish with whom they may relate well

SUMMARY OF CLERIC'S ROLE IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION:

- It is the priest's or deacon's responsibility to ensure that the couple is adequately prepared for marriage. Those who also participate in the process such as lead couples and regional coordinators are working to assist the priest or deacon overseeing the preparation. Therefore, it is the priest or deacon who must make sure that the couple has completed all required steps.
- That being said, it is important to remember that two baptized Catholics have a right to receive the sacraments, including Matrimony. Pastorally, care must be taken in balancing the readiness of the couple and their canonical rights.
- Be sure that the priest or deacon witnessing the wedding is properly delegated (i.e. has permission of the pastor of the parish in which the wedding takes place).
- Complete and submit all prenuptial paperwork 1-2 months prior to the wedding (see instructions below from the Chancery).
- Obtain any necessary dispensations (See instructions below).

NOTES FROM THE CHANCERY ON COMPLETING PRENUPTIAL INVESTIGATION:

- The couple should be prepared for marriage and the nuptial paperwork prepared in the parish of the Catholic party. **If the marriage is to take place within the Archdiocese, the marriage papers should be submitted to the Chancery one month prior to the marriage.** **If the marriage is to take place outside of the Archdiocese, the marriage papers should be submitted to the Chancery two months prior to the marriage.** (The parish of the Catholic party is the parish where they are registered as a parishioner. If they are temporarily living away from their home parish, the parish they are currently attending should be considered their home parish and should prepare the prenuptial paperwork. College students fall under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Campus Center or the parish of their parents.)
- If the last name of the bride and groom are not the same as the last name of their fathers, please provide an explanation.
- Please submit an **original baptismal certificate** for the Catholic party. The certificate should have been issued within the past six months and should include notations. The only exception is when the marriage is to occur in the Church where the Catholic party was baptized.
- List the number of previous marriages for the bride and groom. This includes marriages that did not take place in the Catholic Church. For each annulment, record the protocol number, date the annulment was granted and the (arch) diocese which granted the annulment. If an annulment was not granted by the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, verification the annulment was granted must be included with prenuptial paperwork. If the former spouse is deceased, record the date of death, county and state in which it is recorded, and the death certificate number. A copy of the death certificate must be submitted with the prenuptial paperwork.
- The bride and groom must answer all of the questions on the prenuptial form and sign, verifying that they have answered all of the questions.
- The Catholic party who marries a non-Catholic must read and sign the promise to raise their children in the Catholic faith and indicate if their future spouse is aware of this promise.
- Please provide an explanation of any asterisked item indicating how the issue has been dealt with.
- The witness form must be completed by parents or guardians of those under 21 years of age and/or for proof of baptism where no baptismal certificate is available. It must also be completed for all marriages that are to take place in other (arch) diocese.
- If the marriage is a convalidation of a present union, record the county/city/state where the union took place, the date of the union and who officiated. The marriage certificate must accompany the prenuptial paperwork. Convalidations may only occur if the parties entered the civil union at least one year prior to the convalidation.

Notes on Completing Prenuptial Investigation, continued:

- **If bride and/or groom are to be married in a parish other than their home parish, they must have permission from their pastor.** This is done by recording their name(s) in Section B and signing the prenuptial form.
- **If a priest or deacon, not assigned to the parish of marriage, is to officiate, he must have the approval of the pastor of the Church of marriage.** This is done by recording the name of the officiant in Section C and signing the prenuptial form. If a priest or deacon from outside the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas is to officiate, a testimonial of suitability from his home (arch)diocese is necessary and should be sent to the Chancellor well in advance of the wedding.
- Please record the dispensation(s) sought and the reason for the request in Section D.
- A certificate indicating that the couple successfully completed an approved marriage preparation program must be submitted with the prenuptial paperwork. Please record the place where the marriage preparation took place. Additionally, evidence of completion of an approved NFP introductory course must also be submitted.

NOTES ON CONVALIDATIONS:

- If a couple has attempted marriage contrary to the laws of the Church, a validation is permitted only after they have completed the marriage preparation and assessment process and only after one year has elapsed since the attempted marriage.
- In the case of a convalidation of a civil marriage of 5 or more years, formal marriage preparation is not required. However, the priest preparing the couple for marriage should submit a letter with the prenuptial paperwork indicating he has met with the couple and that they have a firm understanding of marriage within the Catholic Church.
- Although a formal marriage preparation course is not required for a couple civilly married five years or more, the priest or deacon may deem it beneficial to put the couple through a form of marriage preparation. Recommended courses for convalidation include:
 - Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend
 - Living in Love Retreat
 - School of Love (special convalidation tract)
 - Program Provided for Spanish Speaking Couples by The Office of Hispanic Ministry

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROGRAM FOR YOUR COUPLES

All of the following programs are approved for use in the Archdiocese. This section provides an overview of the marriage prep options so as to help pastors and those who assist them decide which program is best for their couples. **Clergy are invited and encouraged to participate in these programs in order to have a better understanding of the content and what their couples are receiving.**

Topics Covered:

A Mission to Love

Smart Loving with insights from your family of origin

Communicating for Intimacy

Sex, Sacred Body Language

Sacrament of Matrimony

Forgiveness and Healing

Becoming a Couple (decision making)

PREPARING TO LIVE IN LOVE

“Preparing to Live in Love” is a mentor-based program that seeks to invite engaged couples to enter more deeply into the life of the Church and to integrate the teachings of the “Theology of the Body” into their relationship and future marriage.

Advantages to “Preparing to Live in Love”:

- Theology of the Body is woven throughout each session
- Use of carefully-formed and fully-trained mentor couples gives engaged couples a good witness of Christian marriage
- Presents theology and life skills in a manner appropriate for couples of any age or education level
- Seeks to bring couples of any level of faith into a deeper relationship with God and better understanding of the Church, (intentionally designed for evangelization)
- Clearly articulates God’s plan for sexuality and its benefits for the married relationship; addressing pre-marital sex, cohabitation and contraception
- Has an optional follow-up retreat offered as marriage enrichment tool (Living in Love)

Format of the Program:

“Preparing to Live in Love” is *ideally* presented over 7 sessions with one lead couple presenting to one engaged couple at a time. However, this program may also be presented over only 4 sessions either to a single engaged couple or to a small group of engaged couples. This program will also be available in a weekend format for those couples that, due to schedule or distance issues, cannot meet for individual or small group instruction. The weekend approach is not however the preferred way to offer this program. Regional coordinators schedule this program. Cost for the program is outlined on page 12 of this manual. The portion of the cost born by the engaged couple is determined by the adopted practice of the specific pastoral region or parish.

SCHOOL OF LOVE

Topics Covered:

Natural and supernatural love

Sacramental understanding and preparation

Marital sexuality and the virtue of chastity

Spiritual formation in prayer and virtue

Communication and forgiveness

Finances and tithing

Natural Family Planning (theological and human as well as medical aspects)

The “School of Love” is a public association of Christ’s faithful in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas whose mission it is to assist in preparing engaged couples for marriage; helping married couples strengthen their vocation and promoting natural family planning. School of Love’s Marriage Preparation program emphasizes doctrinal catechesis and deep spiritual formation in a way that is human and accessible to today’s engaged couples.

Format:

All teaching is done by catechists with advanced degrees and experience in the marital field. Catechists are joined at marriage preparation programs by mentor couples. These are members of “School of Love” who take part in their own continual formation. They are present at marriage prep to lead small groups of engaged couples, and are even available after marriage prep as resources, friends, and mentors to the engaged couples.

“School of Love” courses are offered once a week for 8 weeks at various locations. Cost for the program are outlined on page 12 of this manual. For more information and schedule email info.schooloflove@gmail.com or call 913-548-7513.

CATHOLIC ENGAGED ENCOUNTER

“Catholic Engaged Encounter” is an international movement whose members minister to engaged couples preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church. The engaged couples attend a quiet weekend retreat specifically designed to give couples the opportunity to talk honestly and intensely about their future together. In Kansas City, there are eight weekends annually.

Weekends begin on Friday evening at 7:00pm and finish with Mass beginning approximately 1:30pm on Sunday. The Kansas location is Savior Pastoral Center and program costs are outlined on page 12 of this manual. For more information, contact Eric and Debbie Zayas at Debbie.zayas@att.net or 913-782-1603.

Topics Covered:

Understanding self

Is romance enough?

Are we communicating?

Conflict resolution

Creating a life-giving marriage

Financial fidelity

Two become one or unity

NFP

Intimacy in marriage

Becoming a family

Sacrament of Marriage

Betrothal

Stewardship



AGAPE CATHOLIC MARRIAGE PREP ONLINE (PRE-CANA COURSE)

AN EXTRA ORDINARY FORM OF PREPARATION

Catholic Marriage Preparation Online is the online version of a program created in Colorado by Christian and Christine Meert under the direction of Archbishop Charles Chaput.

Advantages of Catholic Marriage Prep Online:

- This course makes it possible for couples in difficult circumstances to complete their marriage preparation. Such circumstances include military deployment, separation by distance or living in a rural area with no access to standard courses. While pastors should obviously exercise their own prudent judgment, **this course is not intended to be an alternative for couples who simply find other courses inconvenient.**
- That being said, this program is very sound, thorough and walks couples through the material with the help of a live mentor.

Format and cost: Couples register for the course online and they receive materials with comprehension and reflection questions via email. After they answer the questions, they receive a personal reply from a mentor couple that includes affirmation and clarification on any answers they may have not understood fully. The mentor couple is able to get to know the engaged couple, and due to the comprehensive nature of the questions, it is impossible for couples to “fake” their way through the course. The priest or deacon who is working with the couple may request to be copied on the couple’s homework completed in this course. Prices for the course are available online and on page 12 of this manual. The course includes a certificate of completion.

info@catholicmarriageprep.com or visit the website at www.catholicmarriageprep.com

Topics Covered:

*Knowing you better
(introductions)
In the beginning...
Sacrament of
Marriage/Ephesians 5
NFP (Janet Smith)
The rite of marriage
in detail
Forgiveness/Your
body is a temple
Relationship tools
Feedback (wrap up)*

Marriage Preparation Programs:

Side-by-Side Comparison and Cost

	<i>Preparing to Live in Love</i>	<i>School of Love</i>	<i>Catholic Engaged Encounter</i>	<i>Agape Online</i>
<u><i>Method of instruction</i></u>	Formation in Church teaching and life skills via lead couple instruction and witness	Large group lecture format with couple discussion and small group time	Presentation by married couple, personal reflection and couple sharing	Couple interacts with mentor via email using articles and reflection questions
<u><i>Time commitment</i></u>	Offered in 3 formats: One-on-one mentoring- 5-7 sessions; Group- 4 sessions; Weekend	8 Sessions	Weekend	Self-guided: 3 weeks to 6 months
<u><i>Flexibility of scheduling</i></u>	One-on-one can be scheduled to fit individual schedules; Groups and weekends follow set schedules.	Set schedule, one night/week for 8 weeks	Set weekend dates published in advance	Completed at the pace set by the engaged couple
<u><i>Defining characteristic of program</i></u>	Practical application of Theology of the Body in everyday married life	Evangelization and Formation through catechesis, spiritual formation and human witness	Personal reflection and couple dialogue on all aspects of marriage	<u>Use only in extra-ordinary cases! Couple must request that priest be copied on course work.</u>
<u><i>Program Cost*</i></u>	\$75	\$150	\$225	\$170
<u><i>Natural Family Planning Introduction Session</i></u>	Required	Not required; included in the course study	Required	Not required, included in course
<u><i>NFP Intro Cost**</i></u>	\$25	\$0	\$25	\$0

* This price is the amount charged by the program providers. Prices set by providers are subject to change.

** This is the cost of the Archdiocesan Introduction Session, paid by the couple upon online registration. Other providers set their own costs, which are subject to change.

EXACT COSTS BORN BY THE ENGAGED COUPLE SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY THE PARISH AND/OR THE PASTORAL REGION.

THE ROLE OF LEAD COUPLES IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION

“PREPARING TO LIVE IN LOVE” LEAD COUPLES

The new archdiocesan program, “Preparing to Live in Love” is a mentor-based program. Married couples selected from the parish or region and recommended by their pastor, serve as lead couples and are trained to accompany engaged couples through this skills oriented marriage preparation process.

These specially trained married couples are to be living, credible witnesses of what the program teaches. They are themselves striving to live in love and share personally from their own lives to motivate and inspire the engaged to embrace the vision for matrimony that the Church holds up for its sacramental couples.

Lead couples must embrace and be willing to witness to the Church’s teachings, especially as they pertain to marital fidelity, human sexuality and openness to new life. These lead couples should be outstanding examples of married love and should have the recommendation of their pastor before engaging in the training to become a lead couple.

The first step in becoming a lead couple is to attend a “Living in Love” marriage enrichment retreat, which is offered from time to time in the archdiocese. In addition to the “Living in Love” retreat an additional day of training is needed so that lead couples are equipped to guide engaged couples through the “Preparing to Live in Love” experience. The Office of Marriage and Family Life will from time to time offer weekends, specifically designed for prospective lead couples, that combine the “Living in Love” enrichment retreat with the mentor training for the “Preparing to Live in Love” program. Contact the Office of Marriage and Family Life for additional information.

Programs offered by the *School of Love*, as well as other marriage preparation programs approved for use in the archdiocese, also use married couples as mentor or presenter couples. Those couples are prepared to minister in the specific program being offered.

The specially trained lead couples, while they provide an invaluable service in preparing engaged couples for marriage, are but one part of the overall preparation process. The role of the clergy cannot be overstated. Priests and deacons are encouraged to become familiar with the content of the various programs that are available in the archdiocese so they appreciate the content to which the engaged couples are exposed. Nothing in any of the approved marriage preparation programs is meant to diminish the role of the priest or deacon in teaching the theology of marriage to engaged couples or in making a canonical determination of the couple’s freedom and readiness to marry.



PASTORAL CONCERNS AND RESOURCES

As a priest or deacon, you know firsthand the pastoral challenges encountered in preparing today's engaged couples. This section will address some of the most common issues facing couples and give some principles for addressing them in a manner that can most effectively help them to best embrace their vocation to marriage

COHABITATION/PREMARITAL SEX



You want what is best for your couples. As such, it can be very disheartening to realize that a large majority of the couples who come to the Church for marriage are already engaging in premarital sex and cohabitation. Often with cohabitating couples, this problem is approached in one of two ways: either we look the other way, figuring that they aren't likely to change, or in our desire to win compliance with Church teaching, we confront the couple in our first conversation and attempt to get them to separate. Here are some important principles to keep in mind when dealing with cohabitating and sexually active couples:

- **You are likely the couple's first contact with the Church** in the marriage preparation process and perhaps the first contact they have had with the Church in many years. How you receive them will shape their attitude toward this sacrament. The couple is probably apprehensive to meet with you. They may be expecting the Church to condemn them for what they know the Church teaches is wrong. Other couples, due to a lack of good catechesis and family example, may honestly not know that cohabitation is wrong. In either case, if the first thing they hear from their priest or deacon is that they are in mortal sin, they may develop a defensive attitude toward the marriage preparation process and not enter in fully. The opposite is also true. If a priest or deacon downplays the legitimacy of Church teaching, the couple is not likely to take the preparation seriously. Instead, it is good for the priest or deacon, in the first meeting, to affirm their love for one another and especially their decision to marry in the Church. This begins the process by which he can lead the couple into the truth of Church teachings.

NOTE: A priest or deacon who feels strongly about broaching this topic on the first meeting might consider providing the couple with a copy of "Common Sense about Cohabitation" by the Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center or, "Living Together" by the Bishops of Pennsylvania. He can simply ask the couple to read the booklet and consider what it says.

- **Marriage preparation is a conversion process.** The cohabitating couple has spent many, many years steeped in the conventional "wisdom" of our modern society. They moved in together believing that it was good for their relationship. It takes time to undo this thinking! As they develop trust with their priest and those administering their marriage prep program, and as they test initial teachings against their lived experience and find them true, they will be more open to

receive the more difficult teachings of the Church. Any of the approved marriage preparation options will clearly articulate Church teachings on human sexuality, but they may not present them until later in the course.

- **Challenging the couple.** After the engaged couple is welcomed and presented with (hopefully compelling) reasons for living out the Church's teachings on sexuality, it is necessary to follow up with them. The most effective way for this conversation to begin is if the couple can bring up the topic themselves. This can be facilitated by asking open-ended questions such as:
 - What did you learn in your marriage preparation program? Did anything surprise you?
 - What was most challenging to you?
 - Have you made any changes in your relationship as a result of the course? If so, what?

If none of these get the topic on the table, you can be simple and direct:

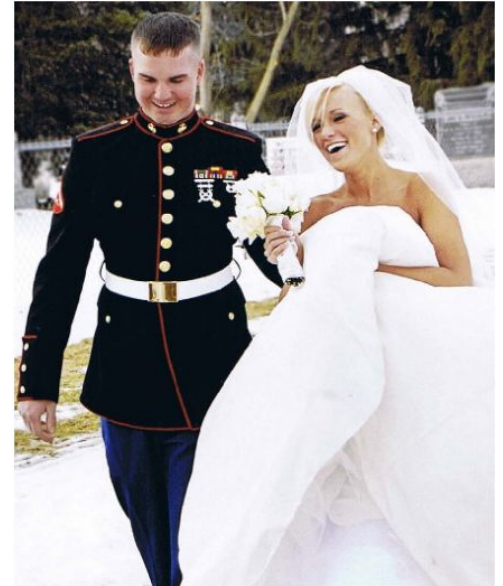
- Now let's talk about your living situation. I assume that this came up in your courses? Can you tell me what you learned? Does it make sense to you why the Church feels it's important for couples to live apart until they are married? *(Clear up any misconceptions.)*
 - Have you discussed moving apart until your wedding? *(Address their legitimate concerns: perhaps they can move in with a parent or friend? Or at least separate bedrooms?)*
 - You can ask them to imagine their wedding night after living apart for the next few months. What benefits can they foresee? *(It can make their wedding night special, can be a way of showing each other they are worth waiting for, at the very least it's likely only a few months away!)*
- **Other considerations.** Living together before marriage brings up some pastoral concerns beyond the question of chastity. Here are some additional questions to explore with a cohabitating couple:
 - Why now? In other words, what has changed in their relationship that makes now the time to get married? *(You want to be sure that they are both freely choosing marriage instead of sliding into it because it is expected of them.)*
 - What will change in your relationship once you are married? *(Hopefully, this has been covered in marriage prep, but their answer may give you an indication of how well they have come to understand the significance of the sacrament of marriage.)*
 - How do you handle conflict resolution? What skills have you learned that have improved the way you handle conflict? *(Many cohabitating couples have gotten into a pattern of not resolving disagreements for fear that the other will leave. The hope is that they have learned some helpful skills in their courses to help break out of this pattern.)*

MILITARY COUPLES

Military couples have concerns that fall into two main categories: logistics and consideration of the special character of military life.

Logistics. Obviously, military couples may need pastors and other parish staff to make exceptions for them in regard to timing of their wedding, marriage preparation and/or communication with other parishes. Compassionate and prompt response to the needs of these couples (within reason) communicates not only our love for them as Catholics, but our support for their service to our country. Even if no special alterations are requested, it may be good to encourage the couple not to hesitate on getting requirements taken care of, as plans can sometimes change quickly for the military partner.

The Archdiocese for Military Services and the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas both approve of “Agape Catholic Marriage Prep Online” (Pre-Cana Course) as an option for deployed or otherwise separated military partners. Also, as “Preparing to Live in Love” comes closer to its goal of one mentor couple for each engaged couple, it may be possible for a military couple to complete this course via Skype or in the limited amounts of time that a couple may have in Kansas.



Special Considerations. Military life brings its share of special sacrifices for both spouses. While it is likely that both spouses have a good understanding of what they are undertaking, it is good to address some of the following topics during one of the meetings with the couple:

- How do both spouses feel about those things that often come along with military life such as frequent moves and separation? What are some specific ways that couples can deepen trust in one another during extended absences? (Lack of trust is a large factor in the failure of many military marriages).
- How do the partners' families feel about the commitment of military life? How can the future spouses deal with this?
- Does the non-military spouse understand and accept the limits to information that they may be subjected to?
- Does the couple have a realistic view of deployment and the challenges that come both during and afterwards?
- What spiritual resources does the military spouse have to help deal with the stress of combat?
- How long does each spouse envision the military service lasting? Is this temporary or a lifestyle?
- Encourage the future spouses to take advantage of the sacraments, any and all programs offered by the military (such as deployment help or marriage counseling) and even seek out a strong Catholic military couple with whom they can share struggles and seek advice.

This being said, military life is not all bad! It may also help to have couples articulate to one another the value that their sacrifices have, both to their country and to their children.



SECOND MARRIAGE

An increasing marriage situation within the Church is marriage between persons who have previously been “married”. There are many reasons for this. The important thing to keep in mind is that these couples will have different issues that will need to be discussed. Some of the main issues are addressed in the following comments, which come from a couple in the Archdiocese who are in their second marriage and have worked extensively with couples who are preparing for a second marriage, so they bring valued personal and pastoral experience.

- **Children.** One of the most important issues is considering the effects of the marriage on children. “We have found that the issue of the children permeates the discussion throughout the weekend [we facilitate for couples preparing for a second marriage] and is definitely not confined to the section on parenting. We encourage discussion throughout all of the topics about how the children fit into the dynamic of the new relationship.” Issues of family of origin are important in any newly-married relationship, but there are additional issues within this category when the married couple already has children from a previous marriage. “For example, in the discussions about families of origin, we encourage the couples to not only talk about their own separate families of origin but also consider how the children's family of origin might be different than the family of the newlyweds. Things for the couple to discuss might be as simple as how special occasions are celebrated and house rules to more complicated topics of family dynamics.”
- **Finances.** “In discussions about Finances we encourage the couples to discuss not only their own finances and their attitudes towards spending but also to consider estate planning and how the family dynamics might impact finances for their children.” For example, finances may be an issue when it comes to situations involving gifts around the holiday time. Children living with one parent may receive expensive gifts from their parent they no longer live with, but their new step-sibling may not receive the same type of gift from their parent they no longer live with. This can contribute to awkward moments. The important thing is to be aware of these types of potential situations and be prepared to handle them when they arise.
- **Forgiveness.** It can be very important for couples to forgive the former spouse of their fiancée. Forgiveness can free the person to fully love their new spouse and make a total gift of self with reservation while minimizing potential hurts that could arise.

The Church must be aware of the sufferings that arise from previous unions. The annulment process can serve to heal former hurts if approached rightly. Nevertheless, communication about these issues and others are very important.

PORNOGRAPHY



Pornography immerses people in the illusion of a fantasy world¹ and internet pornography has become one of the most pervasive forms of sexual sin in American culture. Though several surveys have indicated that pornography is a weekly struggle for nearly half of Christian men in America and a growing percentage of women², there are many signs of hope for Catholics to experience freedom from pornography.

Shame, embarrassment, and isolation are common experiences with this sin, and it is helpful for clergy and parish staff to be non-judgmental when they address pornography, and to speak about the help that is available for the many who have struggles in this area. Through the power of the Sacraments, the beauty of Church teachings on human sexuality, honest friendships, internet accountability software, new insights from brain science, and other practical strategies, many Catholics are able to live with sexual integrity.

A short handout is available from the Archdiocese's My House Initiative to give practical advice for people to break free whether they have occasionally dabbled in or compulsively used pornography. Though the majority of people have been exposed to pornography, it will be amazing to see how strong our Church becomes when the majority of Catholic men and women receive a basic introduction to the Church's incredible teaching on love and sexuality along with practical information about freedom from pornography.

¹Catechism of the Catholic Church # 2354

²Recent pornography statistics from Promise Keepers conferences, a Catholic high school, and Focus on the Family are available at archkck.org.

For professional assistance please contact Sam Meier, MA, LPC

Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas

www.MyHouseKansas.org

913-647-0378

PREMARITAL RESOURCES

Wedding Ceremony Planning

Together for Life by Joseph M. Champlin

Natural Family Planning Instructors

Fertility Care Center of Kansas City (Creighton) www.fertilitycarekc.com

Couple to Couple League (Sympto-thermal) to find classes: <http://register.ccli.org/search>

Short, Relevant Booklets for Couples

Total Gift of Self (Natural Family Planning) by Francine and Byron Pirola available at www.thepmrc.org

Common Sense about Cohabitation by Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center, available at www.PMRCusa.org

Living Together before Marriage by Ascension Press, available at www.ascensionpress.com

Living Together by the Bishops of Pennsylvania available at www.pacatholic.org

Theology of the Body

Good News about Sex and Marriage by Christopher West

Men and Women are From Eden by Dr. Mary Healy

Lives Changed by the Theology of the Body by Marcel LeJeune

Recovery from Pornography

www.loveisfaithful.com

www.reclaimsexualhealth.com

Sample questions for priests and deacons to use with the engaged

Marriage as a Sacrament

Why are you choosing to be married in the church?

How has God entered into your decision to marry?

What does it mean for you to enter into the sacrament of marriage?

Do you pray together as a couple? What effect does praying together or not praying have on you relationship?

How has your relationship helped you grow spiritually as a person? How do you feel you have helped your spouse to grow spiritually?

How will your marriage help you to attain your eternal salvation?

What expectations do you have of your spouse regarding religion and spirituality?

Marriage Commitment

Rite of Marriage

Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Will you accept children lovingly from God and raise them according to the law of Christ and his Church?

Marriage Vows: I, _____ take you _____, to be my wife/husband. 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.

1. As you reflect on these words, what do you understand as the most important parts of the commitment that you are making in entering marriage?
2. What do you mean by being TRUE in marriage? What are some ways of being UNTRUE?
3. What rights and responsibilities are you assuming in becoming a married person?
4. Marriage demands committed love expressed in permanence, fidelity and openness to children. What does each demand mean to you?
5. Do you intend to have children? What factors will go into your decision regarding children?
6. What are the moral differences between natural family planning and artificial means of birth control?
7. What is the relationship between married spirituality and sexuality? What does chastity in marriage mean to you?
8. What are some of the more serious moral decisions that you may face as a married couple?
9. What are three things that you have going for you in developing a successful marriage? What are three possible pitfalls?

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT RESOURCES

Living in Love

This is a parish-based enrichment retreat that complements the “Preparing to Live in Love” marriage preparation program. This retreat will not only invite couples into a more joyful relationship, but will empower them to share their sacrament with the larger parish community. This retreat can be a springboard for renewal in your parish. To learn more about “Living in Love,” go to: www.pmrusa.org . To learn more about scheduling a “Living in Love” retreat for your parish or region, contact the Marriage and Family Life Office 913-721-1570.

Six Great Dates

This is a marriage enrichment program which helps couples to deepen their married relationship by bringing their relationship back into focus. Couples gather at the parish and view a ten-minute video. They are then sent on a date with reflection. Mother Teresa of Calcutta Parish used this program as a Lenten enrichment with great success. For more information or to preview the materials, call the Marriage and Family Life Office.

Blessed is Marriage

Blessed is Marriage is a book by John Bosio which walks Catholic couples through the Beatitudes. This book can be used as a small group study or by individual couples.

God’s Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage

This is a series of presentations that Christopher West did for engaged couples. It is available on DVD and is also adaptable as marriage enrichment. West provides the Theology of the Body in a practical and relatable way. www.ascensionpress.com This can be structured as a small group study or weekend retreat presentation.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter

The focus of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend is on enhancing communication between husband and wife. The Weekend enables couples to concentrate on each other while freeing them from the distractions and tensions of everyday life. It’s neither a retreat nor a marriage clinic. It is not a counseling session. It is a unique approach aimed at revitalizing Christian Marriage. This is a time for the couple to rediscover each other and focus on their relationship for an entire weekend. Every marriage deserves that kind of attention!

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

www.foryourmarriage.org

TROUBLED MARRIAGES/THERAPISTS

Retrouvaille

Retrouvaille is a program designed for couples experiencing serious marital problems. It begins with a weekend and continues with follow-up meetings. For more information, go to www.retrouvaille.org

Marital Healing

Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons gives very practical advice for common problems found in marriages. While not a substitute for therapy, this site can help spouses reflect deeply on causes for discord in their relationships. The format is very easily accessible and non-threatening. www.maritalhealing.com

Tele-Counseling Services: Pastoral Solutions Institute Dr. Gregory Popcak

Dr. Gregory Popcak and associates offer assistance with:

- Marriage Improvement (couples or solo spouse)
- Help for Parenting Problems
- Other Associated Areas of Marital Support

This form of counseling has proven effective for a wide range of problems. Contact: www.Counseling@exceptionalmarriages.com or call 740 266 6461.

Marriage Counseling

The choice of a therapist for a troubled marriage is a very important matter. To aid you in this process of selecting a counselor that will uphold marriage and family values, the Archdiocese is working on compiling a list of faithful Catholic therapists. In the interim, please contact Sam Meier in the Office of Marriage and Family Life with questions or concerns 913-647-0378.

FOCCUS AND PREPARE/ENRICH

WHAT ARE FOCCUS AND PREPARE/ENRICH?

FOCCUS and Prepare/Enrich are two different marital inventories designed to aid in Marriage Preparation. Both inventories are designed to help couples study, understand and communicate openly about many things that are important to couple's relationship. **They are not tests, nor are they a way to predict the future.**

HOW ARE MARITAL INVENTORIES PRESENTED?

Both FOCCUS and Prepare/Enrich are given to couples as a series of questions which they either complete on paper or online. Their answers are then compiled so that the priest can discuss their answers with them.

WHY GIVE A MARITAL INVENTORY?

It allows the priest to get to know the couple and to identify areas in which the couple needs more depth of discussion.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE INVENTORIES?

FOCCUS and Prepare/Enrich each have their own strengths and weaknesses and different people have preferences between them. However, both are acceptable for use in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas. **Whichever method is used, please be sure you are using the most up-to-date version of the inventory and that you are current on your training to use the method most effectively.** The Office of Marriage and Family Life will periodically offer trainings in these methods.

WHAT IS THE COST?

FOCCUS charges \$15.00* for scoring and inventory results. A discounted cost of \$10.00 is available through coupons purchased from FOCCUS. (Contact the Office of Marriage and Family Life for information).

PREPARE/ENRICH charges \$29.95* for scoring and inventory results.

*These prices are set by the vendor of the program and are subject to change.

