



## Marriage Preparation Checklist for Engaged Couples



### At least one year before your wedding...

*Congratulations! Now that your engagement is official, you should notify your parish and schedule your first meeting with your pastoral minister (priest, deacon, or lay minister), who may also serve as the officiant for your wedding. If possible, it's best to book your reception venue after you've confirmed your wedding date at the parish.*



### What should happen at your first meeting(s) at your parish:

- If you are newly registered in your parish or have been away from the area for some time, this is a getting-to-know-you session. It's also a time to discuss your hopes and dreams about marriage.
- Catholic persons should be prepared to present a recent certificate of Baptism with notations of all other sacraments (communion, confirmation and any prior marriages in the Church).
- Marriage preparation in the Church requires a pre-nuptial investigation (PNI), which is all about your marital readiness. When Part I of your PNI is complete, you may officially schedule your wedding Mass or ceremony, and may register for a Pre-Cana class – [www.dioceseoftrenton.org/precana](http://www.dioceseoftrenton.org/precana)
  - For all couples in which one or both parties were previously married and for civilly married couples who wish to bring their marriage into the Catholic Church, the **Better Together Remarriage Retreat** offered in Spring and Fall is the preferred option.
- An important part of marriage preparation is to select (or be paired with) a mentor couple, a married couple you admire from your parish who will offer guidance and accompany you through the preparation process and into the early years of marriage. If you need help selecting a couple, speak to your preparer (priest or deacon) or an active member of your parish.
- To provide the skills, knowledge and tools to live your Catholic marriage, it is suggested that engaged couples work with their mentor couples (at their own pace) through the *Better Together* free online program from Dynamic Catholic, with 12 sessions of engaging videos on marital topics (<https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/marriage-preparation.html>)



### By nine months before the wedding...

- It is recommended that all couples take a pre-marital inventory such as FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study), so that all key aspects of the marital

relationship are discussed, and couples enter marriage with full knowledge of their situation ([www.FOCCUSinc.com](http://www.FOCCUSinc.com)).

- Once your pastoral minister (PM) receives your FOCCUS results, you'll want to schedule a few sessions to discuss your responses. If FOCCUS isn't offered, you'll have sessions with your PM to discuss the important elements of Catholic marriage as they apply to your relationship.
- If you haven't done so already, it's time to officially meet with your mentors to determine what activities you will do together which may include discussing topics presented in the *Better Together* video series.



#### **By six months before the wedding...**

- Attend your (Pre-Cana) marriage preparation class (it is suggested that you complete your marriage preparation program after the FOCCUS pre-marital inventory, ideally between 3 and 8 months before your wedding). Elements of the *Better Together* program may be used at your Pre-Cana
- Take an online or live/in-person Natural Family Planning class for a full understanding of reproductive health.
  - [www.dioceseoftrenton.org/natural-family-planning](http://www.dioceseoftrenton.org/natural-family-planning)
- If your meetings with your PM uncover some serious concerns in your relationship, you may wish to schedule additional sessions, consult with your pastor, or ask for a referral through the parish counseling program. The Church's primary concern is a fulfilling, lifelong marital relationship for both of you.



#### **By two to three months before the wedding...**

- Schedule a *Theology of Marriage* discussion session with your priest or deacon (and mentors if possible) to explore important aspects of sacramental marriage such as permanence, faithfulness, openness to life, marriage as a call to mission, and sacramental grace (God's divine help).
- Once you've completed your marriage preparation instruction and all paperwork, you'll meet with your pastoral minister (preparer) to affirm your readiness for marriage and begin planning your wedding liturgy. If you are both Catholic, a nuptial Mass is recommended. If you're an interfaith couple, a nuptial ceremony may be a better option.
- It is highly recommended that all aspects of marriage preparation at the parish be completed by six weeks before the wedding, allowing you to focus on personal reflection and last-minute details.
- Catholic persons should plan to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the wedding to fully prepare you for the graces of sacramental marriage.



#### **After the wedding...**

Once you've settled into daily married life, be sure to set aside Sunday as a day of rest and renewal and make Mass a priority in your lives. The graces and blessings you'll receive as a couple are an immeasurable source of strength to meet the challenges of daily married life.

- Plan to get involved in your parish community together as a couple. Your marriage is a vocation and a call to loving service.
- Stay in touch with your mentors, especially through the early months and years of marriage. They will be an excellent resource for you and will keep you connected to your parish community.
- Always remember that your marriage is a sign of Jesus' unending love for his people. May your marriage always be blessed by his presence.