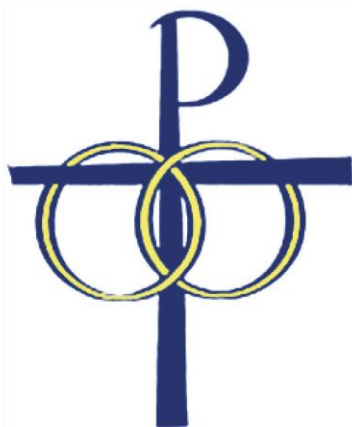
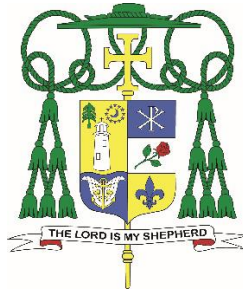


Diocese of Biloxi



*Marriage
Preparation Policy*



To all Priests and Deacons in the Diocese of Biloxi,

It is my pleasure to approve and officially promulgate our new Marriage Policy with the goal of increasing the number of strong sacramental Marriages in our Diocese. The policy standardizes marriage preparation across the diocese and is to serve as a ready resource for Priests, Deacons and engaged couples.

I view marriage preparation as a golden opportunity to form Missionary Disciples. Sacramental Marriages produce strong families which help build our Church. With this in mind, the policy was crafted following USCCB guidelines, reviewed and edited by the Presbyterial Council, and presented to the Deaneries for additional comment. I heartily thank all those who performed initial studies, conducted surveys, drafted, reviewed and edited the policy.

This policy is effective beginning on the 1st of January, A.D. 2020, the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given from the Pastoral Center this 6th day of December, A.D. 2019, the memorial of St. Nicholas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Louis Kihneman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "L" and "K".

+Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi

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Attachment 1	Couple's Guide
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Catholic Diocese of Biloxi Marriage Preparation Policy

1. Purpose and goals of the policy.

The covenant of Matrimony, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is ordered for the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children (1 - c. 1055 §1). Through holy Matrimony, God raises up the “domestic church” and the home becomes a place where the faith is planted in the hearts of the young, and the faith is radiated into the surrounding world (2 - CCC 1666).

The purpose of a marriage preparation policy is to assure that a couple is free to marry and has the capacity and intention to marry. More broadly, the policy aims to strengthen marriage in the Catholic Church through effective formation, pastoral care, and celebration.

This Policy, for the purpose of consistency, provides direction to clergy and laity involved in any aspect of marriage preparation and serves as a source of information for couples who desire and are planning for a Catholic marriage within the Diocese of Biloxi. In offering such preparation and adopting the policies below, the Diocese of Biloxi is committed to sharing our joy in the vocation of the marriage covenant.

In 2018, Pope Francis spoke about the importance of marriage preparation, in his series of talks on the Ten Commandments. The Pope reiterated the need for stronger and more effective catechesis in preparation for marriage. He said that a marriage preparation program that involves just a few meetings is not marriage preparation, it is fake. It is the full responsibility of the priest and bishop to make sure the proper amount of time and discernment have been spent preparing for something that is a true sacrament, not just a formality. A couple cannot promise to be faithful “for better or for worse” and to love and honor each other every day of their lives only on the basis of good intentions or on the hope that things work out. They need to base it on the solid terrain of God’s faithful love.

This Policy is indebted to *An Analysis of Diocesan Marriage Preparation Policies*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (3), as well as existing marriage preparation policies from the Archdiocese of New Orleans, LA (4), and the Diocese of Jackson, MS (5), from which this Policy borrows heavily.

2. Remote and proximate stages of marriage preparation.

Although Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* (6 - Part Four, 66) exhorts the Church to see marriage catechesis as a life-long process, the primary focus of nearly all marriage policies remains on immediate marriage preparation, i.e. the period of formal engagement.

Remote preparation begins at birth and includes all family and environmental factors that influence the person in positive and negative ways regarding marriage. It is through the “family of origin” that the role models, values, traditions, communication styles, attitudes, etc., consciously and unconsciously, play a major part in a person’s formation. Remote marriage preparation has a profound foundational effect on minors, youth and young adults, especially in today’s society when many are not coming from positive experiences of marriage and family life. The Church’s support of family life during the formative years is critical to building strong families in which children can grow and learn.

Proximate marriage preparation, defined as the time from puberty to formal engagement, involves, through appropriate catechesis, a more specific preparation for and rediscovery of the sacraments. It is the responsibility of parents, along with pastoral ministers, to provide integration of the religious formation of young people with their preparation for life as a couple (1 - c. 1063). Parents sow the seeds for healthy and mature future relationships, for example, by showing affection to each other and to their children and by teaching their children about the goodness and healthy use of one’s sexual powers.

Although parents continue to be instrumental in the formation of healthy relational skills and attitudes during this period, the value of classroom instruction in marriage and family life during junior high, high school, and college can also be important.

We would be remiss if we failed to acknowledge that the prevailing culture also has a significant role in influencing attitudes and perceptions of masculinity, femininity, and marriage. It is also noted that role models, values, expectations, etc., that were at one time taught in the home are now profoundly being impacted by TV, movies, and music of today’s young people. These influences are often at odds with the values that the Church seeks to foster.

3. Marriage Preparation Process.

The Ministry of Marriage Preparation was established within the Office of Family Life to strengthen and enhance marriage preparation within

the Diocese of Biloxi. Strong marriages build strong and loving families which foster vocations to the priesthood, permanent diaconate, religious life, committed single life, and dedicated married life. The parish has the primary responsibility in assisting couples preparing for marriage. Ordinarily, the priest or deacon who will assist at/witness the wedding ceremony for the Church will oversee the couple's marriage preparation. In order to ensure that sufficient time is available for adequate marriage preparation and pastoral counseling, couples should contact their priest or deacon six to nine months in advance of the anticipated date of their wedding. The proposed date for the wedding will be considered conditional and dependent upon completion of the marriage preparation. This amount of time is necessary in order that a couple may adequately prepare for marriage.

Orderly and well-developed marriage preparation can greatly aid the engaged couple in understanding and appreciating the importance of a Catholic marriage, which is raised to the dignity of a sacrament when both parties are baptized. To this end, the Diocese of Biloxi has developed a marriage preparation process. Couples preparing for marriage in the Diocese are to participate in a marriage preparation process consisting of the following pastoral components and four educational steps:

- Initial Meeting with Priest or Deacon
- Education Steps
 1. Completion of the Premarital Inventory Assessment
 2. Education in Natural Family Planning
 3. Participation in a Sponsor Couple Program
and/or
 4. Participation in a Premarital Retreat or Workshop
- Final Meeting with Priest or Deacon

A two page "Couple's Guide" (attachment 1) provides a description of the marriage preparation process from the couple's perspective and should be provided to couples at the initial meeting with the Priest or Deacon.

Pastors may modify this process, as required to fit the needs of special circumstances. In the case of impediments to marriage discovered during the initial meetings, additional time could be required to work through these impediments and receive necessary permissions from the Ordinary.

In its simplest case (no impediments), Pastoral Components and the 4 Educational Steps in the marriage preparation process for the Diocese of Biloxi are depicted in Figure 1.

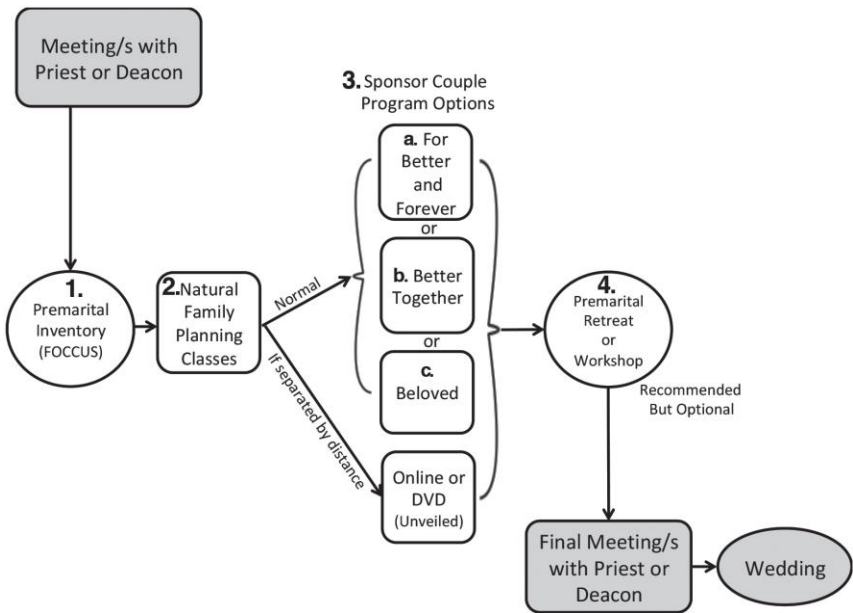


Figure 1: Diocese of Biloxi Marriage Preparation Process

Initial meeting with a Priest or Deacon. At the initial meeting, the priest or deacon welcomes the couple, gets to know them a little, and does a preliminary assessment of possible impediments to the marriage using the Diocese of Biloxi Prenuptial Investigation Form (attachment 2). If there are no obvious impediments the couple continues the process. If this is a second marriage, one partner is not Catholic, or other special circumstances exist, the discussion may continue in a second interview. If a delay is necessary to deal with impediments, the couple is advised on how to proceed. In no case should the initial interview take place over the phone or be done by the parish receptionist/secretary. The Prenuptial Investigation Form and other pertinent materials pertaining to each marriage case are to be placed within the Diocese of Biloxi Pastoral Care and Preparation for Marriage envelope (attachment 3). This envelope provides a guide to the steps required for the pastoral care and preparation of couples as well as a source of documentation for any necessary dispensations or permissions required in advance of Marriage. Attachments 2 and 3 are to be retained as parish records.

When the initial interview does not indicate any impediments, a tentative date for the wedding can be set. The wedding date is then confirmed

after the couple participates in a marriage preparation program. All couples without impediments have a right to be married. However, the priest or deacon may delay, for just cause, assisting in the celebration of a wedding as long as such cause continues and he offers continued pastoral care. Just cause would include, but is not limited to the following:

- Non-practice of the Catholic faith by a Catholic party or parties with no intention of returning to the practice of the faith.
- Lack of readiness and maturity for marriage.
- Refusal of the parties to participate in the marriage preparation process.
- Substantial lack of appreciation for the spiritual and sacramental aspects of marriage.

A cleric should not be unduly hasty to set a date since the couple may be committing themselves to reception venues and travel arrangements once that date is set. Should a significant reason to delay the marriage arise, a cleric will consult with a diocesan official before counseling the couple to delay their marriage date. The diocesan officials that a cleric may consult are: a dean, the Judicial Vicar, the Vicar General, or the Bishop.

1. Premarital Inventory. The FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study) Premarital inventory is the preferred inventory tool within the Diocese of Biloxi. The FOCCUS inventory is a tool to help the engaged couple explore with each other and the marriage minister all aspects of the future marital relationship; the assessment is designed to highlight potential strengths and weaknesses within a couple's relationship and lead to further dialog with and between the couple. The FOCCUS has a solid research background, published studies indicating strong reliability and validity, and has been in use for over 30 years. All engaged couples are required to complete the FOCCUS assessment and the results will form the basis for subsequent marriage preparation discussion with either the priest, deacon, or the sponsor couple. If someone other than the priest (e.g., deacon) is responsible for discussing the FOCCUS inventory results with the engaged couple, a summary of the discussion is to be shared with the priest. Program Information: FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study), Family Life Office, 3214 N. 60th St., Omaha, NE 68104, (402) 551-9003

2. Natural Family Planning (NFP). The Diocese of Biloxi requires all engaged couples to attend a Natural Family Planning class as part of their overall marriage preparation formation program. Typically this will include several sessions covering why the Church teaches NFP, basic biology of the body and how NFP works. Couples who attend the Engaged Encounter Weekends may receive additional information on NFP. Clerics will ensure that the names of engaged couples are provided to the Diocese of Biloxi Marriage and Family Life ministry office so the couple can be contacted by a certified Natural Family Planning trainer.

3. Sponsor Couple and Sponsor Couple Programs. The term “sponsor couple” refers to any one-on-one relationship where a trained, married couple works with one engaged couple. The Diocese of Biloxi supports the use of parish-based sponsor couples in the marriage preparation process. The use of sponsor couples has the added benefit of linking engaged couples more closely to the parish through sponsor couples while strengthening the marriage of the sponsors. This causes a ripple of marriage enrichment in the whole parish. A Sponsor Couple Program is a proven and effective “peer-to-peer” method used to assist engaged couples prepare for marriage. Peer-to-peer refers to an engaged couple interacting with a married couple. The engaged couple meets with the married couple 6 to 8 times over a period of several weeks. There are reading assignments and questions to answer before each session. The meetings typically consist of discussion and dialogue based on the readings. The engaged couple participates in conversations they may not have already had including: families of origin, marital communication, marital spirituality, family planning, sexuality and intimacy, and problem solving. Training of sponsor couples is the responsibility of the local parish. Only fully-trained sponsor couples are to be used in marriage preparation. The following are preferred Sponsor Couple Programs for the Diocese of Biloxi:

- *For Better & For Ever, A Resource for Couples Preparing for Christian Marriage (7)*. In using *For Better & For Ever*, sponsor couples are trained to meet the engaged “where they are” as the starting point for dialogue about the vocation of Matrimony. The Sponsor Couple hosts a series of meetings with the engaged couple in their own home, then after the wedding they follow up with the newly married couple through the first year(s) of marriage. *For Better & For Ever* is available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and French.

Program Information: Contact: rob@marriagepreparation.com, 210-534-1129. Website: <https://marriagepreparation.com/>

- *Better Together*. *Better Together* is a video-based sponsor couple program consisting of 12 sessions. Each session uses 4 or 5 short (3 to 6 minute) videos to lead the conversation which is guided by the sponsor couple. The engaged couple uses a workbook that has 2 short pages of reading for each video short with a place to take notes. In addition the Leader's Guide has helpful tips to bring up when discussing each video.

Program Information: Contact: Dynamic Catholic, 5081 Olympic Blvd. Erlanger, KY 41018.

Website: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/better-together>

- *Beloved, Finding Happiness in Marriage*.

Program Information: Websites: Augustineinstitute.org and Lighthousecatholicmedia.org, run by Augustine Institute under FORMED. Format: Videos and Guide, may be led by local Sponsor Couple. Videos can be streamed online on FORMED.org.

- *Unveiled: Marriage Prep Anytime, Anywhere*. The preferred online/DVD Sponsor Couple Program for the Diocese of Biloxi when an engaged couple is separated by distance is *Unveiled: Marriage Prep Anytime, Anywhere*. This program is primarily to be used as a marriage preparation option when marriage preparation is required while the engaged couple is separated by distance. Long distance preparation, though not ideal, is sometimes necessary due to military service or other factors. Couples may reside in separate cities or at a distance from the place where they will be married. Military or college chaplains can often provide independent preparation but the presiding minister needs to coordinate the process. Premarital inventories can be done independently, then discussed when the couple is together or via phone, letters, or e-mail. Separation is a challenge but not a reason to omit marriage preparation programs.

Program Information: Online e-learning and DVD; Websites: Unveiledmarriage.com and cdremfl.org; Email: marriage_prep@richmonddiocese.org; Diocese of Richmond VA USA; Format: Videos and Guide, self-led, with online assist.

4. Premarital Retreat or Workshop. The Diocese of Biloxi encourages engaged couples to attend a Premarital retreat or Workshop as part of their overall marriage preparation formation program. As of the date of this policy, this Diocese does not have its own retreat program. Initially couples are to use the Engaged Encounter Weekends at the three

surrounding Dioceses (New Orleans, Mobile and Jackson) for couples after they have completed the Sponsor Couple program or its equivalent.

Contact information:

New Orleans Archdiocese Office of Marriage and Family Life, (504) 861-6243; email: mfl@arch-no.org; website: www.arch-no.org/marriage-and-family-life

Mobile Archdiocese Catholic Engaged Encounter Ministry, (251) 473-1626; website: <http://mobile.engagedencounter.com/>

Jackson Diocese: Marriage and Family Ministry, (601) 969-1880; website: www.jacksondiocese.org/offices/family-ministry

The Diocese of Biloxi plans to establish its own Engaged Encounter Weekend program within a few years of the date of this policy. At that time engaged couples will be able to use the Diocese of Biloxi program.

Follow-up Pastoral Session. At the completion of the marriage preparation formation process the engaged couple meets for a final time with the priest or deacon to discuss any remaining question or concerns. At this meeting the appropriate Rite of Marriage (During Mass, Outside of Mass, or Between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person) is discussed. The specific readings and prayers for the Rite may be selected with the aid of the *Together for Life* (8) handbook. A date and time for a wedding liturgy rehearsal should also be set at this time.

Biloxi Diocese Marriage Preparation Contacts:

- Ministry of Marriage Preparation under the Office of Marriage and Family Life

4. Wedding Liturgy Policy

a. Wedding Rehearsal. The wedding rehearsal should take place in a prayerful context. It is desirable for the principal celebrant to be present at the wedding rehearsal. Also, the Church calls engaged Catholics to the sacramental nourishment of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist as a fitting preparation for holy Matrimony.

b. The Wedding Liturgy. Marriage should normally be celebrated within Mass. However, the pastor should decide whether it would be

preferable to propose that marriage be celebrated within or outside of Mass given both the necessities of pastoral care and the way in which the prospective spouses and those present participate in the Life of the Church. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (9) contains the rites to be used in the celebration of marriage. It is standard for Catholic-Catholic weddings to use the *Rite of Christian Marriage* within a Mass and for ecumenical weddings to use the *Rite of Christian Marriage Outside a Mass*. Chapter 1 of *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* contains information on celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony.

c. Place of marriage. Marriage is to be celebrated in the parish church where either party has domicile, quasi-domicile, or month-long residence. It may be celebrated within another church or oratory with the written permission of the pastor, or in another place with the permission of the local ordinary (1 - c. 1115, 1118). A minister of another Christian community may ask for and receive the vows or be present at the Catholic church. In the latter case, only the Catholic minister receives the vows in the name of the Church.

5. Special Circumstances.

A great variety of special circumstances may be encountered when ministering to a couple preparing for a Catholic Marriage. The guidelines provided below are largely ground in the 1983 Code of Canon Law that states “all persons not prohibited by law can contract marriage” (1 - c. 1058), and “before marriage is celebrated it must be evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration” (1 - c.1066). However, the local ordinary may “prohibit marriage for his own subjects residing anywhere and for all actually present in his own territory but only for a time, for a grave cause, and for as long as the cause continues” (1 - c 1077). Besides canonical requirements that address specific special circumstances, it is the desire of the Church that increased pastoral care and attention be given to the couple so that their subsequent marriage will be as strong as possible. The *Diocese of Biloxi Pastoral Care and Preparation for Marriage* envelop (attachment 2) describes and provides a source of documentation for those circumstances in which special permissions and dispensations are required.

a. Readiness issues (age, pregnancy, mental illnesses, immaturity, brief courtship, marriage on the rebound or as rebellion, lack of financial support). As serious as these issues are, the resolution is similar for all of them. The priest refers the couple to a professional for assessment and treatment if necessary. The professional’s role is to advise the couple and the priest, not to make a final decision on whether the marriage should be delayed. The burden of that decision rests solely with Church authority.

1. Age. The Code of Canon Law establishes that a man below the age of 17 and a woman below the age of 15 cannot enter marriage (1 - c. 1083 §1). The Diocese of Biloxi requires written parental consent for anyone under the age of 18 seeking to enter into marriage. (Mississippi statutes set the minimum age at 21, but allow males aged 17 and females aged 15 to marry with parental permission.) It is highly recommended that parents of minors seeking marriage be included in the discernment process.

Maturity varies with the individual and many couples past their teens are not ready to take on the commitment and responsibilities of marriage and would benefit from similar extra attention. In addition to professional assessment, discussion facilitated by a premarital inventory can help such couples to recognize their need for more time.

2. Pregnancy. Pregnancy is always treated as a caution to marriage as opposed to a reason to speed up a wedding, since it may interfere with a person's free consent. If the couple only started to discuss marriage following the pregnancy, then the issue of undue pressure to marry needs to be explored. On the positive side, in light of our Church's consistent witness to the sanctity of human life, the couple's choice to embrace the pregnancy should be affirmed by the pastoral minister.

b. Faith issues (Ecumenical, Interfaith, Non-practicing Catholics)

1. Ecumenical (or Interchurch): Marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic baptized Christian. If suitable, and at the request of both the officiant of the wedding and the pastor of the place of the wedding, permission may be granted for the wedding to be celebrated within the context of Mass. Priest celebrants see faculties. An Eastern Orthodox member is also a non-Catholic party and the same requirements pertain to them as to other non-Catholic baptized Christians.
2. Interfaith: Marriage between a Catholic and a non-Christian. When a Catholic marries someone who is not baptized, or a person with an invalid baptism (some invalid baptisms would be Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [Mormons], Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Masons [no baptism at all], Pentecostal, Quakers, Salvation Army, Unitarians), this presents a situation in which careful pastoral guidance is to be provided. So that the faith of the Catholic party may be safeguarded, the Church provides much pastoral guidance. See: CCC 1633-1637 (2); 1 – c. 1128,

1129; Paul VI, *Matrimonia Mixta* (10). The Rite of Marriage does not foresee the possibility of celebrating marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person within the context of the Mass, nor may the Eucharist be distributed to those present. Contact the Bishop's Office for exceptions.

3. Interreligious: More generic term that includes ecumenical, interfaith, and marriage with someone of no religious belief. In marriages not involving a Catholic party, the Church presumes to be valid those that are duly celebrated and entered into by parties who are free to marry (and otherwise qualified) and recognizes as a sacrament those marriages entered into between the baptized.
4. Pastoral Approach. The confusion over terms is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to interreligious marriages, with over 15 different combinations of Catholic and "other." Despite the complexity of combinations, canon law and liturgical rites are specific about what dispensations and rites are needed. Couples are also urged to learn about their future spouse's faith; not for the purpose of conversion but for understanding and family harmony.
5. The Promise of Raising Children in the Faith. Historically, perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of interreligious marriage has been the promise that Catholic partners must make to raise their children in the Catholic faith (1 - c. 1125). The promise is made in the following or similar words:

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

This promise can be made orally or in writing. The non-Catholic partner is to be informed of the promise, so that he or she is aware of the promise and obligation the Catholic partner has made. The non-Catholic partner no longer has to make a promise or sign a statement.

The *Decree on Ecumenism* (11), no. 3 clarifies that "to do all in one's power" recognizes the religious convictions of the non-Catholic party and implies that a decision is reached that respects those beliefs. It does not mean an absolute promise at the risk of jeopardizing the marriage itself.

The possibility also exists that, despite their best efforts, Catholics will be in a situation where some or all of the children are brought up in the religious tradition of their spouses. In such circumstances, the obligation of Catholics to share the Catholic faith with their children does not cease, but should take the form of prayer, good example, witness to the faith in word and deed, and maintaining a Christian or religious atmosphere in the home.

The Church recognizes that the non-Catholic party may feel a similar obligation to his or her religious commitment. Despite the challenges of ecumenical and interfaith marriages, they do provide an extra motivation for couples to nurture prayer in the home in a form that is common to both spouses.

6. Non-practicing Catholic. When a Catholic who no longer practices their Catholic faith approaches a parish for marriage preparation, special pastoral care is to be extended to them. Since marriage between the baptized is a sacrament lived out only by God's grace, any form of marriage preparation will have the goal of aiding a couple to reengage their personal faith through the practice of their religion. Failure to practice the faith is not in itself a matrimonial impediment. To address this perplexing issue, many policies quote Pope John Paul II: "The faith of the person seeking marriage in the Church can exist in varying degrees. It is the primary duty of pastors to facilitate a rediscovery of this faith, nourishing it and bringing it to maturity. But pastors must also understand the reasons that lead the Church to admit to the celebration of marriage, those who are imperfectly disposed." (*Familiaris Consortio* [6]).

While some evidence of faith is required for the reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony, the level of faith is not the question. Engaged couples must be accepted and instructed at their actual level. "As for wishing to lay down further criteria for admission to the ecclesial celebration of marriage, criteria that would concern the level of faith of those to be married, this would above all involve grave risks." (*Familiaris Consortio* [6]).

Non-practice is different from a direct rejection of the Catholic faith. "Is there a willingness to participate in catechesis, share the faith with children, share in some worship, and share moral values? Is there some basic agreement on the part of the couple with Christian values? For example, do they share any common ground with us and our desires for social justice, peace, racial equality,

support of human life?" John Westerhoff's *Four Stages of Faith* (12) can serve as a basis for exploring faith with the couple.

c. Previous marriage (*divorce, annulments, death, convalidation, children from a previous marriage*)

1. Pastoral approach. The complexities of interreligious marriage are probably surpassed only by those of couples who seek to marry after a divorce. Yet one of the first steps in marriage preparation, after hospitality, is to determine the couple's freedom to marry so that the process can continue.

Couples entering a second marriage need special attention to help them understand how the dynamics of a previous marriage will impact their new marriage. Due to the increased risk of divorce, more rather than less preparation is beneficial. For older couples or couples with children, Marriage Encounter is recommended as a supplement to normal marriage preparation. Marriage ministers should also address resolution of grief from the previous relationships, freedom to marry, role shifts and step-parenting, and establishing new traditions.

2. Divorce and annulment. For pastoral and practical reasons, no wedding date, even a tentative one, should be set for couples if one or both parties is still going through the annulment process. In order to discourage marrying on the rebound or without having understood how the partner contributed to the difficulties of the previous marriage, it is recommended that a significant period of time be taken to work through these issues. Couples who are free to marry in the Church need to obtain the necessary documentation stating their freedom to marry and follow the marriage preparation process described herein, making use of a premarital inventory that addresses remarriage issues as a modification is recommended (ReFOCCUS). In the case of marriages, where a previous annulment was granted, the priest or deacon is to check with the Diocesan office to determine if there is a *vetitum* (prohibition) or *monitum* (caution) attached to an annulment which might require further counseling prior to entering into marriage in the Church. (*Vetitum* is a prohibition placed by the Tribunal; however, it is not an invalidating prohibition -- and if ignored the marriage would be considered valid although the officiant's involvement was illicit.)
3. Death. Historically, priests often accepted abbreviated preparation for couples who had happy marriages and were marrying after the death of a spouse. However, this is no longer the case, although

the form of marriage preparation should be adapted to the age and circumstances of the couple. Sponsor Couples can help the engaged discern where they are in the grief process and how they will deal with issues such as merged finances and obligations to children from the previous marriage.

4. Convalidation. Convalidation (sometimes referred to as validation or, less accurately, as “blessing” a marriage) can be performed in instances in which a couple who was civilly married acknowledges that they are not in a valid marriage and seeks to regularize their union within the Church. A convalidation is not simply a renewal of the previous intention to marry but the creation of a valid marriage in the sight of the Christian community. A convalidation is permitted after the couple has completed adequate preparation and premarital counseling. ReFOCCUS and *For Better and Forever* (7) are helpful tools for preparing these couples for marriage. Regarding the six-month preparation requirement, the priest or deacon preparing the couple may adjust this regulation appropriately if the couple has been married for a number of years.
 5. Children from a previous marriage. Children from a previous marriage do not become illegitimate after an annulment, it is important to reaffirm this with the person seeking an annulment lest this fear be an obstacle to the person (1 - c. 1137). A primary concern is that the parent recognize his or her responsibility to support children from a previous relationship both financially and emotionally. Becoming an instant stepparent, whether custodial or non-custodial, also strains a new marriage; thus specialized marriage preparation is especially important.
- d. Moral issues. (cohabitation, choosing not to have children, abortion)
1. Cohabitation. If, either from public knowledge or by frank admission of the couple, a priest or deacon knows that the couple is living together before their upcoming marriage, he is to approach the marriage preparation process with cautious pastoral care. In teaching the couple about matrimony and Christian teachings on the meaning of sexual intimacy, the cleric should exhort them to live separately and refrain from sexual activity until after their marriage.

The priest or deacon is to be welcoming and to see this as an opportunity for evangelization; at the same time, he must uphold the Church’s teaching on the nature of the sexual commitment

made in marriage. *Faithful to Each Other Forever* (13) warns against two extremes: (1) immediately confronting the couple and condemning their behavior and (2) ignoring the cohabitation.

As stated by Pope John Paul II: “Pastors and the ecclesial community should take care to become acquainted with such situations and their actual causes, case by case. They should make tactful and respectful contact with the couples concerned and enlighten them patiently, correct them charitably and show them the witness of Christian family life in such a way as to smooth the path for them to regularize their situation” (*Familiaris Consortio* [6]).

The pastoral challenge for the minister is to invite the engaged couple to consider living separately and chastely.

Suggested steps for dealing with cohabiting couples:

- Approach the couple with sensitivity and welcome.
- Explore with them the reason that they are now approaching the Church for marriage (as with pregnancy, the risk of divorce is lessened if the decision to marry was made prior to the cohabitation). Help the couple to understand the wisdom behind the Church’s teaching on sexual intimacy within the sacrament of marriage.
- Encourage the couple to live separately and chastely before their marriage as a spiritual preparation for marriage (exceptions are made for those with children).
- *For Better and Forever* (7) suggests a Premarital covenant for engaged couples which includes a paragraph stating, “We agree that abstaining from sexual intercourse during this time of our engagement is the best way to prepare for making sexual intercourse in our marriage a very special sign of our marital commitment. With this in mind, we agree that we will abstain from words or actions with one another that will place us in danger of breaking this Premarital covenant (Betrothal Agreement).

Since cohabitation is not in itself a canonical impediment to marriage, the couple may not be refused marriage solely on the basis of cohabitation.

2. Choosing not to have children. *The sacrament of marriage, by its nature, is ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children.* (2 - CCC 1601) A decision by the couple or one party to permanently exclude children invalidates a marriage.
 3. Abortion. Having had an abortion requires special pastoral care; referral to *Rachel's Vineyard Ministries* is recommended.
- e. Miscellaneous (*unwillingness to participate in a program, non-registered, persons with disabilities, infertility and impotence, citizenship status, prenuptial agreements, sexual identity*)
1. Unwillingness to participate in a program. Unwillingness to participate in a marriage preparation program as a sign of lack of commitment to marry in the Church. As mentioned in paragraph 3.a. of this policy, unwillingness to participate in a marriage preparation program constitutes just cause for postponing a marriage before the Catholic Church.
 2. Non-registered Catholic. Canon law does not make parish registration a prerequisite for marriage in the Catholic Church (1 - c. 1115). Each situation has to be handled separately and delicately. The presumption of the Church is that people have a natural right to marry. The Church, therefore, is to provide a welcoming presence regardless of whether or not the couple are registered parishioners. See paragraph 4.c. for additional guidance.
 3. Persons with disabilities. "Realizing the unique gifts handicapped individuals have to offer the Church, we wish to address their need for their fuller integration into the Christian community and their fuller participation in its life" (*Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities* [14]). Disabilities may be physical or mental. As with questions of readiness, the priest should utilize the counsel of professionals knowledgeable about the particular disability. Except for antecedent and perpetual impotency, physical disability is not an impediment to marriage. Catholics who are deaf should be offered the opportunity to express their matrimonial consent in sign language. With mental disabilities the priest needs to assess the couple's ability to give consent and to assume the essential obligations of marriage. See *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* (15).

4. Infertility and impotence. While infertility is not an impediment to marriage, it should be discussed with openness and candor if known in advance. Impotence, permanent inability to have intercourse, nullifies marriage but where there is doubt, marriage must not be impeded (1 - c. 1084). Continuing medical advances make permanent impotence difficult to confirm and increase the possibility of the impotence being temporary. *See Vatican document from Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Impotency dated May 13, 1977 or later.*
5. Citizenship status. Situations that may affect a couple's ability to contract a marriage include: (1) marrying in order to remain in the U.S. or to gain citizenship, which impacts consent, and (2) undocumented couple who freely want to marry. In these cases, the priest is to consult with the Diocesan Chancery or Tribunal for legal clarification. Marriages in order to remain in the U.S. are contrary to both civil law and canon law. Civil law and canon law would see such actions as fraud and any cleric knowingly performing such weddings are subject to the law.
6. Prenuptial Agreements. Marriage is based on an enduring committed love and partnership of the whole of life which implies a comprehensive sharing of both spiritual and temporal goods. A prenuptial agreement is not automatically a cause of invalid marital consent but an evaluation of the agreement is necessary to determine if there are any conditions limiting consent. Many couples consider forming a legal agreement concerning their temporal goods before they contract marriage. Some couples entering marriage after the death of a previous spouse consider such agreement to direct their assets to their proper heirs. If, however, such an agreement is formed in such a way that indicates the couple is not taking seriously the goods of marriage, namely fidelity and permanence, then the couple needs to be advised to reject their prenuptial agreement.
7. Sexual Identity. For a sacramental marriage the presumption is that "a man and a woman" asking to marry are so by nature and understand themselves as a heterosexual man and a heterosexual woman. When either person expresses doubt or conflict about sexual identity or sexual orientation, careful attention must be given to both parties. If the couple has not dealt with this topic, further assistance by a counseling professional is required. See CCC 2333, 2393.

6. Enrichment After Marriage

Research shows that immediate marriage preparation (the 6-9 months before the wedding) has a limited effect in the life of a marriage. “The perceived value of marriage preparation diminishes with the length of the marriage or the time elapsed since marriage preparation” (*Marriage Preparation in the Catholic Church: Getting it Right* [16]). As described in the documents below and Canon Law, marriage enrichment is equally important for married couples:

- Pope St. John Paul II exhorted pastoral ministers to help the couple “to discover and live their new vocation”. This holds true especially for young families, which, finding themselves in a context of new values and responsibilities, are more vulnerable, especially in the first years of marriage. (*Familiaris Consortio* [6]).
- Pope St. Paul VI encouraged ministers of marriage to “work ardently and incessantly for the safeguarding and the holiness of marriage, that it always be lived in its entire human and Christian fullness. Consider this mission as one of your most urgent responsibilities at the present time” (*Humanae Vitae* [17]).
- Canon Law requires pastors and faith communities to provide assistance to all married people so that “the matrimonial state is preserved in a Christian spirit and advances in perfection” (1 - c. 1063). Canon 1128 (1) specifically requires pastoral care for ecumenical marriages, while Canon 1129 (1) deals with pastoral care of interreligious marriages.

Examples of support to married couples include: parish support for marriage through the Prayer of the Faithful (Universal Prayer), bulletin inserts, and homilies; diocesan or parish support programs specifically directed to couples in the first five years of marriage; promotion of standard marriage enrichment programs such as Marriage Encounter, marriage enrichment events, marriage retreats, Retrouvaille/Third Option; celebration of World Marriage Day (the weekend closest to Valentine’s Day); diocesan or parish 25th and 50th Anniversary Masses; occasional marriage talks or workshops; and referral to pro-marriage counselors.

Print, video and internet resources include:

- **Foundations** -- A bi-monthly newsletter for newly married couples (www.foundationsnewsletter.com)

- **First Years and Forever** -- A monthly e-newsletter
(cana@archchicago.org)
- **To Seal and Strengthen Love:** A Resource Manual for Ministry with Newly Married Couples published by National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers, www.nacflm.org

7. References

Preparation in the Catholic Church: Getting it Right [16]). As described in the documents below and Canon Law, marriage enrichment is equally important for married couples:

1. 1983 Code of Canon Law, New English Translation, Canon Law Society of America, Washington DC, 1998.
2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd Edition, 1994.
3. *An Analysis of Diocesan Marriage Preparation Policies*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004.
4. Archdiocese of New Orleans, Archdiocesan Policy Manual, Section 13 -- *Policies for Marriage Preparation for the Archdiocese of New Orleans*, (undated -- website).
5. Catholic Diocese of Jackson (Mississippi), *Marriage Preparation Policy*, (undated – website).
6. Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio (On the Family)*, November 1981.
7. *For Better and Forever; A Resource for Couples Preparing for Christian Marriage, Roman Catholic Edition*, Revised Edition 3.2d, Ruhnke, Robert A. C.S.S.R., May 2012.
8. *Together for Life*, Sixth Edition, Champlin, Joseph M., Jarret, Peter A. C.S.C., Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN, 2016.
9. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony, The Roman Ritual*, English Translation, 2nd Edition, 2016.
10. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical, *Matrimonia Mixta (On Mixed Marriages)*, October 1970.
11. Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism)*, November 1964.
12. *Four Stages of Faith; Will Our Children Have Faith?*, John Westerhoff, Seabury Press, 1976.

13. *Faithful to Each Other Forever; A Catholic Handbook for Pastoral Help for Marriage Preparation*, taken from *Family Planning: A Guide for Exploring the Issues*, Revised Edition, Liguori Publications, 2005.
14. *Pastoral Statement of US Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1978.
15. *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Revised June 15, 2017.
16. *Getting it Right; Marriage Preparation in the Catholic Church*, Center for Marriage and Family, Creighton University, November 1995.
17. Pope Paul VI, *Encyclical Humanae Vitae (On the Regulation of Birth)*, July 1968.

8. References to Articles of Canon Law

The 1983 Code of Canon Law -- Book IV, The Sanctifying Function of the Church; Part 1, The Sacraments; Title VII and its subordinate chapters and articles govern all aspects of the Sacrament of Marriage. The following Canons are specifically referenced in this marriage preparation policy document:

CAN. 1055 §1. The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized.

CAN. 1058 All persons who are not prohibited by law can contract marriage.

CAN. 1063 Pastors of souls are obliged to take care that their ecclesiastical community offers the Christian faithful the assistance by which the matrimonial state is preserved in a Christian spirit and advances in perfection. This assistance must be offered especially by:

1° preaching, catechesis adapted to minors, youth, and adults, and even the use of instruments of social communication, by which the Christian faithful are instructed about the meaning of Christian marriage and about the function of Christian spouses and parents;

2° personal preparation to enter marriage, which disposes the spouses to the holiness and duties of their new state;

3° a fruitful liturgical celebration of marriage which is to show that the spouses signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church;

4° help offered to those who are married, so that faithfully preserving and protecting the conjugal covenant, they daily come to lead holier and fuller lives in their family.

CAN. 1066 Before a marriage is celebrated, it must be evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.

CAN. 1077

§1. In a special case, the local ordinary can prohibit marriage for his own subjects residing anywhere and for all actually present in his own territory but only for a time, for a grave cause, and for as long as the cause continues.

§2. Only the supreme authority of the Church can add a nullifying clause to a prohibition.

CAN. 1083 §1. A man before he has completed his sixteenth year of age and a woman before she has completed her fourteenth year of age cannot enter into a valid marriage.

CAN. 1084

§1. Antecedent and perpetual impotence to have intercourse, whether on the part of the man or the woman, whether absolute or relative, nullifies marriage by its very nature.

§2. If the impediment of impotence is doubtful, whether by a doubt about the law or a doubt about a fact, a marriage must not be impeded nor, while the doubt remains, declared null.

§3. Sterility neither prohibits nor nullifies marriage, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 1098.

CAN. 1115 Marriages are to be celebrated in a parish where either of the contracting parties has a domicile, quasidomicile, or month long residence or, if it concerns transients, in the parish where they actually reside. With the permission of the proper ordinary or proper pastor, marriages can be celebrated elsewhere.

CAN. 1118

§1. A marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic baptized party is to be celebrated in a parish church. It can be celebrated in another church or oratory with the permission of the local ordinary or pastor.

§2. The local ordinary can permit a marriage to be celebrated in another suitable place.

§3. A marriage between a Catholic party and a non-baptized party can be celebrated in a church or in another suitable place.

CAN. 1125 The local ordinary can grant a permission of this kind if there is a just and reasonable cause. He is not to grant it unless the following conditions have been fulfilled:

1° the Catholic party is to declare that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of defecting from the faith and is to make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power so that all offspring are baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church;

2° the other party is to be informed at an appropriate time about the promises which the Catholic party is to make, in such a way that it is certain that he or she is truly aware of the promise and obligation of the Catholic party;

3° both parties are to be instructed about the purposes and essential properties of marriage which neither of the contracting parties is to exclude.

CAN. 1128 Local ordinaries and other pastors of souls are to take care that the Catholic spouse and the children born of a mixed marriage do not lack the spiritual help to fulfill their obligations and are to help spouses foster the unity of conjugal and family life.

CAN. 1129 The prescripts of can. 1127 and 1128 must be applied also to marriages which the impediment of disparity of cult mentioned in can. 1086, §1 impedes.

CAN. 1137 The children conceived or born of a valid or putative marriage are legitimate

Diocese of Biloxi “Couple Guide”

Formation for the Sacrament of Matrimony

Why Marriage: Marriage is a sacred calling! Marriage is about God and serving God's purposes. It is a vocation just as the priesthood of a priest is a vocation. Marriage is a covenant relationship wherein a man and a woman establish themselves in a partnership for life. God is present in this relationship to bless, assist and guide you. This relationship is ordered for the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. Through Matrimony God raises up the "Domestic Church" where faith is planted in the hearts of children and radiated to the surrounding world.

Why Prepare: The marriage formation process is to assure that you are free to marry, have the capacity to marry and the right intention to marry. Further the formation process provides assistance in your final months of discernment of the sacramental bond where you will promise to be faithful “for better or for worse” and to love and honor each other every day of your life.

What to Expect during Marriage Formation: “Immediate Preparation” for marriage should begin six to nine months ahead of the anticipated date of your wedding. The process begins with an initial meeting/s with a Priest or Deacon, followed by four educational steps and concludes with a final meeting with the Priest or Deacon just prior to the ceremony. These pastoral and educational steps are listed and described below.

- Initial Meeting/s with Priest or Deacon and Prenuptial Investigation
- Educational Components
 1. Completion of the Premarital Inventory Assessment
 2. Education in Natural Family Planning
 3. Participation in a Sponsor Couple Program
 4. Participation in a Premarital Retreat or Workshop
- Final Meeting with Priest or Deacon

Overview of the pastoral and educational steps including your responsibilities.

- Initial Meeting/s with Priest or Deacon Date: _____

At this meeting the priest or deacon will do a “Prenuptial Investigation” and determine if there are any impediments (obstacles) to marriage. You will be interviewed separately, about 15 minutes each. If there are no impediments a tentative date for the wedding can be set and you can proceed to the first educational step. Additionally you will need to provide

the following documentation verifying your sacramental status:

- Baptismal Certificates with notations
- Confirmation Certificates (unnecessary if noted on Baptismal Certificate)

If impediments exist such as the proposed marriage is a second marriage while the first spouse is still alive, or one partner is not Christian, or other special circumstances exist, the discussion may continue in a second interview. If a delay is necessary to deal with impediments, you will be advised on how to proceed.

- Educational Components:

1. Completion of the Premarital Inventory Assessment Date: _____

This is a tool to help you explore aspects of your future marital relationship. This tool assesses your readiness to marry and how well you communicate with each other. The tool identifies potential strengths and weaknesses in your relationship and indicates where additional dialog could be useful. Typically the assessment is administered at the parish office and takes about an hour to complete. It will take about a week to assess the results and then a second meeting with your priest or deacon will be set to review and discuss the results.

2. Natural Family Planning Date: _____

The Catholic Church guards the sanctity of life from conception until natural death and teaches natural family planning as the method to plan for the timing and growth of your family. The Church does not approve of the use of artificial birth control or contraceptives. To this end all engaged couples are required to attend Natural Family Planning classes conducted by a certified Natural Family Planning Trainer. Your priest or deacon will provide you with the necessary information so you can coordinate class times and location.

3. Sponsor Couple Program Date: _____

In this “peer-to-peer” program you will meet with a “sponsor couple” in the parish who will assist in your marriage preparation. Typically you will meet with the sponsor couple 6 to 8 times over a period of several weeks. There are reading assignments and questions for you to answer before each session. You will participate in conversations on: families of origin, marital communication, marital spirituality, family planning, sexuality and intimacy, and problem solving. Your priest or deacon will match you with an appropriate sponsor couple.

4. Premarital Retreat or Workshop

Date: _____

After the completion of items 1-3 above you should attend a Premarital retreat or workshop. The Engaged Encounter Weekend retreats are offered in the three surrounding diocese (New Orleans, Mobile and Jackson). Your priest or deacon will provide you with contact information and options for your retreat.

- Final Meeting with Priest or Deacon

Date: _____

When the educational aspects of your marriage formation are completed you are ready for a final meeting with your priest or deacon to discuss any remaining questions or concerns. At this meeting the appropriate Rite or Order of Matrimony (During Mass, Outside of Mass or between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person) is discussed. Additionally specific readings and prayers for the Rite may be selected with the aid of the *Together for Life* handbook. A date and time for a wedding liturgy rehearsal should also be set at this time.

One last thing! Remember to pray often with your fiancé/fiancée about your future life together. The old adage “Families that pray together, stay together” is so true. May God Bless You!

PRENUPTIAL INVESTIGATION

DIOCESE OF BILOXI

PARISH: _____

CITY: _____

DATE OF MARRIAGE: _____

GROOM: _____ BRIDE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO.: _____

WITNESSES:

(If deposition is taken outside the Diocese of Biloxi, it must be reviewed by the Chancery Office where the party resides.)

Visum est _____

Chancellor

Date, Place _____ (Seal of Chancery)

The parties are to be interviewed separately and privately on the enclosed points. The Oath is to be explained and administered before taking the testimony. If the interview is conducted by other than the pastor, the pastor is to certify as to its completeness (cc. 1067, 1070, 530

(Reviewed by Pastor)

GROOM

1. Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth in answering the following questions? _____
2. Name _____ SSN _____
3. Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____
4. Baptism Date _____ Church _____
(Obtain recent Certificate, with notations)
5. Father's Name _____ Religion (Rite) _____
6. Mother's Maiden Name _____ Religion (Rite) _____
7. Other Sacraments Communion Yes ___ No_ Confirmation Yes No _
8. Do you practice your faith regularly? _____
9. (If under 18) Have your parents (guardians) consented to this marriage? _____
10. Are you aware of any physical problems that would prevent a normal marital relationship?
____ If yes, please explain _____
11. Have you been married before? If yes, complete information on each prior marriage on back of questionnaire
12. Are you related to your intended spouse by blood, marriage or legal adoption? If yes, please explain relationship _____
13. Have you or your intended spouse vowed or solemnly promised not to marry?__ If yes, please explain _____
14. Have you or your intended spouse ever received professional care for psychological or emotional difficulties? If yes, please explain _____
15. Are you or your intended spouse being forced in any way to enter this marriage? _____
16. Are you and your intended spouse giving unconditional consent to this marriage? ____ If no, please explain _____
(Permission of Ordinary is required if a condition concerning the present or past is present.)
17. Do you intend: To enter a life-long union? _____ To be faithful to your spouse for life? _____
To exercise the normal rights of marriage necessary to have children? _____

Date

Signature of Groom

Signature of Priest/Deacon/Delegate

Church City
(Parish Seal)

Person(s) involved in marriage preparation may wish to add comments or observations on the individual's readiness to enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony _____

BRIDE

1. Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth in answering the following questions? _____
2. Name _____ SSN _____
3. Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____
4. Baptism Date _____ Church _____
(Obtain recent Certificate, with notations)
5. Father's Name _____ Religion (Rite) _____
6. Mother's Maiden Name _____ Religion (Rite) _____
7. Other Sacraments Communion Yes ___ No_ Confirmation Yes No _
8. Do you practice your faith regularly? _____
9. (If under 18) Have your parents (guardians) consented to this marriage? _____
10. Are you aware of any physical problems that would prevent a normal marital relationship?
____ If yes, please explain _____
11. Have you been married before? If yes, complete information on each prior marriage on back of questionnaire
12. Are you related to your intended spouse by blood, marriage or legal adoption? If yes, please explain relationship _____
13. Have you or your intended spouse vowed or solemnly promised not to marry?__ If yes, please explain _____
14. Have you or your intended spouse ever received professional care for psychological or emotional difficulties? If yes, please explain _____
15. Are you or your intended spouse being forced in any way to enter this marriage? _____
16. Are you and your intended spouse giving unconditional consent to this marriage? ____ If no, please explain _____
(Permission of Ordinary is required if a condition concerning the present or past is present.)
17. Do you intend: To enter a life-long union? _____ To be faithful to your spouse for life? _____
To exercise the normal rights of marriage necessary to have children? _____

Date

Signature of Bride

Signature of Priest/Deacon/Delegate

Church City
(Parish Seal)

Person(s) involved in marriage preparation may wish to add comments or observations on the individual's readiness to enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony _____

<u>Prior Marriage:</u>	<u>Party:</u> _____
Date _____	Place: _____
With whom: _____	
Type of Ceremony _____	Official Witness: _____
Date/Place of Divorce: _____	Date of Death of Prior Spouse _____
Church Declaration of Nullity received:	Yes No _____
Diocese: _____	Copy of Decree Enclosed Yes No ____
Date of Annulment: _____	Prot No. _____
Are obligations toward former spouse and children being met? _____	
While the bond of a previous marriage existed, did you and your intended spouse attempt marriage? _	
(If yes, prudent inquiry about the impediment of Canon 1090 may, on occasion be necessary.)	

<u>Prior Marriage:</u>	<u>Party:</u> _____
Date _____	Place: _____
With whom: _____	
Type of Ceremony _____	Official Witness: _____
Date/Place of Divorce: _____	Date of Death of Prior Spouse _____
Church Declaration of Nullity received:	Yes No _____
Diocese: _____	Copy of Decree Enclosed Yes No ____
Date of Annulment: _____	Prot No. _____
Are obligations toward former spouse and children being met? _____	
While the bond of a previous marriage existed, did you and your intended spouse attempt marriage? _	
(If yes, prudent inquiry about the impediment of Canon 1090 may, on occasion be necessary.)	

The Diocesan Marriage Preparation Policy requires Counseling when either party is under nineteen (19) years of age; when the woman is pregnant and either party is under 20 years of age; when the woman is pregnant prior to a decision to marry; and when the priest considers that either party is not ready to marry It may also be required by the Decree of Nullity for a prior marriage. A summary of the observations, recommendations and the name(s) of the Counselor(s) may be outlined here:

[illegible]

Signature of Priest/Deacon/Delegate

DIOCESE OF BILOXI

PARISH: _____ CITY: _____

GROOM: _____ BRIDE: _____

DATE OF WEDDING: _____ CHURCH OF MARRIAGE: _____

PASTORAL CARE AND PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

	Groom	Bride
I. Prenuptial Investigation Completed:	_____	_____
II. Sacramental Status:		
1. Baptismal Certificate of Catholic, with notations	_____	_____
2. Birth Certificate and affidavit of baptismal status of non-Catholic	_____	_____
3. Certificate of Communion and Confirmation	_____	_____
(It is recommended, if possible, for the non-confirmed to be confirmed prior to marriage and that all Catholics receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, c 1065)		
III. Pre-marital Preparation Received:		
1. Parish Sponsor Couple Program	_____	_____
2. Marriage Preparation Weekend	_____	_____
3. Other (describe) _____	_____	_____
IV. Affidavits or Parents' Consent for Minor (Under 18 years)	_____	_____
V. Establishment of Free Status Parties:		
1. Letter of Freedom to marry from parish priest	_____	_____
2. Two Affidavits of Free Status	_____	_____
3. Copies of Decrees of Nullity for prior marriages	_____	_____
4. For Military Personnel: Marriage Status from Chaplain	_____	_____
Marital Status on Discharge Record	_____	_____
VI. Cases which require <u>permission</u> from the local ordinary:		
1. Marriage of Transients (C. 1071).		
2. Marriage which cannot be celebrated in accordance with Civil Law (C. 1071).		
3. Marriage of a person who is bound by the natural obligation toward another party or toward children arising from a prior union (C. 1071).		
4. Marriage of one who has notoriously rejected the Catholic Church, even if the person has not joined another ecclesial community or if a baptized Catholic has left the Church <u>by a formal act</u> , please obtain written proof, e.g. certificate of baptism in another communion, letter from parish of baptism requesting removal from the roles or transfer of letter. The same condition as permission for a mixed religion are required (cf #9) (C. 1071).		
5. Marriage of someone bound by an ecclesiastical penalty (C. 1071).		
6. Marriage of a minor when the parents are unaware of it or are reasonably opposed to it (C. 1071).		
7. Marriage to be entered by means of a proxy (C. 1071).		
8. Marriage with a condition (C. 1102).		
9. Marriage of a Catholic with a <u>baptized</u> member of an ecclesial community not in full communion with the Catholic Church (C. 1124).		

<p>PERMISSION FOR _____ GRANTED IN THE</p> <p>DIOCESE OF _____ ON _____</p> <p>(PERMISSION ENCLOSED _____)</p>
--

VII. Cases which require a dispensation from the Apostolic See:

1. Sacred Orders or Public perpetual vow of chastity in a religious institute of pontifical right (C. 1078)
2. Crime (C. 1078).

VIII. Cases in white a dispensation is never given:

1. Consanguinity in the direct line or in the second degree of the collateral line (C. I 078).
2. Impediments arising from Divine Law, e.g. non-age, ligamen, abduction, direct line from an invalid marriage (C. 1078).

IX. Cases which require a dispensation from the local ordinary:

1. Disparity of Cult: Marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person (C. I 086).
2. Religious Vows: Marriage involving a person with a public vow of chastity in a religious institute. (c. I 088)
3. Consanguinity: Marriage between persons related in the third (aunt/nephew or uncle/niece) or fourth degree (first cousins) in the collateral line (C. 1091).
4. Affinity: Marriage between persons related by marriage (C. I 092).
5. Public Propriety arising notorious and public concubinage in the first degree of the direct line.
6. Legal relationship arising from adoption (C. 1094).

DISPENSATION FOR _____ GRANTED IN THE DIOCESE
OF _____ ON _____ (PERMISSION ENCLOSED _____)

X. Canonical Form:

Marriage is to be contracted in the presence of the local ordinary, the pastor, or a priests/deacons who has been delegated, in the presence of two witnesses (C. 1108).

DISPENSATION FOR CANONICAL FORM GRANTED IN THE DIOCESE OF
_____ ON _____ FOR THE MARRIAGE TO TAKE
PLACE AT _____ IN THE PRESENCE OF _____
(DISPENSATION ENCLOSED _____)

I HEREBY **DELEGATE** REV. _____ TO ASSIST AT THIS MARRIAGE
WITHIN MY PARISH _____ (PASTOR/PRIEST) _____ (DATE)

XI. Place of Marriage:

Marriage is to be celebrated in the parish church where either party has a domicile, quasi-domicile or month-long reside. It may be celebrated in another church or oratory with the permission of the pastor or in another suitable place with the permission of the local ordinary (C. 1115, 1118).

PERMISSION WAS GRANTED BY _____ FOR THIS
MARRIAGE TO TAKE PLACE IN _____ CHURCH OR ORATORY
DATE _____ PASTOR _____

PERMISSION RECEIVED FROM THE LOCAL ORDINARY FOR THIS MARRIAGE
TO BE CELEBRATED AT _____ (PLACE)
(PERMISSION ENCLOSED _____)

XII. Recording of Marriage:

1. Civil License returned to Registrar's Office _____
2. Marriage entered in marriage register _____ Volume _____ Page _____
3. Recorded in Baptismal Record _____ Groom _____ Bride _____
4. Notification sent to parish of baptism of _____ Groom _____ Bride _____
5. Notification of celebration with Dispensation from Canonical Form to Chancery Office _____
6. Notification of Chancery Office on non-celebration of wedding if permission or dispensation was obtained _____

