

Family Life Ministry Directory



2025-2026

Family Life Office

700 N. Virgen de San Juan Blvd.
San Juan, TX 78589
(956) 784-5012
www.cdob.org



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Family Life Office	3
2025-2026 CALENDAR	4
Diocesan Norms	5
Marriage Preparation Process	7
Proceso de Preparacion Matrimonial	8
Sacramental Marriage Preparation Checklist	10
Marriage Preparation Retreats—Schedule (2025-2026)	11
Convalidation Conference—Schedule (2025-2026)	12
Retreat Recommendation Form	13
Sponsor Couples Program	15
Sponsor Couple Role Description & Suggested Agreement	16
FOCCUS Sponsor Couple Training Program	19
Fully Engaged Sponsor Couple Training	20
Sponsor Couple Continuing Education	21
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY ENRICHMENT	23
Parent Sacrament Resource Day	24
Strong Catholic Families Strong Catholic Youth	25
Fortaleciendo Familias en la Fe	26
Mother/Daughter Program	27
Father / Son Program	28
World Marriage Day	29
Marriage Building Program	30
New Day Program	31
Divorce and Beyond	32
P.I.C.K a Partner	33
FAMILY MINISTRY ADVOCACY RESOURCES	34
10 INSPIRING QUOTES FROM AMORIS LAETITIA	36

FAMILY

An Ecclesial Reality

Vision



"The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment. The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses, since 'their mutual belonging is a real representation, through the sacramental sign, of the same relationship between Christ and the Church. The married couple are therefore a permanent reminder for the Church of what took place on the cross; they are for one another and for their children witnesses of the salvation in which they share through the sacrament.'" [AL 72]

Mission



"Few human joys are as deep and thrilling as those experienced by two people who love one another and have achieved something as the result of a great, shared effort." [AL 130]

Family Spirituality



Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and "a school for human enrichment". Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous—even repeated—forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life. [CCC # 1657]

Family Life Office

Diocese of Brownsville
700 N. Virgen de San Juan Blvd.
San Juan, TX 78589
(956) 784-5012
www.cdob.org

Lydia Pesina
Director
lpesina@cdob.org
956-784-5030

Giovanni Ada
Associate Director
gada@cdob.org
956-784-5052

Lydia Riojas
Secretary
familylife@cdob.org
956-784-5012



FAMILY LIFE OFFICE CALENDAR JULY 2025-DECEMBER 2026

July 2025	
12-13	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
19	Convalidation Conference (English)
August 2025	
2	Fully Engaged Sponsor Couple Training (E)
9-10	Retiro
23-24	For Better and Forever Retreat
September 2025	
6-7	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
6	FOCCUS Sponsor Couple Training (E)
20	Convalidation Conference (Spanish)
October 2025	
4	Sponsor Couple Continuing Education (E&S)
11-12	New Life Retreat
18	Fully Engaged Sponsor Couple Training (S)
25-26	Retiro
November 2025	
1-2	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
1	FOCCUS Sponsor Couple Training (S)
15	Convalidation Conference (English)
December 2025	
6-7	For Better and Forever Retreat
January 2026	
3-4	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
3	FOCCUS Sponsor Couple Training (E)
17	Convalidation Conference (Spanish)
24	Mother/Daughter Retreat (English & Spanish)
February 2026	
7-8	New Life Retreat
14	World Marriage Day
21-22	Retiro
28	Fully Engaged Sponsor Couple Training (E)
March 2026	
7	Convalidation Conference (English)
21-22	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
28	Sponsor Couple Continuing Education (E&S)

April 2026	
11-12	For Better and Forever Retreat
18	Fully Engaged Sponsor Couple Training (S)
25-26	Retiro
May 2026	
2-3	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
3	FOCCUS Sponsor Couple Training (S)
16	Convalidation Conference (Spanish)
June 2026	
6-7	New Life Retreat
20	Father/Son Retreat
20	Sponsor Couple Coordinator Training
27-28	For Better and Forever Retreat
July 2026	
11-12	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
18	Convalidation Conference (English)
August 2026	
1	Fully Engaged Sponsor Couple Training (E)
8-9	Retiro
22-23	For Better and Forever Retreat
September 2026	
5-6	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
5	FOCCUS Sponsor Couple Training (E)
19	Convalidation Conference (Spanish)
October 2026	
3	Sponsor Couple Continuing Education (E&S)
10-11	New Life Retreat
17	Fully Engaged Sponsor Couple Training (S)
24-25	Retiro
November 2026	
7-8	Catholic Engaged Encounter Retreat
7	FOCCUS Sponsor Couple Training (S)
21	Convalidation Conference (English)
December 2026	
5-6	For Better and Forever Retreat

DIOCESAN NORMS

The Sacrament of Matrimony

DIOCESAN NORMS FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

April 3, 2024

(Canons 1055-1165)

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 1601 – 1666)

"The LORD God said: 'It is not good for the man to be alone... That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body'" (Gn 2:18, 24)

Introduction

The Catholic Church trusts that when a man and a woman stand before the community to marry each other, the couple will make a free commitment to join lives fully and completely in a life-long faithful covenant that is fruitful in deepening their relationship and in accepting children. Through these holy vows, God promises to be with them to sustain them on their journey together, and to help them love each other with His very own love.

1. Candidates for the Sacrament of Matrimony are any member of the Christian faithful who are free to marry in or by the Catholic Church (i.e. not bound by a previous union or any other civil or ecclesiastical impediment). Baptized non-Catholics and non-baptized persons are also candidates when marrying a Catholic.
2. Documentation: The pastor or appointed delegate witnessing the marriage must be certain that the following documentation is in his possession prior to the wedding ceremony or convalidation.

A properly completed Form V Pre-Nuptial Investigation Form;

A baptismal certificate with all notations issued within a year before the marriage;

Two Affidavits of Free Status for each of the future spouses;

Civil Marriage License issued by the State of Texas at least five days before the date of the marriage ceremony or, for a convalidation, the original or certified copy of the marriage license;

Any needed Dispensations or Permissions; and

If one of the parties is under the age of eighteen, a completed parental consent form.

NB: For non-Catholics all the above documents are required, except a baptismal certificate.

All completed and original documentation for marriage must be submitted and filed at least one month before the date of the marriage celebration, except the Marriage License, which may be brought to the priest no later than five days before the wedding.

DIOCESAN NORMS

The Sacrament of Matrimony

3. To ensure adequate time for marriage preparation, couples planning to marry should contact the parish (of the bride or groom) where the marriage is to take place, at least six months prior to the intended date, to arrange for an initial interview with the pastor or appointed delegate.

NB: The full schedule along with the marriage process may be found in the annual directory published by the Family Life Office.

4. No tentative date will be set or agreed upon before ascertaining the freedom to marry of both parties. A person who was previously married must obtain the necessary dispensations, permissions, and/or declaration of invalidity of the previous marriage(s).
5. In the United States the priest represents both the Church and the State as a witness to a marriage; consequently, couples are not required to marry civilly before the Catholic wedding takes place.
6. When the marriage takes place at a parish other than that of the bride or groom, the pastors involved will coordinate with the Office of the Chancellor to ensure the couple has completed all documentation and preparation.
7. When a cleric not assigned to the parish is to witness the marriage:
 - A. If the visiting cleric has faculties in the Diocese of Brownsville, the pastor must give specific delegation; or
 - B. If the visiting cleric does not have faculties in the Diocese of Brownsville, along with specific delegation the pastor of the parish is to ensure that the visiting cleric is in good standing with their proper diocese/order and is known to the Office of the Chancellor.
8. If the pastor or appointed delegate, at any point during the marriage preparation process, finds that the couple's readiness is questionable, he should seek immediate consultation with qualified resource personnel or with medical and psychological experts if necessary, to ascertain whether to proceed with the marriage ceremony.
9. Request for marriage in the Catholic Church is a unique opportunity for the evangelization and reconciliation of Catholics who do not practice their faith or strongly identify with it. The non-practicing Catholic should be given an opportunity to return to the active practice of the faith and should receive special catechesis in the Catholic faith, in addition to full participation in the marriage preparation process.
10. Pastors are encouraged to offer opportunities for newly married couples to deepen their sacramental bond and become the lead agents in the formation of a new domestic church.

NB: Request for marriage is not a guarantee of marriage. The marriage preparation process allows for the bride and groom to discern the call to marriage with this particular person.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS

Steps to the Altar

Follows # 3 of Diocesan Norms for Sacramental Life of the Church: Sacrament of Matrimony
“To ensure adequate time for marriage preparation, couples planning to marry should contact the parish (of the bride or groom) where the marriage is to take place, **at least six months prior to the intended date**, to arrange for an initial interview with the pastor or appointed delegate.”

1. THE PARISH:

- Welcomes the bride and the groom, determines their freedom to marry, and discusses the documentation that is required.
- Provides an overview of the marriage preparation requirements which include the completion of a FOCCUS or Fully Engaged premarital instrument, the assignment of a parish sponsor couple to assist them in their preparation for their life as a married couple, and information regarding the diocesan marriage preparation retreats available to them.
- Sets a tentative date for the wedding, while making it clear the couple must complete all requirements before setting a fixed date.

2. THE PARISH assigns the engaged to a trained Parish Marriage Sponsor Couple to facilitate the couple's FOCCUS or FULLY ENGAGED Pre-Marital Questionnaire results.

3. THE ENGAGED COUPLE attends four to ten sessions with the Sponsor Couple as an essential part of their Marriage Preparation. (At the completion of the sessions, the sponsor couple will present its findings, evaluation, assessment, and recommendations to the pastor, in writing.)

4. THE PARISH PRIEST OR DEACON recommends the Marriage Preparation Retreat best suited for the engaged couple. (Catholic Engaged Encounter, Retiro Pre-Matrimonial, New Life: Remarriage Retreat, For Better or Forever Retreat, Convalidation Conference).

5. THE ENGAGED COUPLE makes arrangements to attend the retreat shortly after the initial meeting with the pastor to ensure space availability for the desired retreat date by calling the Diocesan Family Life Office **956-784-5012**.

(Note: Persons who married outside the Catholic Church and wish to convalidate their union are expected to participate in the normal assessment and in a preparation process adapted to their needs (E.g. participation in a Convalidation Conference, and/or making use of the REFOCCUS or FULLY ENGAGED CONVALIDATION inventory facilitated by a sponsor couple.)

6. THE ENGAGED COUPLE will receive a careful presentation of the procreative dimension of marriage and on the morally acceptable methods of Natural Family Planning given by trained personnel (at Marriage Preparation Retreat, at Parish, and/or complete Natural Family Planning course)

7. After the requirements of marriage preparation have been completed, **THE PASTOR** will conduct a pastoral follow-up interview with the couple to discuss what insights and growth they have discovered in themselves and in their relationship, and to verify their preparedness and disposition for the celebration of their marriage.

8. THE ENGAGED COUPLE will complete the marriage preparation process **no later than 2 months before the wedding**. This will allow the couple time to identify any serious problems that may exist between them, and, if circumstances warrant it, to consider prolonging or breaking the engagement.

PROCESO DE PREPARACIÓN MATRIMONIAL

Pasos Hacia el Altar

Siguiendo # 3 de las Normas Diocesanas para la Vida Sacramental de la Iglesia: Sacramento del Matrimonio "Para asegurar el tiempo adecuado para la preparación del matrimonio, las parejas que planean casarse o convalidar su unión civil en o por la Iglesia deben comunicarse con la parroquia (de la novia o el novio) donde se llevará a cabo el matrimonio, **al menos seis meses antes de la fecha prevista de la boda o convalidación**, para organizar una entrevista inicial con el párroco o delegado designado. El párroco puede delegar al vicario parroquial o diácono para completar la preparación."

1. LA PARROQUIA:

- Da la bienvenida a los novios, determina su libertad para casarse y discute la documentación que se requiere.
- Ofrece una descripción general de los requisitos de preparación para el matrimonio que incluyen la finalización de un instrumento prematrimonial FOCCUS o Fully Engaged, la asignación de los padrinos de preparación matrimonial de la parroquia para ayudarlos en su preparación para su vida como pareja casada, e información sobre los retiros de preparación matrimonial diocesanos disponibles a ellos.
- Establece una fecha tentativa para la boda, dejando en claro que todos los requisitos deben cumplirse antes de establecer una fecha fija.

2. LA PARROQUIA asigna a los novios a una pareja capacitada como padrinos de preparación matrimonial para facilitar los resultados del cuestionario prematrimonial FOCCUS o Fully Engaged de la pareja.

3. LOS NOVIOs asisten de cuatro a diez sesiones con los padrinos de preparación matrimonial como parte esencial de su preparación matrimonial. (Al finalizar las sesiones, los padrinos de preparación matrimonial presentarán sus hallazgos, evaluación, valoración y recomendaciones al párroco, por escrito).

4. EL PÁRROCO O DIÁCONO recomienda el Retiro de Preparación Matrimonial más adecuado para los novios. (Catholic Engaged Encounter, Retiro Pre-Matrimonial, New Life, For Better or Forever Retreat, Conferencia de Convalidación).

5. LOS NOVIOs hacen arreglos para asistir al retiro poco después de la reunión inicial con el párroco para garantizar la disponibilidad de espacio para la fecha deseada del retiro llamando a la Oficina Diocesana de Vida Familiar al **956-784-5012**.

(**Nota:** Las personas que se casaron fuera de la Iglesia Católica y desean convalidar su unión deben participar en la evaluación normal y en un proceso de preparación adaptado a sus necesidades (por ejemplo, participación en una Conferencia de Convalidación, y/o usando el inventario del REFOCCUS o Fully Engaged Convalidación facilitado por unos padrinos de preparación matrimonial).

6. LOS NOVIOs recibirán una presentación cuidadosa de la dimensión procreadora del matrimonio y de los métodos moralmente aceptables de planificación familiar natural dados por personal capacitado como parte del proceso de preparación del matrimonio (en el Retiro de Preparación Matrimonial, en la Parroquia y/o curso completo de Planificación Familiar Natural).

7. Una vez que se hayan completado los requisitos de preparación para el matrimonio, **EL PÁRROCO** llevará a cabo una entrevista de seguimiento pastoral con la pareja para discutir qué percepciones y crecimiento han descubierto en sí mismos y en su relación, y para verificar su preparación y disposición para la celebración de su matrimonio.

8. LOS NOVIOs completarán el proceso de preparación matrimonial **a más tardar 2 meses antes de la boda**. Esto le dará tiempo a los novios para identificar cualquier problema grave que pueda existir entre ellos y, si las circunstancias lo justifican, considerar prolongar o romper el compromiso.

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY



The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."^{CCC}
#1601

Our Diocesan Marriage Preparation Retreats help couples acquire a better understanding of the Sacrament of Matrimony; allowing the couples to evaluate and strengthen their decision to live a sacramental marriage. It is crucial that they attend the retreat that best conforms to their life circumstances.

For any questions on any of our retreats, please contact the Family Life Office at 956-784-5012.

SACRAMENTAL MARRIAGE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Sample

Groom: _____ Bride: _____ Desired Wedding date: _____

____ 1. **Schedule** Appointment to meet with Priest or Deacon for marriage preparation.

1st Meeting Date _____ Time: _____
2nd Meeting Date _____ Time: _____
3rd Meeting Date _____ Time: _____
4th Meeting Date _____ Time: _____
5th Meeting Date _____ Time: _____
6th Meeting Date _____ Time: _____

____ 2. **Complete** FOCCUS or *Fully Engaged* Couple Inventory.

Date Inventory Taken: _____
Date Inventory Submitted: _____
Date Results Received: _____

____ 3. **Meet** with Sponsor Couple.

Names of SC: _____
Date Assigned: _____ Date SC Evaluation Submitted: _____

____ 4. **Submit** required Affidavits.

Date submitted: _____
Date Priest or Deacon Signed Affidavits: _____

____ 5. **Register** for Diocesan Marriage Preparation Retreat at the Family Life Office, San Juan, TX

Call 956-784-5012 to register (space is limited).
Priest or Deacon assigns appropriate proper retreat.
Retreat assigned: _____
Date of Retreat: _____
Date Certificate Submitted: _____

____ 6. **Submit** Civil Marriage License if currently married civilly.

Date Marriage License submitted: _____

____ 7. **Inform** priest or deacon if currently cohabiting.

____ 8. **Submit** proper documentation if Bride or Groom previously married (Civil or Church).

____ 9. **Obtain** Marriage License at (Hidalgo) Court House.

Needed 1 week before wedding day and bride & groom must both be present with ID's)
Needed by: _____ before 6:00pm Tuesday–Friday.
Submitted on: _____

____ 10. **Select** readings for the wedding ceremony (needed 1 week before wedding day).

Date Readings submitted: _____

____ 10. **Schedule** Wedding Rehearsal.

Date and time of rehearsal: _____
All participants in the wedding party should attend..

MARRIAGE PREPARATION RETREATS

2025-2026 Schedule

Please Note Catholic Engaged Encounter retreat important changes:

The Catholic Engage Encounter is overnight (Saturday morning – Sunday evening) at St. Eugene de Mazenod Renewal Center. The price is \$292.00.

CATHOLIC ENGAGED ENCOUNTER

Is best suited for engaged couples preparing for a Sacramental Marriage and

- * Have never been previously married
- * Are NOT living together
- * Do not have children
- * Are not expecting a child

2025

JAN 4-5 JUL 12-13
MAR 22-23 SEPT 6-7
MAY 3-4 NOV 1-2

2026

JAN 3-4 JUL 11-12
MAR 21-22 SEPT 5-6
MAY 2-3 NOV 7-8

Cost \$ 292 p/couple

RETIRO PREMATRIMONIAL

Este retiro es apropiado para parejas

- * que no han sido casadas
- * que NO viven en union libre
- * que no tienen hijos
- * que prefieren el Español

2025

FEB 8-9 AUG 9-10
APRIL 26-27 OCT 25-26

2026

FEB 21-22 AUG 8-9
APRIL 25-26 OCT 24-25

Cost \$ 130 p/couple

FOR BETTER AND FOREVER RETREAT

Is best suited for engaged couples that find themselves in unique circumstances such as:

- * are living together
- * one or both have child(ren) (but not previously married)
- * are expecting a child
- have been civilly married 1-2 years
- Cannot attend an overnight retreat

2025

APRIL 5-6 AUG 23-24
JUNE 28-29 DEC 6-7

2026

APRIL 11-12 AUG 22-23
JUNE 27-28 DEC 5-6

Cost \$ 145 p/couple

MARRIAGE PREPARATION RETREATS

2025-2026 Schedule

NEW LIFE – REMARRIAGE RETREAT

- * Engaged couples where one or both have been previously married with or without children
- * Engaged couples coming from previous cohabitation relationships 3+years

2025

FEB 1-2
JUNE 7-8
OCT 11-12

2026

FEB 7-8
JUNE 6-7
OCT 10-11

Cost \$ 140 p/couple

CONVALIDATION CONFERENCE

Cost \$ 75 p/couple

Is best suited for:

- Civilly married couples who have been married 3-25+ years
- Cohabiting couples of 3-25+ years

JANUARY 11, 2025	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	SPANISH
MARCH 1, 2025	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	ENGLISH
MAY 17, 2025	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	SPANISH
JULY 19, 2025	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	ENGLISH
SEPTEMBER 20, 2025	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	SPANISH
NOVEMBER 15, 2025	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	ENGLISH
JANUARY 17, 2026	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	SPANISH
MARCH 7, 2026	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	ENGLISH
MAY 16, 2026	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	SPANISH
JULY 18, 2026	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	ENGLISH
SEPTEMBER 19, 2026	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	SPANISH
NOVEMBER 21, 2026	BISHOP MARX CONFERENCE CENTER	ENGLISH

RECOMMENDED RETREAT

I, _____, am recommending that
(Name of priest, deacon, or delegate)
_____ attend the following retreat:
(Name of Couple)

Diocesan Marriage Preparation Retreats

_____ **1) Catholic Engaged Encounter** is best suited for:

Engaged couples preparing for a sacramental marriage as husband and wife and

- * have never been previously married,
- * are not living together
- * do not have children

_____ **2) Retiro Pre-Matrimonial de Dos Días** is best suited for:

Engaged couples preparing for a sacramental marriage as husband and wife and

- * (same as #1)
- * prefer to attend a retreat in Spanish (presentations done in Spanish; written materials in English and Spanish)
- * cannot attend an overnight retreat

_____ **3) For Better and Forever Retreat** is best suited for:

Engaged couple that find themselves in unique circumstances such as

- * are living together
- * one or both have child(ren) (but not previously married)
- * are expecting a child
- * have been civilly married 1-2 years
- * cannot attend an overnight retreat

_____ **4) The New Life/Remarriage Retreat** is best suited for:

Engaged couples where one or both have been previously married
with or without children

Engaged couples coming from previous cohabitation relationships 3+years

_____ **5) The Convalidation Conference** is best suited for:

Civilly married couples who have been married 3-25+ years

Cohabiting couples of 3-25+ years

PRAYER OF THE ENGAGED

God our Father, in your own good care and wisdom, we have come to know each other.

We have come to discover something of the mystery of each other.

Pour out your blessings on us as we love each other for the rest of our lives:
blessings for safety, for strength, for joy.

Help us, as we form a family together, to find a new way to love the families
who have loved and nourished us until now.

In these hectic weeks and afterwards, help us laugh when small plans don't
work out, and make us willing to support each other in real problems.

Let us stay always secure in one another, secure in you, and secure in prayer.

Grace our relationship with the gift of your Holy Spirit,
so that, day by day, our affection may grow
into self-sacrifice, our passion into deep human caring,
and our warm feeling into lasting commitment.

Bring to fulfillment the wonder of your ways that you have begun to reveal to us.

We pray this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



SPONSOR COUPLES

Who and What?

Sponsor Couples are an essential part of a ministry that helps pastors to prepare engaged couples for marriage.

Sponsor Couples **minister** to engaged couples in their own home, which is very helpful for couples with school-aged children.

Sponsor Couples **witness** to engaged couples the sacredness of ordinary life as a committed, Catholic couple lives.

Sponsor Couples **reflect** on and discuss how they themselves are currently living the different aspects of their own marriage (goals, friends, in-laws, religion and values, sexuality, finances, etc.) every time they sponsor a couple. This serves as great marriage enrichment for the Sponsor Couple.

Sponsor Couples **give** the engaged couple an opportunity to discuss many areas of marriage in a confidential setting. They *facilitate* (not counsel or advice) the engaged couple's communication.

Sponsor Couples **pray** with the engaged, evangelize through word and action, and invite/encourage the engaged to participate fully in the life of the parish.

Sponsor Couples **welcome** engaged couples as a "new family" into the life of the Church.

Sponsor Couples **inform** the engaged on the Church's teaching regarding Natural Family Planning and refer to certified NFP teachers for individualized instruction; engaged couples are given an opportunity to learn the Billings Ovulation Method of Family Planning through the diocese's instructors.

Sponsor Couples **emphasize the essential elements of a sacramental marriage:** FIDELITY, LIFE-LONG COMMITMENT, and OPENNESS TO LIFE.

Sponsor Couples **guide** engaged couples to "see" their future spouse more clearly and to say "yes" to this person, graces and warts and all, for the rest of their life, to promise to be faithful, and acknowledge that Christ is at the center of their lives aiding them in beginning this new family with the children that God endows them with.

Sponsor Couples **make** a tremendous contribution to the success and vitality of the Sponsor Couple Program.

SPONSOR COUPLES

Role Description

TITLE: Marriage Sponsor Couple

SUPERVISOR: _____

PURPOSE OF MINISTRY/PROGRAM:

To complement the Marriage Guidelines for marriage preparation in facilitating the engaged couples a better understanding of themselves and the Sacrament of Marriage.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

GENERAL:

To lead the engaged couple through the marriage preparation process as role models, teachers, and facilitators of communication.

SPECIFIC:

1. Review engaged couple's FOCCUS or *Fully Engaged* summary before meeting with them.
2. Set up weekly 2 hour sessions (4-10 sessions at sponsor couple's convenience, but remaining flexible).
3. Welcome couple to your home (keeping normal status of family living - keep it realistic).
4. Pray with couple.
5. Insure confidentiality.
6. Share personal experiences and information.
7. Facilitate engaged couple's communication.
8. Model a healthy (not perfect) married couple.
9. Evangelize through word and action.
10. Respect differences (cultural, values, language, life-style, etc.).
11. Give information on Church's Teaching on Natural Family Planning (including YouTube videos).
12. Obtain evaluations of engaged couple's assessment of the preparation process.
13. Submit written Evaluation of the Marriage Preparation form to pastor or deacon and discuss if necessary.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- * Not perfect couple, but good couple who is willing to keep working a making their marriage better
- * Married at least three years
- * Married in the Catholic Church
- * Ability and desire to share both the difficult and joyful experiences with the engaged couple, thereby being role models of a healthy marriage.
- * Need to be good listeners and be able to facilitate the communication between the engaged couple
- * Have a "sense" of confidentiality

SPONSOR COUPLES

Training and Preparation

TRAINING AND PREPARATION NEEDED:

1. Attendance at Sponsor Couple Training available through FOCCUS, Inc. or the Family Life Office of the Diocese of Brownsville depending on the corresponding marriage preparation inventory used by the parish involved.
2. Diocesan Sponsor Couple Training session – after initial training.
3. Continuing Education at least once a year available through the Family Life Office.
4. Any additional meetings as required by the pastor or sponsor couple coordinator.

EVALUATION:

The appointed supervisor is held accountable to see that the Sponsor Couple Program succeeds, and the supervisor will strive toward this end by reviewing all elements of the Job Description with the sponsor couple at agreed upon times during the year. The sponsor couple will be given an opportunity to continue or change ministry at the end of a one year commitment or any time before if it is determined that the requirements of the Role Description are not being met.

TIME COMMITMENT:

The one – year commitment involves:

1. Registration for appropriate Sponsor Couple Trainings for new couples.
2. Attendance at any agreed-upon meetings with sponsor couple coordinator
3. Attendance at Sponsor Couple Continuing Ed. Sessions for on an annual basis (minimum 1 per year).
4. Schedule time to meet with engaged couples as often as needed [4–10 sessions, with an average of six (6) two–hour sessions]

SIGNATURE OF SPONSOR COUPLE

_____ Date _____

_____ Date _____

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR

_____ Date _____

SUGGESTION BY THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

SPONSOR COUPLES

Program—Training



FOCCUS

In order to properly nurture and support, a married couple discerning to become a Sponsor Couple should reach out to their local pastor to share their interest in responding to this ministry. Upon receiving his approval, the couple should contact **FOCCUS, Inc.** in order to register for appropriate training, assuming that the parish utilizes the FOCCUS inventory as part of their marriage preparation program.

FOCCUS, Inc. USA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building, promoting and enhancing healthy relationships by offering resources and training that "Facilitate Open, Couple, Communication, Understanding and Study." FOCCUS, Inc. USA offers materials that are research-based, affordable, and user-friendly for both professionals and trained lay volunteers.

SPONSOR COUPLES TRAINING



Pre-Marriage Inventory Facilitator Training for Sponsor Couples

Part 1—Register On-Line with FOCCUS Inc.

- On-line modules
- Register on-line with FOCCUS Inc.
- To register for on-line modules prior to on-site training please send an email to foccusrmgr@foccurinc.com with:
Names:
Mailing Address:
City
State
Zip
Email
Phone
Parish name you will be facilitating at
- FOCCUS personnel will setup your FOCCUS account and get the training set up for you.

Part II—On-Site Training—Learn: *(See page 22 for FOCCUS Training dates)*

- the dynamics of communication and facilitation to develop skills used to facilitate the FOCCUS questionnaire with engaged and convalidating couples assigned to you
- how to facilitate the FOCCUS© Pre-marriage inventory
- about The Diocese of Brownsville Synodal Legislation Marriage Preparation Policies
- about Marriage as a Sacrament, Human Sexuality & Married Conjugal Love, & Church Teaching on Natural Family Planning
- Both parts are required to complete the Sponsor Couple Training

SPONSOR COUPLES TRAINING



FULLY ENGAGED is a Catholic, catechetical, premarital inventory and marriage formation program.

Fully Engaged is a Catholic premarital inventory designed to help engaged couples build a foundation for the Sacrament of Marriage. Grounded in Church teaching, this dynamic premarital inventory is a trustworthy guide that meets the real challenges today's couples face.

Fully Engaged helps couples to grow in their Catholic identity by integrating Church teaching into its materials. With the Couple's Workbook and monthly follow up emails, Fully Engaged seeks to ensure that the couple continues to grow in their Sacrament throughout this time of preparation and beyond.



For parishes using ***Fully Engaged*** Sponsor Couple Training, please contact the Family Life Office for training information.

(See page 22 for Fully Engaged Training dates)

SPONSOR COUPLES

Continuing Education - Review / Update

Continuing Education

Sponsor Couple Continuing Education is a learning opportunity to which we encourage every sponsor couple to attend. There are two sessions offered each year with the different topics corresponding to the Marriage Preparation themes covered in FOCCUS and Fully Engaged, such as:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. The Sacrament of Marriage | 5. Personality Match |
| 2. Family of Origin | 6. Intimacy |
| 3. Communication | 7. Financial Issues |
| 4. Problem Solving & Conflict Resolution | 8. ...and other special issues |

(See page 22 for Continuing Education dates)

Review / Update

Review / update is for all sponsor couples, newly trained to very experienced ones. It's a 60 to 90 minutes review / update via zoom that includes Q & A for FOCCUS or Fully Engaged. *Repaso / actualización para facilitadores / padrinos de preparación es para todos los facilitadores recién entrenados o veteranos. Es un repaso de unos 60 a 90 minutos por zoom que incluye tiempo para preguntas de FOCCUS o Fully Engaged.*

(See page 22 for Review / Update dates)

R eview role of Sponsor Couples/ facilitators
E ngage in Questions and Answers
V ideo clips and resources
I nventory/questionnaire review
E njoy sharing experiences
W itness and facilitate through role- playing

R epaso de rol de Padrinos/ Facilitadores
E nterarse de recursos y videos
P reguntas y respuestas
A segurar proceso atraves de dramatizaciones
S istema de declaraciones
O portunidad de compartir experiencias

"As Catholics, we believe marriage is authored by God himself. Unlike institutions that are created by people, marriage is designed by God to establish an intimate community of life an love."

(Gaudium et Spes: 48:1)

SPONSOR COUPLE TRAINING

Schedules

Fully Engaged. 8:00am - 4:30pm. St. Paul Classroom

Fully Engaged English	Fully Engaged Spanish
8/2/25 - Saturday	10/18/25 - Sábado
2/28/26 - Saturday	4/18/2026 - Sábado
8/1/26 - Saturday	10/17/26 - Sábado

FOCCUS. 8:00am - 4:30pm. St. Paul Classroom

FOCCUS English	FOCCUS Spanish
9/6/2025 - Saturday	11/1/2025 - Sábado
1/3/2026 - Saturday	5/2/2026 - Sábado
9/5/2026 - Saturday	11/7/2026 - Sábado

Sponsor Couple Coordinator Training

Date	Time	Location	Language
Sat., June 14, 2025	9-12	St. Paul Classroom	English
Sat., June 20, 2026	9-12	St. Paul Classroom	English

Continuing Education

Date	Time	Location	Language
Sat., October 4, 2025	8:00-4:30	Marx Conference Ctr.	English-Spanish
Sat., March 28, 2026	8:00-4:30	Marx Conference Ctr.	English-Spanish
Sat., October 3, 2026	8:00-4:30	Marx Conference Ctr	English-Spanish

Review / Update Via Zoom. Time: 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Review / Updates in English	Repaso / Actualización en Español
6/17/2025 – Tuesday	7/15/2025 – Martes
8/19/2025 - Tuesday	9/16/2025 – Martes
10/21/2025 – Tuesday	11/18/2025 – Martes
1/20/2026 – Tuesday	12/16/2025—Martes
3/17/2026 – Tuesday	2/17/2026—Martes
5/19/2026 – Tuesday	4/21/2026 – Martes
7/21/2026 – Tuesday	6/16/2026 – Martes
9/15/2026 – Tuesday	8/18/2026 – Martes
11/17/2026 – Tuesday	10/20/2026 – Martes

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

Marriage and Family Enrichment



It is very important to reaffirm the family, which remains the essential cell of society and the Church; young people, who are the face of the Church's future; women, who play a fundamental role in passing on the faith and who are a daily source of strength in a society that carries this faith forward and renews it."

Pope Francis

Sunday, July 28, Address to the Bishops of Brazil

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION TRAINING

One Day Training

FOR WHOM:

Parish staff and volunteers who present “Parent Sacrament Preparation Sessions” for Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation

PURPOSE:

To offer *resources and lessons* that Parish Catechists of Parent Sacrament Sessions can utilize to supplement or enhance existing curriculum (*or just pick up a few new ideas*)

For more information on Sacramental Resources please contact

Family Life Office 956-784-5012

Office of Evangelization and Catechesis 956-784-5040

Ministry with Young People 956-784-5036

Office of Catholic Schools (956)784-5051

San Juan Diego Ministry Institute (956) 784-5059



TALLER DE PREPARACIÓN SACRAMENTAL

Taller de un Día

DIRIGIDO A:

El personal de la parroquia y/o voluntarios que actualmente facilitan sesiones para la Preparación Sacramental de Padres y Padrinos. Esto incluye la Preparación para celebrar el Bautismo, Reconciliación, Eucaristía y Confirmación.

OBJETIVO:

Ofrecer recursos y lecciones que los facilitadores de sesiones para la Preparación Sacramental de Padres y Padrinos pueden utilizar; para suplementar o enriquecer el currículo existente en la parroquia (o

Para mas información sobre Recursos para la Preparación Sacramental

Family Life Office 956-784-5012

Office of Evangelization and Catechesis 956-784-5040

Ministry with Young People 956-784-5036

Office of Catholic Schools (956)784-5051

San Juan Diego Ministry Institute (956) 784-5059



STRONG CATHOLIC FAMILIES STRONG CATHOLIC YOUTH

Family Enrichment

Building Strong Catholic Families... It Takes a Partnership! Partnering with Parents to Bring Home the Faith

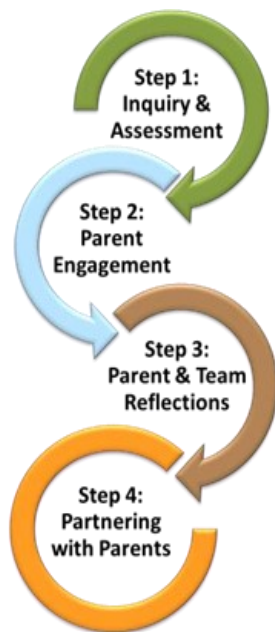
What is Strong Catholic Families About?



Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth is an ongoing parish- or school-based process that engages and strengthens parents and families in growing as a domestic church through a close and vital partnership with the parish and school community.

How Does it Work?

The *Strong Catholic Families* process is made up of four distinct steps that lead to numerous avenues of faith growth within families and the entire faith community.



The process begins with consultations between a diocesan consultant and parish/school leadership. **Step 1** During these meetings, the consultant presents an overview of the *Strong Catholic Families* dynamic and assists the leaders in assessing their readiness to begin building strong Catholic families and in thinking through the implications this direction will have upon current programming and structures. Once the leadership is prepared to make this initial commitment, it begins to assemble a local team of parents and staff to prepare for the next

Step 2 seeks to engage parents through presentations and dialogues with a diocesan-trained presenter who uses contemporary research combined with engaging visuals and pertinent stories to help parents understand the critical role they possess in how faith is lived in their home and especially in their children's lives. Follow-up gatherings will help engage parents in exploring their emerging needs and concerns while exploring practical strategies for how to best grow in faith as a family.

Step 3 involves additional critical reflection and discernment by all involved: staff, leaders, parents, and the local *Strong Catholic Families* Team, concerning the next steps in partnering with one another to empower and support family faith growth.

Step 4 is an ongoing and evolving movement comprised of implementing new strategies, further reflection and evaluation, and continued commitment to supporting the growing partnerships between the institutional church/school and the domestic church. This cycle continues throughout the years ahead as more and more families become empowered to grow in their Catholic faith.

For more information please contact us to Begin Building *Strong Catholic Families* Today!

FORTALECIENDO FAMILIAS EN LA FE

Family Enrichment

¿De qué se trata Fortaleciendo Familias en la Fe ?



FFF es un proceso para cultivar y desarrollar la iglesia doméstica a través de una asociación entre la parroquia y/o escuela y los padres de familia.

¿Cómo funciona?

El proceso FFF consta de cuatro pasos a desarrollar que conlleva a numerosas opciones de crecimiento en la fe dentro de la familia y en la comunidad de fe en general.

El proceso comienza

Paso #1 con una consulta entre un consultor diocesano y los líderes de la comunidad parroquial y/o escuela. Durante esta reunión, el consultor presentará un resumen del contenido de FFF para evaluar el interés y la disponibilidad de la comunidad parroquial en el desarrollo de familias católicas enraizadas en la fe, y así analizar las implicaciones que trae este nuevo proceso a la formación de fe actual. Una vez que los líderes de la comunidad parroquial y/o escuela están dispuestos a iniciar este compromiso, se empieza a buscar un equipo parroquial para que lleven a cabo los próximos pasos



En el segundo paso

Paso # 2 se ofrece a los padres con sus hijos una presentación de dos horas y una oportunidad de diálogo con el presentador, quien utiliza los resultados de una investigación actual, por medio de una combinación de recursos visuales y testimonios. Esto les ayudará a comprender lo importante que es su rol y la responsabilidad que ellos tienen, en cómo se cultiva la fe en sus hogares y específicamente en la vida de sus hijos. Se llevan a cabo reuniones de seguimientos para involucrar más a estos padres y seguir hablando acerca de sus necesidades, mientras juntos buscamos maneras para crecer en la fe.

Paso # 3 El tercer paso es una revisión y discernimiento para todos los involucrados: los líderes de la comunidad parroquial y/o escuela, los padres de familia, y el equipo parroquial de FFF, sobre los futuros pasos a seguir de cómo llegar a obtener el objetivo de dar apoyo y motivar a las familias a crecer en la fe.

Paso # 4 El cuarto paso es un desarrollo continuo y evolutivo que lleva a implementar nuevas estrategias después de reflexionar y evaluar el compromiso de la Iglesia institucional y la iglesia doméstica. Y este desarrollo continuo, año tras año, sigue fortaleciendo familias católicas enraizadas en la fe.

¡Comuníquese con nosotros para comenzar a fortalecer familias en la fe!

*Diocese of Brownsville - Family Life Office
Presents a very special occasion*



*Mother Daughter
Program*



Moms are invited to spend a morning/afternoon with their 10-12 year old daughter(s). Mother and daughter Will be able to learn about God's plan for them through the gift of fertility, sexuality and holiness of chastity. Explore together the grace of God's special gifts to girls and women.

.....
Madres e hijas (de 10-12 años) están invitadas a disfrutar de un programa donde podrán conocer más sobre el plan de Dios para ellas, el regalo de la fertilidad, sexualidad y la santidad de la castidad. Juntas podrán conocer más sobre la gracia del regalo especial que Dios ha dado a la mujer

Saturday, January 24, 2026
9:00am - 12:00pm (English) 2:00pm-5:00pm (Español)
Bishop Adolf Marx Conference Center - San Juan, TX
(on Raul Longoria across from Stripes)
Early registration \$15.

Please complete the registration form below and submit payment to:

Mother's Name	Daughter's Name	Age
Parish	Daughter's Name	Age
Address	City	
Home Phone	Cell Phone	
E-mail	Eng	Español
Payment amount: _____ paid: money order _____ credit/ debit card _____		

The Diocese of Brownsville
Family Life Office
PRESENTS



\$10 PER FAMILY (NON REFUNDABLE)
FEE INCLUDE SNACK AND MATERIALS

June 20, 2026
8:00AM-1:00PM

Bishop Adolf Marx Conference Center
[East of the Basilica (San Juan)
across from Stripes]

JUST AT THAT MOMENT...

Father and son will experience a great time as they reflect on what it means to be a man of Christian values, the move to manhood and God's terrific plan for today's heroes!

Reservation is required

Father - Son Program Registration Form

Please complete the registration form below and submit it and \$10.00 to:
Family Life Office 700 N. Virgen de San Juan Blvd. San Juan, TX 78589
PH.956-784-5012

Father's Name	Son's Name	Age
Parish	Son's Name	Age
Address	City	
Home Phone	Cell Phone	
E-mail		
Payment amount: _____ paid: cash _____ check _____ money order _____		
Received: _____		Date _____

WORLD MARRIAGE DAY

Annual World Marriage Day Mass

Celebrated the second Saturday of February every year at the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle National Shrine.

This special Mass honors couples celebrating their

10th, 20th, 25th, 30th, 40th, 50th, 60th or more

wedding anniversary.

Couples receive a certificate signed by the Bishop through the mail the week following the Mass.

February 14, 2026

The Family Life Office sponsors this wonderful event every year honoring married couples for their commitment to love and faithfulness in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

These couples bear witness to God's love to the young people in their families, as well as to young people everywhere.

To register for this event,
you may call the
Family Life Office
at **956-784-5012**.



In that variety of gifts and encounters which deepen communion, God has his dwelling place.
This mutual concern “brings together the human and the divine”, for it is filled with the love of God.

In the end, marital spirituality is a spirituality of the bond, in which divine love dwells.

[AL 315]

MARRIAGE BUILDING PROGRAM

This program focusses on:

- Strengthen couples in their love for God and each other.
- Offer greater insight into God's plan for marriage.
- Encourage development and growth in the prayer lives of the spouses.
- Foster a deeper appreciation and living out of the sacraments.
- Provide practical suggestions to assist couples in living out their vocation faithfully and joyfully.
- Build up parish life and promote the sacramentality of Marriage.
- Highlight the importance of Mary for marriage and family life and encourage Marian devotion.



SAVE THE DATE

NEW DAY PROGRAM

Enrichment and Healing

The New Day Program offers a structured approach to facing the death of a loved one. It is based on the belief that writing and sharing one's thoughts, feelings and experiences is one of the most helpful ways to move beyond pain and loss.

This ten session program includes prayer, presentation, writing, and small group work to guide participants to enter and / or continue the process of accepting the reality of loss; experiencing the pain of grief; adjusting to life without the deceased, and work towards moving on with life.

Participants are asked to commit to all ten sessions and participate actively. Presentations and small group interactions will help the grieving person organize their thoughts and concerns more productively by reflecting on the transition they are experiencing and allow the grace of God to guide them through the process.

* The Family Life Office offers facilitators training to parish volunteers interested in initiating the New Day Program through San Juan Diego Ministry Institute.

Please call us @ 956-784-5012



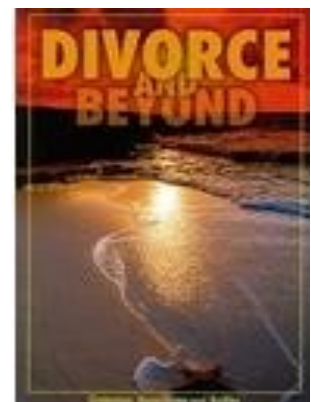
DIVORCE AND BEYOND

Enrichment and Healing

This program is geared towards people that are divorced or in the process of getting a divorce. It consists of ten sessions that focus on what happens to both spouses after the divorce. Such sessions include the process of divorce, self-image, stress, anger, guilt, loneliness, forgiveness, happiness, and growth. The program encourages participants to comprehend and recognize the situation at hand, and realize that others have gone through the same tribulations. It offers concepts to help the person go through the grieving process. Participants are asked to commit to all ten sessions and participate actively. Presentations and small group interactions will help the divorcee organize their thoughts and concerns more productively by reflecting on the transition they are experiencing and allow the grace of God to guide them through the process.

* The Family Life Office offers materials and support to parishes interested in initiating the Divorce and Beyond Program.

Please call us @ 956-784-5012



PICK A PARTNER

Enrichment



P.I.C.K a Partner

(HOW TO AVOID MARRYING A JERK /JERKETTE)

This Five Week Program is based on John Van Epp's P.I.C.K. Program "Pre-marital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge". The Family Life Office is offering this program as a Proximate Marriage Preparation Program. Unlike our Immediate Marriage Preparation Programs which we offer to engaged couples, this program is designed to provide singles with a plan for pacing a relationship and exploring the key areas that foreshadow what a partner will be like in marriage. It teaches a way to build a healthy relationship that keeps the heart and the head working together.

Based on significant research and theory, Dr. Van Epp's proven methods in How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk /Jerkette maximize the potential of finding "the one" by giving singles the tools to focus on the crucial characteristics of a loving, lasting, relationship.

Included in the five sessions will be Catholic Church teachings on the sanctity and sacredness of a Sacramental Marriage.

For more information please call the Family Life Office @ 956-784-5012

RESOURCES

Family Ministry Advocacy

Family Ministry Apostolates

Marriage Encounter: <http://www.wwme.org>

Marriage Encounter provides a weekend get-away for a married couple who want to rediscover each other, and together focus on their relationship as husband and wife.

Couples for Christ:

Gerry Obnial

956-867-2736

(Updated 2024-1-25)

Movimiento Familiar Cristiano:

DELEGADOS REGIONAL, TEXAS REGION 11

Antonio & Rosario Martinez

Cell: 956-221-1180

(Updated 2024-1-25)

Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial: www.wwme.org

Contact Couple-Leaders/Coordinadores Generales- El Valle

Yadira & Jorge Rivera

Cell: 956-648-0000

(Updated 2024-1-25)

Apostolado de la Cruz - Zona VII

Karina Rivera (Enlace)

Cell: 914-330-5369

Email: lamera30@hotmail.com

(Updated 2024-1-25)

AMORIS LAETITIA 309



“The Church is commissioned to proclaim the mercy of God,
the beating heart of the Gospel,
which in its own way must penetrate the mind
and heart of every person.

The Bride of Christ must pattern her behavior
after the Son of God
who goes out to everyone
without exception”.

She knows that Jesus himself
Is the shepherd of the hundred,
not just of the ninety-nine.

He loves them all.

On the basis of this realization, it will become possible for
“the balm of mercy to reach everyone, believers and those far away,
as a sign that the kingdom of God is already
present in our midst”.

AMORIS LAETITIA

10 Inspiring Quote by Pope Francis

1. "I thank God that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfil their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way. The Synod's reflections show us that there is no stereotype of the ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities, with all their joys, hopes and problems." [57]
2. "Just as a good wine begins to 'breathe' with time, so too the daily experience of fidelity gives married life richness and 'body'." [231]
3. "The life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises, yet these are also part of its dramatic beauty. Couples should be helped to realize that surmounting a crisis need not weaken their relationship; instead, it can improve, settle and mature the wine of their union." [232]
4. "I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, 'always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street'." [308]
5. "We have been called to form consciences, not replace them." [37]
6. "Few human joys are as deep and thrilling as those experienced by two people who love one another and have achieved something as the result of a great, shared effort." [130]
7. "I think, for example, of the speed with which people move from one affective relationship to another. They believe, along the lines of social networks, that love can be connected or disconnected at a whim of the consumer, and the relationship quickly 'blocked'... We treat affective relationships the way we treat material objects and the environment: everything is disposable; everyone uses and throws away, takes and breaks, exploits and squeezes to the last drop. Then, goodbye." [39]
8. "Young love needs to keep dancing towards the future with immense hope." [219]
9. "Here let me say a word to fiancés. Have the courage to be different. Don't let yourselves get swallowed up by a society of consumption and empty appearances. What is important is the love you share, strengthened and sanctified by grace. You are capable of opting for a more modest and simple celebration in which love takes precedence over everything else." [212]
10. "Love needs time and space; everything else is secondary." [224]