

FRAMEWORK FOR  
**MARRIAGE PREPARATION**  
& ACCOMPANIMENT



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE



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# LETTER FROM BISHOP LUCIA

Dear Brothers in Christ,

The Vatican Dicastery of Laity, Family, and Life issued the Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life: Pastoral guidelines for local Churches as an essential path forward in the formation of future spouses for the holy sacrament of marriage. It is the most fundamental mission of the Church to “proclaim the Gospel at all times,” to provide for each and every soul an opportunity to encounter Jesus. No venture or task we undertake is ever removed from this call. As couples come before us requesting the Sacrament of Marriage, it is of paramount importance that we seize this opportunity of evangelization to renew the sacrament as a sacred sign of God’s love and the family as an icon of the Most Blessed Holy Trinity.

In the opening of Catechumenal Pathways, the Church is reminded “although beginning with the concrete experience of human love, faith and personal encounter with Christ should be placed at the center of marriage preparation” (Catechumenal Pathways, #16).

“Today more than ever, this preparation is presented as a true and proper occasion for the evangelization of adults and, often, of the so-called distant ones. There are, indeed, numerous young people for whom the approach of the wedding is an opportunity to encounter once again the faith which has long been relegated to the margins of their lives; ...It can be, therefore, an advantageous time for renewing their encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, with the message of the Gospel and with the teaching of the Church” (Francis, Address on the Inauguration of the Judicial Year of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, 21 January 2017).

For this reason, I am issuing guidelines for marriage preparation with a view of accompanying couples to a deeper conversion and formation in the Sacrament of Marriage as a call to discipleship, that couples may participate in the Church’s universal work of holiness and mission with ever deeper interior commitment. This approach to the catechumenal process of marriage preparation involves an emphasis on mentorship that is deeply rooted in a long-term commitment on the part of parish communities to the salvation of souls and the virtues that form a free, total, faithful, and fruitful bond between spouses for life-long sacramental marriage.

This formation does not conclude at the celebration of the wedding nuptials. This process and commitment on the part of the church must carry over into those most vulnerable early years of marriage, where couples may be fully integrated into the life of the parish community through various efforts at intentional accompaniment and personal invitation. Where the church is present and available to walk together with couples in vulnerable stages of marriage, we remind them of the graces offered in the Sacrament, the full meaning and dignity of human life, affirmation of the family as the cornerstone of society, and more personally - the ever present love of God to each of them as his beloved sons and daughters.

In this spirit, please find enclosed the updated Framework for Marriage Preparation and Accompaniment in the Syracuse Diocese as well as the Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life and Called to the Joy of Love, a pastoral framework from the USCCB.

I encourage you to collaborate with the Office of Family/Respect Life Ministry who can assist you with implementing the guidelines into the life of your parish.

Thank you for the gift of your priestly ministry and your desire to bring Christ to the world!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a thin vertical rectangular border on the right side.

Most Rev. Douglas J. Lucia  
Bishop of Syracuse

# FRAMEWORK FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION & ACCOMPANIMENT

The Order of Christian Initiation for Adults offers a framework from which parishes can order their preparation process. The phases of preparation do not have a definitive end, and the Order invites the faithful to continue the mystagogy through an ongoing process of accompaniment.

The same should be true for the formulation of a marriage preparation process in the parish. This requires not another program, but a new pastoral approach emphasizing accompaniment, conversion, and catechesis. A most effective means is through the formation of a core team equipped with tools to carry out this mission.

The Office of Family/Respect Life Ministry recommends the discernment and invitation of a core team of mentors/mentor couples who would share the load in collaboration with priests and deacons and who, upon request, would be provided with accompaniment and training through diocesan offices.



PHASE	PRE-CATECHUMENAL Child - Adult	INTERMEDIATE 13 months before	CATECHUMENAL 12 months before; 1-2 months before; First 5 years			MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT & CRISIS SUPPORT Anytime
STAGE	Foundational Remote	Welcoming of Couples	Stage 1: Proximate	Stage 2: Immediate	Stage 3: First Years	Ongoing
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Kerygma</li> <li>• Invitation to conversion</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of God's will</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of vocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evangelistic encounter with Christ</li> <li>• Determination of Freedom to Marry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate couples into the Sacrament of Marriage</li> <li>• Direct mentorship &amp; catechesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare couple for a free, conscious, and fruitful participation in sacramental marriage</li> <li>• Nurture growth in faith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompany first five years of marriage</li> <li>• Ongoing conversion</li> <li>• Deepen relationship with God, spouse, &amp; the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support for married couples</li> <li>• Encourage missionary discipleship</li> </ul>
CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacraments of initiation</li> <li>• Invitation to personal encounter with Jesus</li> <li>• Christian Understanding of the Human Person (Theology of the Body)</li> <li>• Concept of self-giving love</li> <li>• Virtue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Propose kerygma and invite to conversion</li> <li>• Accompany couple to discern the call to marriage</li> <li>• Complete Pre-Marital Index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theology of Marriage</li> <li>• Couple's relationship</li> <li>• Chastity</li> <li>• Prayer life</li> <li>• Participation in the life of the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral virtues</li> <li>• Continued catechesis on Sacrament of Marriage</li> <li>• Liturgy preparation</li> <li>• Wedding rehearsal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in discipleship and mission</li> <li>• Healthy relationships</li> <li>• Parenting</li> <li>• Infertility and miscarriage</li> <li>• Mission of Marriage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide regular gathering opportunities for couples and families to grow in mission and holiness</li> <li>• Offer information about ministries of healing for managing transitions, conflicts, and crises</li> </ul>
RITEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacraments of Initiation</li> <li>• Continued reception of Sacraments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry into Marriage Catechumenate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Betrothal (Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacrament of Reconciliation</li> <li>• Marriage (Order of Celebrating Matrimony)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option: Order of Blessing a Married Couple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewal of Marriage Vows (Order of Blessing a Married Couple)</li> </ul>
MINISTRY GOALS	<p><b>Intentional Accompaniment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish identity as beloved child of God</li> <li>• Help families form their children as disciples of Jesus</li> <li>• Share concept &amp; process of discerning God's will</li> <li>• Establish ministry mentors to accompany through each stage</li> <li>• Establish Christian community to assist families/individuals</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intentional Accompaniment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce/ assess where individuals are on evangelization scale</li> <li>• Develop relationship of trust with priest, deacon, or mentor</li> <li>• Proclaim the Good News of Sacramental Marriage</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intentional Accompaniment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Christian formation for married life and discipleship</li> <li>• Finalize discernment of vocation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intentional Accompaniment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued meetings with priest, deacon, or mentor to prepare for celebration of Rite of Marriage and to live sacramental marriage vows; free, faithful, fruitful, and forever</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intentional Accompaniment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued mentorship and immersion into community of faith</li> <li>• Invitation to Adult Faith Formation and Marriage Ministries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intentional Accompaniment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support for married couples through enrichment and pastoral care</li> </ul>
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baptismal Prep (ie. <i>Belonging</i> (Ascension Press), <i>Reborn</i> (FORMED))</li> <li>• Family Faith Formation (ie. Trinity House*)</li> <li>• LoveEd*</li> <li>• Youth Ministry (ie. TOB for Teens, You (Ascension))</li> <li>• Young Adult Ministry</li> <li>• Theology on Tap</li> <li>• CCO Faith Studies, Kerygmatic encounters*</li> <li>• Parish Ministry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss relationship with God (use relationships diagram from CCO)</li> <li>• Invite into CCO Faith Studies*, Alpha, etc.</li> <li>• Go through Pre-Martial Investigation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marriage Mentorship with inventory (Prepare/Enrich, FOCUS)</li> <li>• NFP orientation**</li> <li>• Intro to Theology of the Body***</li> <li>• Discuss relationship with God and call to conversion and discipleship</li> <li>• Invite further growth through CCO studies (Source, Trust, Growth)*</li> <li>• Bless couple at Mass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diocesan* or Parish Marriage Preparation Retreat/Class</li> <li>• Accompaniment with mentors</li> <li>• Small group community gatherings</li> <li>• Invitation to begin or continue studies for growth in discipleship</li> <li>• Book: <i>Love &amp; Responsibility</i> (St. Pope John Paul II)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual dinner with recently married couples</li> <li>• Trinity House Gatherings*</li> <li>• Family Catechesis at parish level</li> <li>• Invitation to join or develop a Marriage Ministry Team</li> <li>• Develop a Mommy &amp; Me Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish Date Nights &amp; Family gatherings</li> <li>• Marriage Ministry*</li> <li>• The Third Option*</li> <li>• Infertility/Miscarriage Support*</li> <li>• Trinity House Gatherings*</li> <li>• Marriage Ministry Core Teams*</li> <li>• Life-Giving Wounds Ministry for Adult Children of Divorce*</li> <li>• Project Rachel (post-abortion healing)*</li> <li>• Resources to overcome pornography*</li> <li>• Resources for Catholic Counseling*</li> </ul>

\* Programs/resources offered by the Family/Respect Life Office

\*\* NFP (Offered through Family/Respect Life Office - [syracusenfp.org](http://syracusenfp.org) or Couple to Couple League - [learnnfp.org/natural-plan/](http://learnnfp.org/natural-plan/))

\*\*\*Intro to Theology of the Body (Book: *Good News About Sex & Marriage*), Joy-Filled Marriage (Ascension Press online series)

# PHASES & STAGES OF PREPARATION

The *Catechumenal Pathways for Marriage* recommends the formulation of three phases of marriage preparation which include three separate stages of preparation.



## PRE-CATECHUMENAL - REMOTE

PRE-CATECHUMENAL Child - Adult	INTERMEDIATE 13 months before	CATECHUMENAL 12 months before; 1-2 months before; First 5 years			MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT & CRISIS SUPPORT Anytime
		Foundational Remote	Welcoming of Couples	Stage 1: Proximate	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Kerygma</li> <li>• Invitation to conversion</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of God's will</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of vocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evangelistic encounter with Christ</li> <li>• Determination of Freedom to Marry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate couples into the Sacrament of Marriage</li> <li>• Direct mentorship &amp; catechesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare couple for a free, conscious, and fruitful participation in sacramental marriage</li> <li>• Nurture growth in faith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompany first five years of marriage</li> <li>• Ongoing conversion</li> <li>• Deepen relationship with God, spouse &amp; the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support for married couples</li> <li>• Encourage missionary discipleship</li> </ul>

### A. Pre-Catechumenal - Remote (Childhood, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry)

Involves invitation to conversion, catechesis, reflection, discernment of sacramental call/vocation (age appropriate)



# INTERMEDIATE

PRE-CATECHUMENAL Child - Adult	INTERMEDIATE 13 months before	CATECHUMENAL 12 months before; 1-2 months before; First 5 years			MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT & CRISIS SUPPORT Anytime
Foundational Remote	Welcoming of Couples	Stage 1: Proximate	Stage 2: Immediate	Stage 3: First Years	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Kerygma</li> <li>• Invitation to conversion</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of God's will</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of vocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evangelistic encounter with Christ</li> <li>• Determination of Freedom to Marry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate couples into the Sacrament of Marriage</li> <li>• Direct mentorship &amp; catechesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare couple for a free, conscious, and fruitful participation in sacramental marriage</li> <li>• Nurture growth in faith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompany first five years of marriage</li> <li>• Ongoing conversion</li> <li>• Deepen relationship with God, spouse &amp; the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support for married couples</li> <li>• Encourage missionary discipleship</li> </ul>

## B. Intermediate - (as soon as possible after engagement)

Involves a period of evangelization, reception of candidates and ritual of entry into the catechumenate

# CATECHUMENAL

PRE-CATECHUMENAL Child - Adult	INTERMEDIATE 13 months before	CATECHUMENAL 12 months before; 1-2 months before; First 5 years			MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT & CRISIS SUPPORT Anytime
Foundational Remote	Welcoming of Couples	Stage 1: Proximate	Stage 2: Immediate	Stage 3: First Years	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Kerygma</li> <li>• Invitation to conversion</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of God's will</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of vocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evangelistic encounter with Christ</li> <li>• Determination of Freedom to Marry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate couples into the Sacrament of Marriage</li> <li>• Direct mentorship &amp; catechesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare couple for a free, conscious, and fruitful participation in sacramental marriage</li> <li>• Nurture growth in faith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompany first five years of marriage</li> <li>• Ongoing conversion</li> <li>• Deepen relationship with God, spouse &amp; the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care and safeguard marriages.</li> <li>• Integrate into missionary discipleship.</li> </ul>

## C. Catechumenal – Proximate, Immediate, First Years - (begins 12+ months prior to wedding)

# PROXIMATE - STAGE 1

PRE-CATECHUMENAL Child - Adult	INTERMEDIATE 13 months before	CATECHUMENAL 12 months before; 1-2 months before; First 5 years			MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT & CRISIS SUPPORT Anytime
Foundational Remote	Welcoming of Couples	Stage 1: Proximate	Stage 2: Immediate	Stage 3: First Years	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Kerygma</li> <li>• Invitation to conversion</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of God's will</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of vocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evangelistic encounter with Christ</li> <li>• Determination of Freedom to Marry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate couples into the Sacrament of Marriage</li> <li>• Direct mentorship &amp; catechesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare couple for a free, conscious, and fruitful participation in sacramental marriage</li> <li>• Nurture growth in faith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompany first five years of marriage</li> <li>• Ongoing conversion</li> <li>• Deepen relationship with God, spouse &amp; the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support for married couples</li> <li>• Encourage missionary discipleship</li> </ul>

## 1. Stage 1: Proximate preparation (12 months from wedding)

### a) Pastoral and catechetical formation of spouses

Direct mentorship and catechesis (invitation or re-invitation to conversion and discipleship and catechesis on sacramental marriage)

### b) Canonical investigation

### c) Rite of Betrothal (Ideally performed during liturgy for the entire faith community to recognize)

### d) Two clarifications

1. Couples who already live together, have a civil marriage and have children (these situations call for personalized accompaniment - see #25 in *Catechumenal Pathways*)

2. Pastoral care should be considered when inviting couples to participate in rites of betrothal - see #26 in *Catechumenal Pathways*



## IMMEDIATE - STAGE 2

PRE-CATECHUMENAL Child - Adult	INTERMEDIATE 13 months before	CATECHUMENAL 12 months before; 1-2 months before; First 5 years			MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT & CRISIS SUPPORT Anytime
Foundational Remote	Welcoming of Couples	Stage 1: Proximate	Stage 2: Immediate	Stage 3: First Years	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Kerygma</li> <li>• Invitation to conversion</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of God's will</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of vocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evangelistic encounter with Christ</li> <li>• Determination of Freedom to Marry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate couples into the Sacrament of Marriage</li> <li>• Direct mentorship &amp; catechesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare couple for a free, conscious, and fruitful participation in sacramental marriage</li> <li>• Nurture growth in faith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompany first five years of marriage</li> <li>• Ongoing conversion</li> <li>• Deepen relationship with God, spouse &amp; the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support for married couples</li> <li>• Encourage missionary discipleship</li> </ul>

1. **Stage 2:** Final preparation (1-3 months from wedding)
  - a) Liturgy planning
  - b) Diocesan or Parish Retreat (ex: one day Diocesan Marriage Prep Class)
  - c) Continued accompaniment, mentorship, and enrichment

## FIRST YEARS - STAGE 3

PRE-CATECHUMENAL Child - Adult	INTERMEDIATE 13 months before	CATECHUMENAL 12 months before; 1-2 months before; First 5 years			MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT & CRISIS SUPPORT Anytime
Foundational Remote	Welcoming of Couples	Stage 1: Proximate	Stage 2: Immediate	Stage 3: First Years	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Kerygma</li> <li>• Invitation to conversion</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of God's will</li> <li>• Introduce discernment of vocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evangelistic encounter with Christ</li> <li>• Determination of Freedom to Marry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate couples into the Sacrament of Marriage</li> <li>• Direct mentorship &amp; catechesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare couple for a free, conscious, and fruitful participation in sacramental marriage</li> <li>• Nurture growth in faith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompany first five years of marriage</li> <li>• Ongoing conversion</li> <li>• Deepen relationship with God, spouse &amp; the Church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support for married couples</li> <li>• Encourage missionary discipleship</li> </ul>

1. **Stage 3:** First Years of Marriage (1-3 years after wedding)
  - a) Invitation to build community (ex: dinner for recently married couples alongside mentors, priests, deacons)
  - b) Accompaniment through initial follow-ups - mentor check-ins and direction to resources for additional supports
  - c) Option: Order of Blessing a Married Couple
  - d) Integration into parish life, evangelization, vocational enrichment and outreach ministries

# THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP

## Mentorship: Why does it matter?

“...The Church must go beyond a type of formation which is solely intellectual, theoretical, and general (i.e. religious literacy) when engaging with those who intend to marry. We need to walk with them along a path that leads to **an encounter with Christ**, or to deepen this relationship, and assist them in making an authentic discernment of their own vocation to marriage, both on a personal and interpersonal level. (*Catechumenal Pathways #5*)

”**It is the duty of the entire ecclesial community** to elaborate a catechumenal pathway for marriage preparation and to offer concrete accompaniment to couples along this path. The journey should be shared among priests, Christian spouses, religious men and women, and pastoral workers, who must collaborate among themselves and in agreement with their bishop. **Marriage is not only a social act; for Christians, it is an “ecclesial” act.** Therefore, the whole Church, as the body of Christ, takes charge of it, and feels the need to be of service to future families.” (*Catechumenal Pathways #6*)

“Married couples must also play a primary role alongside priests and religious. **The preparation of couples for marriage is a true work of evangelization**, and the lay faithful, especially married couples, receive an equally important call as religious and ordained ministers to participate in the Church’s evangelizing mission: they are pastoral workers. Because of their unique experience, they can offer concrete support along the journey of accompaniment by intervening as witnesses and companions of couples, both before and during marriage, regarding many aspects of married life (emotional, sexual, communicational, and spiritual) and family life (duties of care and nurturing, openness to life, reciprocal self-offering, raising children, and mutual support in daily labors, difficulties, and illness).” (*Catechumenal Pathways #10*)

## The Art of Accompaniment

The Office of Family/Respect Life Ministry will host **three Mentor Orientation workshops** throughout the year to prepare mentors/ mentor couple core teams for mentorship. **The full day training session** will introduce Mentorship skills:

1. **proper disposition and role of mentor,**
2. **practical skills for accompaniment, and**
3. **marriage accompaniment as a natural part of evangelization.**

The Office of Family/Respect Life will also arrange for **mentor training and certification** in the **Prepare/Enrich Catholic Marriage Pre-Marital Inventory**. The training offers facilitator skill building, tools for reviewing marriage inventory results (to focus on areas of strength and growth for the engaged couple), and provides skill building exercises and discussion prompts.



## Forming Marriage Mentorship Ministry in Parish Life

### 1. Discern mentor/mentor couple candidates

Criterion: FACT

- Faithful
- Available
- Contagious
- Teachable

### 2. Contact The Office of Family/Respect Life Ministry with names and contact information for mentors/mentor couples to begin the mentorship team building process.

The Family/Respect Life Office will:

- Share registration information for Marriage Mentor Orientation Workshop offered by Family/Respect Life
- Arrange Prepare/Enrich facilitator's training (Family/Respect Life Office can assist with cost, if needed)

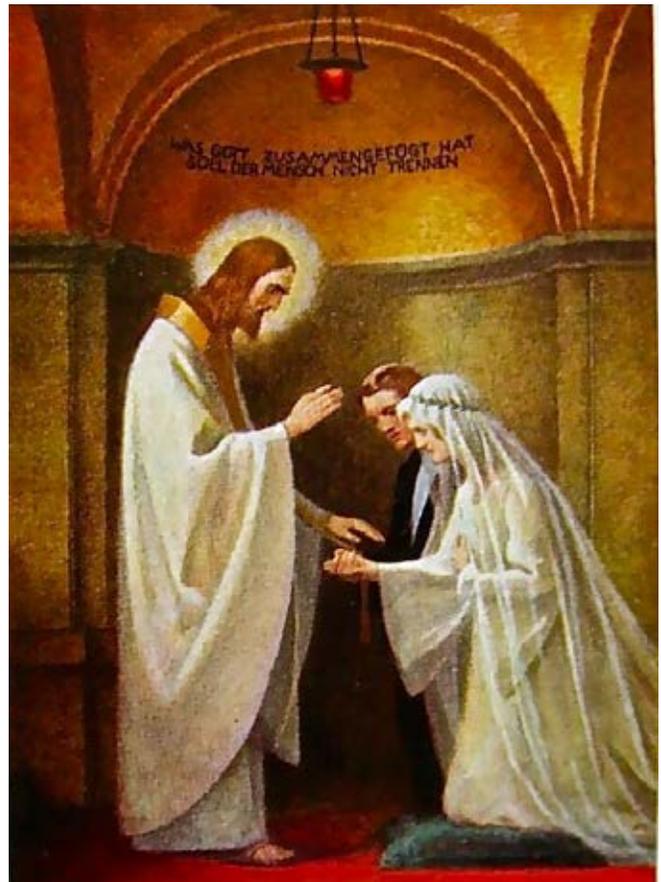
## On-Going Accompaniment of Married Couples

*Catechumenal Pathways* emphasizes the on-going work of accompaniment of newly married couples including offering rites, opportunities for fellowship, and ongoing enrichment. This must be an intentional and integral part of parish mission planning.

Some avenues of fostering this would be to\*:

- Invite couples married within the past year to an annual dinner with marriage ministry/mentor couples, pastor, and deacons.
- Invite recently married couples (perhaps around World Marriage Day) to a liturgy which includes vow renewal, blessing of the rings, and special prayer intentions with a light reception afterwards.
- Connect couples who are engaged, married within the past 3-5 years, and parents of recently baptized babies/children through intentional outreach.
- Include recently married couples in targeted small group experiences (CCO faith studies, Genesis Mission, marriage enrichment or parenting workshops, etc.)
- Invite couples to be trained as mentors or to develop a marriage ministry core team.

*\*Office of Family/Respect Life can provide/facilitate vetted programs and resources.*





# MARRIAGE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- Date and time of the wedding** should be arranged with the parish office staff and confirmed by the presiding cleric 12 months prior.
- Catechesis on relationship with Christ and the Theology of Marriage:**
  - Go through a vetted program to invite couples to conversion and discipleship and build a marriage centered on Christ. The Family/Respect Life Office can offer programs (Discovery, Joined By Grace, etc) or train people in parishes to offer them.
  - Go through a pre-marital inventory to discover the couples' specific strengths and areas for growth and share exercises in areas where growth is indicated. The Family/Respect Life Office uses Prepare/Enrich.
  - Go through a program developed by the pastor and/or parish.
  - Provide a mentor couple to meet with engaged couple to provide intentional accompaniment
- Complete Pre-Marriage Investigation form with the presiding clergy member.**
  - Schedule PMI meeting with priest/deacon.
  - The type of ceremony (rite) should be clarified with the priest/deacon. Review of liturgical readings, involvement of relatives/friends as Lectors and presenters of the Eucharistic gifts.
  - Music arrangements should be made with the Director of Music at least 6 weeks in advance of the ceremony.
  - If there has been a previous marriage for either party, it is absolutely necessary that the presiding clergy member be contacted regarding the status of freedom to marry. If an annulment has been obtained by a Tribunal of the Catholic Church, the "Certificate of Annulment" should be presented before the wedding date is confirmed. In the event of the death of a spouse, a copy of the death certificate or obituary is necessary.
- Prepare a Record of Baptism** - to be submitted to the parish office within six months of your wedding date.
- Participate in a Pre-Cana Retreat**
  - Diocesan One Day Retreat (Marriage Prep Class offered by Family/Respect Life)
  - A retreat provided by the parish



# NOTES

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# CONTACT US

## **Office of Family/Respect Life**

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