



MARRIAGE PREPARATION POLICY FOR COUPLES

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PEORIA

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Letter from the Bishop

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*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh. — Mark 10:7-8*



Office of the Bishop

Dear Engaged Couple:

Permit me to congratulate you on your recent engagement. Soon you will commit yourself for the remainder of your life to the person you believe God has chosen for you. This may be the most significant decision you will ever make.

You come now to Christ's Church, asking to be united in holy matrimony. The Church has the privilege to pass on, in its fullness, the clear teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ regarding the profound mystery of marriage. Namely, the love between husband and wife, consecrated in marriage, is called to be a sign of God's love for his people. The unity seen in the mystery of the Holy Trinity — the community of love who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit — is symbolized and lived out by the married couple.

Out of reverence and love for God's plan for marriage, family and you, the Diocese of Peoria has established marriage preparation policies which each couple is asked to fulfill.

Now more than ever, in an era when a significant number of marriages and families fall into ruin, we need to cultivate healthy and happy marriages in the image and likeness of God. We know from experience that those who have been well prepared for marriage and family life generally succeed better than others.

It is my hope that our marriage preparation policy will assist you in preparing for the life-long vocation of sacrificial love, allowing you to be a source of strength and holiness, not only for your family but also for the Church, and for society as well.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Daniel R. Jenky C.S.C.

†Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky C.S.C.
Bishop of Peoria

WELCOME

The Catholic Community welcomes you and your desire to enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony. The Office of Family Life of the Diocese of Peoria is ready to assist you during this time of preparation as you explore the mystery of Christian marriage. The following instructions are to help you understand the Diocesan Marriage Preparation Policy and explain the different programs offered to help you schedule your pre-marriage events.

Finding time for the important things

We realize that you are busy with wedding plans, and that things will get even busier as the day approaches. During your marriage preparation, we hope to work together with you to create a space where all these demands can be put aside for a time so you can grow in trust, communication and understanding of each other and of the nature and duties of Christian marriage.

Marriage preparation continuum

Marriage preparation is a continuum — a sequence of events which takes place in parish and group settings. Each meeting is designed to help you further understand your decision: what you want, why you want it, and how you intend to reach your goal. After each step, you are encouraged to spend some time alone together to consider your relationship in light of what you have heard and experienced together. The whole process is intended to help you confirm, edify and strengthen your commitment to each other.

A deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church

The Diocese hopes this preparation process will also foster a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ, whose own love for the Church is the model of every Christian marriage. Through this policy and the programs provided, we hope you will gain insight into the good that you most desire, and find the support and encouragement to love each other with fidelity through every joyful event, difficulty and trial.

PROGRAM SEQUENCE

The marriage preparation process follows a sequence of meetings and programs, some of which involve more than one choice and so require careful attention. The process is ideally designed to take place over eight months to a year, *but at the very least, four months are required* to insure enough time to complete the preparation. Next to each event below is a space to write in your dates, with the suggested amount of time before the wedding underneath.

Be sure to meet with your parish priest to begin with this process of preparation.

<hr/> 8-12 months	Initial visit with priest or deacon. At this time you will be referred to or review this information, begin the necessary paper work for your file and make an appointment for your pre-marital inventory session.
<hr/> 8-12 months	Registration for diocesan programs There are two parts to the diocesan programs: Part One is fulfilled either by attending the Pre-Cana Conference, or the Engaged Couple Encounter weekend. Part Two is fulfilled by attending the Christian Sexuality Workshop, or the Natural Family Planning Class Series. <i>Attendance is required of one program from both Part One and Part Two.</i> Program information can be found below.
<hr/> 7 months	Pre-marital inventory and follow-up sessions
<hr/>	Participation in diocesan program: Part One
<hr/> 6 months	Participation in diocesan program: Part Two
<hr/> 4 months	Parish follow-up of diocesan programs (3 meetings)
<hr/> 4 months up to wedding	Liturgical planning and ongoing relationship with priest or deacon and parish.

DIOCESAN PROGRAMS

PART ONE: PRE-CANA CONFERENCE

The **Pre-Cana Conference** is a day-long marriage preparation conference designed to assist engaged couples in preparing for their life-long vocation of marriage. “Cana” was the name of the small village where Jesus Christ attended a wedding and performed his first public miracle — turning water into wine. Thus the term “Pre-Cana” simply means “before marriage.” For engaged couples, it is a time to focus entirely on their relationship with each other, with God and with His Church. It is also a time to study, review, and perhaps learn, for the first time, the truth, beauty and joy of God’s plan for marriage.

The day consists of a series of presentations providing basic instruction on the nature of Christian marriage: its essential elements, God’s plan for marriage and family life, the importance of communication, time for couple discussion and a question-and-answer session to assist you to make the beauty of our marriage doctrine a living reality.

PART ONE: ENGAGED COUPLE ENCOUNTER

The **Engaged Couple Encounter**, although similar to the Pre-Cana, is a weekend experience which offers the couple an opportunity to get away from all the pressures and anxieties of work, school, wedding plans, etc., to spend an entire weekend with each other focusing on their relationship as a couple, with God and His Church.

The emphasis of the weekend is on Christian Marriage, not the wedding. Engaged couples will be able to consider their upcoming marriage through face-to-face, heart-to-heart dialogue with each other. In so doing, they learn communication techniques they can use the rest of their lives.

Couples also enjoy the social and meal times to get to know other couples. The opportunity to participate in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, make this weekend complete.

PART TWO: CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY WORKSHOP

The **Christian Sexuality Workshop** is a day-long seminar for engaged couples, focusing on that dimension of Christian marriage that involves sexuality and family planning. Sex and children are an integral part of married life. This program explains and explores the traditional Christian vision of how God’s plan for marriage includes an approach to sex that is honest, faithful and open to life.

The day consists of presentations about the nature of human sexuality, its right use in

the context of Christian marriage, an *introduction* to modern methods of Natural Family Planning — highly effective, healthy, marriage-building, and morally sound ways of planning a family — as well as couple discussion and a question-and-answer period. Please note, to actually learn a method, sign up for the class series described below.

PART TWO: NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

The Natural Family Planning (NFP) class series is designed to teach couples the principle signs of fertility and the application of solid scientific research. Modern NFP is not the outdated calendar rhythm method, but an effective, healthy and moral means to avoid, achieve or space births. Simple to learn and use, NFP works with any woman's cycle, even the most irregular. NFP is marriage building as it helps spouses treat each other and their fertility as precious gifts from God.

Beginning with instruction in the basic biological facts and signs of fertility and how they lend themselves to observation and charting, the classes move onto more advanced guidelines for determining times of couple fertility — to avoid pregnancy by periodic abstinence or to try to achieve pregnancy through focused intercourse. A brief review of Christian moral teaching is included.

The classes are taught by certified instructors and consist of a series of classes generally over a three month period. This allows the couple time to apply what they learn in order to practice the method in their marriage with confidence and success. Classes are scheduled throughout the year and various locations throughout the Diocese. *Click here* for a brief description of the available methods, schedule and contact information.

There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven ... a time for embracing, a time to refrain from embracing. — Ecclesiastes 3:1, 5

SCHEDULE AND REGISTRATION

Before you register be sure to first meet with your parish priest to begin this process.

It is required to register for one program from each of Part One and Part Two.

Registration is necessary at least **two months** before the program date in order to secure your preference. Late registration cannot guarantee the availability of your first preference.

Fee information:

The program fee for Pre-Cana and Christian Sexuality includes continental breakfast and a luncheon, facility rental, materials, and program expenses. For the Engaged Couple Encounter weekend they include lodging, meals and related program expenses. Partial financial assistance is available upon written request to the Office of Family Life. For dates, times, locations and fees click the Schedule and Registration Form link below.

To complete your registration, print the form. **Printing clearly**, indicate the programs, dates and sites you prefer as well as alternatives. Mail your form with the **payment** to the address indicated. Once received, your registration will be confirmed in writing.

* In case of an emergency, your payment may be transferred to another date. A \$20.00 fee will be assessed for no shows and for transfers or cancellations that take place less than 5 days before the date of the program.

Upon completion of Part One and Part Two you will receive Certificates of Attendance, which you must present to your pastor before finalizing your marriage plans.

For the Schedule and Registration Form, go to:

<http://www.cdop.org/pages/AOfficeFamilyMarriage.aspx>

and click on the Schedule and Registration Form tab to download a copy for yourself.