

Christian Marriage Preparation

I. INTRODUCTION

“The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church
#1603

“For Christians, marriage implies a real vocation to a particular state and a life of grace... this vocation requires adequate, particular preparation.”

Pontifical Council for the Family
Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage, 1996

“Pastoral leaders are obliged to see to it that their own ecclesial community furnishes the Christian faithful assistance, so that the matrimonial state is maintained in a Christian spirit and makes progress toward perfection.”

Canon 1063

“Bishops, priests and the whole people of God are urged to make a concerted effort to work ardently and incessantly for the safeguarding and the holiness of marriage so that it may always be lived in its entire human and Christian fullness. Consider this mission as one of your most urgent responsibilities”.

Pope Paul VI
Humanae Vitae, #30

“It is imperative to give suitable instruction to young people and in good time, especially in their own families, concerning the dignity of married love, its function and exercise.”

Gaudium et Spes, #49

“Everyone who exercises an influence in the community and in social groups should devote him/herself effectively to the welfare of marriage and the family.”

Gaudium et Spes, #52

- A. Marriage, by its very nature, is a most serious and sacred commitment requiring the total gift of oneself. Spouses are called on to grow closer to God and to each other in a life-giving community of love. The grace that flows from the sacrament of Matrimony strengthens their indissoluble unity, helps them attain holiness in their married life and supports them in welcoming and educating their children.
- B. The Church stresses the dignity of the marriage relationship by the great emphasis she places upon it as a vocation. Spouses are a sign of God’s faithful love and continuing presence among us. It is the responsibility of the entire faith community to support and strengthen this vocation.
- C. This support is especially to be furnished through preaching and catechesis adapted to youths and adults (remote preparation); personal preparation for marriage (proximate and immediate preparation); a fruitful liturgical celebration; and assistance to those already married (pastoral care).

II. REMOTE PREPARATION

This period of time includes childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. There are many societal and family factors (both positive and negative) that influence and informally prepare a person for marriage. An intentional spiritual and catechetical formation throughout a person’s life must be provided within the parish in order to support and strengthen marriage.

- A. Preaching
 1. Through homilies and sermons at liturgical celebrations
 2. By faith-sharing at meetings and in Bible study groups
- B. Catechesis
 1. In the home and extended family by model and example
 2. Through celebrations in support of marriage at the parish, such as blessing of the engaged or anniversary celebrations
 3. Through the witness of married couples within the community of faith
 4. Through the curriculum and activities of Religious Education, Youth Ministry, Catholic schools, Campus Ministry & Young Adult Ministry.

(see Appendix I)

“The intimate partnership of life, and the love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws.”

Gaudium et Spes, 48

“So that the ‘I do’ of the spouses may be a free and responsible act, and so that the marriage covenant may have solid and lasting human and Christian foundations, preparation for marriage is of prime importance.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church
1632

“It would be desirable if the favorable moment of marriage preparation could be transformed, as a sign of hope, into a New Evangelization for the future families.”

Pontifical Council for the Family
Preparation for the
Sacrament of Marriage, 1996

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

Canon 1066

“Pastors have the special responsibility to see that all the baptized reach the completion of Christian initiation, and therefore, that they are carefully prepared for Confirmation.”

Rite of Confirmation, 3

“FOCCUS is a self-diagnostic tool designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their unique relationship. It is not a test, nor meant as a predictor of success or failure in marriage.”

FOCCUS Introduction, 1

“The catechesis for marriage should include the teachings on marriage and the family, on the sacrament itself and its rites, prayers and readings. In this way, the bridegroom and the bride will receive far greater benefit from the celebration of the sacrament.”

Rite of Marriage, 5, ¶2

III. PROXIMATE PREPARATION

This is a time for the couple to obtain a deeper understanding of the Sacrament of Matrimony and the mission of married persons both in the Church and society. The couple is led to a greater appreciation of their faith, and evaluates readiness to live married life.

The engaged are invited to understand that a responsible and mature love is the foundation of marriage. When married, they will constitute the domestic church, which holds the power to enrich the Church and the world.

Throughout this process, the priest/deacon or pastoral leader is responsible for entering into a dialogue with the couple on the fundamental principles of Christian marriage (Freedom of Consent, Unity and Indissolubility, Fidelity, Covenant, and Welcoming/Educating Children).

(see Appendix II)

A. Initial Session

This takes place one year to six months before the proposed wedding date by the priest/deacon, pastoral leader or their delegates. While many practical things need to be addressed, a welcoming and understanding pastoral presence provides a great opportunity for evangelization, and creates a positive attitude toward the Church.

The session should include a preliminary assessment of the couple’s readiness for marriage and the determination of any special circumstances in this particular situation. No firm date for the wedding should be set until the conclusion of this first meeting.

(see Appendices III, IV)

The pre-nuptial investigations forms should be filled out throughout the process.

If it is determined that one of the engaged has not completed their Christian initiation an invitation ought to be extended to do so “if it can be done without grave inconvenience” (*Canon*, 1065) and with the “free cooperation of the individuals”. (*RCIA*, ¶5)

B. Session Two

The priest/deacon or pastoral leader (or their delegates) administers the FOCCUS inventory tool and schedules further sessions with the engaged couple for interpretation

(see Appendix V)

C. Pre-Cana sessions

These sessions can be presented in a variety of models, and should include the following subject areas:

- Theology of Marriage
- Spirituality of Marriage
- Teachings on Marriage & Family
- Rite of Marriage

IV. IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

This period is the final stage before the wedding takes place. As the couple prepares to celebrate the marriage, they should review with the priest/deacon or pastoral leader what they have learned through the marriage preparation process up to this point, and receive spiritual and liturgical preparation. All canonical forms should be completed.

“To receive the sacrament of marriage fruitfully, spouses are urged especially to approach the sacraments of Penance and of the Most Holy Eucharist.”

Canon 1065, ¶

“The conference of bishops is to establish norms about the examination of spouses and about the marriage banns or other opportune means to accomplish the investigation necessary before marriage. After these norms have been diligently observed, the pastor can proceed to assist at the marriage.”

Canon 1067

A. Spiritual Preparation

Help the couple cultivate a deeper awareness of the God who abides with them now, and throughout their lives. Encourage the couple to discover God in their basic activities and commitments—work, leisure and family—and to pray with one another at home, and in the community.

B. Conclusion of Pre-Nuptial Investigation

The pre-nuptial investigation forms should be completed and current baptismal certificates received before the celebration of the sacrament. If either (or both) partner is not well known to the priest/deacon or pastoral leader, an affidavit of freedom to marry should be requested.

C. Liturgical Preparation

Planning for the celebration should be done by liturgical planners in consultation with those directly involved with the catechesis and the celebration.

The couple should be involved in the selection of the various options the Rite offers: processional, Scripture readings, consent (vows), music, nuptial blessing and other prayers.

(Appendix VII)

Scriptural readings are not to be replaced by readings from other texts.

D. Rehearsal of Marriage Rite

“In the Latin Church, it is ordinarily understood that the spouses, as ministers of Christ’s grace, mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church
1623

The rehearsal offers another opportunity for evangelization for both the wedding party and the families of the couple about to be married. Adequate time should be scheduled so that those unfamiliar with the flow of the Mass, or Liturgy of the Word, will be able to participate fully at the celebration.

V. CELEBRATION OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

The celebration of the sacrament is the culmination of the journey of marriage preparation, and the source and origin of the couple’s married life. Care should be taken that the details of the marriage celebration are characterized by a restrained, simple and authentic style.

The Rite is a celebration of the faith community in which all are called to “full, conscious and active participation”,

“The rites prescribed in the liturgical books approved by the Church or received by legitimate custom are to be observed in the celebration of a marriage.”
Canon 1119

“Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local ordinary, priest or deacon delegated, and in the presence of two witnesses.”
Canon 1108

“The local ordinary can permit marriage to be celebrated in some other suitable place.”
Canon 1118, ¶2

all are called to “full, conscious and active participation”, and to which all the principles of good liturgy apply.

Suitable assistance should be provided to help all those present comprehend and savor the richness of the Rite.

A. The Church offers three separate Rites for Marriage:

1. Rite for Celebrating Marriage during the Mass
(Rite of Marriage, 19)
2. Rite for Celebrating Marriage outside of Mass
(Rite of Marriage, 39)
3. Rite for Celebrating Marriage between a Catholic and an Upbaptized Person.
(Rite of Marriage, 55)

B. Place Where Christian Marriage is to be Celebrated

1. The ordinary place for the celebration of marriage is the parish church where at least one of the parties resides, if both are Catholic, or in the case of mixed marriages, the Catholic party resides. The permission of the ordinary or pastor of one of the spouses is required to licitly celebrate the marriage elsewhere.

2. Canon Law does not make parish registration a prerequisite for marriage in the Catholic Church. The parish is to provide a welcoming presence regardless of whether or not the couple are registered parishioners. *(Canon 1115)*

3. In order to address the complexity of issues which arise when Catholics of different rites marry, call the Chancellor’s office for clarification on procedure.

4. When a Catholic and a baptized Christian person marry, the ceremony would ordinarily take place in the church of the Catholic partner. However, for pastoral reasons, the ceremony may take place in the church of the non-Catholic partner. If the Catholic minister officiates, permission must be obtained from the Bishop. If the non-Catholic minister officiates, a dispensation from form must be granted.

5. Weddings may also take place in designated interfaith chapels approved by the Bishop.

6. If a wedding is desired in a place other than a sacred building, permission from the Bishop is required.

C. Liturgical Ministers

The wedding liturgy is for all present an opportunity for an encounter with God in Christ. The signs, symbols, words and actions of the liturgy are the means by which this encounter is brought about.

Any person invited to perform a liturgical role in the wedding must have the skills and spiritual gifts necessary to fulfill the ministry in such a way that will facilitate a truly spiritual experience for all.

“Priests (and deacons) should show special consideration for those who take part in liturgical celebrations or hear the Gospel only on the occasion of a wedding, either because they are not Catholics or because they are Catholics who rarely if ever take part in the Eucharist, or who apparently have lost their faith.”

Rite of Marriage, 9

The diversity of liturgical ministers should be evident in the wedding ceremony; no one person should assume all liturgical duties.

1. Any priest or deacon who comes into this Diocese to officiate at a marriage must provide a letter to the Chancellor’s office that they are in good standing before being delegated to witness a marriage.

2. Liturgical ministers may be selected from among the relatives and friends of the couple. Sufficient preparation and rehearsal should be given so that everyone may participate as completely as possible in the liturgical celebration.

D. Music should have a value and appropriateness in keeping with the dignity of this sacrament.

(see Diocesan Wedding Music Guidelines)

VI. PASTORAL CARE AFTER MARRIAGE

“Pastors of souls are obliged to take care that the ecclesial community offers assistance...to those already married so that, while faithfully maintaining and protecting the conjugal covenant, they may day by day come to lead holier and fuller lives in their families.”

Canon 1063, ¶4

“Those who are already married need to have continued pastoral care in order to sustain them in this vocation. This is especially important in the first five years of marriage as the couple is adjusting to their new responsibilities as married people, and possibly as parents.”

*New Commentary on
Code of Canon Law, p. 1264*

Christian marriage is a journey of faith which does not end with the wedding day, but continues throughout life.

Ministry to the newly married is important, but care should also be extended to all married couples during the various stages of their life together.

Appendix I
Christian Marriage Guidelines
Remote Preparation: Catechesis

Catechesis (education) for marriage has always been necessary, but in the past, the larger Christian culture supported both marriage, and its underlying principles and values. In the present era, the church must present the concepts of conjugal life and marriage, its sacramental value and links with the Church within a counter-cultural context, and throughout a person's life. The entire church is responsible for building a framework of support for marriage, so that it "may always be lived in its entire human and Christian fullness". (*Humanae Vitae*, #30)

Remote marriage preparation begins in early childhood, and includes family and environmental factors that influence and prepare the person in both positive and negative ways for marriage. The parish must provide developmentally appropriate formation on marriage throughout the life-cycle. The **major goals** for this period include: solid spiritual and catechetical training that portray marriage and parenting as a vocation and mission, a gradual formation of the young person's character, and moral decision making .

The objectives for this period include at least the following:

- theology of marriage
- reverence for the dignity of the human body & appreciation of human sexuality
- respect for all persons
- the essentials for acquiring the parameters of right judgment
- conscience formation
- developing right relationships with the world

Catechesis on marriage and family begins in the home; in order to carry out their mission as educators, parents have a right to suitable and adequate assistance from the parish. Some possible opportunities for assistance could include: adult and family faith formation opportunities on relationships, communication, conflict resolution, praying together, Scripture, and the sacraments, offered throughout the year; access to Catholic websites and publications on the family; encouraging domestic ritual life (grace before meals; prayer before bed), and bulletin inserts.

Intentional theological catechesis on the sacrament of marriage and moral formation ought to progress methodically and systematically from early childhood throughout young adulthood. This can be accomplished through the implementation of the religion curriculum in religious education classes and in Catholic schools; through activities in youth, campus and young adult ministry; and family faith formation opportunities.

"Ways and means must be "invented" for the on-going formation of adolescents and young adults in the period preceding engagement which follows the stages of Christian initiation."

"Even when remote preparation deals more with doctrinal content, it is to be placed in the perspective of marriage in which human love becomes a sharing, as well as a sign, of the love between Christ and the Church."

Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage
Pontifical Council for the Family, 1996

Appendix II

Fundamental Principles of Christian Marriage

Freedom of Consent

“To be qualified for marriage, persons must possess at least the minimal psychological capacity to establish and nurture an intimate partnership of life, sufficient knowledge of the nature of this partnership, and the intention to undertake it. If these psychological, intellectual, or volitional requirements are lacking, a person’s consent is deficient and fails to give rise to a marriage.”

(New Commentary on Code of Canon Law, p. 1250)

“The pastoral minister preparing the couple for marriage must be certain that nothing impedes a valid and lawful celebration.”

(New Commentary on Code of Canon Law, p. 1265)

Questions #112, 132, & 155 in the FOCCUS inventory tool raise questions on individual reluctance to marry, questioning choice of partner, or marriage at this time.

#66, 122, 33, 75, 47 deal with pressures to marry, and objections to marriage.

#141, 101, 98 show a highly romantic view of marriage, and unrealistic expectations.

Those preparing couples for marriage can use the facilitator aids on pages 56-58 for open-ended questions to use in a dialogue on these issues, such as “Why marry now? What would happen if you waited? What does a lifelong commitment require? How free are you to stay single? What problems do you think marriage would solve? As a couple, how are you dealing with the objections others have made concerning your marriage? Are you able to ‘fight fair’ with your fiancée? What kind of lifestyle changes do you anticipate?”

Unity & Indissolubility

“Marriage is an exclusive relationship between one man and one woman. To include anyone else within this privileged sphere of marital intimacy violates the unity proper to marriage.”

“Violations of the unity of marriage need not involve extramarital sexual relationships. For example, a man may continue an unhealthy close emotional relationship to his mother after marriage with even daily visits, sharing intimate aspects of marital life, often unknown to his wife.”

“To say that marriage is indissoluble means that it is a perpetual relationship which not only should not be terminated but cannot be terminated, even if the couple’s existential relationship is irretrievably broken.”

(Commentary on Code of Canon Law, p. 1249)

“All FOCCUS categories of statements assume that each partner seeks an ongoing relationship. Each is asked continually to look ahead at what will support or undermine a quality marriage. They will be called to pledge, before the fact, to renew their relationship continually and to repair it if it gets battered or even broken. They will need to create around themselves an environment to support lifetime marriage.”

(FOCCUS Facilitator Notebook, p. 73-74)

There are many questions in the FOCCUS inventory tool relating to Commitment that help couples discuss marriage as process (10, 48, 79, 98, 141), marriage as appropriate priority (20, 22, 37, 41, 77, 124, 126), and attitudes about marriage commitment (27, 54, 57, 113, 133, 155).

Those preparing couples for marriage can use open-ended questions when in dialogue with the couple on these issues, such as “How do you spend time together to nourish your relationship? Have you ever known growth to come out of pain and suffering? How do you define fidelity? Sexual? Emotional? Intellectual? How will you remind yourself that there is sacred in the ordinary? What can you ask of others to help keep your marriage on solid ground?”

Covenant

“Covenant is the term chosen by the Old Testament authors to designate the faithful and loving relationship between Yahweh and his chosen people Israel. The analogy was carried forward in the New Testament, especially in Ephesians 5 where the love of husband and wife is called a great foreshadowing that refers to Christ and the Church.”

“The covenantal model of marriage places primary emphasis on the mutual personal commitment of the spouses.”

(New Commentary on Code of Canon Law, 1242)

Questions 27, 48, 54, 113, & 244 in the FOCCUS inventory tool raise questions on fidelity, spiritual and emotional support for one another, the sacredness of marriage, unconditional love, and forgiveness.

Those preparing couples for marriage can use open-ended questions when in dialogue with the couple on these issues, such as “What do you mean by permanent commitment? How is faithfulness a choice for you? What has been your experience of shared prayer? What are the obstacles to forgiveness? How do you see the relationship between the marriage covenant promises that you make and the way that you will choose to live out your lives?”

Welcoming/Educating Children

“While the primary emphasis has traditionally been given to the procreation of offspring, their nurture and education are equally important. Parents have both the obligation and the right to see to the physical, social, cultural, moral, and religious education of their children. This education is to take place in a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered among the children.”

(New Commentary on Code of Canon Law, p.1243)

There are many questions in the FOCCUS inventory tool relating to Parenting issues that help couples discuss problem attitudes or fears about parenting (3, 39), conflict or difficulty in decision making about having children (13, 65, 87, 111,153), incompatibility of expectations about parenting roles (32, 68, 97, 100, 1400).

Those preparing couples for marriage can use the facilitator aids on pages 40-41 for open-ended questions to use in a dialogue on these issues, such as “What would make you open to having children? What happens if one of you changes your mind about when to have children? How will you deal with the differences in expectations about parenting?”

Appendix III
Christian Marriage Guidelines
Initial Session with Pastoral Leader (or delegate)

Keep in mind throughout this discussion the great opportunity for evangelization that exists here. A welcoming and understanding pastoral presence allows and encourages a positive attitude toward the Sacrament and its proper preparation.

A. Goals of the Session

1. To begin to establish with the couple a relationship of mutual trust and respect, interest and concern focused on the couple's intention to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage.
2. To affirm the couple and their love for each other and their choice to be married in the church.
3. To ascertain with the couple the existence of any special circumstances which might be an impediment to their marriage.
4. To discuss with the couple the nature of the marriage preparation process they will be participating in. It is a unique opportunity for their spiritual and emotional growth both as a couple, and as individuals.
5. To ascertain their knowledge of the fundamental principles of Marriage. (Freedom of Consent, Unity and Indissolubility, Fidelity, Covenant and Welcoming & Educating Children).

B. Tasks of the Session

1. Welcome the couple with enthusiasm and joy in their choice to celebrate their marriage within the faith community.
2. Initiate your exploration/assessment of the couple's attitude toward faith, church and the Catholic Church's understanding of marriage.
3. Discuss the fundamental principles of the Sacrament of Marriage. (Appendix II)
4. Determine any special circumstances and/or impediments (serious obstacles) which may exist for this couple's marriage. (see Appendix IV)
5. Introduce the FOCCUS inventory tool, its goals, and the strategies that will be used at subsequent meetings. (see Appendix V)
6. Emphasize with the couple the importance of the marriage preparation process as it relates to each other individually, and to their future lives together.
7. Determine the date for celebration of marriage, in accord with the time needed for proper preparation, barring any special circumstances and/or impediments.

Appendix IV
Christian Marriage Guidelines
Special Circumstances

The parties need to be mature, responsible, and free to enter this indissoluble union. When preparing a them for Christian marriage, in particular, one also looks for an understanding of the dimension of faith. Circumstances may be present which, by canon law, indicate a need for special consideration and/or resolution before a date to marry can be finalized.

Some particular circumstances are described below. Any doubts on the part of the priest/deacon or pastoral leader on how to proceed in any special circumstances should be referred to the Chancellor's office.

A. Serious Lack of Maturity

Immaturity might be characterized by a lack of self-control, dependency, lack of consideration of others' rights and feelings, inability to defer gratification, tendency to manipulate others for one's personal satisfaction, and living by emotion rather than reason.

In contrast, maturity might be characterized by: the ability to recognize the interdependence among persons, living by a set of personal convictions, responding consistently to persons and life-circumstances with behavior governed by reason and consideration for all involved. A distinguishing characteristic of maturity is the ability to love, a love that is understood as concern for the life and growth of the one loved.

If the parties are found to be *seriously* lacking in maturity, it **may be necessary to require:**

1. A session with the party's (parties) parents. (If younger than 18)
2. A referral to appropriate counseling services. (this may, in effect, delay marriage in the Church at this time)

B. Unwillingness to Prepare for Marriage in the Catholic church

The priest/deacon, pastoral leader, or their delegate must distinguish carefully between the parties' exaggerated preoccupation with the details of preparing for the wedding (clothing, parties, photos, etc) and their reluctance, or open hostility, to the sacramental preparation process required.

A gentle reminder of the seriousness of the marriage covenant in the eyes of Christ and His Church can be helpful. Stress how much Christ, the Church and the local parish community of faith love them and all engaged couples, and wish to support their desire for a happy and successful marriage. Thoughtful and serious preparation is a foundational step toward the lifetime commitment of love that the parties seek.

All parties desiring to be married in the church must complete appropriate pre-marriage preparation. This circumstance **MAY REQUIRE** a temporary delay of the marriage until it is satisfactorily resolved.

C. Marriage between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person

Before entering such a marriage in the Catholic Church, certain procedures must be fulfilled and care must be taken to allow for the sensitivities of all parties involved.

This circumstance **REQUIRES:**

1. Sufficient sessions with the priest/deacon or pastoral leader:
 - a. To instruct the parties on the purposes and essential properties of marriage
 - b. To help them identify struggles which may arise in such a marriage
 - c. To explore with both parties the role of Christian faith.
 - d. To receive the promise of the Catholic party:
 1. to live their faith in the Catholic Church
 2. to do all in his/her power to give the children the Catholic faith, including Baptism
 - e. To inform the party who is not Catholic of the Catholic's responsibility in the faith of the children
2. A dispensation from Disparity of Cult recorded at the Catholic parish.

This circumstance **MAY REQUIRE** additional dispensations:

1. If someone other than a Catholic priest or deacon is the official witness, an application for a dispensation from Canonical Form must be sent to the Chancellor's Office
2. If, in consideration of the sensitivity of the non-Catholic family, the ceremony is to take place outside of a sacred place, permission for the marriage must be obtained from the Chancellor's office.

D. Marriage between a Catholic and a Baptized person of another faith

Before entering such a marriage in the Catholic Church, certain procedures must be fulfilled and care must be taken to allow for the sensitivities of all parties involved.

This circumstance **REQUIRES:**

1. Sufficient sessions with the priest/deacon or pastoral leader:
 - a. To instruct the parties on the purposes and essential properties of marriage
 - b. To help them identify struggles which may arise in such a marriage
 - c. To explore with both parties the role of Christian faith.
 - d. To receive the promise of the Catholic party:
 1. to live their faith in the Catholic Church
 2. to do all in his/her power to give the children the Catholic faith, including Baptism
 - e. To inform the party who is not Catholic of the Catholic's responsibility in the faith of the children
2. Permission for Mixed Religion to be recorded at the Catholic parish.

This circumstance **MAY REQUIRE** additional dispensations:

1. If the non-Catholic party wishes to have their minister be the official witness, dispensation from canonical form must be requested.
2. If the marriage is to take place in the church of the non-Catholic party, permission must be obtained from the Chancellor's office.

E. Marriage between a Catholic and an Orthodox Christian

Before entering such a marriage in the Catholic Church, certain procedures must be fulfilled and care must be taken to allow for the sensitivities of all parties involved.

This circumstance **REQUIRES:**

1. Sufficient sessions with the priest/deacon or pastoral leader:
 - a. To instruct the parties on the purposes and essential properties of marriage
 - b. To help them identify struggles which may arise in such a marriage
 - c. To explore with both parties the role of Christian faith.
 - d. To receive the promise of the Catholic party:
 1. to live their faith in the Catholic Church
 2. to do all in his/her power to give the children the Catholic faith, including Baptism
 - e. To inform the party who is not Catholic of the Catholic's responsibility in the faith of the children
2. If the ceremony is to take place in the church of the Orthodox Christian, dispensation from Canonical Form must be obtained.
3. If the ceremony is to take place in the Catholic church, a priest must preside.

F. Marriage between a Latin Catholic and a Catholic of an Eastern Rite

Before entering such a marriage in the Catholic Church, certain procedures must be fulfilled and care must be taken to allow for the sensitivities of all parties involved.

This circumstance **REQUIRES:**

1. The priest/deacon or pastoral leader must contact the Chancellor's office.
2. A priest must be the official witness.

G. Those with No Domicile in the Diocese

Before marriage preparation begins, contact must be made with the Chancellor's office.

1. If the party lived here in the past; no longer lives here; but wishes to marry here:
 - a. Marriage preparation is carried out in the Diocese in which the party resides.
 - b. PMI file is forwarded from the party's priest/deacon or pastoral leader to their Chancery, then to our Chancery, and finally to the parish where the marriage will be held.
2. If the parties never lived in this Diocese, but wish to marry in this Diocese:
 - a. Marriage preparation is carried out in the Diocese in which the party resides.
 - b. An affidavit of Freedom to Marry must be obtained.
 - c. PMI file is forwarded from the party's priest/deacon or pastoral leader to their Chancery, then to our Chancery, and finally to the parish where the marriage will be held.

H. Those with a Domicile in this Diocese, but will Marry in another Diocese

Someone who lives here, but will be married anywhere else in the world:

- a. Marriage preparation is carried out in the parish in which the party resides.

b. PMI file is forwarded from the party's priest/deacon or pastoral leader to our Chancery, then to the Chancery where the marriage will be held, and finally to the parish where the marriage will be held

I. Marriage Involving Teenagers between the ages of 16-18

“Except in a case of necessity, a person is not to assist without the permission of the local ordinary at a marriage of a minor child when the parents are unaware or reasonably opposed.
Canon 1071, ¶1.6

Marriage entails serious responsibilities, and therefore, requires a certain minimum of maturity to fulfill those responsibilities. (see A.) The underage party should be led to understand that the care which is given to the study of their plans is not meant to create difficulties for them. Its purpose is consistent with NYS law, and seeks to fulfill it as well.

“They are incapable of contracting marriage: who lack the sufficient use of reason, and who suffer from grave lack of discretion of judgment concerning essential matrimonial rights and duties which are to be mutually given and accepted.”

Canon 1095, ¶1.2

1. Marriage involving teenagers between the ages of 16 and 18 **REQUIRES:**

a. Sufficient sessions with the priest/deacon or pastoral leader:

1. To interview the parties and fill out the *Pre-Marital Investigation Form*

2. To indicate his/her own appraisal of the contemplated marriage: stability of the future union, spiritual welfare and dispositions of the party, as well as their ability to assume the responsibilities of marriage

b. Additional session with the parents of the underage party and the priest/deacon or pastoral leader:

1. To ascertain the views of the parents regarding the contemplated marriage

2. To complete the Affidavit for Parents (Guardians) of a Minor

2. This circumstance **MAY REQUIRE:**

a. Referral to other professional counselors for additional counseling

b. Suggestions offered to the party in order to plan a future marriage.

J. Pregnancy

Special care must be taken to help the parties, engaged or not, to consider the motivation for marriage in light of the pregnancy. *Pregnancy in and of itself is not to be considered the determining factor in proceeding with or delaying a marriage.*

1. This circumstance **REQUIRES** sufficient sessions with the priest/deacon or pastoral leader:

a. To ascertain whether or not the pregnancy is the sole reason for marriage.

b. To help the party review/consider alternatives to marriage.

- c. To insure adequate preparation for the parties
 - d. To determine parental influence on the decision
 - e. To discuss readiness to accept the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood emotionally, intellectually, financially, and spiritually
2. This circumstance **MAY REQUIRE** additional sessions with a family counselor.

K. Cohabitation

Marriage, by its very nature, is a most serious and sacred commitment requiring the total gift of oneself. Spouses are called to grow closer to God and to each other in a life-giving community of love. The grace that flows from the sacrament of Matrimony strengthens their indissoluble unity, helps them attain holiness in their married life, and supports them in welcoming and educating their children.

Unmarried couples who cohabit, that is, who live together in a sexual relationship when not married, have not formally pledged to uphold these guiding principles. The fact that the couple before you is seeking marriage in the Catholic church is a positive sign.

This circumstance **REQUIRES** sufficient sessions with the priest/deacon pastoral leader or delegate to:

1. Instruct the parties on the purposes and essential properties of marriage
2. Reflect on the couple's experience of living together, and its implications for Christian marriage. The Special Issues Facilitator Aids for Cohabitation in the FOCCUS inventory (questions # 174-189) are especially helpful for a reflection of this nature.

The following resource could be helpful for either cohabiting couples and/or marriage preparation ministers:

Living Together and Christian Commitment (A Reflection for Engaged Couples Who Are Living Together), by James Healy, PH.D. (www.rootedinlove.org)

L. Prior Marriage

At least one party has been married before and now wishes to marry in the Catholic Church. (A marriage in any setting or by any rite is a previous marriage.)

This circumstance **REQUIRES**:

1. No date for the wedding may be set until this process is complete.
2. A formal investigation into validity of the former marriage(s), with sufficient facts and circumstances—whom did they marry; when did they marry; how did the marriage end (death, divorce, etc.)
3. If the prior spouse died, a death certificate must be on file.
4. If the party, or prior spouse was Catholic, a petition for lack of form or defect may be possible after the investigation is complete.

When the nullity of all previous unions has been established through the Diocesan Tribunal, the couple should attend the Marriage Preparation process offered by the Diocese for second marriages. (Diocesan website: www.dor.org/ec/sacraments)

M. Those who Marry Later in Life

The preparation processes outlined above should be adapted to meet the special needs of older persons seeking to be married.

N. Developmentally Disabled

The preparation processes outlined above should be adapted to meet the special needs of the developmentally disabled.

O. Other Impediments

As a reminder to the priest, pastoral leader or deacon, there are several impediments not listed here, such as marriage between blood relatives; impotence; religious vows/holy orders; legal relationship (adoption); apostate from the faith.

In case of doubt, check the canons, and call the Chancellor's Office.

- Diriment Impediments in General: Canons 1073-1082
- Diriment Impediments Specifically: Canons 1083-1094

P. Convalidation of a Marriage

If a couple attempts marriage contrary to the laws of the Church regarding the proper "form of marriage", a convalidation (marriage in the Church) is permitted only after the couple has been properly prepared according to the guidelines presented here. The fact that the couple is legally married does not of itself prepare them for marriage as a sacrament.

1. This circumstance **REQUIRES** sufficient sessions with the priest/deacon or pastoral leader:
 - a.. To highlight the significance of the sacrament of Marriage in the pastoral practice of the Church
 - b. To examine the stability of the existing marriage
 - c. To seek out the attitudes/opinions of each spouse individually regarding the validation
2. This circumstance **MAY REQUIRE:**
An application for permission for a "Mixed Religion" (baptized Christians) or a dispensation from "Disparity of Cult" (one not baptized), sent to the Chancellor's Office.

Appendix V
Christian Marriage Guidelines
FOCCUS Inventory Tool

The FOCCUS instrument is an integral part of the pre-marital inventory for the Diocese of Rochester. In 2001 this tool was affirmed by the Priest Council as part of the *ordinary* Marriage Preparation process. It has proven to be an asset in the parish, both for the couple preparing for marriage, and the marrying minister.

Training and ongoing support for the use of this instrument is available to every parish through the Diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis.

FOCCUS (an acronym for “Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study”) was developed to reflect the values and ideals of marriage as sacred, and is an internationally used instrument for marriage preparation. It is self-diagnostic and designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their unique relationship.

It provides individualized couple feedback on where each partner stands in regard to topic areas most important to marriage:

Religion & Values	Commitment
Parenting Issues	Sexuality Issues
Readiness for Marriage	Family of Origin
Extended Family Issues	Communication
Marriage Covenant	Problem Solving
Financial Issues	Lifestyle Expectations
Friends & Interests	Personal Issues
Personality Match	Dual Careers

This discussion instrument is intended to maximize the total marriage preparation by tailoring it to the individual couple and by providing comprehensive content and process. In addition, FOCCUS is a valuable tool of evangelization - it provides an opportunity for relationship building, perhaps an avenue to 'welcome' someone back to church, and sends the message that 'the church cares about you and your marriage - we want it to be successful'.

Special sections deal with interfaith issues, previous marriages and co-habitation.

This tool is also available in Spanish, and as an Alternate Edition for the learning challenged, or those with English as a second language.

Appendix VI
Christian Marriage Guidelines
Pre-Cana Sessions

These sessions are not only for theoretical study, but also for formation. Christian married couples can contribute to shedding greater light on Christian life in the context of the vocation to marriage. Therefore, the team should be comprised of qualified, trained and faith-filled couples of varying ages, the pastoral leader, priest and/or deacon..

In a variety of ways, include the following areas of preparation:

Theology of Marriage

1. Scriptural foundations for Marriage
 - a. Companionship (Gen 2:18)
 - b. Responsibility (Gen 2:24)
 - c. Intimacy (Gen 2:25)
 - d. Mutuality (Eph 5:21, 25-32)
 - e. Unconditional Love (1Cor 13)
 - f. Source of Love (1Jn 4:7-16)
2. Covenant
3. Sacramentality of Marriage
4. Forgiveness & Reconciliation

Teachings on Marriage & Family

1. Benefits & Purposes
 - a. *Gaudium et Spes* #47-52
 - b. *Familiaris Consortio*
2. Social Responsibility
3. Properly Informed Conscience
4. Moral Decision Making
5. Responsible Parenthood

Spirituality of Marriage

1. A Community of Love
 - a. Trinitarian communion
 - b. The Domestic Church
2. Intimacy
 - a. Communication
 - b. Experiences of Prayer
3. Paschal Mystery
 - a. Sacrificial love
 - b. Conversion

Rite of Marriage

1. Gathering of Assembly
2. Liturgy of the Word
3. Ritual Questions
4. Exchange of Vows
5. Blessing of Rings
6. Liturgy of the Eucharist

“The pastoral workers and persons in charge must have a solid doctrinal preparation so that they will be able to transmit the truths of faith and the responsibilities connected with marriage with sufficient in-depth knowledge and life witness. Moreover, their faithful life witness and joyful giving are indispensable conditions for carrying out their task. Based on their own experiences in life and human problems, they can offer some starting points for enlightening the engaged with Christian wisdom.”

Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage
Pontifical Council for the Family, 1996

Appendix VII
Christian Marriage Guidelines
Planning the Wedding Ceremony

“A wedding is for a day; a marriage is for a lifetime.”

This wisdom of the Engaged Encounter movement captures clearly what the Roman Catholic tradition means when it teaches that marriage is a sacrament. The bride and groom contract their marriage in the presence of God and of the community of faith, and become, by their living in love and fidelity each day, a holy sign of Christ’s love for the Church and God’s faithful love for the world.

In the marriage covenant, the bride and groom

- freely enter into a vowed commitment of respect, reverence and love
- make this promise for a lifetime
- promise fidelity to each other
- desire that their commitment be blessed with children and make the commitment to pass on the gift of faith to their children.

Thus the sacrament becomes a way of life, not just a ceremony on the wedding day. God in Christ is the center of the married relationship “in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health,” because where love is, God is (see 1 John 4:15).

Planning the Ceremony

There are at least two sets of questions for each couple to discuss with each other as they begin to plan their ceremony:

- I. How is God present in our relationship; how have we experienced it? How do we want to express our relationship with God in our wedding ceremony? How do we want to express and deepen that relationship with God in our married life?
- II. Are you coming to be married freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage? Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives? Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and the Church? [*These questions will be asked of each couple publicly in the wedding ceremony.*]

Although pastoral ministers ask each couple to plan their own ceremonies, they have to remember that many couples have only marginal understanding of the parts of the Mass and their names, if they have any understanding at all. Hence, couples may need some orientation to the Order of Mass and the rubrics of the Rite of Marriage, in addition to being provided with a planning book. Each couple might be provided with a sheet like the one at the end of this

appendix that makes the two forms of the Rite of Marriage clear and may assist in the preparation of helpful wedding programs.

The two most common planning booklets are:

Joseph Champlin, **Together for Life**, Ave Maria Press

Paul Covino (editor), **Celebrating Marriage: Preparing the Wedding Liturgy**, Pastoral Press (OCP Publications).

Pastoral Notes about the Wedding Ceremony

The rehearsal for and the celebration of the sacrament of Marriage requires gracious hospitality for all who attend, respectful sensitivity to the situations of families, and faithful respect for the Church's rubrics and vision of the Rite. Careful preparation with each couple will ensure that all of these requirements are met.

Music: please consult "Wedding Music Guidelines of the Diocese of Rochester," published in Spring 2002 in order to assist pastoral ministers, parish musicians and couples in selecting music appropriate for a religious ceremony. Copies are available from the Office of Liturgy.

Scripture Readings: sometimes couples find that the lectionary for the Rite of Marriage does not provide enough selection for them. Attached to this Appendix are additional readings used by other Christian Churches that are not found in our lectionary. Of course, any scripture reading a bride and groom might choose would be appropriate (and could provide excellent homily material as well), if they made the connections with their married life. Non-scripture readings never replace scriptures at a wedding.

Liturgical Ministers: pastoral ministers should do everything in their power to ensure liturgical ministers (readers, musicians and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion) are qualified to fulfill their roles.

Full and Active Participation: the Sunday celebration of Eucharist is the model for the celebration of the Rite of Marriage during Mass. Consequently, the congregation should be invited to make the appropriate responses and sing the responsorial psalm, gospel acclamation, acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Lamb of God and the communion hymn. The assembly are not spectators, but participants in this Rite.

Additional Ritual Elements: lighting of a "unity candle," bringing flowers to Mary, ethnic customs, and other added elements should have a clear religious meaning for the couple, consistent with their own faith and the Church's.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE RITE OF MARRIAGE

Alternate Old Testament Readings

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24
Isaiah 43:1-7
Isaiah 54:5-8
Isaiah 55:10-13
Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Isaiah 63:7-9
Jeremiah 29:5-7
Hosea 2:16-23
Proverbs 3:3-6

Alternate Responsorial Psalms

Psalm 67
Psalm 100
Psalm 103:1-5, 15-18
Psalm 112:1-9
Psalm 136:1-9, 26
Psalm 145

Alternate Second Readings

2 Corinthians 5:14-17
Ephesians 2:4-10
Ephesians 3:14-19
Ephesians 4:1-6
Ephesians 4:25-5:2
Philippians 2:1-2 or 1-11
Philippians 4:4-9
1 John 3:18-22
1 John 4:7-16
Hebrews 13:1-6

Alternate Gospel Readings

Matthew 6:25-33
Matthew 25:31-46
Mark 2:18-22
Mark 10:6-9, 13-16
Luke 10:25-37
John 15:9-17 or 1-17

Program Format
RITE FOR CELEBRATING
MARRIAGE DURING MASS

Gathering and Entrance Rites

Gathering of the Assembly
Procession
Sign of the Cross and Greeting
Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

Old Testament Reading
Responsorial Psalm
New Testament Reading
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel Reading
Homily

Rite of Marriage

Statement of Intentions
Exchange of Vows
Blessing and Exchange of Rings
[Lighting of Unity Candle]
General Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts and Altar
The Eucharistic Prayer
The Lord's Prayer
Nuptial Blessing
Sign of Peace
Breaking of Bread/Lamb of God
Communion
Prayer after Communion

Closing Rites

Blessing
[Introduction of the Couple]
Recessional

Program Format
RITE FOR CELEBRATING
MARRIAGE OUTSIDE MASS

Gathering and Entrance Rites

Gathering of the Assembly
Procession
Sign of the Cross and Greeting
Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

Old Testament Reading
Responsorial Psalm
New Testament Reading
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel Reading
Homily

Rite of Marriage

Statement of Intentions
Exchange of Vows
Blessing and Exchange of Rings
[Lighting of Unity Candle]
General Intercessions

Closing Rites

The Lord's Prayer
Blessing
[Introduction of the Couple]
Recessional