

Diocese of Norwich Marriage Preparation

2011



*May the Lord direct
your hearts
into
God's Love*

2 Thessalonians 3:5

PREPARE FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Perfecting our love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. Love is not a feeling. Love is a decision for the good of others. It is the gift of self for good. This sacrifice is a proclamation of God's love in living life unselfishly. In a very special way, husband and wife are called to help each other live holy lives and give themselves as a gift of self-donating love to each other; and guide their children in holiness.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE: PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

Among baptized persons, marriage has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. The marriage of a Christian man and woman possesses a unique character: It is a visible sign of Christ's love to the husband and wife and through them a sign of Christ's love and living presence to others. The bride and the bridegroom are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage.

This love is characterized by the Biblical idea of covenant. That is, covenant love is the bond of a solemn promise of two people who commit themselves to each other in the present for the joy and suffering of an unknown future.

To be married in the Catholic Church means far more than to have the wedding ceremony in a church building. While marriage as a "contract" is legally binding, a covenant is spiritually and morally binding. To be married in the holy assembly of God's people means a man and woman are joined together in a lasting bond of love as God has willed. The matrimonial union of man and woman is indissoluble: God Himself has determined it: "what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6)

Don't try to do it alone! In fact, every marriage needs God's grace. Jesus has not offered you an impossible burden of lifelong covenant. Pray to the Lord to bless and guide you to become a witness of his love. By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, He Himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses are able to "receive" the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ's cross, the source of all Christian life. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1615)

WHY MARRIAGE PREPARATION?

The Christian community needs to help engaged couples prepare for life together, a life that is sacramental in character and attitude. The wisdom of families of origin is supplemented with marriage preparation programs, including catechesis. The Church aims to provide the atmosphere and opportunity for engaged couples to establish maturing and successful marriages.

The Church wishes the engaged person to grasp the unique and multi-faceted nature of marriage made holy in Christ beyond its purely social or legal requirements. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Christian community, guided by the pastor, to provide marriage preparation for engaged couples. In response to this need, the Diocese of Norwich has formulated a positive approach to marriage preparation. These guidelines apply to all marriages in the diocese in which a Catholic takes part.

A MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS

By creating the opportunity for dialogue and assessment of the engaged couple's readiness to enter the sacrament, the church community provides the support and encouragement for them to "marry well." The **three phases** of the Diocesan Marriage Guidelines are designed to pastorally guide the engaged couple, enabling him and her to evaluate their own relationship and deepen it before a permanent commitment is made. The primary goal is to assist the couple as they prepare for a sacramental marriage, a lasting union in which Christ is always present, making the couple ministers of Christ's love to each other and to the whole world.

ENGAGED ENCOUNTER APPLICATION

Dates you wish to attend _____

Mr. _____

Age _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Occupation _____

Religion _____

Parish _____, Town _____

Is This Your First Marriage? _____

Date of Wedding _____

Email address _____

Miss _____

Age _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Occupation _____

Religion _____

Parish _____, Town _____

Is This Your First Marriage? _____

Priest Making Arrangements _____

Parish for Wedding _____

Phase I - Proclaim Your Commitment

A. Engagement represents a special time in your relationship, a new stage in your development. The Church views this time as a period of actively preparing for that more complete commitment of marriage. At least a year to six months before the wedding, the future bride and groom should contact and register with your parish priest or deacon. The purpose of the six months minimum is to permit a full and active discernment process. The outcome of this process should be a positive commitment to the permanent sacramental union of man and woman. (With this, as with the other parts of the marriage prep. policy, the parish priest for good reason can grant exceptions to time. All exceptions granted, however, must be exceptions from the letter of the law, but not from the spirit.)

B. At the outset, the marriage preparation program will be explained. The priest or deacon who will be witnessing your marriage will spend time with you in order to develop a helpful relationship so that you might share your feelings, attitudes, expectations, and beliefs about yourselves and the essential elements of marriage. As soon as possible, after you have registered as a couple with your parish for your wedding you can register for one of the Phase 2 programs. See next section.

Phase 2 - Enrich Your Commitment

Together you will attend an enrichment experience; aimed at helping you gain insight into yourselves and your relationship providing you with techniques for maintaining and enriching that relationship. Married couples, witnessing their life in the sacrament, will share in this experience with you. Couples are free to choose from the following sessions:

- I. Engaged Encounter Weekend
- II. Together in Love
- III. New Life – New Love for Remarriage
- IV. God’s Plan for A Joyfilled Marriage
- V. On Line Catholic Marriage Preparation

These programs are directed to helping couples explore more deeply their decision to marry. Early participation in this phase is encouraged so that couples will give this phase the attention it deserves and not be distracted by the details of last minute wedding preparations. A presentation of Natural Family Planning is also a diocesan required.

Phase 3 - Celebrate your Commitment

In a final meeting or two, after the enrichment program has been completed, some time is given by the priest/deacon/ pastoral minister and you to review your readiness to enter marriage. The priest/deacon/pastoral minister will explain the ceremony options and will help both of you plan the liturgy for your wedding day (the texts, music, etc.).

I. ENGAGED ENCOUNTER

An Engaged Encounter is a weekend away with other engaged couples to plan your marriage. It is designed to give couples planning marriage the opportunity to dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives together - their strengths and weaknesses, desires, ambitions, goals, their role in the church, society - in a face-to-face way. Sign up after you have registered with your parish. Couples of all faiths are welcome at Engaged Encounter.

The weekend is a very low-key time with emphasis on quiet and relaxation. There are no group dynamics. The Encounter is specifically designed for dialogue between the couple. Through a series of ideas presented by a team of two married couples and a priest, the couple is encouraged to dialogue privately with each other on all aspects of married life. Communal meals and liturgy provide group participation. The Engaged Encounters begin about **7:30 PM** on Friday evening, and conclude about **2 PM** on Sunday afternoon. The Encounters are held at Immaculate Retreat Center, Willimantic.

The cost of the entire Engaged Encounter weekend is \$399.00 per couple, pre-paid in full. This includes two nights lodging and four meals. **Deadline for sign-up** is one month in advance of the weekend.

ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKENDS

February 25-27, 2011

April 15-17, 2011

October 28-30, 2011

FOR INFORMATION, APPLICATIONS & RESERVATIONS -

Contact Frank & MaryAnne Pendola: 860-536-8665
or e-mail at NorwichEEBooking@comcast.net

Send Application and Check Payable to:

ENGAGED ENCOUNTER
Frank & MaryAnne Pendola
51 Judson Ave., Mystic, CT 06355-2107
Website: engagedencounter.org



*Thy father
and thy mother
shall be glad,
and she that
bare thee
shall rejoice.
Proverbs 23:25*

II. TWOGETHER IN LOVE PROGRAM

The Twogether in Love Program affords the Engaged Couple the opportunity of meeting with one married couple, in their home, for four one-hour sessions. Study materials are provided. This program offers a chance to share and discuss on a couple to couple basis.

The Twogether in Love Programs are presented in some parishes. (Fee as determined by the pastor.) Program also follows curriculum of God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage, the Decision to Love workbook, and diocesan requirement of a Natural Family Planning presentation. Please call the Office of Family Life or parish for more information.

III. NEW LOVE - NEW LIFE REMARRIAGE PROGRAM

This program offers emotional and spiritual support to those contemplating a remarriage commitment and to those already living that unique experience. (Fulfills diocesan requirements for remarriage preparation.)

In this program, various presentations and discussions will address couples' experiences and common concerns.

Topics:

- closure on relationship with former spouse
- how our present is influenced by our past
- communication skills
- conflict resolution
- blending families
- importance of having fun
- sexuality
- spirituality and the sacramentality of marriage

Friendship is the theme which ties these topics together.

Please call the **Office of Family Life** for information.

THE COST :

Fifty dollars per couple. This includes materials.

IV. GOD'S PLAN FOR A JOY- FILLED MARRIAGE

God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage is a marriage preparation course offered by the Office of Family Life in conjunction with Catholic Charities. The course offers engaged couples a heightened understanding of God's plan for sacramental marriage and human sexuality. This is an ideal way to introduce the future husband and wife to the beauty of the Church's vision of marriage, as proclaimed by Pope John Paul II in his writings of "The Theology of the Body", and is presented by writer and lecturer Christopher West. "A Decision to Love" workbook is also used in the course and offers a comprehensive program with "The Theology of the Body". Both offer the guidance and groundwork necessary to assist the couple in evaluating their readiness to make a permanent life commitment. The last session of the 4 day class includes a NFP presentation by our certified NFP instructors. To register or for more information please call: The Office of Family Life: 860-889-8346 ext.283.

Dates: Sat. Jan. 15, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 2011 9:30 a.m.-11:45
Fri. May 6, 20, 27, June 3, 2011 7pm-9:15pm
At St. Francis of Assisi, 10 Elm St., Middletown
Fri. June 17, 24 July 8, 15, 2011 7p.m.-9:15p.m.
At SS. Peter & Paul, 181 Elizabeth St., Norwich
Fri. Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28, 2011 7p.m.-9:15p.m.
Our Lady of Lourdes, 1650 Rte.12, Gales Ferry

Cost: \$50.00 per couple

V. ONLINE CATHOLIC MARRIAGE PREPARATION

An online Marriage Preparation Program available: at www.catholicmarriagepreonline.com contact: The Office of Family Life to complete the NFP Diocesan requirements if you will register for the online course.

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops website: www.foryourmarriage.org for engaged and married.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

Couples preparing for marriage should be introduced to Natural Family Planning (NFP). Natural family planning is the practice of achieving or avoiding pregnancies according to an informed awareness of a woman's fertility

Why is NFP the best in Family planning? NFP is the medically safe, healthy, highly effective and very low cost method of planning your family. It is convenient (no birth control devices to use), and it's immediately reversible for achieving or avoiding pregnancy. Most importantly it is morally acceptable.

What's the basis for NFP? It is scientifically established that during each menstrual cycle a woman normally becomes fertile and then naturally infertile. The fertile time is the part of her cycle when sexual intercourse can result in pregnancy. A woman's body provides certain physical signs to indicate her fertile and infertile times.

What is the Sympto-Thermal Method of Natural Family Planning? The Sympto-Thermal Method is a system of using different physical signs in a cross-checking way for the highest confidence and reliability in family planning. This simple process gives a couple an accurate, day to day picture of the woman's fertility.

Is this what used to be called the "Rhythm Method"?

Absolutely not! The Rhythm Method was the Calendar Rhythm Method developed in 1930. It was based on some biological averages, but it did not work well for women who had irregular cycles. It was the 1930's model of NFP and great progress has been made since them.

Can NFP work with irregular cycles?

Yes. Modern NFP assumes that every woman is irregular at least some of the time. In general, if her fertile time comes earlier or later than usual, she knows about it because of physical signs that she is trained to identify.

How EFFECTIVE is NFP? Numerous studies, including one by the U.S. Government, have shown that the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP can be used at the 99% level of effectiveness for AVOIDING pregnancy. *That's equal to the birth control pill and better than all the barrier methods.*

Can NFP help ACHIEVE pregnancy? Yes. With NFP you will become aware of the most fertile days in your overall fertile time, and you will learn how to maximize your mutual fertility. Many couples of marginal fertility are helped by NFP training to achieve much wanted pregnancies, and the charts of those who may need medical help can assist the knowledgeable physician.

Is NFP Morally Acceptable? Yes, the Catholic Church and all the major religions accept the use of natural family planning when couples have a sufficiently serious reason for spacing babies or family limitation.

For NFP info or to register for a NFP class:
www.ccli.org ~ The Couple to Couple League

Cohabiting Couples

A sexual relationship prior to marriage violates the Church's teaching on fornication and the sanctity of marriage. It also has a negative impact on the success of a marriage.

- There is an 80% failure rate of relationships in which couples cohabitate.
- Cohabitation is associated with reduced sexual exclusivity after marriage. (Adultery is more likely.)
- Those who cohabitate report lower quality marriages, poorer communication, wives with a more individualistic view of marriage, and a lower commitment to the institution of marriage than those who do not cohabitate.

The couple preparing for marriage should cease a sexual relationship from that period on until the marriage. Marriages of cohabiting couples could be delayed until the issue of marital commitment, fidelity and permanence has been properly understood. Reconciliation is a plan to celebrate your Wedding Day in a state of Grace.

NFP CLASSES are scheduled throughout the year in the diocese by the certified instructors below.

It is recommended that pre-marriage couples attend a NFP three part series of classes.

Southwest - Old Saybrook

The Collisons (860) 399-8265

Southeast - Pawcatuck - Westerly

The Bliers (860) 596-9582

The Brodeurs (401) 596-3443

South Central - Gales Ferry - Oakdale

The Schantzes (860) 536-1871

The Flynns (860) 772-2355

NFP Home Study Course is also available in English and Spanish at: www.ccli.org

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

on all **Marriage and
Natural Family Planning**
programs call:

THE OFFICE OF FAMILY LIFE

331 Main Street

Norwich, Ct. 06360-5836

Tel: 860-889-8346 ext.283

Website: www.ccfns.org