

IN *perfect* UNION

living the sacrament of marriage



STATE OF WISCONSIN
CATHOLIC MARRIAGE COMPENDIUM

CLERGY GUIDE



IN *perfect* UNION

I
P R E F A C E

P R E F A C E

Marriage is a sacred relationship. For individual persons, it is a moment of profound richness and dignity. For the community, it is an institution that serves as one of the basic bonds that holds our society together. For the Church, it is a sacramental event that gives a visible sign of God's presence and graceful intervention in our lives.

Aware of this special significance, the Catholic dioceses of Wisconsin have prepared these Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation. These guidelines are a revision of the original Common Policy for Pastoral Marriage Preparation in the State of Wisconsin and are written in light of recent documents of the Church and in accord with the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

The Church has a rich tradition in its teaching on marriage. Throughout the Old Testament the authors speak of God making a covenant with the chosen people and promising them that they will never be forsaken. The authors of the New Testament speak of Christ as the new covenant and compare the relationship of Christ with the Church to the relationship of a husband and wife.

The sacredness of marriage, as upheld by the Church throughout the centuries, is central to marriage preparation. Many couples need guidance in grasping the concept that in marriage they are a sign of God's faithful love to one another and to the larger community. Their bond becomes the symbol of the covenant that unites God and God's people (*Familiaris Consortio*, 12) and, in this sense; each couple's marriage belongs to the whole Church.

The Church believes that the sacred union of husband and wife acknowledges God's unconditional love and presence in their relationship. The couple is assured of God's graces as they face the struggles and joys of a lifelong journey of faith together. The bride and groom are the ministers of marriage. For this reason, it is their responsibility to judge their relational readiness and personal faith. The Church is here to assist the couple in making a judgment concerning their readiness for marriage and to provide an environment of support and love in which the couple can succeed. Through marriage preparation the engaged persons are given an opportunity to review their decision to marry and their decision may be reinforced through the preparation.

These guidelines have been written to provide support and direction for priests, deacons and pastoral ministers who prepare engaged couples for marriage. They have been written to express the concern of the Church, as a caring community, for the future marital happiness of engaged couples. The guidelines offer an important relational component (the premarital inventory) as well as an educational component in a marriage preparation process, which will allow a couple to fully explore their commitment before exchanging vows.

The marriage preparation process can provide teachable moments for the evangelization of couples who do not have a strong faith commitment. A caring response from the priest, deacon, pastoral minister and the parish community may be an invitation for a couple to take a deeper look at their faith. A positive experience of marriage preparation, wedding liturgy planning and a concerned follow-up with couples living in the parish may provide a hospitable atmosphere which may lead the couple to become involved in their faith community and grow in their faith.

Marriage preparation also provides a unique opportunity for the parish priest, deacon or pastoral minister and the members of the parish to develop a deep and supportive relationship with engaged couples. This is very much in keeping with the exhortation of Pope John Paul II that "the Christian family and the whole ecclesial community should feel involved in the different phases of the preparation for marriage..." (*Familiaris Consortio*, 66).

The vast majority of couples who come to the Church for marriage do so in the hope that they will continue to grow in love and that God will be present with them on their journey. However, the Church realizes that many couples “ask to be married in church for motives which are social rather than genuinely religious. This is not surprising” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). In some instances, a pastor or parish community experiences frustrations when working with couples who do not practice their faith or who have little appreciation of the sanctity of marriage. Other couples may be more responsive to parents or other persons who are making demands than to God’s invitation to make the moment sacred. Still others may lack the maturity needed to make such a commitment. These guidelines are offered to assist pastors, deacons, pastoral ministers and parish communities in their efforts to prepare couples for marriage and to evangelize the couple when the need is indicated.

These guidelines have been written to help couples realize the serious and sacred, yet joyful and life-giving nature of marriage. It is hoped that the marriage preparation process established in these pastoral guidelines will enable couples to pray in the community of the Church, to be God’s witnesses in the world, and “after a happy old age, together with the circle of friends that surrounds [them], may [they] come to the Kingdom of Heaven” (*Rite of Marriage, Option C, Roman Missal, Third Edition*).

Throughout these guidelines reference is made to pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers. The term “pastor” refers to pastors and associate pastors who are priests. The term “deacon” refers to properly delegated deacons. “Pastoral ministers” include parish directors, parish life coordinators, pastoral associates, married couples who give presentations to engaged couples or who administer the premarital inventories (e.g. FOCCUS or other inventories used by sponsor couples) and other people who assist in preparing engaged couples for marriage. These guidelines are addressed to all of the above in their ministry to couples preparing for marriage.

Some of the information provided in this manual is for the continued education of those preparing couples for marriage and is not in the couples’ guide. Corresponding sections in the couples’ guide are referenced by page number.



IN *perfect* UNION

II
GUIDELINES

responsibilities of pastor and parish

Responsibilities of Pastor and Parish Community

GOALS

To help prepare couples to enter into and to celebrate a life-long, faithful and fruitful marriage.

To encourage members of the parish community, along with the pastor and pastoral ministers, to become involved in preparing engaged couples for marriage, in celebrating marriage and in providing opportunities for the ongoing support of married couples.

GUIDELINES

Through pastoral counseling, enrichment and education, pastors and parish communities will support and assist engaged couples and their parents.

Pastors will involve appropriately trained and recognized members of the parish community by delegating some of the responsibilities for the preparation, celebration and ongoing support of marriage.

DISCUSSION

Preparing individuals to understand, intend and accept marriage as the Catholic Church teaches begins long before a couple announces their engagement. In the Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, Pope John Paul II notes: “Marriage preparation has to be seen and put into practice as a gradual and continual process. It includes three main stages: remote, proximate and immediate preparation. Remote preparation begins in early childhood, in that wise family training...” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 66). The Holy Father also stresses the importance of involving the community as an effective means for transmitting Christian values (*Familiaris Consortio*, 69).

The Code of Canon Law outlines the type of assistance needed from the parish and pastor in terms of preaching and catechesis for young and old, preparing the engaged, celebrating the wedding liturgy and providing assistance to those already married. The responsibility for providing this care does not rest solely with the pastor, but the pastor is obliged to see to it that the community assists so that the “matrimonial state is preserved in a Christian spirit” (Canon 1063). Cultural differences regarding marriage and family concerns need to be woven into parish programming, pastoral care and service.

Early Catechetical Preparation (Remote Preparation)

GOAL

To prepare young people for marriage and family living through the use of age-appropriate catechetical materials in preschool through grade twelve.



GUIDELINE

Catholic educational programs in preschool through grade twelve will include catechesis on marriage and family life.

DISCUSSION

Remote marriage preparation, as outlined in Church teaching, is rooted in the lived experience of the family. This preparation “involves a more specific preparation for the sacraments, as it were a rediscovery of them. This renewed catechesis of young people and others preparing for Christian marriage is absolutely necessary...” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 66). Canon 1063 emphasizes the responsibility of the pastor and the parish community to provide assistance through catechesis adapted to minors and youth.

Ministers of education have the responsibility to review the catechetical materials used in the parish to ensure the implementation of this guideline with sensitivity to cultural diversity. In addition, adequate training for catechists in the Church’s teachings about marriage and family living need to be provided so that they are prepared to incorporate healthy attitudes concerning marriage and family in their catechesis.

Pre-Engagement Counseling

GOAL

To assist pre-engaged couples in their initial assessment of readiness for marriage.



GUIDELINE

Pastors and pastoral ministers will have information and resources available which can assist couples to determine their readiness for engagement.

DISCUSSION

Many young couples are committed to one another, but they are not yet ready to announce their intent to marry publicly. While not every parish is able to offer programs to assist pre-engaged couples in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship, the diocesan staff responsible for family ministry can provide alternative ways to evaluate their relationship. Self-evaluation tools are available for pre-engaged couples. Pastors can also refer couples to appropriate counseling agencies and periodically put notices of available resources in parish bulletins.

I

Location of Preparation and the Wedding Liturgy

(SEE PAGE 41 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOAL

To provide an opportunity for an engaged couple to prepare for and celebrate their marriage in the parish where one of the parties has residence or is registered.

② GUIDELINES

Prior to beginning marriage preparation, if a Catholic is not a registered member of a parish in the area where he or she resides, he or she should be informed of the obligation to do so.

The couple's preparation for marriage and the wedding liturgy are ordinarily to take place in the parish in which at least one person is resident.

If the marriage will not take place at the parish where one or both of the engaged couple are registered, due to the location of family and friends, the pastor(s) of their parish(es) must be notified of the couple's plans for marriage. The pastor(s) must give permission for the wedding to take place in another church.

DISCUSSION

Canon 1115 of the Code of Canon Law states: "Marriages are to be celebrated in a parish where either of the contracting parties has a domicile, quasi-domicile, or month long residence or, if it concerns transients, in the parish where they actually reside. With the permission of the proper ordinary or proper pastor, marriages can be celebrated elsewhere." In most instances, one member of the engaged couple has a residence where the couple will reside following the wedding, and, therefore, the couple meets the requirement of canon law.

Beyond the requirements of canon law, there are pastoral considerations. Increasingly and regretfully, parish leaders raise the concern of investing their time and energy in preparing an engaged couple who are not or will not be members of their parishes. While this pastoral guideline addresses the issue of jurisdiction and procedure, parish leaders are also urged to look to the pastoral needs of couples preparing for marriage, regardless of the parish in which they will reside.

This guideline indirectly addresses the need to support and assist newly married couples. The most successful programs of support for newly married couples are those which are part of the parish's continuing ministry to marriage and include programs that begin with preparation for marriage and continue beyond the wedding. Due to the mobility of couples, however, such follow-up is often difficult. In addition, for various reasons newly married couples often fail to register in their local parish until the need of baptism of the first child arises. The intent of this guideline is to urge parishes to create a welcoming atmosphere for engaged couples, to encourage them to register in the parish and to provide ongoing support for newly married couples.

While couples are encouraged to become involved in the parish where they will reside, their marriage can be celebrated elsewhere. Distance and travel restrictions for the engaged couple's families and friends may indicate such a need. Support and encouragement from the couple's family and friends are more important than arbitrarily involving the couple's future parish community in the wedding liturgy.

When the marriage is not celebrated in the community of future residence, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister where the celebration takes place is responsible for either contacting the future community directly or for instructing the engaged couple to contact the parish in which they will be living. Contact can be as simple as mailing a letter, advising the new pastor of the engaged couple's future wedding in their parish.

II

Early Contact with the Parish

(SEE PAGE 41 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOALS

To allow couples adequate time to prepare for marriage and the wedding celebration.

To provide the pastor or pastoral ministers and the engaged couple an opportunity to develop a relationship with one another.

GUIDELINES

Preparation for marriage will begin when the engagement is announced, even if that is a year or more before the proposed wedding date. A couple must contact the parish a minimum of six months prior to the anticipated date of the wedding.

It is recommended that all formal preparation be completed at least six weeks prior to the anticipated date of the wedding.

DISCUSSION

Couples should be encouraged to contact the parish as soon as they announce their engagement. They need time to carefully look at their relationship, learn from the experience of Catholic tradition and lay a solid foundation for their marriage. Experience has shown that it takes a minimum of six months to accomplish these goals. An even longer period is preferred. Emphasis should be given to the fact that preparation is focused on marriage itself and not merely on the wedding day.

It is strongly recommended that marriage preparation be completed at least six weeks prior to the wedding date. This allows the couple those final weeks to focus on personal reflection and their last-minute preparation for the wedding.

III

Engagement Blessing

(SEE PAGE 42 OF THE COUPLE'S GUIDE.)

GOAL

To emphasize the importance of this time of discernment and preparation for marriage.

To provide a ritual through which family and the parish community can bless and become involved in the couple's journey of faith in marriage.

GUIDELINE

Following the engagement announcement, the parish may provide an opportunity for the couple's family and members of the parish community to affirm the couple's decision through an engagement blessing.

DISCUSSION

In discussing the essential elements in the immediate preparation of couples for marriage, Pope John Paul II notes: "Among the elements to be instilled in this journey of faith, which is similar to the catechumenate, there must also be a deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the church..." (*Familiaris Consortio*, 66).

As with the rites that accompany the catechumenate or the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults, so too, engaged couples benefit from the prayers and the support of the family and the parish community during this important time of discernment and preparation. It is suggested that the blessing include three important elements:

- Discernment by the couple
- Prayers of petition asking for blessings on their preparations
- Commitment of support by the family and parish community.

It must be stressed that the engagement blessing is not the couple's betrothal or a public commitment to marriage. Rather, it is a time for engaged couple to discern God's will for them. Being truly open to God's will means being open to the possibilities of proceeding or not proceeding with marriage plans at this time.

Through prayers of petition, the community asks God to bless the couple's preparation for the sacrament of marriage. The couple's prayer of petition is also important. Through it, they ask God to help them learn from one another, learn more about Church teachings, and gain from the wisdom and experience of the parish community. The purpose of the prayer element is to support the couple in laying a solid foundation for a lasting relationship.

The third element provides the family and parish a chance to publicly commit themselves to journeying with the engaged couple and to be available to help them during this important time of discernment and preparation.

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III
ENGAGED COUPLE
BLESSINGS

Introduction

The revised *Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation* recommend an engagement blessing as a way for the family and the parish community to show their support of the engaged couple early in their preparation period (see the Manual for the Guidelines, part V, page 7).

There are several options for the time and place for these blessings (at the conclusion of the Sunday liturgy, at a private prayer service, in the home, etc.). The immediate family, friend and the wider parish community could all participate.

Included in this handout are examples of blessings which can be used in these various settings. Examples of longer and more formal blessings for engaged couples can be found in the following sources:

- *Book of Blessings* (Liturgical Press)
- *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* (United States Catholic Conference)
- *Prayer Book for Engaged Couples* (Liturgy Training Publications)

Perhaps some of the married couples of the parish who are involved in ministry to the engaged could be responsible for the scheduling and other details of these blessings. If done at Sunday liturgies, the blessings could be given every 4-6 months for those engaged couples involved in preparation during that time span.

Parishes are strongly urged to begin the implementation of this guideline. The couple, family, and parish community will all benefit from the use of such a ritual. Please contact the diocesan office of marriage and family ministry with questions and suggestions as your parish begins this new practice.

A Simple Blessing of Engaged Couples

A SHORT BLESSING TO BE USED AT THE CONCLUSION OF A SUNDAY LITURGY

PRIEST/DEACON:

We are very happy to take this opportunity to present to you several of the engaged couples in our community who are preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage in the near future.

Couples, please come forward as I call your names.

_____ and _____ plan their wedding for _____ (DATE) .

_____ and _____ plan their wedding for _____ (DATE) .

THE MINISTER NOW ADDRESSES THE COUPLE AS HE/SHE NAMES THEM:

_____ and _____, _____ and _____, etc. Today we the members of _____'s parish community welcomes you! We care about you and are here to support you on your journey together towards God, the Creator of us all. You are a sign of God's love to each other and to all of us, and so we pray...

Lord, God, rejoice with us today as we hold up to you the lives and love of these engaged couples. They are your children. They have committed themselves to each other and to you. Protect them, guide them and help their love grow. Be with them now in their engagement time and always through the many trials and joys ahead.

Will all the members of the assembly please raise your hands as together we bless these couples:

Lord God of wondrous love,
Bless these engaged couples of our community.
Shower them with all the goodness, comfort, and strength
You hold out to all your creatures.
In good times and bad, Lord, be with them
And bring them and their families here to your table,
Where together, they can be a blessing to us all.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Please give a warm welcome to our engaged couples as they return to their places.

Engagement Blessing

A BLESSING TO BE USED AT A SUNDAY LITURGY, IN A PRIVATE PRAYER SERVICE WITH THE COUPLE
OR WITH THE FAMILIES

The sacredness of marriage is reinforced by the rituals that lead to it. Engagements are one of those rituals. Engagements should be more than a social act; they should also enjoy the beauty and grace of God, and the blessings of the faith community. An engagement ritual ought to enrich and strengthen, not burden the couple. The ritual can be done publicly, if mutually acceptable, at a Sunday Mass or it can be done with family and friends present.

PRAYER LEADER :

(Invites the engaged couple forward)

With great joy we announce to you the engagement of _____ and _____. They have willingly and freely expressed their decision to be engaged to be married and to come before you now seeking your blessing and support.

(Speaking to the congregation)

Do you promise to walk with them in this journey toward marriage, so that they can feel your presence and be touched by your support?

ALL :

We do!

PRAYER LEADER :

Do you promise to surround them with your prayers during this engagement time so that they may enjoy the blessing of this community?

ALL :

We do!

PRAYER LEADER :

Do you promise to open your doors to them as they explore among you the realities of married life?

ALL :

We do!

PRAYER LEADER :

(Speaking to the couple)

Do you promise to use the grace of this time and of our presence as an opportunity for growth, for it is in such searching that our community grows and develops?

COUPLE :

We do!

ALL :

(Extending hands toward couple)

We praise you Lord, for your gentle plan that has drawn together _____ and _____. Strengthen their hearts, so that they will keep faith with each other and in mind and heart work together as they prepare to celebrate the sacrament of marriage.

Engaged Couple Blessing

A BLESSING TO BE USED BY THOSE PREPARING THE COUPLE FOR MARRIAGE, BY THE FAMILY OR FAMILIES
OR IN ANOTHER TYPE OF PRIVATE PRAYER SERVICE

Let us pray.

Loving God,
You have blessed us as your people
and have called us to serve you in love.
Listen to our prayers for _____ and _____.
and bless them as they prepare for marriage.

Keep them holy and pure in their lives,
deepen their spirit of prayer and love,
and lead them in perfect joy.

Guard them from evil and guide them in your light,
so that they may enter their marriage in your love
and serve you faithfully at all times.

Bless their parents, families and friends
as they help _____ and _____
by their prayer and example as they
prepare to marry.

May almighty God bless you, _____ and _____.
May God grant you love and happiness,
Peace and joy,
And strength in trials,
All the days of your life together.
May you remain always in God's love.

We ask this in Christ's name and in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
Forever and ever. Amen.

This blessing is an adaptation of a prayer found in *A Book of Blessings* by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Engaged Couple Blessings was written by Jennifer Christ for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. For further information or permission for use please contact Randy Nohl (NohlR@Archmil.org) or Lydia LoCoco (LoCocoL@Archmil.org), 414.769.3300.



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IV
GUIDELINES

marriage preparation process

IV
The Marriage Preparation Process
(SEE PAGE 42 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

PROXIMATE PREPARATION

A. The Initial Session

GOALS

To show the concern of the Church for the success of the couple's relationship and marriage and for their personal happiness.

To encourage spiritual preparation for marriage.

To explain the Marriage Preparation Process.

To determine the couple's canonical and civil eligibility for marriage.

To explore the possibility for the sacrament of confirmation of a Catholic who has not been confirmed.

To begin the instructional and sacramental process.

 GUIDELINE

The initial session will occur as soon as the couple informs the parish that they have decided to marry.

STEPS OF THE FIRST SESSION

At the beginning of this first session with the couple, it is recommended that the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister emphasize the positive aspects of these guidelines as an expression of concern of the Christian community. The process is meant to be a positive aid to the couple in the development of a stable, enriching marriage.

The initial session begins the immediate stage of marriage preparation. During the initial session, it is recommended that the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister complete seven steps.

1. Establish a rapport with the couple in order to support and counsel them in their preparation for marriage.
2. Give the couple an opportunity to discuss their relationship and their hopes for their marriage.
3. Review and explain the concerns of the community as expressed in the Wisconsin Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation. A copy of the *Couple's Guide* may be given to the couple at this time.

4. Explore their motives for marriage and any special circumstances that may affect their marriage, for example: age, cultural background, pregnancy, military service, physical or mental disability, levels of faith development and religious issues. If any impediment or special circumstance arises, see the appropriate section of these guidelines.
5. Explain the canonical and liturgical procedures that will be required. It is recommended that the bride and groom complete the required canonical forms during this initial session in order to surface any canonical impediment that would prevent setting a wedding date. Instruct the couple in regard to Church and civil documents that will be required: baptismal certificates, affidavits for freedom to marry, and in the event of a second marriage, a civil decree of divorce and an ecclesiastical decree of invalidity. If registration in a parish has not been discussed prior to the meeting, the pastor or pastoral minister should explain the requirements of parish registration in keeping with the guidelines in Section IV.
6. If no canonical impediment surfaces in the discussion during the first session, the wedding date may be set. If the couple has begun their preparation well in advance of their wedding date, there should be sufficient time to resolve any difficulties that arise during the course of preparation. In the event that a sufficient cause for delaying the marriage arises during this time, see the section of “Delay of Marriage” in these guidelines.
7. Arrange for the couple to begin their instructional and sacramental preparation.

B. Program of Preparation for Marriage

GOALS

To present the essential Christian and human aspects of marriage so that the couple come to a deeper understanding of all the dimensions of the marriage covenant.

To provide the engaged couple with concrete means to reflect on their relationship in light of the factors and issues that are usually involved in marriage.



GUIDELINES

The relationship of the couple with each other and their readiness for marriage are explored through a premarital inventory or an equivalent experience.

The engaged couple participate in the instructional program provided by the diocese or parish program that follows the criteria of the state guidelines.

At the completion of this process, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister (with input from designated marriage preparation ministers) will proceed with the marriage unless a serious obstacle arises that might prevent the couple from entering a sacramental and permanent marriage.

DISCUSSION

It is recommended that the instructional and sacramental preparation begin as soon as the couple completes the initial meeting with the pastor or pastoral minister. This may take place as early as a year to

a year and a half prior to the wedding, if that is when the couple has announced their plans to marry. Couples should not be advised to wait until six months prior to the wedding to begin this process. Beginning the process immediately will allow adequate time to complete the premarital inventory and the instructional and formational program well in advance of the wedding.

The pastor, deacon or pastoral minister, in consultation with the engaged couple, will determine the order of the process. In some instances, circumstances may indicate that they begin with the instructional program. In other instances, it may be more beneficial to start the engaged couple with the premarital inventory. Pastoral discretion will be the determining factor for the order of the process.

Facilitators of the premarital inventories and the instructional programs need to provide ample time for the engaged couples to reflect and to discuss the content presented in these sessions. Through the techniques of writing and discussion recommended in many of the programs, couples more readily come to a more concrete and deeper awareness of their own person, of the person of their future spouse and of the marital state that they are entering.

PREMARITAL INVENTORY

The premarital inventory or the use of a similar experience provides a process in which the engaged couple can better discover their feelings, their ability to communicate, their process of social growth and the religious faith present in their relationship. This section of the marriage preparation process includes the completion of a premarital inventory, such as FOCCUS, PMI, PREPARE or another recommended inventory.

The premarital inventory is not a psychological test, nor is it an instrument to reliably measure the readiness of a couple for marriage. It is a means of allowing the couple, with the assistance of the marriage preparation minister(s), to strengthen their relationship with each other prior to marriage. Through this process the Christian community reaffirms its concern for the development of sound and lasting foundations for successful marriage.

Normally, it is expected that this phase of preparation will require two or three sessions as a minimum. The actual number of sessions with any given couple will be determined by the engaged couple and the facilitators of the premarital inventory. During the first session, the engaged couple will complete the premarital inventory which will be the basis for discussion in the following sessions (see Section VI for additional premarital inventory questions). Pastors and professionals or married couples trained to administer the premarital inventory are urged to carefully utilize the manuals that accompany each of the inventories.

Persons trained to facilitate the premarital inventory, other than the priest, deacon or pastoral minister, who will witness the marriage, will need to either meet with the priest, deacon or pastoral minister to give a verbal report or prepare a written report for the priest, deacon or pastoral minister. These forms or reports will include feedback concerning the couple's relationship. In the event that serious questions arise that might indicate a delay in marriage, any decision to do so must be based on the overall observations drawn from discussions by the facilitators and the priest, deacon or pastoral minister and not simply on the responses of the couple to the inventory questions.

Observations made by those preparing the couple may be kept in the marriage file.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

C. Liturgical Preparation

(SEE PAGE 43 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOAL

To understand the Rite of Marriage and to prepare for its celebration.

① GUIDELINES

Pastors, deacons or pastoral ministers and the engaged couple are to follow the Catholic Rite of Marriage and diocesan guidelines in preparing the wedding liturgy.

In the event that the wedding liturgy will be celebrated in other than a Catholic church for a reasonable cause, the marriage preparation sessions are to be completed and a dispensation from the canonical form of marriage obtained by the Catholic priest, deacon or pastoral minister.

DISCUSSION

In liturgical preparation, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister will assist the engaged couple in planning a celebration that is “simple and dignified, according to the norms of the competent authorities of the church...” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 67). It is also for the planners, in accordance with concrete circumstances of time and place, “to include in the liturgical celebration such elements proper to each culture which serve to express more clearly the profound human and religious significance of the marriage contract, provided that such elements contain nothing that is not in harmony with Christian faith and morality” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 67).

Care and prudent consideration will determine what can be fittingly introduced from the traditions and cultures of individual people.

The liturgical celebration of marriage should involve the Christian community, with full, active and responsible participation of all those present, according to the place and task of each individual” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 67).



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V
INSTRUCTIONAL
PROGRAM

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Participation in an instructional program provided by the diocese, a region or the parish is required of couples planning to marry. Parish or regional instructional programs are required to meet the criteria established in these state guidelines and in the guidelines of the diocese in which the couple will be married.

The instructional program presents the essential Christian and human aspects of marriage so that the couple becomes aware of the full dimensions of marriage as a committed, life-long and fruitful relationship.

There are instructional programs for marriage preparation in each of the diocese of Wisconsin. Options that may be presented to couples include:

- participating in a diocesan or regional program;
- participating in a combined diocesan/area/parish program;
- meeting with marriage preparation ministers trained at a parish level; or
- meeting with the pastor or his delegate.

For a complete listing of programs available in each diocese contact the office of marriage and family ministry or the chancery office of each diocese.

It is recommended that the instructional programs include the following content:

1. Awareness and Understanding of Self and Human Development

To enter into a strong and healthy marriage it is essential that the persons entering the relationship have a healthy understanding and acceptance of their own personalities, and a healthy self-esteem.

This section of the instructional process may include considerations of the following, if they have not been covered in remote preparation:

- the families of origin
- family strengths
- the stages of emotional development and faith development
- communications and conflict management skill building
- practical information on such issues as finances, two career marriages, parenting, etc.

2. The Sanctity of Marriage

Significant time should be devoted to helping the couple achieve an understanding of marriage as sacred. This includes, but by no means is limited to, elements of spirituality and theology.

Spirituality in Marriage

All programs of marriage preparation, in emphasizing the on-going nature of marital development and love, should stress the couple's responsibility to deepen their relationship with God. This will require, on the part of the couple, a commitment to:

- strive for a deeper understanding of God
- prayer, personal and shared
- become more aware of God's activity in and through their marriage
- grow in grace and strength by sharing in the sacraments of the Church together if both parties are Catholic
- find help and resources when needed.

Theology of Marriage

The documents, *Familiaris Consortio*, *A Family Perspective in Church and Society* and *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan* provide a rich consideration for the content of this section which includes:

- a. The sacredness of marriage
- b. The role of the Christian family:
 - forming a community of persons
 - serving life
 - participating in the development of society
 - sharing in the life and mission of the Church.

3. Human Sexuality

While couples may appear to be quite sophisticated in their discussions of sexuality, experience indicates this is often not the case. Therefore, the inclusion of a discussion on sexuality is necessary. While some information may be presumed, human sexuality should be thoroughly explored. This part of the instructional section "will present marriage as an interpersonal relationship of a man and a woman that has to be continually developed, and it will encourage those concerned to study the nature of conjugal sexuality and responsible parenthood, with the essential medical and biological knowledge connected with it" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 66). See the enclosed compendium for information on Theology of the Body.

Education on conjugal sexuality and natural family planning should be provided for engaged couples during this stage of their preparation process. For educational resources please contact the arch/diocesan offices of marriage and family.

At the completion of the premarital and instructional program, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister will recommend that the engaged couple begin planning the liturgical celebration. However, for serious reasons that may have arisen during the instructional and formational sessions, a delay may be recommended according to the process established in Section V, "Delay of Marriage."

V Delay of Marriage

(SEE PAGE 44 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOALS

To emphasize the importance which the Catholic community places on the permanence and sacredness of marriage.

To address reasons that may indicate a delay in marriage and to present the engaged couple with options when a delay is recommended.

② GUIDELINES

For a just cause a marriage can be delayed.

When a delay is recommended, the couple will be offered resources to help them remove the cause(s) of delay, and will be advised of the process of appeal.

DISCUSSION

The Church believes that the right to marry is a natural right. The right to marry is rooted in scripture and the tradition of the Church. Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* states that engaged persons who are baptized are already “sharers in Christ’s marriage covenant with the church” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68).

Conscious of a couple’s right to marry, the Code of Canon Law states that “all persons who are not prohibited by law can contract marriage” (Canon 1058) but, before a marriage can be celebrated, it must be evident that “nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration” (Canon 1066).

Pastors can refuse the sacrament of marriage only if the marriage will not be valid or licit. Impediments that may cause a marriage to be invalid or illicit include:

- a canonical impediment (until dispensed and if a dispensation is possible)
- lack of freedom or sufficient use of reason
- incapability to assume the essential obligations of marriage due to causes of a psychological nature
- an expressed intention by either party to deny the other’s right to a permanent and exclusive union
- a decision by the couple or individual to permanently prevent children
- refusal by the Catholic party to provide for the Catholic formation of children.

In addition to these instances when marriage is to be refused until the impediment is removed, a priest, deacon or pastoral minister may discover a lack of readiness during the marriage preparation process that may indicate that it would be in the couple’s best interest to delay the marriage plans. In the best scenario, the priest, deacon or pastoral minister and the bride and groom will come to a mutual agreement that a delay would be advisable.

Situations may arise in which the priest or deacon who is to witness the marriage cannot in good conscience proceed with the marriage even though the bride and groom believe that they are ready for marriage. A delay can then be recommended. It is difficult to give a comprehensive list of reasons for delaying a marriage. In addition to the special circumstances in Section X of these guidelines, some of the more common reasons for delaying marriage include:

- non-practice of the faith by the Catholic party or parties with no apparent intention of practicing the faith
- substantial lack of appreciation for the spiritual and sacred aspects of marriage
- refusal to cooperate with the marriage preparation guidelines
- nonsupport of obligations to an ex-spouse or children from a previous union
- a restriction or warning issued by a Tribunal that accompanies a decree of invalidity.

Delaying a marriage should be a pastoral judgment based on deep concern for the individuals planning to marry. A period of delay can be a time of evangelization and catechesis which will help the couple to celebrate the sacrament of matrimony “not only validly but also fruitfully” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). The priest, deacon or pastoral minister who recommends a delay must inform the couple of the reasons for the delay and must offer to help the couple remove the causes of the delay. The priest, deacon or pastoral minister is advised not to recommend a civil union when a delay of marriage has been recommended.

Pastors and deacons may consult their diocesan offices of family ministry for resources to deal with the causes of delay. However, recommendations that may be suggested to the couple include:

- continuing to meet with the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister until the problem is resolved
- referral to a marriage counselor
- referral to educational programs, such as adult education programs on the Catholic faith, communication workshops, financial planning seminars, etc.
- referral to groups or counselors who deal with alcohol or substance abuse, domestic abuse, etc.
- recommending a period of time to allow the couple to mature. This may be helpful for marriages of those not yet nineteen years of age, for those couples who will be separated for an extended time or who lack maturity.

In those instances when the priest, deacon or pastoral minister is not actively involved with the couple in the remedial course of action, it is recommended that they meet periodically with the couple to evaluate their progress and give them support. When the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister and the couple mutually agree that significant progress has been made in resolving the problem, the date for the wedding may be finalized and the remaining preparation completed.

If a couple does not agree with a pastor, deacon or pastoral minister’s decision to delay their marriage, the couple must be advised of the appeal process that is explained in the next section of these guidelines.

VI Appeal Process

(SEE PAGE 44 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOALS

To protect the rights of engaged couples, pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers.

To provide diocesan personnel an opportunity to review the engaged couple's case.

② GUIDELINES

If the marriage is delayed, the couple may ask to have their situation reviewed by the designated diocesan marriage office.

The recommendations arising from the appeal process shall be referred to the bishop or his representative for final determination in a timely and strictly confidential manner.

DISCUSSION

The priest, deacon or pastoral minister is the one who makes the decision to delay a marriage. As in all human situations, there is room for human error or mistaken judgment. The Church as a caring community must provide for a review of a decision to delay a marriage. For this reason, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister recommending a delay in marriage must inform the couple of their right to appeal the decision.

The engaged couple who believe their marriage is unjustly delayed are to be given instructions on beginning the appeal process. Their first step is to contact the designated diocesan marriage office. The diocesan office is then responsible for coordinating the appeal procedure. This process is to be expedited in a timely and strictly confidential manner by the diocesan office and all parties involved in the appeal process (See *Delay of Marriage Appeal Forms*).

VII and VIII Marriage Between a Catholic and a Baptized Non-Catholic or a Non-Baptized Person

(SEE PAGE 45 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOAL

To alert the couple to the influences that their religious convictions and values or lack thereof will have on their lives as a married couple.

GUIDELINES

When a Catholic plans to marry a person of another church, ecclesial community, denomination, religion or faith, the couple is requested to participate in additional sessions about the Catholic faith.

The involvement of the pastor, deacon or pastoral ministers from the community of faith of each partner is encouraged when the non-Catholic would like him or her to be involved.

DISCUSSION

When a Catholic plans to marry a person of another church, ecclesial community, denomination, religion or faith, additional sessions in the Catholic faith are required for the couple. These sessions may serve as an opportunity for renewal of the faith life of the Catholic and create a deeper level of understanding for the non-Catholic.

The specific content of these sessions should include a summary of Sacred Scripture and the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, giving particular attention to sacramental theology. While each preparation session may lead a non-Catholic closer to reception into the Church that must never be the purpose of preparation. Both parties are to enjoy total freedom with regard to their religious beliefs and practices.

In addition to the extra sessions on the Catholic faith, the couple should explore the traditions, rituals and practices of the non-Catholic person's faith in order to facilitate mutual understanding and support. It is recommended that the non-Catholic pastor or pastoral minister be involved in the marriage preparation process and in the planning of the wedding ceremony itself when that is possible. In the event that the couple chooses to be married in the non-Catholic's church, a dispensation from canonical form must be obtained from the bishop of the Catholic party's diocese.

Special pastoral concern is required when a Catholic prepares for a marriage to a non-Catholic. A distinction must be made between a marriage of two baptized Christians and a marriage between a Catholic and a person who has not been baptized. When a Catholic plans to marry a Christian of another faith, the marriage is considered a sacrament, and mixed marriage permission must be granted.

When a Catholic marries a person who is not baptized, the marriage is not a sacrament although it is a valid marriage if all conditions for validity are fulfilled. A dispensation from the impediment of disparity of cult is required from the bishop of the Catholic party's diocese. The marriage is invalid without this dispensation.

In each instance, whether a Catholic marries a non-Catholic who is baptized or not, the Catholic is to offer assurance that he or she will remain faithful to the Church's teachings and share his or her faith with their children. For permission to enter marriage with a non-Catholic, a Catholic is required to verbally express or sign the following declaration:

*I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ and, with God's help,
intend to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church.
I promise to do all in my power to share the faith I have received
with our children by having them baptized and reared Catholic.*

This declaration and promise should be completed early in the preparation to allow time for the couple to resolve any difficulties that may arise from this requirement. If the issue cannot be resolved, the local Catholic bishop is instructed to proceed according to Canon 1125. The non-Catholic party must be informed of the Catholic's obligations but is not required to sign any declarations or promise.

When couples of differing faith traditions prepare for marriage it is important to stress the need for mutual respect as each person lives out their own faith tradition. The lived practice of each one's faith will serve to strengthen the couple's relationship as the two individuals affirm the presence of God in their loving commitment. By their example of respect, care and concern for one another, couples of mixed religion can witness God's love in the broader community.

At the same time we must recognize the tensions that may and often do arise in marriages of mixed religion. These may include difficulty with the dispensations that must be obtained, the promise of the Catholic concerning the rearing of children, sensitivity of in-laws, struggles over the religious education of children and differences concerning the celebration of the rituals of each religious tradition. The time of preparation will allow the couple to dialogue about these differences and concerns so that they may grow in mutual respect for each other's faith. In addition, every effort should be made to deal with the couple's parents and family members who may be offended with the marriage of their son or daughter to someone of a different faith. Such efforts can and do remove some of the stress that may cause difficulty for the couple during their marriage.

Specific guidelines are available for marriages between Roman Catholics and members of other faiths. Please see the reference section for guidelines which address marriages between Roman Catholics and United Methodists, Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, Roman Catholics and Protestants, and Roman Catholics and members of the Orthodox Churches. Guidelines for marriages that take place in the Greek Orthodox Church and for working with the ecumenical aspects of interreligious or interfaith marriage are also included in the reference section.

IX

Marriage of Non-Practicing Catholics

(SEE PAGE 46 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOAL

To assist the non-practicing Catholic(s) in developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of their Catholic faith.

GUIDELINE

When one or both of the parties entering marriage is a non-practicing Catholic, the couple is to participate in additional sessions about the Catholic faith.

DISCUSSION

Couples who are not practicing their faith, either one or both of the parties, often approach the Church for marriage. In these instances, Pope John Paul II states that "it is the primary duty of pastors to bring about a rediscovery of this faith and to nourish it and bring it to maturity" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). He states further: "But pastors must also understand the reasons that lead the Church also to admit to the celebration of marriage those who are imperfectly disposed" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 68). The pastor is to involve the pastoral staff and the faith community in bringing about the rediscovery of faith for those who are baptized in the Catholic Church but who were not raised in the faith or not practicing their faith at the time of their engagement.

When non-practicing Catholic couples approach the Church for marriage, it is necessary to first acknowledge that by virtue of their baptism they are sharers in faith and that faith can exist in varying degrees. That personal experience of faith is to be respected. This can be a teachable moment for the couple as they are invited to re-examine God's plan in their life and remain open to the graces received in their baptism.

It is recommended that when one or both parties to a marriage are non-practicing Catholics, that they attend additional sessions besides those required in the usual marriage preparation program. The content of these sessions should incorporate Sacred Scripture and an understanding of the Catholic Church and its teaching with specific attention to the sacraments. Some couples may choose to involve themselves in an organized parish process for welcoming returning Catholics.

The model given in the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults could serve as a model for these additional sessions. Engaged couples can benefit from the small faith sharing groups that gather routinely to read scripture, study the Sunday scripture readings, and discuss issues important to the faith life of an adult Catholic.

A married couple trained in the marriage preparation program, who is strong in their faith, can be a rich source of renewed enthusiasm and faith sharing. This married couple or a couple who have experienced the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults could share with the engaged couple their experience of joining the Church, the meaning it holds for them, and how it influences their lives.

The parish itself, as a family of believers, should be aware of the need for hospitality to the engaged and their family members, especially during this time of preparation for marriage. The warmth and concern extended to the couple may lead to recommitment to the Catholic faith and membership in that parish.

X Special Circumstances in Marriage Preparation

(SEE PAGE 46 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

Couples seeking marriage in the Church often find themselves in circumstances that may affect the validity of their marriage or the quality of their married lives. These special circumstances include:

- absent partner/Long distance relationship
- dysfunctional relationships
- cohabitation
- ethnic, cultural and racial differences
- HIV and marriage
- marriage of persons under age nineteen
- marriage of older couples
- marriage of Persons with Disabilities
- pregnancy
- remarriage.

A. ABSENT PARTNER/LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS

GOAL

To provide formation and liturgical preparation for the engaged couple.

GUIDELINE

When the full application of these guidelines is not possible due to absence or distance, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister will offer alternative ways to carry out the spirit of the guidelines. When suitable alternatives cannot be found, delay of the marriage may be appropriate.

DISCUSSION

Some couples requesting marriage in the Catholic Church are separated from their parish or from each other by long distances due to military placement, college attendance, employment, etc. Adequate preparation cannot be overlooked even in these cases. The preparation may be done through referral and follow-up.

Military chaplains, campus ministers, the parish where the couple now worships, and the local diocesan office of family ministry are resources to the home pastor, deacon or pastoral minister. Through collaboration, the necessary preparation can be provided without creating unnecessary difficulties for the couple. At the same time, it is critical that the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage remain a part of the couple's preparation. He should determine the specifics case by case. The couple should meet with their priest, deacon or pastoral minister at least once to establish rapport, document the preparation progress and discuss the plans for the wedding liturgy.

Pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers can take advantage of on-line marriage preparation programs where available and appropriate.

B. DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

GOAL

To help the engaged couple assess their ability to form a relationship based on respect and equality.

GUIDELINE

In relationships where physical, chemical, sexual or emotional abuse/addiction or addiction to pornography is evident, a marriage should be delayed until appropriate remedial action has been taken.

DISCUSSION

One basic element in dysfunctional relationships is the premise that one partner has the right to dominate the other partner. Any behavior which maintains an imbalance of power or creates fear is abusive. Some indicators of abuse include: a history of abusive behavior or witnessing abuse, rigid sex-role stereotyping, isolation, a history of poor or irregular employment, inability to handle frustration, or substance abuse without treatment.

Pastors, deacons or pastoral ministers should be alert to signs of power and control in relationships and the tactics used to maintain power and control, in order to comprehensively assess such circumstances. The pastor, deacon or pastoral minister should note the strong correlation between alcohol and/or substance abuse and domestic abuse. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter: *When I Call for Help: Domestic Violence against Women* is an excellent reference for pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers. Resources concerning abuse include Catholic Social Services or Catholic Charities in each diocese of the state.

Military chaplains, campus ministers, the parish where the couple now worships, and the local diocesan office of family ministry are resources to the home pastor, deacon or pastoral minister. Through collaboration, the necessary preparation can be provided without creating unnecessary difficulties for the couple. At the same time, it is critical that the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage remain a part of the couple's preparation. He should determine the specifics case by case. The couple should meet with their priest, deacon or pastoral minister at least once to establish rapport, document the preparation progress and discuss the plans for the wedding liturgy.

Pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers can take advantage of on-line marriage preparation programs where available and appropriate.

C. COHABITATION

GOALS

To explore the reasons for the Church's disapproval of cohabitation, while maintaining the couple's relationship with the community of faith.

To highlight the implications which cohabitation may have for the enduring stability of marriage.

GUIDELINE

Pastors, deacons or pastoral ministers will explain and discuss with the couple the teachings of the Church regarding human sexuality and marriage, and the issues raised by cohabitation before proceeding with the marriage.

DISCUSSION

When a couple is living together and approaches the Church for marriage a process of discernment begins. The pastor, deacon or pastoral ministers must be conscious of the tension between pastoral sensitivity and moral directives while examining with the couple the Church's teachings, their reasons for cohabitating, their attitude toward marriage, and their readiness for marriage in the Church.

Cohabitation of itself may not be the reason for a couple seeking marriage in the Church, but it can be an influence on the couple's decision. The couple's parents and families may have difficulty with the couple living together without being married. The individuals themselves may feel personal anxiety, even if they do not admit it to each other. The couple may choose to marry to escape these problems which stem from cohabiting. The pastor, deacon or pastoral minister needs to explore these issues with the couple as part of their marriage preparation.

Premarital sexual intercourse violates an objective moral code that the Church officially teaches and is not a recommended or wise way to prepare for marriage. For this and for other reasons, the Church rejects cohabitation as appropriate behavior for Roman Catholics.

Upon completing the explanation of the Church's teachings and the discussion with the couple, if the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister is satisfied that the couple is acting in good faith, the marriage preparation may proceed. A suggestion that the couple separate reflects the Church's perspective and may give each partner some personal space to objectively consider their relationship. If the couple cannot or will not separate, preparation is to continue. However, a delay must be advised if the couple does not show sufficient awareness of the essential commitments in marriage. Each case must be taken on its own merits and each case must be dealt with pastorally.

Cohabitation in itself is not a canonical impediment to marriage. While canon law never supersedes conscience, those priests or deacons who choose not to witness the marriage of cohabiting couples must realize that they do not have canon law to support them. If a priest or deacon cannot, in conscience, continue with the marriage, he is to refer the couple to another priest or deacon.

For more information concerning cohabitation, see: *Pastoral Approaches and Procedures with Cohabiting Couples*.

D. ETHNIC, CULTURAL AND RACIAL DIFFERENCES

GOAL

To recognize and affirm cultural and ethnic diversity and richness, both in preparing for and in celebrating marriage.

GUIDELINE

These guidelines should be pastorally and sensitively interpreted in light of the couple's ethnicity, culture and race.

DISCUSSION

Within the dioceses of Wisconsin there exist differing ethnic, cultural and racial groups. These include Native American, African American, Hispanic, and Asian, as well as European and other groups. All contribute to the richness of the Catholic community.

Remote, proximate and immediate preparation for marriage must all reflect a family perspective when priests, deacons and pastoral ministers prepare couples from varying traditions for marriage. Priests, deacons and pastoral ministers must also maintain the Catholic Church's intent of preparation for marriage. Some cultures have extensive preparation by elders and extended family, including godparents. This practice is valid and needs to be affirmed. It reflects the belief that those who have lived longer and have been married longer have accumulated wisdom and experience from which the engaged couple can benefit.

Many cultural norms are harmonious with Catholic teaching, but others have been found questionable or even unacceptable. Marriage preparation ministers must make themselves aware of the marriage customs in the particular culture with which they minister in order to help the couple determine which customs are in harmony with the theology of the sacrament of marriage.

Premarital inventories are culturally biased unless they are specifically designed to meet the experience of a given people. The pastor, deacon or pastoral minister must be aware of specific cultural practices and traditions in order to effectively discuss topics raised in a premarital inventory such as FOCCUS.

Catechists already working with people of other cultures can be a helpful resource in marriage preparation. They might be trained to use the Sponsor Couple Program to prepare couples for marriage.

The diversity of varied cultural and ethnic groups becomes evident during the ritual and celebration of the wedding liturgy. The *Constitution on the Liturgy*, a document from the Second Vatican Council, strongly supports regional and cultural adaptations.

E. HIV AND MARRIAGE

GOAL

To provide pastoral guidance for HIV infected persons regarding marriage and their natural right to marry.

GUIDELINES

While the Code of Canon Law does not list HIV/AIDS as an impediment to marriage, it is essential that a couple, who are dealing with HIV/AIDS, receive proper counsel prior to any decision to marry.

Persons who have tested positive to HIV/AIDS and who are contemplating marriage must inform their prospective spouse of the virus infection.

In situations where one or both parties have HIV/AIDS, the couple is requested to explore the unique issues a qualified representative of the Church.

DISCUSSION

Persons who suspect exposure to the HIV infection are encouraged to seek the necessary testing. A person who has knowledge of contracting the HIV infection or AIDS virus must inform the prospective spouse.

The Church understands a Christian marriage to be a covenantal relationship based on openness and honesty. Both people entering a marriage have a right to know information which will have major ramifications for their marriage and personal health. The marriage could be invalid on the basis of fraud if a person knew that he or she had tested positive to HIV or AIDS and kept that knowledge from their spouse.

If a pastor, deacon or pastoral minister is working with a couple and it is revealed that one or both persons have HIV/AIDS, the local ordinary, his delegate or the diocesan office of family ministry should be contacted. The representative can assist the couple in contacting qualified people who can be helpful.

It is the responsibility of each diocese to have a list of competent individuals to act as counselors/spiritual advisors for couples dealing with HIV/AIDS. These counselors/advisors must be well versed in HIV/AIDS ministry with a deep understanding of the Catholic Church's teachings, highly developed communications skills and a sincere regard for confidentiality. Numerous professionals may act in such a capacity. Physicians, marriage counselors, spiritual directors, community support program leaders, or representatives from a Catholic sponsored HIV/AIDS ministry program are some examples of people who might be available to assist the couple as they deal with the multiple issues involved with HIV/AIDS.

It is essential that the couple explore the physical, psychological, social and spiritual implications that HIV/AIDS will have on their relationship. The Church must provide information and continuous support

as they discuss and discern their decision to marry. Having done this, the couple will be asked to meet with the pastor or pastoral minister who began the marriage preparation process with them and the local ordinary, his delegate or a person from the diocesan office of family ministry.

At this time the information the couple has gained from this process will be thoroughly discussed. It will be important to talk about what they have learned and their personal desire to proceed or not proceed with the marriage. Based on the recommendations made by those who assisted with the discernment and the information provided by the couple themselves, a decision to proceed or not proceed with the marriage will be made. Pastoral sensitivity and careful counseling are prerequisites throughout the entire preparation process.

F. MARRIAGE OF PERSONS UNDER AGE NINETEEN

GOAL

To recognize and affirm cultural and ethnic diversity and richness, both in preparing for and in celebrating marriage.

GUIDELINE

To inform the couple of the serious nature of marriage and of their responsibilities to each other and the community and to help them understand the degree of maturity necessary for such a commitment.

DISCUSSION

Couples eighteen years of age or younger face serious obstacles in succeeding in marriage. It is commonly believed that the experience of living outside the protective atmosphere and security of the family home for a year can have profoundly maturing and stabilizing effect on young persons. This time of independent, responsible living can prepare them to enter marriage with a fuller understanding and broader experience of life.

Pastors, deacons, pastoral ministers and parents should make every attempt to dissuade those under nineteen years of age from entering marriage. The pastor, deacon or pastoral minister needs to stress that the Church is recommending this age for marriage out of support and concern for the individuals in the relationship. The purpose in urging a delay is to assure that their union and their love will be lasting and to prevent them from making irreparable mistakes.

After the initial interview, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister should meet with the parents before making a decision to begin the premarital inventory or the instructional section. If any of the parents disagree with the marriage, the pastor or pastoral minister should proceed with great caution.

Marriage entails serious responsibilities: moral, sexual, familial, financial, and societal. It takes a minimal level of maturity to fulfill these responsibilities. Anyone who possesses this minimal level of maturity cannot be excluded from marriage. Anyone who does not possess this minimal level of maturity is precluded from marrying, since no one has a right to enter a contract which he/she is incapable of fulfilling. The fact that people think they are capable of marriage and insist that they are ready for marriage does not relieve the Church of the right and obligation to make its own judgment in individual cases.

The pastor may, if necessary, discuss a case with the bishop or his delegate, but it is understood that the pastor has the responsibility for making a pastoral decision. This responsibility is a privileged and valued opportunity to intervene forcefully and uniquely in the spiritual lives of two persons. It is often the best opportunity these two persons may have throughout their lives to deal closely with a pastor on a very personal and spiritual level.

In the event that a couple does not accept the decision of their pastor to delay the marriage, they may appeal the decision. (See Section VI of these guidelines.) They may also be referred for professional counseling or continue counseling with the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister. With the help of the counselor, the couple may take definite steps toward a resolution of the difficulty. In this way, it is hoped that what may have caused the marriage to break up in later years will have been recognized and possibly eliminated before the marriage.

G. MARRIAGE OF OLDER COUPLES

GOAL

To help older couples reflect on and incorporate their life experiences into their preparation for marriage.

GUIDELINE

The marriage preparation process should be adapted to the age and maturity of the couple, but marriage preparation should not be eliminated.

DISCUSSION

Age does not automatically mean readiness for marriage. Older couples have different marriage preparation needs. Couples of any age can benefit from a premarital questionnaire and the resultant communication.

An inventory, Mate: Middle Age Transition Evaluation has been designed which can be beneficial in working with older couples. A more mature married sponsor couple can be most helpful in facilitating such an inventory with an older couple who are planning to marry. Other alternatives include the Engaged Encounter/Enrichment Weekend or other programs that may be available in each diocese. Instructions with older couples may include the issues of aging parents, adult children, independent living experiences, financial responsibility, understanding of commitment, and relationship adjustment.

H. MARRIAGE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

GOAL

To provide spiritual guidance, support and education to persons with disabilities, to their fiancée and to their families.

GUIDELINE

While certain physical and mental disabilities render one canonically incapable of contracting marriage, persons with disabilities, in general, have the right to marry. Pastors and pastoral ministers should extend appropriate pastoral care.

DISCUSSION

The need for love and intimacy is common to all persons with or without disabilities. When a couple with disabilities request marriage in the Church, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister must exercise great sensitivity while helping them to examine their reasons for marriage, their ability to carry out the responsibilities of marriage, their ability to make a permanent commitment and the ability to live independently or in homes with supportive assistance.

Persons with Cognitive Delays

In addition to the above considerations, other elements need to be considered when one or both persons have cognitive delays. These include: their emotional maturity, their ability to solve problems, their social awareness, their freedom to decide to marry, their ability to care for children, and their respect for and devotion to each other.

When helping a couple in which one or both parties has cognitive delays, it may be necessary to contact the parents or caregivers/guardians to seek their evaluation of the relationship and the capability of the couple to live out a marriage relationship. It may be helpful to seek the assessment of professionals who have already worked with the individual(s) requesting marriage and to seek genetic counseling for the couple regarding the risks involved in having children.

The advice and support of family and professionals will aid the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister in determining if marriage is to be recommended. If marriage is not recommended, the family and professionals will be a valuable source of support for the couple.

The law of the State of Wisconsin regarding marriage states that only those persons with cognitive delays who cannot understand the legal action of marriage or the seriousness of the matter can be prevented from marrying. Persons with mild cognitive delays, who are capable of achieving social and vocational skills, adequate maintenance, and social conformity, are permitted by law to marry after the age of eighteen. However, these guidelines recommend that all persons under the age of nineteen be encouraged to delay their marriage.

Persons with Mental Illness

The ability to assume the essential obligations of marriage is a key factor in determining if an impediment exists when a person is mentally ill. In cases in which the issue of mental illness is in question, the ability to consent to the marriage is the issue. To be most pastoral it is recommended that the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister consider both the right to marry as explored earlier in this discussion on disabilities and the discussion provided in Section V, Delay of Marriage.

The presence of a disabling condition is not a reason to omit proper developmentally-appropriate instructions and preparation for marriage.

I. PREGNANCY

GOALS

To help engaged couples in which a pregnancy is involved to reflect on their reasons for marriage, apart from the pregnancy.

To adequately prepare engaged couples, in which a premarital pregnancy is involved, to make a responsible decision regarding marriage and to explain the various programs and resources available to them.

GUIDELINE

Pregnancy itself is not the determining factor in proceeding with or delaying a marriage, nor is it sufficient reason to omit the marriage preparation process.

DISCUSSION

There are many concerns that must be addressed when a premarital pregnancy occurs. In many cases, parents, society, and one or both of the individuals in the relationship exert pressure to proceed with marriage. In these instances, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister must make every effort to relieve the sense of urgency by centering attention on the good of the couple and encouraging them to look at alternatives to marriage. Marriage is not an automatic solution for the difficulties arising from a premarital pregnancy.

If the couple had decided to marry and were engaged prior to the pregnancy, preparation for marriage may proceed under the following conditions: 1) the couple completes a premarital inventory and the instructional programs, and 2) the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister determines that the couple is sufficiently prepared for marriage.

The age of the couple may raise additional difficulties for couples involved with a premarital pregnancy, for example, the issues raised with a couple who are seventeen years of age versus a couple who are in their mid-twenties or older. If either party is not yet nineteen years of age and if the couple had not made a decision to marry prior to the pregnancy, every effort should be made to discourage the marriage before the birth of the child. It is further recommended that, in the event that either party is not yet nineteen years of age, a meeting be held with the parents of both parties. The purpose of this session is to gather further information that will determine the readiness of the couple for marriage before they proceed with marriage preparation (See Section F: Marriage of Persons Under Age Nineteen, and the Guide for Interviewing Parents in Special Circumstances).

Since cases involving pregnancies are especially complex, the couple should be advised to undertake professional counseling. The implications of the pregnancy should be discussed, as well as the seriousness of each individual's commitment to marriage. It is important that the couple carefully consider their own best interest and the best interest of the child, not only in the present but for the future as well. No matter what the age of the couple, key questions for the marriage preparation ministers are:

1. Does the couple possess the minimal amount of maturity needed to validly consent to marriage?
2. Does the couple possess the emotional, intellectual, financial and spiritual levels of maturity to develop a marriage relationship?
3. Does the couple possess the necessary level of maturity to assume the responsibilities of parenthood?

Finally, pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers need to stress that there are positive and morally acceptable alternatives to marriage when a premarital pregnancy occurs. They need to help the couple make as free and informed a choice as possible in resolving their difficulties. If marriage is not chosen, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister must help both parties accept their moral responsibility in caring for the child.

J. REMARRIAGE

GOAL

To address the unique issues faced by people who were previously married and now seek to marry again in the Catholic Church.

GUIDELINE

Preparation for remarriage includes a process to determine the couple's canonical freedom to marry and to implement the marriage preparation guidelines, while sensitively addressing the unique challenges faced by couples planning to remarry.

DISCUSSION

Everyone entering marriage, even if they have been previously married, is entering a new relationship. Persons who are remarrying need to evaluate anew their readiness to marry. In the event of a subsequent marriage, the complexities that must be addressed include: grieving the death of a spouse or the end of a prior marriage, establishing new bonds, blended families, the clarification of expectations of the new marriage, and the acknowledgment of legal obligations from the previous union. A premarital inventory specifically for couples who are remarrying is available. (See Additional Premarital Inventory Questions) Pastors, deacons, and pastoral ministers are encouraged to contact their diocesan office of family ministry for specialized programs and inventories that are available.

A remarriage can be celebrated in the Catholic Church only if the previous spouse has died or if the previous marriage has been declared invalid by the Church. The pastor, deacon, or pastoral minister must encourage persons exploring remarriage who have not had their previous marriage annulled to begin a petition for annulment. Couples can remarry in the Church only after a decree of invalidity has been granted. No date may be set until the canonical process has been completed. The setting of marriage dates presupposes a favorable decision on the part of the tribunal, a decision that cannot be presupposed. When

a decree of invalidity has been granted, the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister must adhere to any cautions or conditions that may be attached to the decree. Fulfilling these conditions can provide great assistance to the marriage preparation minister, particularly in discussions concerning their readiness and intent to marry.

While grief is a common element in the loss of a spouse through divorce or death, the marriage of a widowed person requires special pastoral care. Children of a previous marriage may react differently in the event of the death of a parent. Establishing a new relationship, while resolving issues that may remain from the previous bond, takes time and careful consideration. In the event of marriages of older, widowed persons, see Section G: Marriage of Older Couples.

XI

Validation of a Marriage

(SEE PAGE 48 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOAL

To ensure adequate marriage preparation for couples seeking marriage validation.

GUIDELINE

Couples approaching the Church for validation of their marriage must participate in an appropriate instructional and sacramental preparation process before the marriage is validated.

DISCUSSION

A couple, who approaches the Church to have their marriage validated, often has complex motives. Regardless of age or motives, their desire should be viewed as a positive step. Their coming to the Church provides an opportunity for the pastor, deacon, or pastoral minister to engage them in a process of evangelization. Empowering the couple to discuss and deepen their relationship with God strengthens their bond of marriage. The time, attention and support given by the pastor, deacon or pastoral minister can draw them into a new understanding of the Church and of their role in the Church as they live out their married life. A distinction should be made between unions that appear to be stable and long standing and those of recent date. Exploration of a couple's motivation to seek a validation at this time should include an explanation of the reasons they originally chose to be married civilly. Cultural differences may be a consideration here. Particular consideration is to be given if a couple indicates that they are seeking a validation in hopes of curing a troubled marriage. The marriage validation, in itself, will not resolve the difficulties of a troubled marriage, and pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers are urged to give special consideration to their preparation before proceeding with the validation.

XII

Pastoral Care After Marriage

(SEE PAGE 48 OF THE *COUPLE'S GUIDE*.)

GOAL

To provide parish support for married couples as they seek to strengthen and deepen their marriage relationship, thereby, strengthening family life.

GUIDELINE

Pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers are to take practical steps to insure that the parish continues to support married couples as they seek to live out the sacrament of marriage.

DISCUSSION

Canon law requires pastors and faith communities to provide assistance to all married people so that “the matrimonial state is maintained in a Christian spirit and makes progress in perfection” (Canon 1063). This challenge goes beyond the steps of marriage preparation and the day of the wedding liturgy. It reaches out to the day-by-day living of marital life by couples committed to permanence, fruitfulness and faithfulness.

Parish and diocesan support of Marriage Encounter and other marriage enrichment programs is essential. Parishes are encouraged to host marriage enrichment programs and to publicize marriage enrichment experiences in other parishes and regions and those sponsored by the diocese. A parish based marriage preparation team with the help of the diocesan family ministry office can provide training and support for couples in leadership positions. Marriage ministry teams or advocates might organize a “young married” support group. Troubled marriages can be helped by referring the couples to such programs as “Recovery of Hope,” Retrouvaille, Catholic Social Services/Charities, or to other qualified counselors, and counseling centers. The diocesan office of family ministry can provide consultation, resources and creative planning for parishes in their ministry to married couples.


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VI
ADDITIONAL
PREMARITAL INVENTORY
questions

ADDITIONAL PREMARITAL INVENTORY QUESTIONS

The following questions may be beneficial when used in conjunction with the results of a couple's premarital inventory. Each of the following sets of questions correlate with the categories used in the FOCCUS Premarital Inventory. There are also questions at the end of this document which can be used with couples who are cohabiting.

These questions may not apply to every couple. Pastors, deacons and pastoral ministers will need to determine which questions will be the most helpful in exploring the couple's relationship and their reasons for marrying. Although these questions can be used with all engaged persons, they can be particularly helpful when a delay of a couple's marriage is begin considered.

A. LIFESTYLE EXPECTATIONS

1. How did the subject of marriage arise?
2. When did you definitely decide to marry (final engagement)?
3. Have you made any preparations for the wedding?
4. Describe what you expect of your fiancée as a husband/wife.
5. What are your personal goals for the future? What will make you most fulfilled in your life?
6. What are your goals for your marriage?

B. FRIENDS AND INTERESTS

1. Do you both have close friends? How long have you known them?
2. How often do you see your friends? Together? Alone?
3. Which friends do you enjoy the most? Why?
4. Do you see your relationship with friends changing once you are married? In what ways?
5. Do you know many happily married couples?

C. PERSONALITY MATCH

1. What are your strengths and weaknesses? How do you think they will affect your marriage?
2. What are your fiancée's strengths and weaknesses? How do you think they will affect your marriage?
3. When did you begin dating? What attracted you to your fiancée? Is there anything that has worried you about your fiancée?
4. Up to this point what have you gained from this relationship? In what ways have you had to give the most?
5. What is the greatest strength of your relationship? The greatest weakness?
6. What kinds of activities do you share together?
7. How often have you been seeing each other?
8. When did you begin to see each other steadily or exclusively?
9. Have you broken up during your courtship? Why?
10. Is there anything you want to change in the other person?

D. PERSONAL ISSUES

1. Have either of you dated others? Did either of you ever decide to marry someone else?
2. How much sexual experience have you had? Is this known to your fiancée?
3. Have either of you had any significant medical history (physical or psychological)?
4. Do either of you have any problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling or abusive behavior?
5. How far did you go in your formal education?
6. Did you enjoy school?
7. If further education is needed, how would you manage that?

E. IF A PREGNANCY IS INVOLVED

1. How long have you/has she been pregnant?
2. Were you considering marriage before pregnancy?
3. Are your parents aware of your plans?
4. Have you thought of other solutions, such as not marrying, keeping the child alone or adoption?

F. COMMUNICATION

1. Do you feel you communicate well?
2. In what areas can you improve your communication with each other?
3. How much time is spent talking? Who does most of the talking? Who initiates conversations?
4. How well did/do your parents communicate? What were/are their styles of communicating with each other?

G. PROBLEM SOLVING

1. How did/do your parents resolve quarrels or differences?
2. How do your disagreements go? What usually causes them? How do you reconcile conflict between you?
3. What conflict situation do you avoid talking about? Does avoidance settle the conflicts?
4. Do you bring up the past or your partner's faults?
5. How do you feel about forgiving your partner? About asking for forgiveness?

H. RELIGION AND VALUES

1. Describe your own religious beliefs and practices as well as those of your fiancée. What role does faith play in your lives?
2. Describe the influence religion has had on your upbringing?
3. How does religion influence your present relationship?
4. What have you come to the Church to be married?
5. What in your opinion are the most important elements of a (Christian) marriage?
6. Does the statement that marriage is a "commitment for life" have meaning for you?
7. What part will religion play in your children's upbringing?

I. PARENTING ISSUES

1. What are your individual feelings about having children?
2. What are your specific fears? What are your strengths? Weakness?
3. Have you decided when you would begin to have children? How did you come to this decision?
4. Have you decided on the number of children you want? Are you both comfortable with your decision?
5. What information did you have that helped you in choosing a method of family planning? Have you discussed natural methods of family planning?
6. If there is an inability to have children, is adoption an option?
7. How would you describe the roles you think are appropriate for mother/father?
8. How were each of you disciplined in your home? Do you want it to be the same/different for your own children?
9. How will you keep parenting from becoming more important than your couple relationship?
10. What's one thing from your childhood you want to be sure to pass on to your children? One thing you want to be sure not to repeat?

J. EXTENDED FAMILY ISSUES

1. Describe your own family: parents, brothers, sisters. How did you get along with them?
2. Which of your parents is/was more dominant?
3. Which of your parents do/did you get along with better? Why?
4. Do you presently live at home?
5. What has been the degree of happiness or unhappiness of the relationship of your parents in their marriage? (Have they ever been separated or divorced?)
6. What in your family experience do you resent the most? What do you treasure the most?
7. Describe your fiancée's family life. How do/did he/she get along with his/her parents? Which parent is/was dominant?
8. Do you think your fiancée is marrying to escape unhappiness at home?
9. What do both sets of parents think of the marriage?
10. Has anyone tried to dissuade you from marriage?
11. What sort of relationship do you anticipate having with your parents and in-laws after the marriage?

K. SEXUALITY ISSUES

1. What are some ways you express your sexuality?
2. What are your ideas concerning the place of sexuality in your forthcoming marriage?
3. How would you react to the possibility that your loved one would need affection and sexual expression more than you? What would be your responsibilities in this area?
4. How do you build intimacy in your daily relationship? What would sex without intimacy be like in your relationship?
5. What would you do if you discovered that your fiancée had an issue/addiction with/to pornography?

L. FINANCIAL ISSUES

1. Are you and/or your fiancée working? Have you had many jobs? How much have you saved? Any debts? How much?
2. How do you handle money now? Will that change after you are married?
3. How often do you speak about your future home? About furniture? Future recreational activities?
4. Where do you plan to live? If with parents, what effect will this have on your relationship?
5. In the beginning how much do you think you will need for living expenses per week?
6. Do you feel that you and your fiancée have planned well enough for your economic future?

M. READINESS ISSUES

1. What motives do you have for considering marriage now?
2. Any hesitations about your decision?
3. Why do you and your fiancée believe that you are mature enough to assume the lifelong responsibilities of marriage?

N. MARRIAGE COVENANT

1. Do you believe that you and your fiancée have decided to marry after sincere and mature deliberation?
2. Are you marrying with complete freedom of choice and because you truly love one another?
3. Will your exchange of marriage vows mean for you an unyielding and permanent commitment?

O. MARRIAGES BETWEEN A CATHOLIC AND A NON-CATHOLIC

1. Have you discussed your individual needs regarding participation in your own Church?
2. What difficulties might arise around your individual needs for participation? How do you expect to deal with these difficulties?
3. Do you worry that your future spouse's participation in his/her church will cause problems between the two of you?
4. Are you comfortable with the decision you have made as a couple concerning your worship practices? Will you worship together?
5. Do you believe that you might have to give up your religion in order to avoid conflict between you concerning religion?
6. Have you discussed how you will handle Church customs and sacramental preparations for your children?
7. How do you plan to share your religion and customs, and to worship with your children?

P. REMARRIAGE

1. Do you feel you and your fiancée have sufficiently dealt with the loss of a previous marriage?
2. How do you see your remarriage family as being different from the first marriage family? What could cause you to experience conflict in this situation? What are some benefits of this family?
3. If one or both of you have children, how do you feel about beginning a marriage with children? What adjustments need to be made?
4. What are the relationships with the previous spouse and in-laws? If you have children, do they see your previous spouse and in-laws? How does each of you feel about this situation?

Premarital Inventory/FOCCUS

EVALUATION FORM

COUPLE _____

PM/FOCCUS COUPLE _____

DATE _____

PRIEST/DEACON _____

PARISH _____

OVERALL IMPRESSION

List your impressions of the engaged couple after the premarital interviews regarding:

Their level of self-exploration:

Their level of self/partner understanding:

PATTERNS OF COUPLE COMMUNICATION

What strengths did you observe?

What weaknesses did you observe?

AREAS OF DIFFICULTY

Did you notice any particular areas of difficulty, disagreement or resistance? Y / N

If yes, please describe:

FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND SHARING

Did the couple each share their views on their faith and their expectations in the future? Describe. Were they in agreement or have an understanding and acceptance of each other's faith? if difficulties were present, describe them.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUPLE

At the conclusion of the PM/FOCCUS discussion(s), did you make any specific recommendations to the couple, for example, further counseling, books or periodicals to read, worksheets on subjects such as finances, in-laws, etc.?

**RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCERNS OR FURTHER COMMENTS
FOR THE PRIEST/DEACON**

What recommendations do you have for the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage? Did any difficulty arise in your discussions that would indicate the need for a delay? If so, describe:

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VII
DELAY OF MARRIAGE
appeal forms

Delay of Marriage Appeal Form

COUPLE'S FORM

Please answer each of the following questions as openly and honestly as possible.
The information on this form is for the sole use of the diocesan personnel handling
your appeal and will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

MALE:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

RELIGION _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

FEMALE:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

RELIGION _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

1. How long have you been dating each other?
2. How long have you been engaged?
3. When did you plan to marry?
4. Who recommended and why has it been recommended that your marriage be delayed?
5. Why do you feel that the reasons for the delay are not justifiable?
6. Are there any significant factors that should be taken into consideration?

If you need more space feel free to attach additional sheets of paper. You are also reminded that, if you feel it would be helpful, your parents may submit written statements on their feelings concerning the delay.

Delay of Marriage Appeal Form

PRIEST'S FORM

PRIEST _____

PARISH _____

MALE:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

RELIGION _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

FEMALE:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

RELIGION _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

PROPOSED DATE AND PLACE OF MARRIAGE _____

1. Why was the delay advised (based on assessment process, interviews with those involved, including parents, etc.)?

2. What recommendations were made for remedial programs?

3. What were the results?

4. What is your general evaluation?

PLEASE INDICATE THE RESULTS OF THE PREMARITAL INVENTORY (e.g. FOCCUS or any other premarital inventory and/or parents' questionnaires and the required diocesan forms. If you need more space, please attach additional sheets of paper.

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VIII
COHABITATING COUPLES

Pastoral Approaches and Procedures with Cohabiting Couples

A. Dialogue and Catechesis Questions

1. Why did you choose to live together (fear of permanent commitment, testing the relationship, convenience, need for companionship, financial reasons, children, escape from home, etc.)?
2. What have you learned from the experience of having lived together?
3. What is it that is causing you to want to commit yourselves to marriage at this time? How will marriage be different from cohabiting?
4. Was there a previous reluctance/hesitation to marry? What has happened to change that? Are you now at a new point of personal development?
5. What is it that prompts you to marry in the Roman Catholic Church at this time? In other words, why have you approached a Catholic minister?
6. What does marriage as a sacrament/sacred union mean to you?
7. How do you see your love and the continued growth of that love for one another as being an intimate part of your marriage?

B. Recommendations

1. For the couple who has seriously planned for a formal marriage and whose reasons for living together now are out of practical consideration of finance or convenience, focus on the meaning of sacrament, commitment, permanence and stability of marriage bond.
2. For the couple who cohabitation lacks clear decision and no previous commitment existed, focus on sacrament, commitment, readiness, and permanence.
3. For the couple who seeks marriage for the sake of appearance, focus on evaluation of psychological and/or spiritual maturity. A delay is probably in order.
4. For the cohabiting couple who seeks marriage because of pregnancy-see the discussion on pregnancy in the “Special Circumstances” section.

C. Background Information

- Cohabitation does not ensure stability.
- Cohabiting persons often hide/wear masks of true self.
- Cohabitation blocks in-depth communication.
- Finances are the highest stressor in any marriage; money may be handled quite differently during cohabitation than after marriage.
- Relationships may be strained with family and friends during cohabitation.
- Guilt may be felt by one partner of the cohabiting couple because the living situation conflicts with their religious upbringing.
- Cohabiting couples don't fully realize the unique marital graces bestowed by God through the sacrament of matrimony.

D. Reasons for Cohabiting

1. Temporary convenience or mutual benefit: expedience, mostly financial. This category represents about 10% of the population (Macklin, Rubin, 1983).
2. Affectionate dating; going together, enjoy being with one another, representing about 50-60%.
3. Trial marriage; testing the relationship; about 15-20% are in this category.
4. Temporary alternative to marriage; committed, waiting for more convenient time to marry. This category includes divorced persons waiting for legal clearance for marriage.
5. Permanent alternative to marriage (see Macklin, 1986; and Brother, 1985).

Pope John Paul II offers these words as direction for remote preparation of youthful members of the Church: "but above all there must be a campaign of prevention, by fostering the sense of fidelity in the whole moral and religious training of the young, instructing them concerning the conditions and structures that favor such fidelity, without which there is no true freedom; they must be helped to reach spiritual maturity and enabled to understand the rich human and supernatural reality of marriage as a sacrament" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 81).

Methods of addressing the problem of cohabitation might include catechesis via religious education sessions, bulletin inserts, and an annual homily on the guidelines for marriage preparation in the state of Wisconsin.



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IX

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES
parents

Guide for Interviewing Parents in Special Circumstances

A. YOUR SON/DAUGHTER

1. What are your reasons for believing your son/daughter is ready/not ready to assume the obligations and responsibilities of marriage?
2. Does his/her attitude at home lead you to believe that he/she could manage a home?
3. In view of his/her age, is he/she able to bring up children well and does he/she love children?
4. If the couple are under the age of nineteen: Do you feel that, in light of his/her age, your son/daughter may find it difficult to adapt to married life while his/her teenage friends still relatively free? Will he/she feel the need to make up for the teenage life that might have been missed? Does he/she have many close friends?
5. How would you characterize your son's/daughter's personality?
6. Has your son/daughter ever had any problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling, or abusive behavior? Have any of these been a part of your family?
7. Since your son/daughter is making a commitment for life, could you please comment on how well he/she understands that commitment? What problems do you foresee him/her having with his/her commitment?
8. Do you know in what ways your son/daughter practices his/her religion?

B. YOUR SON/DAUGHTER'S FIANCEE

1. Do you know his/her family well? How long have you known them?
2. How well do you know your son's/daughter's fiancée? How would you describe his/her personality? Does your son/daughter see him/her in the same way?
3. Do you think the person your son/daughter plans to marry is the right person for him/her? Would you rather see your son/daughter marry someone else?
4. Do you think that your new son-in-law/daughter-in-law will feel comfortable with your family?
5. What qualities in your son's/daughter's fiancée suggest to you that he/she is responsible? Relatively mature? Reliable? Economical?
6. Does he/she have a steady job?
7. If you are aware of their incomes, do you see the incomes as adequate for supporting them?
8. Do you think that you might be called upon to assist them financially? How do you feel about that possibility?

9. In what areas of handling money do you think they will do well?
10. Do you know if your son's/daughter's fiancée has ever had any problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling or abusive behavior? Have any of these been a part of his /her family of origin?
11. Do you know in what ways your son's/daughter's fiancée practices his/her religion?

C. COURTSHIP

1. What kind of courtship did they have?
2. Have there been any arguments or breakups since the beginning of their courtship?
3. Do you feel that they know each other well enough?
4. What preparation have they made for marriage? Have they consulted anyone? Have they talked with you at any length?

IF THERE IS A PREGNANCY:

- Considering the pregnancy, what makes you believe the marriage will succeed? What prompts you to fear it may fail?
- Do you think they would have planned to marry soon if there was not a pregnancy?
- If there was not a pregnancy, would you consent to this marriage?
- What alternatives had you considered to this marriage? What prompted you to develop those alternatives and consent to the marriage?
- In a situation such as a pregnancy, both parents and the couple often feel pressure to go through with the marriage as quickly as possible. How much pressure are you under? How is the pressure detracting from adequate preparation for marriage? How are these pressures diminishing the freedom of the couple to be able to make an honest choice for or against the marriage?

D. THE MARRIAGE

1. Why do you approve of or disapprove of this marriage? Do you find these reasons to be good?
2. Do you think this marriage will last a lifetime?
3. Are you sure that marriage at this time is the best means to assure your son/daughter a happy life?
4. Please share the way in which you came to the decision to consent to this marriage. Do you think you have given this matter sufficient thought?
5. As far as you know, is your son/daughter completely free to enter into marriage? Are you aware of any fears, outside pressure or influences that may be affecting his/her choice in this matter?
6. Since the happiness and future of your son/daughter are at stake, are there any doubts that are prompting you to reconsider your decision?

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X
CANONICAL CITATIONS

Canon Law and Marriage Preparation

- CAN. 1057: §1. The consent of the parties, legitimately manifested between persons qualified by law, makes marriage; no human power is able to supply this consent.
- CAN. 1058: All persons who are not prohibited by law can contract marriage.
- CAN. 1063: Pastors of souls are obliged to take care that their ecclesiastical community offers the Christian faithful the assistance by which the matrimonial state is preserved in a Christian spirit and advances in perfection. This assistance must be offered especially by:
- 1^o preaching, catechesis adapted to minors, youth, and adults, and even the use of instruments of social communication, by which the Christian faithful are instructed about the meaning of Christian marriage and about the function of Christian spouses and parents;
 - 2^o personal preparation to enter marriage, which disposes the spouses to the holiness and duties of their new state;
 - 3^o a fruitful liturgical celebration of marriage which is to show that the spouses signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church;
 - 4^o help offered to those who are married, so that faithfully preserving and protecting the conjugal covenant, they daily come to lead holier and fuller lives in their family.
- CAN. 1065: §2. To receive the sacrament of marriage fruitfully, spouses are urged especially to approach the sacraments of penance and of the Most Holy Eucharist.
- CAN. 1066: Before marriage is celebrated, it must be evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.
- CAN. 1067: 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 investigations necessary before marriage. After these norms have been diligently observed, the pastor can proceed to assist at the marriage.
- CAN. 1071: §1. Except in case of necessity, a person is not to assist without the permission of the local ordinary at:
- 1^o the marriage of transients;
 - 2^o a marriage which cannot be recognized or celebrated in accord with the norm of civil law;

3^o a marriage of a person who is bound by natural obligations toward another party or toward children arising from a prior union;

4^o a marriage of a person who has notoriously rejected the Catholic faith;

5^o a marriage of a person who is under a censure;

6^o a marriage of a minor child when the parents are unaware of it or are reasonably opposed;

7^o a marriage to be entered by means of a proxy, mentioned in can. 1105.

CAN. 1072: Pastors of souls are to take care to dissuade youth from the celebration of marriage before the age at which a person usually enters marriage according to the accepted practices of the region.

CAN. 1077: §1. In a special case, the local ordinary can prohibit marriage for his own subjects residing anywhere and for all actually present in his own territory but only for a time, for a grave cause, and for as long as the cause continues.

CAN. 1084: §1. Antecedent and perpetual impotence to have intercourse, whether on the part of the man or the woman, whether absolute or relative, nullifies marriage by its very nature.

§2. If the impediment of impotence is doubtful, whether by a doubt about the law or a doubt about a fact, a marriage must not be impeded nor, while the doubt remains, declared null.

§3. Sterility neither prohibits nor nullifies marriage, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 1098.

CAN. 1095: The following are incapable of contracting marriage:

1^o who lack the sufficient use of reason;

2^o who suffer from grave defect of discretion of judgment concerning essential matrimonial rights and duties mutually to be handed over and accepted;

3^o those who are not able to assume the essential obligations of marriage for causes of a psychic nature.

CAN. 1108: §1. Only those marriages are valid which are contracted before the local ordinary, pastor, or a priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who assist, and before two witnesses according to the rules expressed in the following canons and without prejudice to the exceptions mentioned in canons 144, 1112, §1, 1116, and 1127, §§1–2.

§2. The person who assists at a marriage is understood to be only that person who is present, asks for the manifestation of the consent of the contracting parties, and receives it in the name of the Church.

CAN. 1115: Marriages are to be celebrated in a parish where either of the contracting parties has a domicile, quasi-domicile, or month long residence or, if it concerns transients, in the parish where they actually reside. With the permission of the proper ordinary or proper pastor, marriages can be celebrated elsewhere.

CAN. 1116: §1. If a person competent to assist according to the norm of law cannot be present or approached without grave inconvenience, those who intend to enter into a true marriage can contract it validly and licitly before witnesses only:

1° in danger of death;

2° outside the danger of death, provided that it is prudently foreseen that the situation will continue for a month

§2. In either case, if some other priest or deacon who can be present is available, he must be called and be present at the celebration of the marriage together with the witnesses, without prejudice to the validity of the marriage before witnesses only.

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XI
RESOURCES

Vatican Documents/Statements

PASTORAL CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD
(GAUDIUM ET SPES)

Second Vatican Council, 1965

MARRIAGE BETWEEN ROMAN CATHOLICS AND ORTHODOX

Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches, 1967

APOSTOLIC LETTER ON MIXED MARRIAGES

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1970

CHARTER OF THE RIGHTS OF THE FAMILY

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1983

CODE OF CANON LAW

1983

INSTRUCTION ON RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE IN ITS ORIGIN AND ON THE
DIGNITY OF PROCREATION (DONUM VITAE)

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1987

CODE OF CANON LAW OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES

1990

DIRECTORY FOR THE APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES AND NORMS ON ECUMENISM

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 1993

LETTER TO THE BISHOPS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONCERNING THE
RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION BY THE DIVORCED AND REMARRIED
MEMBERS OF THE FAITH

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1994

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING PROPOSALS TO GIVE LEGAL RECOGNITIONS TO
UNIONS BETWEEN HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2003

Papal Statements

ON THE REGULATION OF BIRTH (HUMANAE VITAE)

Pope Paul VI, 1968

ON THE FAMILY (FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO)

Pope John Paul II, 1981

ON THE DIGNITY AND VOCATION OF WOMEN (MULIERIS DIGNITATEM)

Pope John Paul II, 1988

LETTER TO FAMILIES (GRATISSIMAM SANE)
Pope John Paul II, 1994

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE (EVANGELIUM VITAE)
Pope John Paul II, 1995

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