

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.