



LaSalle Catholic Parishes

Marriage Preparation Packet

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The policies contained in this marriage preparation packet are those belonging to LaSalle Catholic Parishes (LaSalle, IL) and are in accordance with the Revised Common Marriage Preparation Policy of the Diocese of Peoria, as promulgated October 28, 1997 by the Most Reverend John J. Myers.

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP



Dear Engaged Couple:

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR



Dear Friends,

With great joy, the Christian community celebrates the sacrament of marriage and rejoices with those who have announced their intentions to marry by an act of engagement.

You are about to begin a very important part of your life, and the community at the LaSalle Catholic Parishes hopes that your wedding day is only the beginning of a long and joyous vocation together lived out in the Christian community. A Catholic wedding is not merely a social event, but it is a sacrament—in which a man and woman become husband and wife in the presence of God, the wedding officiant, and your family and friends.

Your preparation for marriage builds up God's Kingdom in a unique and special way. As a couple, you offer a visible sign of God's presence and love for each one of us. It is an act of worship that takes place in the midst of a Christian community. In living out your vows, as husband and wife, you will share in Christ's Paschal Mystery by dying to your own desires so as to live for each other and your children. Your marriage reflects Christ's relationship with the Church and creates a new family within the community of the Church.

The staff at the LaSalle Catholic Parishes and I look forward to working with you as you prepare for the day of your wedding and a lifetime of marriage together. May Christ bless you in this sacrament and the Holy Spirit guide you in preparation!

In Christ,

Very Reverend Paul Carlson
Pastor

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

The matrimonial union, whereby one man and woman establish between themselves a partnership for their whole life and ordered to the good of the spouse and the procreation of children, is found to exist within the natural ordering of biology and human nature. As such, states and governments have a right to oversee the wellbeing of marital unions for the good of the state.

Yet, Christ has raised the natural matrimonial union (civil marriage) to the dignity of a sacrament. He has established it as covenant between two persons and God, for the sake of the salvation of their souls and procreation of offspring to likewise live a life of holiness modeled after Christ. Indeed, Sacred Scripture speaks of the creation of man and woman endowed with dignity for having been created in the image and likeness of God and it concludes with a vision of the great “wedding-feast of the Lamb,” where in God and the Christian faithful of his Church are perfectly united. Therefore, the sacrament of marriage is an image and a sign which points to the love of God for his people. This sign is most fully realized in the nuptial union of the two spouses and celebrated in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass.

To enter into a valid Catholic marriage, at least one of the two parties of opposite genders must be a baptized Catholic. Both parties must prove that they are free to marry (that they are not already married, not ordained, have not professed a vow of chastity, etc.), know what it is that they are undertaking by entering into marriage, and choose to enter into marriage by their own free volition. The marriage preparation process helps to establish these things, as well as to equip the couple for a lifetime of marriage together.

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MARRIAGE

Because marriage is governed by the laws of nature, civil law, and ecclesial law, the following pieces of documentation are necessary and the parish priest who is leading the marriage preparation will guide you through these applicable documents:

- Certificates of Baptism and Confirmation (as applicable; issued within last 6 months)
- All marriage certificates, divorce certificates, and decrees of nullity (as applicable)
- Two witness affidavits for each party
- Certificates of completion for diocesan level preparations Part One and Part Two
- Marriage license secured from one’s local County Clerk’s Office

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Some couples have special circumstances, which may require more paper work and preparation than usual. Some of the possibilities include:

Interfaith Couples: When one of the persons is of a faith tradition other than Catholic, some additional instruction in orientation into the Catholic concepts of marriage is helpful. Special permission of the priest/deacon witnessing the marriage is required. A dispensation is required to marry in the non-Catholic party's church.

Non-Christian or Non-Baptized: When one of the persons is non-Christian or non-baptized, some additional preparation may be required. Special permission (dispensation) is required.

Previous Marriage: When one partner has been married before, divorced, and has not applied for a Decree of Nullity, there is a waiting period from the time the divorce is finalized to the time that a Petition for a Decree of Nullity can be initiated. Even if the person has been married by a minister in another faith tradition or by a Justice of the Peace, a Decree of Nullity is still necessary. The Diocesan Marriage Tribunal reviews and judges each Petition and this can take approximately six months to complete. If one of you has been married before and has not applied for a Decree of Nullity, it is not possible to set a date for the wedding until the Decree of Nullity has been finalized. This should be your first concern before attending to your wedding plans, and the pastorate staff will assist you with the process.

THE MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS

The marriage preparation process ordinarily lasts at least 8 months (definitely no less than 4 months) from the anticipated date of the marriage celebration. Through a series of meetings with a parish priest, parish staff, and representatives from the Diocese of Peoria the couple prove that they are sacramentally free to marry and know what they are entering into by their marriage. Furthermore, the couple will be led in discussion about themselves and their relationship, so as to help strengthen their mutual relationship for a lifetime of marriage together. The final portion of marriage preparation will be the planning of the marriage liturgy.

1. **Initial meeting**– If you have not yet done so, please contact the parish office to schedule an initial meeting with a priest, so as to start the marriage preparation process. In this meeting, the priest will obtain basic contact information, assess the status of the couple’s engagement, and explain to them the marriage preparation process.
2. **FOCCUS Test**– Taken about a month after the initial meeting, the *Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understand and Study Test* (FOCCUS Test) is a pre-nuptial inquiry instrument which shows patterns of strengths and areas that need the couples' attention. It is designed to help engaged couples appreciate their unique relationship, learn more about themselves, and discuss topics important to their lifelong marriage. Please note that this is not a “test” in the sense of pass/fail, but rather a means of assessing and analyzing the couple’s relationship.
3. **FOCCUS Discussions**– Starting about one month after completion of the FOCCUS Test, the couple will meet about once a month with the priest (~3 meetings) to discuss the findings of the FOCCUS assessment and help the couple grow deeper in their relationship. These meetings last about an hour each.
4. **Diocesan Level Preparation**– While the discussions of FOCCUS test are ongoing, the couple should complete Part One and Part Two of the diocesan level preparations.
Part One: Engaged Couple Encounter or Pre-Cana Conference
Part Two: Christian Sexuality Workshop or Learn Natural Family Planning (NFP)
Further information, including costs and schedules, can be found here:
<http://cdop.org/evangelization-and-faith-formation/family-life/>
5. **Liturgy Planning**– About two months before the wedding date, the couple will meet with the priest to discuss specific plans for the wedding liturgy. These will include music, Scripture readings, prayers, attendants, etc.

DIOCESAN LEVEL PREPARATION

Couples are responsible to complete either option under *Part One* and under *Part Two*. Upon completion of each, the facilitator will provide the couple with a certificate of completion. Please give these certificates to the priest arranging your marriage, as it must be filed in the marriage preparation packet.

Part One

PRE-CANA CONFERENCE

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

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

ENGAGED COUPLE ENCOUNTER

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

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

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

Part Two

CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY WORKSHOP

The Christian Sexuality Workshop is a day-long seminar for engaged couples, focusing on that dimension of Christian marriage that involves sexuality and family planning. Sex and children are an integral part of married life. This program explains and explores the traditional Christian vision of how God's plan for marriage includes an approach to sex that is honest, faithful and open to life. The day consists of presentations about the nature of human sexuality, its right use in the context of Christian marriage, an introduction to modern methods of Natural Family Planning — highly effective, healthy, marriage-building, and morally sound ways of planning a family — as well as couple discussion and a question-and-answer period. Please note, to actually learn a method, sign up for the class series described below.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

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

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

The classes are taught by certified instructors and consist of a series of classes generally over a three-month period. This allows the couple time to apply what they learn in order to practice the method in their marriage with confidence and success. Classes are scheduled throughout the year and various locations throughout the Diocese.

In the Illinois Valley, the local instructor for Natural Family Planning, according to the Creighton Model, is Alyssa Zukowski. Alyssa can be reached by phone: (815) 848-7997, email: alyssa@embraceyourcycle.com, or her website: www.embraceyourcycle.com.

"There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven ... a time for embracing, a time to refrain from embracing."

~ Ecclesiastes 3:1, 5

Further details, schedules, and registration instruction can be found on the Diocesan website: <http://cdop.org/evangelization-and-faith-formation/family-life/>

LITURGY PLANNING

Date and Time – Weddings are usually scheduled for Saturday afternoons, starting at 1:00pm and can last from 45 minutes up to an hour and a half in length of time. To celebrate the wedding liturgy on Friday is welcomed by the parish.

In the context of Mass – While it is ideal that wedding liturgies be celebrated in the context of a Mass since Jesus' presence in the Eucharist is the source of all Christian unity, pastoral concern does allow for weddings to be celebrated outside of Mass. This may be the preferable method when one party is not Catholic.

Devotionals – Please discuss with the priest arranging your marriage if you wish to utilize any devotionals within the marriage liturgy (flowers to Mary, Lazo, Arras, etc.). Please note that symbolic acts such as the unity candle or mixture of sand may be more meaningful and better suited at the reception.

Prayers of the Liturgy – Specific readings, proper prayers, and options for the exchange of vows will be reviewed and discussed with the priest arranging the marriage.

Music – It is the responsibility of the couple to be married to arrange for any desired incorporation of music in the wedding liturgy. They are encouraged to contact the musicians of the parish to schedule them for the liturgy and plan the musical selections. All music must be appropriate for use in church and fitting to the dignity of sacred liturgy. The parish music director is Alex Dittmer and he can be contacted by email at adittmer@lasallecatholic.org. The parish organist is Stacy Konczak and she can be contacted by email at pianist2024@hotmail.com.

THE DAY OF THE REHEARSAL

Wedding rehearsals are usually scheduled for Friday evenings and can last up to an hour in length. The rehearsal is run by the priest who will celebrate the liturgy, not by any outside professional wedding coordinate/planner.

The entire wedding liturgy will be walked-through at the rehearsal. Therefore, those in attendances should include the bride, groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, parents, grandparents, ushers, flower-girl, ring-bearer, readers, and gift-bearers.

Please come to the rehearsal with the marriage license, any devotionals being utilized, and all applicable gratuities. Typical gratuity is \$150 for the priest and \$200 for the church.

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

Please note that occasionally funerals may be scheduled in the church on the morning of the wedding. This may delay access to the church for preparations for the wedding liturgy.

After 10:00am

- Flowers may be placed in the church
- Pre-ceremony wedding photos may begin to take place in the church.

Noon

- Groom and groomsmen should arrive in the church, already dressed.
- Ushers arrive in church vestibule.

12:30

- Parents and grandparents arrive in church vestibule.
- Flower-girl and ring-bearer arrive in church vestibule.
- Readers arrive in church.
- Musicians arrive in choir loft.

12:45

- Bride and bridesmaids may arrive at the church.

At 1:00pm

- The wedding liturgy begins promptly.

Immediately following:

- The civil marriage license is signed in the sacristy.
- Wedding photos may be taken.
- Clean-up must occur promptly, as the church must be cleared-out by 3:00pm.

GENERAL RULES FOR THE WEDDING LITURGY

- No food or drink is allowed inside the church, except for bottled water.
- Absolutely no drugs or alcohol are allowed on church property.
- Flower girls may only scatter artificial flowers and they must be cleaned-up afterwards.
- Photographers/Videographers are welcome, provided that they are discreet and respectful to the nature of the church building. They are welcome to take photos from the aisle and pew areas of church, but are not allowed in the sanctuary during the liturgy.
- Modesty of clothing, speech, and behavior is expected at all times.
- The LaSalle Catholic Parishes are not responsible for any lost or stolen personal belongings.
- **Absolutely no wedding will be celebrated if:**
 - the bride and/or groom are intoxicated by drug or alcohol to any degree.
 - a valid civil marriage license is not supplied.