

# **MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT**



## **POLICY AND PLANNING GUIDELINES**

**DIOCESE OF GARY**

**GUIDELINES**

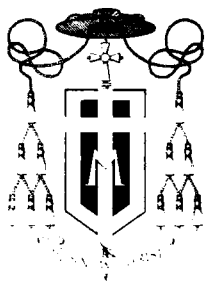
**For**

**MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT**

***Diocese of Gary***

***Indiana***

***Promulgated February 2, 1996***



**DIOCESE OF GARY**

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Coadjutor Bishop of Gary

February 2, 1996

**Dear Monsignor, Father, Deacon, and All Who Minister to Couples Who Will Receive the Sacrament of Marriage:**

We, who minister in the name of Jesus, are challenged by Him to extend ourselves so that men and women preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage will grow in their relationship with the Lord, His Church, and each other. It is important for us to make the precious time of marriage preparation truly grace-filled moments of evangelization for the couples.

Marriage is an ecclesial matter involving a man, a woman, and the faith community. Our role is to help the couple respond to God's call to witness to His unconditional, enduring love for His people and Christ's love for His Church by forming a family which is, in the words of Pope John Paul II, the domestic church.

Throughout the long process of preparing these guidelines which form the marriage policy and preparation expectations for the Diocese of Gary, I have been impressed with the seriousness with which so many approached this work. Priests, deacons, lay men and women spent many hours in research and in meetings developing this policy.

As you minister to the couples who approach you for assistance in preparing for marriage, may you share their joy at these special moments in their lives. May you always have the heart and mind of Jesus. My prayers are with you in this important work.

This document is promulgated on the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus, February 2, 1996.

Sincerely yours in the Lord Jesus,

*+Dale J. Melczek*

**Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek  
Coadjutor Bishop of Gary**

**MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT**  
**Guidelines - Diocese of Gary**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Importance and Dignity of the Sacrament of Marriage**

When a couple decides to marry, they are beginning a time of joyful anticipation. They have agreed to establish between themselves a partnership for the whole of life. When it occurs between two baptized persons, this partnership has been elevated to the order of a sacrament by Jesus Christ.

Pope John Paul II writes, "By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligations, they are penetrated with the Spirit of Christ, who fills their whole lives with faith, hope and charity" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 56).

Men and women have a basic right to enter into valid marriages. When they do so under the aegis of the Church, marriage becomes a sacred bond. It is the desire and the responsibility of the Church to assist couples in understanding how serious, special and significant the bond of marriage really is. To help the couples understand the life-long fidelity on which a marriage is based requires careful thought, preparation and prayer.

The following Policies for Marriage Preparation are offered with the hope that we, the Church of the Diocese of Gary, can assist and serve engaged couples in their response to God's call to the married life.

During policy development, we have attempted to be sensitive to the small parish community, which might joyfully celebrate only a few marriages each year, and to larger, urban parishes, where fifty such celebrations occur annually. Our goal for engaged couples is that they, and the entire parish community, find in marriage a "specific source and original means of sanctification" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 56). May they do so with an assurance of peace, happiness and permanence.

**Policy and Guidelines Committee:** Msgr. Joseph Semancik, chairman, Rev. Martin Dobrzynski, Rev. Richard Emerson, Rev. Joseph Gazarkiewicz, Rev. Francis Lazar, Msgr. Carl Mengeling, and Msgr. John Siekierski

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**I. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARISH PRIEST & ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY**

1. The parish priest has the responsibility of assessing the readiness of those desiring marriage, and, with his own ecclesial community, assisting in the immediate preparation of the engaged couple for the Sacrament of Marriage. *(CF/c. 1063)*
2. The parish priest of the church where the wedding takes place has the right to assist at the marriage, the responsibility for the couple's preparation for marriage, and for the assessment of their readiness to enter marriage. This canonical right belongs to the local parish priest even when a visiting clergyman is asked to officiate. *(CF/c. 1070)*
3. Those involved in the immediate preparation of couples for marriage are assured that nothing stands in the way of the valid and licit celebration of any given couple's marriage. *(CF/c. 1066)*
4. The parish priest may delegate to visiting priests and to deacons the faculty to assist at marriages within his territory. *(CF/c. 1111)*

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) A grave obligation rests upon the parish priest to provide any and all necessary assistance to a couple who is intending to enter into marriage. Such assistance will include a premarriage program. It may also include having the names of the couple(s) in the general intercessions, having the couple(s) meet with married couples in the parish prior to their wedding, and opportunities for psychological counseling and/or professional assistance.
- b) All persons have the right to marry. *(CF/c. 1058)* Canon 1066 is a reminder that the right to marry is contingent on fulfilling certain legal prerequisites. The pastor becomes morally certain that nothing stands in the way of a valid and licit celebration before he proceeds with being a witness to the particular marriage.
- c) Even if a couple is from another diocese, the parish priest who is performing the marriage and has the right to validly officiate is responsible for seeing that the couple is adequately prepared for marriage. "...within the confines of their territory, the local ordinary and the pastor in virtue of their office, validly assist at the marriages of their subjects as well as of non-subjects provided one of the contractants is of the Latin rite." (C.1109)

**A. NOTIFICATION OF THE PASTOR**

1. A couple contacts their parish priest as soon as they propose to marry, or at least six months prior to the proposed date of the wedding.
2. A tentative wedding date may be selected during the first session with the parish priest, but the date is not finalized until it is established that the couple is free to marry.

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) Couples are encouraged to begin formal marriage preparation with their parish priest as soon as possible after the engagement has been announced. Oftentimes, this can occur almost one year before the anticipated wedding date.
- b) A minimum of six months comprises a preparation time. It is the minimum time necessary for proper personal, spiritual, and liturgical preparation of the couple for marriage. Important elements in the preparation are:
  - Premarital Assessment/Evaluation
  - Formation Sessions
  - Liturgical Preparation
  - Completion of Civil Requirements, e.g. marriage license

**B. INITIAL INTERVIEW - WELCOME****1. WELCOME AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The initial interview with the couple requesting marriage is an important time for establishing rapport, and for reviewing and explaining the concerns of the ecclesial community as expressed in these guidelines. It also is a time to determine the eligibility of the engaged couple to marry, according to both the civil law and the canon law of the Catholic Church. Priests cannot witness marriages not recognized by the State.

*(See Appendix A for sample questions)*

**2. EXPLAIN MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCEDURE/PROCESS**

At the first introductory session, a complete explanation of the Marriage Preparation Process is given.

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) The Marriage Preparation Process is begun by filling out the diocesan premarital documents; briefing about the Instructional/Formational Program in which they will participate; and informing about the Premarital Inventory which they may be asked to complete.

b) It is extremely important that, during the initial stages of this first session with the couple, the priest emphasizes the positive aspects of this policy as an expression of the concern of the Church, given the many problems encountered in marriage today. He stresses that the marriage preparation process is a positive aid to the couple in the exploration of their future marriage. It is also an aid to the priest, as the representative of the Church, in the development of a solid marriage preparation program for this unique couple. In no way is it meant to be "just more red tape" or a hurdle that has to be jumped before the couple is "permitted" to marry in the Church.

c) The parish priest creates an atmosphere in which the engaged couple is motivated to sense the value of preparation and thus can commit themselves to it.

**3. ASSESSMENT AND ARRANGEMENTS**

At the initial interview, the parish priest assists the couple in beginning to assess their strengths and weaknesses in terms of marriage, and to evaluate their readiness as a couple to marry in the Catholic Church.

**a. PRE-MARITAL INQUIRY.**

After the priest has thoroughly discussed this diocesan policy, answering the various questions that the couple may have, he initiates the formal marriage preparation process by filling out the diocesan premarital documents:

- Form M-1 \* (Premarital Questionnaire);
- Form M-2 \* (Witness Form);
- Form M-3 \* (if a dispensation or permission is needed);
- Signature of the Catholic party to the Declaration and Promise in an interreligious marriage \*;
- Supplementary Oaths in the case of a premarital pregnancy.

***(See Appendix B for Sample Forms\*)***

(CF/c. 1066) Marriage is celebrated when it is evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.

***(See Appendix C for Impediments to Marriage)***

\*At the time of this printing, Diocesan Marriage Forms are being revised and combined. A sample form is not available for inclusion in this document.

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) The Pre-Marital Investigation Form is used not only to uncover impediments to marriage, but also may be used as a springboard for discussion of a couple's attitudes toward marriage, and especially the Sacrament of Marriage.

b) In some cases, the priest may wish to delay filling out some forms until further in the preparation process when the couple is better able to assess the importance and references of the forms. However, the tentative marriage date remains tentative until the forms are completed and it is determined that the couple is free to marry.

**b. DOCUMENTATION**

**Baptismal Certificates/Other Documents.** The parish priest obtains a **recent** (no older than six months from date of request) copy of the baptismal certificate(s) of the Catholic party(ies).

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) The parish priest also indicates what further premarital documents will/may be required: parental affidavits; death certificate of a previous spouse; written permission from pastor of either the bride or the groom, if appropriate; Declaration of Nullity of previous marriage.

b) The parish priest informs the couple about the **requirements of the State**. In order to obtain a marriage license (county clerk's office) in Indiana, the couple is required to have valid driver's licenses or state I/D cards, and a rubella blood test (females under 50 years) entered on a blue Indiana form.

c) These documents, and any necessary dispensations, along with a brief summary of any marriage assessment tool and/or report from a counselor, are kept in an envelope and saved in a permanent file at the parish.

**c. WITNESS/INTERVIEW**

Goals are to ascertain freedom to marry. *(See Appendix B for sample forms)*

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) The witness forms are filled out by persons who have known either of the engaged since the party was of marriageable age. Parents can be used.

b) Interviews with the parents, or others who know the couple well, are very effective in cases involving **minors, pregnancy, apparent immaturity, or other difficulties**. Whenever possible, these interviews are extended to such areas as family background, parents' assessment of the readiness of the couple, as well as the couple's motivation to marry.

c) Results of these interviews are retained with the permanent prenuptial file.

**d. DATE & PLACE OF MARRIAGE**

**Date of Marriage.** Discussion of a tentative wedding date may take place during the initial contact with the parish priest/deacon; however, the date is not to be finalized until the assessment process has been completed. At the conclusion of the Marriage Preparation Process, a decision to proceed with or delay the planned wedding is made by the priest and the couple.

**Pastoral Notes:**

The couple is advised that if serious reasons surface, the priest/deacon may delay the wedding until the matter is resolved. If the decision is to proceed, the wedding date is finalized and the Liturgical Preparation for the wedding begun. (CF/c. 1077)

**Place of Marriage.** The wedding of two Catholics takes place in the parish church of either the bride or groom. For two Catholics to marry in another parish church, it is proper that permission is received from either of the respective parishes. The wedding in which only one of the parties is Catholic takes place in his or her parish church. (See *"The Place of the Wedding" in the Liturgy Document, p. 30.*)

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) Since the parish church is the spiritual "home" of the family of God, where the life-giving sacraments are normally celebrated and since the parish is the heart of sacramental life and ministry, weddings in non-sacred places (private homes, gardens, parks, hotels, wedding chapels) are rarely, if ever, allowed.

b) In the case of an interreligious marriage, the bishop may permit the couple to celebrate their wedding in the place of worship of the non-Catholic party when a pastoral reason exists. A dispensation from canonical form is required as it is presumed that the officiant, witnessing consent, is not a Catholic priest or deacon.

c) In cases where a wedding in a Catholic Church would be offensive, the pastor can permit the marriage celebration in a suitable place.

**e. CELEBRANT**

No priest may assist at the wedding of parishioners of another parish without the permission of the proper pastor. (CF/c. 1115) No priest can **validly** assist at a wedding in a parish of which he is not the pastor, associate pastor, assistant pastor or curate without proper "delegation" of the pastor or the Ordinary. (CF/c. 1118)

**Pastoral Notes:**

If another priest is invited to perform the ceremony, it is permissible for him to handle the preparation, but confirmation of this must be given to the local priest. If the priest is from out of state or is not able to handle the couple's preparation, it remains the responsibility of the local parish priest.

**C. REQUIREMENTS FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

1. All couples wishing to be married in Catholic churches in the Diocese of Gary must participate in a formal diocesan approved marriage preparation course.
2. The engaged couple is asked to participate in a formal preparation course during the first three months of the six-month preparation time.
3. The Marriage Preparation Course is designed to:
  - Bring the couple to a deeper awareness of self, of intercommunication, of human sexuality and the theology of marriage.
  - Promote discussion between the couple on topics they may have not fully considered or shared with respect to marriage.
  - Help the couple come to a deeper appreciation of the impact of their own families of origin.
  - Foster personal and spiritual maturity through the use of parish resources.
  - Consider and review practical information a married couple will need.*(c. 1063)*  
*(See Appendix D for Course details)*

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) In some particular cases, participation in the marriage preparation program by both parties **together** is impossible by reason of special circumstances (e.g. military service). Absent parties must obtain like preparation and assessment of readiness for marriage in their own locality in cooperation with the parish priest who will perform the ceremony.
- b) Since the last few months prior to the date of the wedding are filled with so many practical details, it is vitally important that quality time be spent early on by the couple and the priest/deacon in assessing the relationship and preparing for marriage. The crucial distinction between preparation for Matrimony and the planning for the wedding liturgy is maintained. "A wedding is a day.....a marriage is a lifetime."
- c) Some couples merit special considerations: the marriage of an elderly couple, for example, or the validation of a civil marriage which has existed for many years. Couples in these situations are treated with special sensitivity and probably always individually, rather than encouraged to meet with a group of couples. In some places special marriage preparation processes are available for couples who have been previously married.
- d) When making decisions about which program the couple will choose, it is wise to encourage the engaged couple to select those programs which will best suit their needs, rather than requiring a particular program.

e) **Pre-Marital Inventory.** Use of a pre-marital assessment or inventory is strongly recommended as part of the assessment for each engaged couple. For the following couples, however, the Pre-Marital Inventory is **required**:

- Age--if the age of either party is under twenty years on the proposed wedding date;
- Pregnancy--if there is a pregnancy and either party was under twenty-one years of age prior to the pregnancy or if there is a pregnancy and both parties have celebrated their twenty-first birthdays but were not engaged prior to the pregnancy;
- Previous marriage--if either party was in a previous marriage either ecclesiastically dissolved or declared invalid by a Church Tribunal;
- MPC non-participation--if one of the parties has not participated in the pre-approved Catholic Marriage Preparation Course;
- Problem areas--if, after participation by both parties in the Catholic Marriage Preparation Course, the parish priest is informed that problem areas surfaced from the course assessments.

**\*\*\* Referral for professional counseling may be advised depending upon the special circumstances, or for other reasons noted by the priest/deacon.** The counselor can assist in determining the readiness of the couple for marriage through professional evaluation, or engage in therapy and ongoing counseling which may deal with personality disorders or psychological issues too important to be left unaddressed before marriage.

f) There are various tools available for the pre-marital inventory. These can be helpful in obtaining insights into the emotional, psychological, and religious maturity of the couple and in helping them become aware of both strengths on which to build their relationship and dangers that might threaten it.

g) The Pre-marital Inventory is a written value clarification exercise. It is not a test. It is intended to be **an aid to the priest and the couple** in exploring the couple's relationship, attitudes and expectations about entering into the proposed marriage.

**D. DISPENSATIONS AND PERMISSIONS**

In faculties granted to parish priests by Bishop Melczek, those permissions necessary for the legal celebration of marriage -- mixed religion, bans, or natural obligations toward a third party, or toward children born of a previous union -- are given within the parish without recourse to the diocesan curia.

All impediments to marriage, those conditions which must be removed for the valid celebration of marriage, are still reserved to the bishop or his delegate.

***(See Appendix C for Impediments to Marriage)***

**Pastoral Notes:**

In the 1918 Code of Canon Law, two kinds of impediments to marriage were identified - impedient impediments and diriment impediments. Impedient impediments affected the liceity of the celebration of marriage, while diriment impediments affected the validity of marriage.

In our common usage, a dispensation was asked from the bishop or his delegate to remove these two kinds of impediments. The 1983 Code of Canon Law removed the distinction and the use of the word impediment to refer to those legal requirements which do not affect the validity but only liceity.

A granting of permission is still required to remove the legal issue, but not a dispensation. The term impediment (diriment is no longer used) refers only to those invalidating blocks to the celebration of marriage. At least one impediment was added to the 1983 Code, that of the legal relationship or adoption, to address the situation of the modern world, and at least one was dropped, that of spiritual relationship.

**II - AREAS OF SPECIAL CONCERNS****A. INTERRELIGIOUS MARRIAGES**

1. The generic term, Interreligious Marriage, applies to any marriage which involves a Catholic and a person who is not Catholic. Since the marriage preparation process will have a direct impact upon both the religious and marital future of the man and woman, the importance of sensitive and honest dialogue cannot be stated strongly enough. The couple is allowed an opportunity to share their different religious traditions and backgrounds, how these affect their relationship, and how they plan to share these with each other and their children.

2. The Catholic Church recognizes the sacred character of all marriages, but Catholic teaching assigns a further significance to marriage between baptized persons in that such marriages are considered sacramental.

3. In similar fashion, the particular tenets of the faith of the party who is not Catholic need to be explored. True understanding of another ecclesial tradition and the impact of that tradition on the life of one who has been raised and nourished in it requires more than a superficial impression gained only through distant observation. At this point, the cooperation of the clergy of both partners should be encouraged.

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) The Catholic party informs his or her future spouse that he or she promises to continue in the practice of the Catholic faith. The Catholic party also promises to baptize, rear and educate their children as Catholics. This written promise, made only by the Catholic party, is discussed by the priest/deacon with both parties early in the marriage preparation meetings. This is done to enhance the unity and oneness of the marriage and the family.

b) When the non-Catholic is not active in his or her religion, and appears to be open to learning more about the Catholic church, the priest/deacon invites him or her to consider the process of Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (R.C.I.A.) with the Catholic partner.

c) In interreligious marriage involving the presence or participation of the non-Catholic minister, the priest or deacon advises the minister regarding the diocesan guidelines for the non-Catholic minister's participation which include:

- It is the sole role of the Catholic priest officiating at such marriages in a Catholic church to accept the couple's exchange of marriage vows. (*See: Liturgical Document for marriage ceremony guidelines.*)
- Exchange of vows between a Catholic and a baptized Christian usually does not involve a Mass. (*See "The Celebration of Marriage Outside of Mass" in the Liturgy Document, pp. 33 & 34; [Rite of Marriage 1969, paragraph 8; Order of Christian Marriage 1991, paragraph 36]*)
- Exchange of vows between a Catholic and a non-Christian may not involve a Mass.

**B. NON-PRACTICING CATHOLICS**

Non practice of the faith by the Catholic party(ies), with no intention of resuming practice, raises issues of special pastoral concern. There is a two-fold responsibility: to the couple and to the ecclesial community.

1. If the Catholic party has no intention of resuming practice of his faith, all policies regarding interreligious marriage apply. This might be an opportunity for evangelizing.
2. Those who are baptized in the Catholic faith but who were never instructed or raised in that faith, and who are, in fact, not practicing the Catholic religion, are invited to consider the R.C.I.A. process.
3. If someone has been raised in the Catholic Church but has abandoned the practice of his/her faith, or formally joined another faith community, the same procedure as for interreligious marriages is required, including permission to celebrate.

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) The priest/deacon is responsible for helping the couple better understand the gift of faith and how the celebration of the marriage is an act of faith and worship which will deepen their personal involvement in the life of grace.
- b) If the couple sees the priest/deacon as fulfilling nothing more than a civil and social function, and is opting for a church ceremony only from social or cultural motives, or to gain family approval, there is good reason to judge that the liturgical celebration will have little, if any, spiritual effect for them. Instruction and counseling with a couple in this situation need to focus on the vital importance of faith for marriage within the Church, and call them to a richer and more fruitful experience of their faith.
- c) If the couple shows no perceivable good will or intent to resume practice of their faith, marriage in the Church can not be considered until a conversion of heart is manifested.

**C. MARRIAGE AFTER A PREVIOUS UNION**

Special marriage preparation is required to meet the unique needs of a couple requesting marriage following a previous union of one or both of them. **Freedom to marry** is determined. Both parties must be:

1. free from the bond of marriage, and
2. free from impediments.

***(See Appendix C for Impediments to Marriage)***

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) In recent years we have become aware that those who are separated from a former spouse by divorce or death go through a period of grieving lasting from two to five years. In our country about half of those who remarry do so within three years after their divorce or the death of their spouse. While this is understandable, such a short time before another marriage raises concerns. It takes time to sift through and properly accept all the thoughts and feelings which accompany such a painful experience. Too swift an entrance into a new relationship can cause a future disaster. Unfortunately, statistics indicate that the divorce rate for those who have married again is even higher than for first marriages.

b) The tendency exists to slight marriage preparation for couples who have been previously married. In fact, the need for marriage preparation is often greater for them than for those entering marriage for the first time. Due to the facts mentioned above, the parish priest needs to discern carefully if any hurts remain from the prior marriage(s) and if this is the case, he might suggest that the person or couple receive some counseling or attend a group program.

c) Besides helping the couple come to grips with the past, the priest/deacon must assesses the present relationship. Use of a pre-marital evaluation instrument such as the Focus instrument is strongly recommended for this. If it becomes apparent that the couple shows good communication patterns and manifests a reasonable potential for adjustment, the couple is directed to a formal marriage preparation program.

**Widowed Persons:**

1. Widows/widowers are to be given special preparation. Previous unions do affect the new relationship. Therefore those in charge of preparing these couples for marriage must keep in mind that although the individuals may have been in good marriages for years before being widowed, they have never been married to each other.
2. The life span of individuals is much longer than in earlier generations. Because of the burden of loneliness among older individuals, care is taken to ensure that the couple is properly motivated.
3. Sufficient time is given to ascertain the attitudes of their children regarding this marriage. The ties of family are strong and will influence the individuals for the rest of their lives. Utilizing the family bond to strengthen the union of a couple is one way to minimize the adjustment strain that comes with any marriage.

**D. VALIDATION OF MARRIAGES**

1. In the case of a couple who has married contrary to the laws of the Catholic Church, validation is permitted only after the couple's freedom to marry has been established and the preparational steps of these guidelines have been completed. (Refer to I., B., through C. Marriage Preparation Course.) It is the actual exchange of consent that forms a marriage, not simply the renewal of consent previously exchanged in another setting.
2. A validation is not simply a "blessing" of an invalid union. It is a commitment and an exchange of vows in the sight of the Christian community. It calls for a full and complete preparation--one which takes into consideration the different needs of a couple in this circumstance.
3. An invalid marriage may not be convalidated within six months following the attempted marriage. The full six month process is to be applied.
4. If one or both parties cannot or will not give the new act of consent required for a simple validation, a retroactive validation (sanatio in radice) might possibly be granted either by the diocesan Bishop or the Apostolic See. A union which is invalid because of an impediment or because of lack of the proper form can be validated retroactively, provided the consent of both parties persists. It involves a dispensation from the impediment, if there is one, and from the canonical form, if it had not been observed, as well as a referral back to the past of the canonical effects. If it is granted, the parties would not need to exchange consent before the duly authorized priest and two witnesses. (Canons 1161, #1; 1163)

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) The care given a couple who is seeking to have their marriage validated, and is canonically free to marry in the Church, will emphasize an appreciation of the new dimensions, in most cases sacramental dimensions, which the relationship will be assuming.
- b) If the invalid marriage has taken place within six months, the priest/deacon will want to determine the motivations of the couple to marry in the Church at this time. Possible concerns to address are whether the couple married "out of the Church" because another priest wanted to delay their marriage, or if there is family pressure to marry in the Church now. Their present marital relationship is assessed and a determination made about the reasons why they desire to have their union validated. The priest/deacon explores whether a good appreciation of the sacramental dimensions of Christian marriage is present.
- c) If the marriage is already of long duration and exhibits stability, freedom to marry and the motivations of the couple to marry in the Catholic Church at this time are determined. Special marriage preparation will be necessary. The couple needs a proper understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage and the new dimension this Sacrament will bring to their union. Special sessions are to be provided for those who are having their marriage validated in the Church.
- d) In instances of advanced age, 60 years and over, the pastor is required to judge the level of formal preparation necessary.

**E. MARRIAGES OF MINORS AND YOUNG ADULTS UNDER 21**

1. The Church holds that the right to marry is a natural right of the highest priority, but is not an unqualified right. The Church and state have both established legitimate restrictions. In the State of Indiana, if either of the couple is 17 years, a signed parental permission, made in person, is required. If either is 16 years, a court order is required.
2. Without permission of the local ordinary, no one is to assist at the marriage of a minor child, under 18, especially when the parents are unaware of it or are reasonably opposed to it.
3. When one or both parties of a couple presenting themselves for marriage is under 21, special care and concern are given during the formal marriage preparation course, and these policy guidelines are closely followed.
4. Although he may consult others, the parish priest reaches the final decision concerning the readiness of the couple for marriage.

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) Since there is such a high incidence of divorce among couples under 21, every effort is made by both parents and parish priest to dissuade the couple from entering marriage until they are properly prepared. The marriage preparation course is vitally important.
- b) Great care is taken to gain the confidence of the couple and to look upon the couple's love in a positive way. It is hoped that the marriage preparation process will bring about increased signs of maturity.
- c) The parish priest gives serious consideration to the couple's backgrounds and intentions. The couple is assisted to understand that marriage is a lifelong relationship and that the care given to their plans is not meant to create difficulties for them. Its purpose is to insure, as much as is humanly possible, that their union and their love will be lasting, and to help protect them from irreparable mistakes.
- d) A separate meeting with each of the engaged parties is suggested, usually at the initial meeting or shortly thereafter. It is also recommended that the parish priest interview each individual's parents at least once to ascertain their reaction to the proposed marriage. (*See Appendix E for the Parental Interview*)
- e) The parish priest makes every effort to reach a decision as soon as is prudently possible after the initial interview. The parish priest may seek the advice of other priests, other professionals or counselors at Catholic Family Service.

**F. PREGNANCY**

1. Pre-marital pregnancy of itself is not to be considered the determining factor in proceeding with the marriage; never is it reason to omit the normal Marriage Preparation Process. Special care and consideration are extended to the couple.
2. It is be strongly recommended to the parties that they consider delaying the wedding until after the birth of the child.
3. If the couple had made the decision to marry (i.e. were engaged) prior to the pregnancy, plans for the marriage are made after the Marriage Preparation Process has been completed and the priest deems the couple sufficiently instructed for marriage. Participation in a Catholic marriage preparation course and utilization of a premarital inventory are required. A parental interview, when possible, is recommended.

***(See Appendix E for sample Parental Interview)***

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) A review of a premarital inventory, completion of the recommended professional evaluations, and counseling can be extremely helpful in determining the couple's maturity and readiness for marriage.
- b) Premarital pregnancy understandably creates a very real sense of urgency in the minds of a couple and/or their parents. However, it does not constitute by itself adequate justification either for the marriage or for shortening the marriage preparation process. Freedom to marry may be compromised, and a person's use of judgement affected.

**G. COHABITATION**

1. Cohabitation is not an invalidating impediment and marriage in the Church cannot be refused.
2. The parish priest is to treat a cohabiting couple with sensitivity, recognizing this as a unique, teachable moment.

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) It is important to recognize that this is a **"teachable moment"** and the parish priest must be cautious lest he alienate the couple from the church community. This calls for pastoral support in the couple's plans for the future rather than chastising them for the past. The couple's desire for a sacramental marriage may be a response to the spirit.

b) The goal of marriage preparation with a cohabiting couple is to bring them to an understanding of the essential properties of marriage: permanence, fidelity, openness to new life, and the establishment of community of life.

Pope John Paul II in his *Apostolic Exhortation on the Family*, states: "The gift of the body in the sexual relationship is a real symbol of the giving of the whole person" (#80). For a couple to engage in sexual intercourse outside of marriage without making a formal, public, permanent commitment to each other is to falsify the sacred symbol that sexual intercourse is. Jesus calls a couple to a covenant relationship. This includes love, fidelity and a commitment to each other forever. The Church, therefore, rejects cohabitation and calls couples to follow Christ's teaching.

c) This premarital process includes the following:

- Inviting the couple to reflect on what led them to the decision to cohabit, what the likely or intended consequences may be and what their hopes are in a cohabitational relationship.
- Sharing with the couple the Catholic Church's rich teaching on matrimony and sexual morality (including the "why" of it) and the faith response which ought to follow.
- Giving the couple the opportunity to choose a personal faith response for the future. Certainly this would be an excellent opportunity to encourage the sacramental celebration of reconciliation.

**G. COHABITATION Pastoral Notes con't**

d) If the engaged couple cannot or will not come to an appreciation of the essential properties of marriage (cf. "b" above), it may be appropriate to delay the wedding after consulting with the local ordinary.

e) While the Church is happy that they want to be married in the Church, the liturgical celebration of the sacrament reflects the present status of the couple, i.e. the entrance procession does not separate the couple; they process down the aisle as a couple. A simple ceremony (only a few attendants) is planned. The father does not "give away" the bride as she has already given herself. We do, however, leave some things to the work of the Spirit.

**H. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:****1. OLDER ADULTS**

The parish priest has the responsibility to see to it that older adults who present themselves for the Sacrament of Marriage have preparation appropriate for their state of life.

**Pastoral Notes:**

a) Generally, when individuals are over the age of 35, special consideration is given to their needs during the marriage preparation process. The usual preparation procedure is followed. In addition, a plan of preparation adapted to their specific needs is given to them.

b) Older couples have different needs than the majority of engaged couples, such as issues of independent living, financial viability, their level of maturation, flexibility and commitment concepts.

## **2. OTHER ABLED PERSONS**

The parish priest needs to show care and concern when an individual who is physically, mentally or developmentally disabled presents him/herself for the Sacrament of Marriage. It is of the greatest importance to treat each situation on an individual basis and oftentimes the counsel of experts is sought.

### **Pastoral Notes:**

a) The "experts" referred to in this policy may be a variety of persons in the diocese who are designated on a full or part time basis to work with those persons who are physically, mentally or developmentally disabled in any way.

b) When necessary, the Tribunal is contacted regarding the canonical aspects of these situations, particularly when professional experts and/or civil authorities consider the parties incapable of assuming responsibility for their own lives.  
(See Appendix F for Marriages with Other Abled Persons)

## **3. DRUG-ALCOHOL DEPENDENCY**

When a person approaching the church for marriage has a chemical dependency of any kind, it must be evident that this individual is in a state of recovery.

### **Pastoral Notes:**

a) The disease of alcoholism as well as acute drug problems permeate society. Affected by these chemical dependencies, families experience a deterioration of mutual support. Children reared in such an atmosphere, or children who are themselves chemically dependent, may not be able to sustain wholesome relationships especially within marriage.

b) Persons divorced from chemically dependent spouses may find themselves in another relationship with a chemically dependent person.

c) Some couples approach the church for marriage who are not chemically dependent, but have been reared in an alcoholic/drug dependent family. It is imperative for them to understand the possible problems this may cause in their marriage relationship. Priests encourage such couples to seek counseling or group therapy.

**4. SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

1) **Unwillingness to prepare for marriage.** Refusal of the couple to participate in any of the steps of Marriage Preparation can be an indication of ill will and/or a sign that they are not really serious about the Sacrament of Marriage, or the life-style of Christian marriage and, therefore, is cause for delay.

2) **Lack of Appreciation for the Spiritual and Sacramental Aspects of Marriage.** The couple is helped to an awareness and appreciation of the essential components of Christian marriage:

- permanence of the union
- creative fidelity to each other
- openness to children
- establishment of community of life

They also become aware of their covenant which offers them the opportunity to bring each other to fullness of life in the Lord. A lack of understanding of these elements is cause for considering a delay.

**Pastoral Notes:****Extended Separation before or after the wedding.**

Good marriage preparation may not be possible and future adjustment to married life may be extremely difficult. It is obvious that for a marital relationship to grow and develop the couple needs to be spending much time together, especially at the outset of their married life.

**I. RIGHTS OF THE COUPLE****1. DELAY OF MARRIAGE**

- 1) The parish priest may not forbid a marriage if the couple is free to marry, but can delay a marriage for a just cause.
- 2) Whenever there is a just cause for delay, it is the responsibility of the parish priest to assist the couple to reach the degree of preparedness necessary for the reception of the sacrament, when possible.
- 3) If a couple, having been advised to delay marriage by the priest with proper jurisdiction, approaches another priest seeking marriage, this priest may not proceed without first consulting the priest who advised the delay.

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) The right to a valid marriage is a natural one of the highest priority but not one absolutely unqualified. Restrictions may be legitimately imposed by Church and State in the face of clear signs that the proposed marriage would conflict with sacramental practice or the common good of society.
- b) The reason for the delay is founded on the obligation of the Church to help the couple. The vocation and sacrament of married life are too important to be taken lightly and the reasons for delay ought to impress upon the couple the seriousness of marriage.
- c) The decision to delay a marriage is best reached in agreement with the couple, but the final decision is the responsibility of the parish priest.

**REMEDIAL PROGRAMS**

If there is indication that the couple is not ready for marriage, the priest has several remedial options available:

- a) Counseling by the priest.
- b) Referral to professional marriage counseling, such as counseling services at Catholic Family Service.
- c) Referral to an educational program available in this, or a neighboring diocese.
- d) Passage of time, especially in the cases of age, maturity, or extended separation, can be a "program" in itself. In such cases, the priest meets with the couple from time to time to assess their progress and readiness for marriage.

**2. APPEAL**

- 1) If a parish priest decides to delay a marriage, the engaged couple has the right to appeal this decision by recourse to the local ordinary or his delegate who reviews the matter.
- 2) The parish priest informs the couple of their right to appeal.
- 3) If the local Ordinary consents to a delay, no priest may proceed, knowingly, with the marriage without the consent of the local Ordinary or his delegate.

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a) This appeal procedure is used when the couple believes that their marriage has been unjustly delayed.
- b) The couple, not their parents, has the right to appeal.
- c) In the event of an appeal, the Prenuptial file, the Premarital Inventory, the results of the Witness Interview, the written appeal-statement signed by the couple, indicating their reason(s) for considering delay unjustifiable, the written opinion of the priest, and, where applicable, any written "second opinion," i.e. counselors, parents, witnesses, are submitted.
- d) Ideally, the entire appeal process from initiation by the priest or the couple to the decision of the ordinary lasts no longer than one month.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Diocese of Gary Marriage Guidelines Committee recognizes the following dioceses and works in their preparation of **Marriage As a Sacrament, Policy and Planning Guidelines**.

**Marriage Guidelines for the Dioceses of Texas.** Texas Catholic Conference, September, 1994.

**Marriage Preparation Guidelines.** Archdiocese of Los Angeles, January, 1990.

**Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation.** Family Ministries Office. Archdiocese of Chicago, revised 1991.

**Preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage.** Diocese of Lafayette in Indiana, revised February, 1991.

**Provincial Guidelines for Marriage Preparation.** The Bishops of Michigan, 1993.

**Wisconsin Pastoral Guidelines for Marriage Preparation.** Prepared by the Wisconsin Diocesan Family Ministers and approved by the Wisconsin Catholic Conference for use in the state of Wisconsin, February, 1994.

**GUIDELINES**

**for the**

**LITURGICAL CELEBRATION**

**of the**

**SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE**

***Diocese of Gary***

***Indiana***

**LITURGICAL CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE**  
**Guidelines - Diocese of Gary**

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## **The Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage**

### ***Introduction***

*The Catholic experience of celebrating marriage vows clearly conveys the Church's beliefs about the Sacrament of Marriage. The Rite of Christian Marriage needs to be respected in its structure and content.*

*The pastoral circumstances of the couple's religious and family background and practice, language and culture, the available resources of the parish, liturgical norms, and canon law are to be considered in the course of planning the celebration of Christian marriage. The Rite of Christian Marriage offers a number of legitimate options to meet these various needs.*

*Clergy and laity involved in the marriage preparation of engaged couples should help couples appreciate the liturgical nature and the liturgical norms relevant to the Rite of Christian Marriage. Parish ministers should encourage engaged couples to avoid all forms of extravagance that would detract from the sacred character of marriage as a sacrament of the church.*

*The Rite of Christian Marriage for two Catholics properly takes place at Mass. However, this presumes that the couple regularly participates in the Sunday Eucharist and are not strangers to their own faith tradition. In some cases, pastoral ministers may need to respectfully encourage the celebration of marriage outside of Mass.*

*Parish policies governing the style of marriage celebrations in the parish should be clearly communicated to and available in print for engaged couples. These parish policies should appear at regular intervals in the parish bulletin.*

*Because there are a number of canonical and legal consequences to a marriage celebrated in Church, it is important for the parish priest or deacon to process all the necessary documentation required by civil law and the canon law of the Church. Accurate records are a serious pastoral responsibility. When a visiting priest is delegated to witness a marriage, the parish priest is responsible for seeing that all necessary documentation has been procured prior to the wedding.*

**I. Liturgical Celebrations In the Couple's Preparation for the Sacrament****The role of the Parish Assembly**

1. The community should be called upon a few times during the year to pray for those preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage.
2. Engaged couples can be presented to the community for a blessing at Sunday Eucharist.
  - The blessing prayer and preceding intercessions are found in the Book of Blessings #195. (*see Pastoral Note*)

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a. Although there is a pastoral note (#198) attached to this rite which appears to disqualify its use at Sunday Eucharist it should be noted that 1) the Book of Blessings is a universal text. This means that its pastoral notes must be universal enough to apply to the whole church and 2) the Revised Rite of Christian Marriage (1991) is strong in its general theme that the long term and short term preparation as well as the after care regarding marriage is an ecclesial concern involving the local community.
- b. The prohibition in #198 is placed there out of pastoral concern because in many non-western countries this blessing could be seen as a formal betrothal with legal and financial consequences or might be mistaken as the marriage itself. However, it is safe to say that in the United States such an interpretation of the rite would not happen. Taking into account the other notes attached to this rite and the General Introduction of the Revised Rite of Christian Marriage it is pastorally favorable to involve the whole community, at least by way of prayer, in the preparation of those parishioners preparing for marriage.
- c. Obviously the whole rite #199-214 cannot be used at Sunday Eucharist but #202, followed by #208 and concluded by #211 or #212 could be used following the Creed.
  - The engaged couples who have been previously prepared for the blessing are invited forward by the priest or catechist. Then a short instruction should be given by the priest to the couples and the assembly (*see #202*).
  - It works best when more than one couple participates in the rite, taking couples in groups at one liturgy.

- Following the brief instruction (#202) the General Intercessions are offered with two or three intercessions specific to the couples to be blessed (see #208 or other shorter versions may be offered).
- The priest concludes the intercessions with the blessing prayer over the couples (see #211 or 212).
- At this time the couples could receive a copy of their vows which they are asked to pray daily as they prepare for the celebration of the sacrament.

This brief celebration helps the couples to understand and appreciate the public/ecclesial nature of their preparation and celebration and it also catechizes the assembly about the same.

## **II. Roles and Responsibilities Regarding the Liturgical Celebration of Marriage**

### **A. The Participation of the Assembly at the Celebration**

As is the norm in all liturgical celebrations, the assembly shall be encouraged to participate in the wedding by making the proper recited and sung responses.

### **B. Respecting Liturgical Roles of Participants**

1. The wedding couple shall be helped to appreciate their special role in the marriage rite in which they confer the sacrament on one another through the exchange of vows. (*see Pastoral Note, a.*)
2. It is not the role of the wedding couple to administer Holy Communion to each other or to the assembly. Their role in the marriage rite is to exchange vows, not to assist the priest in distributing communion. (*see Pastoral Note, b.*)
3. The wedding couple is part of the eucharistic assembly and so it is inappropriate for the wedding couple to stand on either side of the presider during the Eucharistic prayer as if they were concelebrants.

#### **Pastoral Notes:**

- a. Respecting the principle that only one role should be exercised at the liturgy by each individual, other members of the family and parish community, depending on their gifts, shall be invited to participate in the marriage liturgy as lectors, cantors, musicians, or ushers.
- b. These ministerial roles do not exist in order to give family and friends something "to do" because they are not in the immediate wedding party. Care must be given to insure that the Word is proclaimed well and that the role of cantor is not transformed into "soloist."

c. In order for the Precious Blood to be made available to the whole assembly, officially commissioned Eucharistic Ministers of the parish where the celebration is taking place or another Catholic parish can be invited to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion.

### **C. Parameters of the Priest Officiating**

1. In the Rite of Christian Marriage, the presiding minister serves as the Church's official witness. A priest is never permitted to officiate at a wedding in the role of merely a civil official; nor may he officiate at a wedding in which neither of the parties is Catholic, except in the case of catechumens.

2. Concelebration at marriage liturgies is ordinarily to be avoided, since con-celebrating is a sign of the unity of the priesthood and not a means of adding more solemnity to the liturgy. Only at the invitation of the bride and groom is a priest to consider concelebrating at the nuptial Mass.

#### **3. Visiting Clergy.**

If visiting Catholic clergy have been invited to witness a wedding, it is understood that they are to honor the parish's scheduling policy as well as Diocesan and parochial expectations for marriage preparation and the celebration of the liturgy. For validity, visiting clergy, including all deacons, must be given delegation by a priest assigned to the parish.

### **D. Witnesses at the Celebration**

#### **1. The Non-Catholic Witness.**

Although it is preferable that both witnesses at a marriage ceremony in the Catholic Church be Catholic, when circumstances warrant, one or both may be other than Catholic without the need for special permission from the Chancery.

#### **2. The Catholic as Witnesses at Non-Catholic Weddings.**

Catholics may serve at weddings of friends of other faiths except where there is reason to believe that the marriage to be witnessed is invalid.

**III. Places, Times and Seasons for the Celebration of Marriage****A. The Place of the Wedding**

1. The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage ordinarily shall take place in a parish church.
2. All Catholics who are baptized and free to marry in the Catholic Church may celebrate their marriages in the parish church of either the bride or the groom. Permission to marry in another parish is to be obtained from either the pastor of the bride or the pastor of the groom.
3. A priest who for serious pastoral reasons decides to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage outside of the parish church (e.g. in parks, backyards, homes, etc.) is accountable for his decision to his parishioners, his brother priests, and the bishop. *(see Pastoral Note)*
4. With a dispensation from canonical form, a marriage may take place in a non-Catholic place of worship. However, a priest may not officiate at this celebration.
5. In the case of a Catholic-Jewish wedding, the custom of having the marriage in a hotel or place of reception may be followed with the usual dispensations from canonical form and disparity of cult.

**Pastoral Notes:**

*The General Introduction to the Revised Rite of Christian Marriage (1991) clearly sets the celebration of marriage within the parish community. The insistence regarding the inclusion of other ministers in the long and short term preparations of the couple(s) is a direct manifestation of the principle that the sacrament be seen and celebrated as a christian/ecclesial reality not one of personal sentimentality. The physical place for the celebration clearly and strongly brings this point home. In a culture driven by a principle of commodity, that is, what can be bought or sold to make one happy for the moment, it is most important that the church maintain a stance of stability not only in concept but in reality.*

**B. Establishing Marriage Celebration Schedules; Days, Times and Seasons**

1. If a parish has a large number of weddings, after reviewing the weekend parish Mass schedule in consultation with the parish pastoral council and the liturgy committee, it is possible to eliminate the Saturday morning Mass. *(see Pastoral Notes, a. & b.)*

2. In establishing a parish marriage schedule, the integrity of the liturgical calendar and the community's celebration of Sunday should be respected.

3. The celebration of Christian Marriage is customarily scheduled on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings and early afternoons. A parish schedule of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and the Sunday Vigil Mass may not be changed to accommodate the celebration of marriages.

4. The Celebration of Marriage can take place during regular parish Sunday Mass.

● *On a Sunday in Ordinary Time, when a wedding is celebrated at a regularly scheduled parish Mass, the Mass orations of the day are used.*

*One of the two readings may be chosen from those provided in the Lectionary for ritual masses for weddings.*

5. Weddings may be celebrated at a Saturday evening Mass of anticipation but this should ordinarily not take place more than once a month. The Sunday liturgy is to be celebrated as provided in the General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar.

6. In most cases additional masses outside the Sunday schedule are not possible due to the restrictions of C. 905.

7. The character of the Lenten Season as a season of repentance and simplicity is at odds with the festive nature of the wedding celebration. Consequently, the celebration of the sacrament should be avoided during this season except for cases of necessity.

8. Weddings on solemnities such as All Souls Day are permitted, but the texts of the Mass are those of the solemnity.

9. If a wedding Mass is able to be celebrated on a Sunday outside of the regular Sunday Mass schedule, the selection of liturgical texts is as follows:

- On Sundays of the Christmas Season and throughout the year, the text of the wedding Mass may be used without change (*see Pastoral Notes, c*).
- On Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, the wedding Mass may not be used, but one of the readings of the Ritual should be used.
- On feasts of Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Assumption, All Saints, Immaculate Conception, and Mary, Mother of God (Jan. 1), the Mass of the day is used without change except for the nuptial blessings and, where appropriate, the special final blessing.

**Weddings are not permitted during the Paschal Triduum.**

**Pastoral Notes:**

a. A fair and reasonable parish policy needs to be established to ensure that Catholics have reasonable options available to them in scheduling their marriages at Mass. This will have to take into account the full schedule of parish services and the number of available clergy in each parish.

b. The parish policy for the scheduling of marriage celebrations should be clearly communicated to all parishioners. The parish policy should appear regularly in the parish bulletin and be available in print as part of the marriage preparation materials given to engaged couples.

c. Since the number of weddings celebrated at Mass may be limited in a particular parish, couples should be helped to understand that it will not always be possible to celebrate a wedding on the day of their first choice.

d. In the scheduling of marriage liturgies, the communal nature of the Sacrament of Marriage should be fostered. It should be remembered that the celebration of Christian Marriage is an "ecclesial" celebration and not a semi-private affair. Appropriate catechesis of the faithful is necessary to help the community to understand the communal dimension of this sacrament. This is especially important, if marriages are to be celebrated occasionally at the regularly scheduled Sunday Mass or if several marriages are celebrated together.

e. The primacy of the parochial celebration of Sunday Eucharist is to always be upheld.

f. A parish, through consultation with the parish pastoral council and the liturgy committee, may develop a policy restricting the number of weddings on a given day depending on the pastoral situation and the number of ministers available to celebrate marriages. This parish policy also includes the scheduling of special wedding anniversary Masses.

g. Church law (C.905) expressly prohibits celebrating more than one Mass a day except in those cases when the law permits multiple celebrations. This law allows the Ordinary to permit a priest to celebrate two Masses on a weekday and three Masses on a Sunday or Holy Day. The Ordinary does not have the authority to authorize more Masses to be celebrated by an individual priest.

h. Since the precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass that is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite, either on the Holy Day or on the evening of the preceding day, a Catholic satisfies the obligation by attending any Mass, including wedding Masses, on a Sunday, Holy Day, Saturday evening or the vigil of a Holy Day. "Evening" is generally understood as late afternoon from about 4:00 PM.

### **C. More than one wedding at same ceremony**

Parish communities may invite more than one couple to consider celebrating their weddings at the same ceremony or Mass. Parishes shall continue to offer couples the option, however, of having individual celebrations of marriage.

### **D. The celebration of Marriage Outside of Mass**

1. In a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, it is expected that the Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass be used. (*see Pastoral Notes, a. and b.*)

2. The distribution of Holy Communion shall not be included in marriage ceremonies celebrated outside of Mass. While the Rite of Christian Marriage allows a communion service to be celebrated after the wedding ceremony, a sufficient number of priests available to celebrate a wedding Mass in the Diocese of Gary makes the use of this option unnecessary in the Diocese. (*see Pastoral Note, c.*)

**Pastoral Notes:**

a. The eucharist is a symbol of Christian unity. Celebrating Christian marriage at Mass may make the celebration awkward for both parties by highlighting their differences in faith. This awkwardness is further accentuated in cases where non-Catholic clergy are invited to participate in a marriage celebrated at Mass.

b. If circumstances justify it and the non-Catholic party asks to have a Mass, "the rite for celebrating marriage within Mass may be used, except that, according to the general law, communion is not given to the non-Catholics."

c. The only exception to this policy is when a deacon presides at a wedding ceremony in order to meet the special language or cultural needs of a couple. In such an instance, a communion service, while not encouraged, is permitted.

**IV. The Wedding Celebration Involving Ecumenical or Inter-religious Marriages****A. Ecumenical Courtesy**

When planning a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, the norms of ecumenical courtesy shall be observed. These norms are:

- **The Norm of Reciprocity:** As a general rule one should neither extend nor accept an invitation to participate in an ecumenical or interfaith activity unless one may extend or accept a similar invitation in return.

- **The Norm of Collaboration:** When planning any ecumenical or interfaith activity or service, there should be consultation and collaboration of representatives of all the participating faiths or communions from the beginning.

**B. Latin Rite/Eastern Catholic Weddings**

1. Marriages between Catholics of the Latin rite and Catholics of an Eastern Catholic Church shall take place in the church of either the bride or the groom as long as the presider is a minister of one or the other churches. Permission of both the proper pastor and the Office of the Bishop is required to have the marriage celebrated elsewhere.
2. For validity, the officiating priest in a marriage between a Catholic of the Latin rite and a Catholic of an Eastern Church must be of the same rite as that of one of the parties.

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a. There are special regulations which must be followed carefully for marriages between Catholics of the Latin Rite and Catholics of Eastern Churches. All questions regarding such marriages are to be addressed to the Office of the Judicial Vicar.
- b. It is advisable to consult with the Office of the Judicial Vicar on all inter-ritual cases.

**C. Catholic/Eastern Non-Catholic Weddings**

When a marriage is celebrated between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, only one religious ceremony is to take place. If the marriage is celebrated in the Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic ritual is used and, for the sake of integrity, the rituals of the two traditions should not be integrated into one ceremony. (*see Pastoral Note , a.*)

**Pastoral Notes:**

- a. An exception is possible in a marriage between a Catholic party and an Eastern Orthodox. In such a case the canonical form obliges only for lawfulness; for validity, however, the presence of a sacred minister is required with the observance of the other requirements of law. While two ceremonies are not ideal, some exceptional situations involving Orthodox Christians could call for a special blessing of the marriage. So long as the vows are not repeated, this could be permitted.

b. Christian marriages entered by an Eastern Orthodox and another non-Catholic before someone other than an Eastern Orthodox priest are considered invalid by the Catholic Church, and a declaration of nullity for such marriages can be obtained from the Chancery in a procedure similar to Catholic Lack of Form cases.

c. Marriages between Latin rite Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians entered without a dispensation from canonical form on or after March 24, 1976, before an Eastern Orthodox priest are considered valid; such a marriage between Eastern Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians entered on or after January 21, 1965 (April 7, 1965 for Ukrainian Catholics) are also considered valid.

#### **D. The Celebration of Marriage Involving Non-Christians and Catechumens**

Marriage involving a non-Christian (after reception of a dispensation from disparity of cult), shall be celebrated at a liturgy of the word and not at the EUCHARISTIC liturgy.

2. While recognizing the catechumens are already joined to the household of the church, marriage involving catechumens shall likewise be celebrated at a liturgy of the word.

3. In these cases Chapter III of the Rite of Marriage is to be followed with allowance for the nuptial blessing in Chapter I, #33 to be used (omitting all references to EUCHARISTIC sharing.)

#### **E. Catholic/Jewish Weddings**

A Catholic priest or deacon with the appropriate delegation to witness marriages may witness the marriage of a Catholic/Jewish couple with the usual dispensation from disparity of cult. The preference would be to celebrate the marriage in the Catholic church or a chapel or other suitable place on parish property. The Catholic ritual for a wedding between a Catholic and an unbaptized person is used.

#### **Pastoral Notes:**

a. The Jewish rabbi can be invited to participate in the ceremony, but the Catholic priest or deacon officially must witness the exchange of vows unless a Dispensation from Canonical Form has been obtained.

b. In all of the previous situations, Catholic priests and deacons should be aware of the sensitive nature of ministering to a Catholic-Jewish engaged couple. Pastoral care prior to and following the wedding should offer the couple support and assistance. Priests and deacons should not hesitate to get involved in these situations and participate in the marriage ceremony.

#### **F. Catholic/Muslim Weddings**

A Catholic priest or deacon with the appropriate delegation to witness marriages may witness the marriage of a Catholic/Muslim couple with the usual dispensation from disparity of cult. Because the situations of these couples are very diverse and complex, the pastoral care before marriage must follow a different process from the usual process in mixed marriages. All preparation for Catholic/Muslim marriages should be planned in consultation with the Office of Ecumenism.

#### **Pastoral Notes:**

a. The Catholic Rite of Marriage as outlined in Chapter III of the present Rite is preferred, modified to include sensitivity to the Muslim party.

b. There is no traditional Islamic marriage rite other than the witnessing of the contract and the public transfer of the bride to the house of the groom. Given that this traditional form can include elements foreign to Christian marriage, very careful planning and agreement must precede any dispensation to allow this rite. For example, the traditional form usually requires the partner to make the profession of faith which converts a person to Islam as a prior condition. Since this would constitute apostasy by formal act, it is impossible for the Catholic to participate in such a ritual. It is conceivable though that, with careful consultation a modified traditional Islamic celebration could be planned which would be acceptable and a dispensation could be granted for this form.

#### **G. Catholic/Non-Monotheist Weddings**

A Catholic priest or deacon with the appropriate delegation to witness marriages may witness the marriage of a Catholic to a follower of a non-monotheistic religion (some of the Asian religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.) with a dispensation from disparity of cult. The Office of Ecumenism may be consulted in planning those marriages.

**Pastoral Notes:**

a. The Catholic rite of Marriage as outlined in Chapter III of the present Rite is preferred, modified to include sensitivity to the non-Christian party.

b. The traditional wedding ceremonies in some other religions include rites which in effect would constitute joining another religion (*communicatio in sacris*). For this reason a parish priest should inquire carefully into the religious significance of traditional wedding customs before permitting them to be included in a Catholic ceremony. This becomes all the more important if a Catholic wishes a dispensation to marry in a non-monotheistic religion's ceremony. In some cases, the dispensation may not be possible.

**H. Admission of Non-Catholic Persons to Holy Communion**

1. Members of the Eastern Orthodox churches may be admitted to Holy Communion in accordance with "The 1993 Directory for Ecumenism," nos. 122-125.

2. Christians of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities would be admitted to Holy Communion only by way of exception and under certain conditions as outlined in "The 1993 Directory for Ecumenism," nos. 130-131.

**I. The Inculturation of Ethnic and Folk Customs in the Liturgy**

Ethnic and folk customs associated with the celebration of marriage in the Catholic Church in other countries are to be respected and may be incorporated into the liturgy. The manner in which these or any other customs are incorporated into the liturgy must always respect the integrity of the liturgy and the universal principles articulated in The Rite of Christian Marriage.

**Pastoral Notes:**

When questions arise regarding the appropriateness of a proposed cultural adaptation of the rite of Christian marriage, parishes are to consult with the Office of Worship.

**V. Liturgical Elements of the Wedding Liturgy****A. The Proper Symbols which belong to the Celebration**

1. The Exchange of Vows and Rings is the central sign of unity in the ritual and should be appropriately respected and emphasized.
2. The Nuptial Blessing is a further sign of this unity.
3. For two Catholics the reception of communion is a deep symbol of their unity as members of Christ's body, the Church, and their unity as husband and wife within His body.
4. There are particular customs, venerable in age and meaning, from various ethnic groups that can also express this unity. These are to be respected but should never overshadow in word or gesture the primary signs of unity the rite upholds.
5. The use of a "unity candle" has never been part of the ritual of marriage and is best used, if at all, at the beginning of the couple's reception. (*see Pastoral Note, a. and b.*)

**Pastoral Notes:**

a. As a whole, too many symbols can overload the rite and consequently the rich meaning contained in the central actions of exchange of vows and rings is diminished. When a presider helps the couple (via prompting) to exchange their vows it looks as if the couple is passive in this endeavor leaving their active participation to "lighting" their "unity candle" without the aid of the presider who now stands in a passive mode. Better for the presider to be passive after he has questioned the couple in regards to their intentions allowing the couple to take the active role at the most central part of the rite, the exchange of vows.

● Couples can be prepared to take their proper active role by memorizing the vows they will exchange at the celebration. These can be given to them early on in the preparation with the encouragement to pray their vows daily. In praying their vows daily the couple can be directed to find in those words food for the personal prayer. When the celebration comes and the presider steps aside and the couple give their vows to each other without his prompting the symbolic power of the vows exchanged as prayer is made clear without much explanation.

b. The use of a "unity candle" creates several complications in the intended symbol system of the Christian tradition. This is true whether the rite is celebrated between two Catholics or between a Catholic and baptized non-Catholic. The use of light, candle light in particular, is not a sign without specific signification. The light is the Light of Christ, and the only candle particular attention should ever be drawn to is the Paschal Candle. The presumption of the message of the "unity candle" is that the couple is now one, yet this is not the presumption of the rite itself. The rite presents itself as the celebration of the starting point for unity of husband and wife.

## **B. Music for the Celebration of Marriage**

Choice of music at weddings must be in accord with all the norms governing music in the liturgy, especially those found in *Liturgical Music Today* and *Music in Catholic Worship*. (see *Pastoral Notes*)

### **Pastoral Notes:**

a. The selection of music for the wedding liturgy is often a sensitive issue for couples, parish musicians and parish staff. Therefore care must be taken in addressing this important part of the wedding liturgy stressing that music is chosen first and foremost to enhance the primary symbols of the liturgy.

b. Sometimes the only music familiar to the couple is a song heard at a friend's wedding ceremony and not one necessarily appropriate to the sacrament. The pastoral musician will make an effort to demonstrate a wider range of possibilities to the couple, particularly in the choice of music to be sung by the entire assembly present for the liturgy.

c. Particular decisions about choice and placement of wedding music should grow out of the three judgments proposed in *Music in Catholic Worship*. These are:

**"The liturgical judgment:** Is the music's text, form, placement, and style congruent with the nature of liturgy? **The musical judgment:** Is the music technically, aesthetically, and expressively good irrespective of musical idiom or style? **The pastoral judgment:** Will it help this assembly to pray?"

d. Popular love songs that were composed for entertainment rather than liturgical purposes are not by their composition and original intent congruent with the nature of liturgy. Hence, they should be avoided during the liturgical celebration.

**VI. Wedding Offerings**

It is not inappropriate for the parish to assume the costs for the nuptial celebration of one of its members, most especially if the member has been an active, participating member of the parish. A parish may not suggest an offering in excess of \$100, exclusive of musicians.

**VII. Continued Pastoral Care for the Newly Married Couple****Pastoral Notes:**

a. The Christian vocation to the married state only begins with the celebration of the nuptial liturgy. The Church desires that Christian couples be given ample support and opportunities to grow and mature in the bond of love that is sealed before God and the community.

b. Every parish is encouraged to provide a ministry to those who are married. Ongoing enrichment for the married couple and support for their family life as a sacred and valuable gift to the Church needs to be evident in parish life.

## **Resources**

### ***Preparation see:***

"The Rite of Christian Marriage."

Austin Fleming, Parish Weddings, Chicago Liturgy Training Publications, 1987.

"Un Matrimonio en el Señor," Cana Office of the Archdiocese of Chicago, 1986.

### ***Presiders see:***

"The Rite of Christian Marriage."

The Code of Canon Law.

Michael Kwatera, The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1985.

USCC Department of Education, Faith and Culture, A Multicultural Catechetical Resource, Washington, USCC, 1987. (See the section on resources for Southeast Asian Communities, and Intercultural and Interracial Relations.)

### ***Scheduling see:***

The Code of Canon Law.

### ***Style see:***

"The Rite of Christian Marriage."

Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, "Concelebration Guidelines", 1987.

Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, Study Text 5: Eucharistic Celebration, 1978.

Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, Music in Catholic Worship, 1972.

Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, Liturgical Music Today, 1982.

Paul Covino, Ed., Celebrating Marriage, Preparing the Wedding Liturgy, a Workbook for Engaged Couples, Washington: Pastoral Press, 1987.

Austin Fleming, Parish Weddings, Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Sample Welcoming Questions**

**These sample screening questions are offered as a guideline in establishing a welcoming atmosphere and determining freedom to marry. It is not expected that you read from this list but rather adapt some form as your initial inquiries.**

1. How did you meet?
2. How long have you known each other?
3. What was your first impression of her?      Him?
4. When did you decide to marry?
5. How do your families feel about your decision?
6. Tell me a little about your religious upbringing.
7. Have you had any previous relationships that failed, or have you ever been married before?
8. Why do you want to marry in the Catholic Church?
9. What date and time did you have in mind?

***Some pastors may have parish policies regarding liturgy and use of parish facilities for weddings. Written notice of these policies should be provided to the couple at this time.***

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Sample Forms for Marriages**

The following forms are used currently in the Diocese of Gary: \*

- 1) M1 - Bride/Groom questionnaires
- 2) M2 - Witness Affidavit
- 3) M3 - Request for Dispensation/Permission
- 4) ---- Supplementary Oath before Marriage  
Bride/Groom
- 5) ---- Application for Sanatio in Radice
- 6) ---- Petition for Declaration of Nullity of Marriage Contracted Outside the Church
- 7) ---- Petition for Permission to Live as Brother and Sister

\* At the time of this printing, Diocesan Marriage Forms are being revised and combined. A sample form is not available for inclusion in this document, but will be provided at a later date.

## APPENDIX C

### Impediments to Marriage

An impediment renders a person incapable of contracting marriage validly (1073). Impediments are canonical obstacles to marriage. They are circumstances or conditions of a person or of the relationship between persons which prevent them from validly marrying.

Code of Canon Law lists twelve impediments to marriage:

1. **Age.** A man under sixteen or a woman under fourteen years of age (*c. 1083*).
2. **Impotence.** The inability to have sexual intercourse, on the part of the man or the woman; a permanent condition, existing before the marriage, either absolute or relative, i.e. impotent with anyone, or only with this partner (*c. 1084*).
3. **Prior Bond.** One who is still bound by an existing valid marriage. If the prior marriage was null or was dissolved, this must be canonically established before another marriage can be entered (*c. 1085*).
4. **Disparity of Cult.** One partner is a baptized Catholic, or has been received into the church, and not formally left it, and the other person is not baptized (*c. 1086*).
5. **Orders.** Those who have been ordained deacons, presbyters or bishops (*c. 1087*).
6. **Vow of Chastity.** Those who are bound by the permanent vow of Chastity taken in a religious community (*c. 1088*).
7. **Abduction.** A man who abducts or detains a woman for the purpose of marriage cannot validly marry her, at least not until she has been freed and willingly agrees to marry him (*c. 1089*).
8. **Coniugicide.** One who causes the death of one's own spouse or the spouse of an intended marriage partner, or conspires with that person to kill the spouse of one of them (*c. 1090*).
9. **Consanguinity.** Blood relatives. In the line of direct descendants (i.e. grandmother, father, daughter, grandson, etc.) marriage is invalid, and it is also invalid in the collateral line (i.e. brother, sister, cousins, aunts, uncles, etc.) up to and including the fourth degree (i.e. first cousins) (*cc 1091, 108*).
10. **Affinity.** Relatives by marriage. All degrees of the direct line, ancestors or descendants (*cc. 1092, 109*). For example, a man cannot marry his former wife's mother or daughter, nor a woman her former husband's father or son.
11. **Public Propriety.** Those who have lived together in an invalid marriage or in public concubinage may not in the future marry one another's blood relatives of the first degree of the direct line (*c. 1093*). (See affinity).
12. **Adoption.** Legal relationship resulting from adoption; all degrees of the direct line, and the second degree of the collateral line, e.g., an adopting parent cannot marry the adopted child, nor may the adopted child marry a brother or sister in the family (*c. 1094*).

*Some marriage impediments can be dispensed, others are considered to be of divine law, that is, either from God's revelation or in the very nature of things, for example, impotence, the bond of a prior marriage, and the closest degrees of consanguinity. These cannot be dispensed.*

## APPENDIX D

### Marriage Preparation Courses

As part of the revision of marriage policy, the marriage preparation courses are being reviewed and revised by an "ad hoc" committee comprised of priests and lay persons. The study has been extensive and has involved examination of preparation courses within our own Diocese and other dioceses throughout the United States.

The committee's work is nearing completion. At this point, four distinct programs will be offered:

1. **PARISH-BASED** is expected to be the common course. It will involve persons and couples within a parish or a cluster of parishes to offer a series of meetings dealing with the sacramental, spiritual, emotional and practical aspects of marriage.

This program will entail recruiting, training, monitoring, enrichment and evaluation of presenter couples. Some parishes have programs already in place and are much involved in the committee's work. How best to develop a good program is a primary concern.

2. **DIOCESAN-WIDE PROGRAM** is being studied and reviewed--a process begun some time ago. The present program will be revised and will be presented regularly through the year, likely in more than one location throughout the diocese. It is the committee's expectation that the revisions will make this program very helpful for those couples who prefer a diocesan-wide preparation experience.

3. **SPANISH-SPEAKING** is being developed with the assistance of persons involved in the Hispanic ministry in our Diocese. This, too, is being examined and assessed in terms of needs and content, as well as frequency and location of preparation programs.

4. **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.** Programs which involve many different situations, e.g., older adults, validation of marriage, those who have had previous marriages, pregnancy, and other conditions may require specialized preparation. Such programs are being planned and will likely be based at St. James Parish in Highland which already is working in this area. Engaged Encounter and other specialized programs outside the diocese are being considered.

The plan for revising Marriage Preparation will continue with completion expected later in 1996.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Parental Interview**

In instances of pregnancy or marriage of minors, the following guidelines apply.

The parents, who know their son or daughter well, are able to offer information to facilitate a prudent decision by the parish priest concerning the proposed marriage.

When questionnaires have been filled out, the answers should be discussed with the parents together, paying special attention to:

- The parents' attitudes toward the marriage itself;
- The parents' attitudes toward their son's or daughter's readiness for marriage;
- The parents' attitudes toward their future son or daughter-in-law's readiness for marriage.

The preferable method of the parental interview might be for the parish priest to interview the parents together by asking them the questions from the **Questionnaire for Parents** and obtaining their verbal responses. In this way, the questionnaire would be utilized simply as a tool for discussion. Pertinent responses of the parents could be written by the parish priest himself and coded. The use of M (Mom) and D (Dad) would facilitate later reference to the responses.

The parish priest should always keep in mind that he is helping the engaged couple with decisions that have a life-long effect on themselves and others -- not merely looking for an immediate solution to a present difficulty.

## Questionnaire for Parents of Those Who Intend To Marry

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Father/Mother

(Other: \_\_\_\_\_) of \_\_\_\_\_

who intends to marry \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

As a parent, you know much about your son/daughter's aptitudes, abilities and convictions. To what degree do you think that he/she has the following qualities? (Please mark the degree which you think appropriate.)

1. A personal religious conviction.
2. Respect for the religious convictions of other people.
3. A readiness to observe the major commandments of the church to which he/she belongs.
4. A readiness to forgo leisure time with friends in order to help at home with chores of household or business.
5. The ability to provide for the material needs of a family.
6. The ability to establish lasting relationships with people.
7. The ability to give up certain personal pleasures in order to help other persons.
8. The ability to work out a household budget and stick to it.
9. The ability to forgive mistakes and to reestablish a relationship after a serious disagreement.

High	Medium	Low

**Please Answer the Following Questions as Accurately As You Can**

Very Co- operative erative Poor

10. How would you characterize your son's/daughter's general behavior at home?
11. How would you characterize his/her attitude toward authority in general?
12. What do you think of his/her attitude toward his/her father in general?
13. How would you describe his/her attitude toward his/her mother?
14. How would you describe his/her attitude toward his/her sisters?
15. How would you describe his/her attitude toward his/her brothers?
16. How would you describe his/her attitude toward his/her religion?
17. How would you describe his/her attitude toward his/her parish church?


Yes No Uncertain

18. Does your son/daughter get angry easily?
19. Does he/she have many close friends?
20. Does he/she seem to adapt easily to new locations?
21. Did he/she do reasonably well in school?
22. Does he/she adhere to moral principles in his/her personal life?


	Yes	No	Uncertain
23. Does his/her anger usually last a long time?			
24. Does he/she make serious efforts to find a job?			
25. Does he/she pray often?			
26. Does he/she seem to find it difficult to make up after a disagreement?			
27. Do you think it will be advisable for him/her to leave home at this time?			
28. Does he/she seem to really miss a close friend when the friend moves away?			
29. Do you think he/she has a good understanding of the meaning of the lifetime commitment to marriage?			
30. Does he/she respect the teachings of his/her church?			
31. Does he/she seem to find it easy to hold a job for a long time?			
32. Does he/she seem to find it easy to establish new friendships?			
33. Does he/she seem to find it difficult to leave home?			
34. Does he/she regularly attend church?			
35. Does he/she like children?			
36. Does he/she seem to be rather dependent on his/her mother?			

	Yes	No	Uncertain
37. Does he/she seem to be happy to leave home?			
38. Does he/she seem to hold a grudge against people who once disappointed him/her?			
39. Do you think that he/she and his/her father understand each other well?			
40. Does he/she have a good and respectful relationship with his/her mother?			
41. Would you characterize him/her as being patient?			
42. Is he/she ready for marriage at this time?			
43. Does he/she want to have children from this marriage?			
44. If he/she marries and moves out of your home now, will your home be more peaceful?			
45. Has he/she found it difficult to maintain a pleasant family relationship?			
46. Do you encourage his/her marriage at the present time?			
47. Do you think that he/she is able to take care of a wife/husband (and children)?			
48. Do you think he/she will be happy with his/her spouse after the present romantic love has faded?			
49. Do you think the person he/she plans to marry is ready for marriage?			
50. Would you rather see your son/daughter marry someone else?			

**(If applicable)**

51. Do you think that they would have planned to marry soon if the woman were not pregnant?

52. If the woman were not pregnant, would you advise them not to marry at this time?

53. Is the pregnancy the primary motivating reason for marriage at this time?

54. Do you like your future son/daughter-in-law?

55. Do you think that he/she will feel really at home with your family?

56. Do you like his/her parents and family?

57. Do you think that he/she is the right person for your son/daughter?

58. As far as you know, was this marriage a sudden decision?

59. If it were completely your decision, would you postpone the marriage?

55. Do you think that he/she will feel really at home with your family?

Yes No Uncertain


## **Parental Interview Thematic Summary**

In the questionnaire for parents, the purpose is to investigate (and further discuss) the opinion of the individual parents about their son or daughter who wants to marry at this time. Although many areas intertwine and overlap, the following division may be helpful.

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| I.                          | Does he/she have an openness to others. (Q. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 35, 39, 40, 43, 55)   |
| Personality Traits          | Is there any ability to handle anger? (Q. 18, 23, 41)<br>Is there a sense of personal responsibility? (Q. 21, 33, 36)<br>Can he/she make up after a disagreement? (Q. 9, 26, 38)<br>Are there religious convictions? (Q. 1, 2, 3, 16, 17, 22, 25, 30, 34) |
| II.                         | Is there a concern for others? (Q. 4, 7, 28)<br>Can he/she establish close friendships? (Q. 19, 20, 32, 37)   |
| Interpersonal Relationships | Can he/she maintain close friendships? (Q. 6, 44, 45, 48, 56)   |
| III.                        | Is there a concern for financial aspects? (Q. 24)<br>Can the couple support a family? (Q. 5, 8, 31, 47)   |
| Readiness for Marriage      | Is there a general emotional readiness for marriage? (Q. 27, 29, 33, 42, 46, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 58, 59)  |

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Marriages with Other Abled Persons**

Physically and/or mentally challenged persons are considered special circumstances. A discussion with the parents is recommended. The following guidelines can be utilized by the parish priest.

The parish priest determines:

- a. The motivation for marriage, i.e. not just because others are marrying.
- b. That the couple exhibits emotional support for each other.
- c. That an extended engagement period is observed, (a one year minimum.)
- d. That the couple will enjoy both the economic and social support of their families.
- e. That appropriate preparation classes are given (simplified presentation and expanded content.)

1. **BLIND** The marriage preparation course needs to include an added session on trust, economics, child rearing and support services.

2. **DEAF** Either sign language or an interpreter must be used in order for the marriage to be considered valid. Most evaluation forms are for speaking persons and cannot be used for the deaf. The Diocese of Gary Apostolate With the Physically and/or Mentally Challenged ministers pastorally with the deaf and can be contacted. Preparation sessions must focus on expectations which the couple have for each other and for the sacrament.

3. **PHYSICALLY** Of other physical challenges, spinal injuries cause some confusion. When one or the other person has a spinal injury, the couple still celebrates the Sacrament of Marriage.

4. **MENTALLY** In some cases of mental challenges or cognitive impairments, the degree is so slight that the parish priest may not even be aware of its existence. The ability to judge and reason must be determined, since not all mentally challenged persons can enter into marriage. The parish priest may contact the Apostolate With the Physically and/or Mentally Challenged or other professionals.

## **APPENDIX D: MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSES**

This portion of the Policy and Planning Guidelines has been developed to assist the parish priest. It contains: I. the Introduction to Marriage Preparation, II. the Role of the Parish Priest (within the course), III. Various Methods of Preparation Available to Engaged Couples, and IV. the Role of Family Life Ministry.

### **I. Introduction to Marriage Preparation**

Diocese of Gary Marriage Policy requires all "couples wishing to be married in Catholic churches in the Diocese of Gary...(to) participate in a formal diocesan approved marriage preparation course." (*Guidelines for Marriage as a Sacrament*, p. 9)

By order of the Church through the new Code of Canon Law, pastor and parish are to work together to prepare couples for the Sacrament of Marriage. "Pastors of souls are obliged to see to it that their own ecclesial community furnishes the Christian faithful assistance so that the matrimonial state is maintained in a Christian Spirit and makes progress toward perfection. This assistance is especially to be furnished through...personal preparation for entering marriage so that through such preparation the parties may be predisposed toward the holiness and duties of their new state;" (*cf Canon 1063*)

When the parish priest, parish staff and lay persons are involved in the process of marriage preparation, it has the highest rate of success. (Marriage Preparation in the Catholic Church: Getting it Right, Center for Marriage and Family, Creighton University.)

All Marriage Preparation Programs offered within the Diocese of Gary include spiritual components consisting of the biblical, theological, sacramental, spiritual, moral, and liturgical aspects of marriage. Courses also examine the practical aspects of family background, communication skills, goal setting, financial planning, family planning, and parenting skills.

"The Marriage Preparation course is designed to:

- Bring the couple to a deeper awareness of self, of intercommunication, of human sexuality and the theology of marriage.
- Promote discussion between the couple on topics they may have not fully considered or shared with respect to marriage.
- Help the couple come to a deeper appreciation of the impact of their own families of origin.
- Foster personal and spiritual maturity through the use of parish resources.
- Consider and review practical information a married couple will need." (*Guidelines for Marriage as a Sacrament*, p. 9)

## **II. Role of the Parish Priest**

The parish priest is responsible for preparing the couple for marriage and for assessing their readiness for the sacrament. It is he who meets with the couple initially, providing a welcoming atmosphere and sharing in their enthusiasm for their approaching sacramental partnership.

1. The parish priest first welcomes the engaged and, through dialogue with the couple, determines their freedom to marry.
2. Secondly, the parish priest and the couple discuss which marriage course will best suit their needs and circumstances.
3. He introduces the premarital inventory, either FOCCUS or PMI, (which may be administered at the end of this first meeting), and informs the couple that information on Natural Family Planning will be presented by the team couples during the course.
4. The couple then completes the specified course.
5. When the couple returns after completing the course, the parish priest addresses any questions or issues unanswered thus far during the process. He discusses the premarital inventory (FOCCUS or PMI) with the couple and continues to explore the spiritual component of marriage. Several meetings may be necessary to accomplish these pastoral aspects of marriage preparation, even before the parish priest and couple begin planning the liturgical celebration.
6. The parish priest discusses with the engaged couple the Guidelines for the Liturgical Celebration, (cf. pp 26-44). He informs them of any parish policies and/or refers them to the Liturgical Coordinator of the parish.

### **III. Methods Available and Approved**

The parish priest and the engaged couple continue the marriage preparation process by choosing from the a variety of Marriage Preparation methods available and approved for use in the Diocese of Gary. These are: Parish Based, Central (Diocesan) Program, Spanish Speaking, Engaged Encounter and Referrals for Special Circumstances.

#### **PARISH BASED**

The primary and more common method for preparing couples for faith-filled, valid marriages in the Diocese of Gary is the PARISH BASED model. The Parish Based Course uses team couples meeting with engaged couples to explore the meaning of marriage.

##### **A. Format**

1. Parish Based Marriage Preparation is designed to accommodate the differences (social, educational, religious, cultural) found among engaged couples within the Diocese of Gary. Team couples establish a rapport with the engaged couples by inviting them into their homes (where this is not feasible, parish facilities may be used) to share their experiences and assist the couples in discussing the practical aspects of marriage.

Using A Marriage in the Lord as a guide, concerns, feelings and ideas are explored. Two married (team) couples meet with four (five maximum) engaged couples. Sessions are four 2-hour sessions or two 4 or 5-hour sessions and may be held during the week or on weekends. Team couples consult with the engaged to determine which time frame best fits into their schedules.

The engaged couples begin the parish based course with the understanding that attendance at all sessions is mandatory for group dynamics and to attain the maximum course benefit.

2. Couples are asked to respect confidentiality regarding all discussions within the marriage preparation program. Team couples likewise maintain confidentiality except in matters where safety (e.g. abuse - physical, mental, emotional and/or substance) or legality (canonical impediments) are concerned.

3. Although the parish priest is not present for group sessions, it is appropriate to invite him to the group's closing celebration.

4. After the course completion, the parish priest meets with the couple to continue the marriage preparation process (e.g. review FOCCUS, discuss the marriage course, fill out questionnaires, etc.).

## **B. Parish Based Coordinator**

The parish coordinator is a vital link in the marriage preparation process. The coordinator welcomes the engaged couple and helps them see the importance of coming together with other engaged and married couples during this exciting and joyful time in their lives. It is the demeanor of the coordinator which contributes to the couple's feelings toward the program itself, their willingness to participate, and the worth of the material discussed.

The pastor may want to select a coordinator among the following: Deacons, DRE's, one of the team couples, a retired person with good organizational skills, or other appropriate person.

### **Responsibilities of the Parish Based Coordinator**

1. In addition to scheduling course dates and team couples, the parish based coordinator works with team couples to ensure dates, locations, attendance notices, and materials are available to the engaged couple. It is the responsibility of the parish based coordinator to order text books and other course materials needed by the teams.
2. Records of registration and course attendance are maintained and available. Fees collected for registration and courses, as well as reimbursements to team couples for out-of-pocket expenditures, are recorded.
3. The parish based coordinator may be trained to administer and/or score the FOCCUS instrument. Parish based coordinators are trained by the Marriage Preparation coordinator and attends a training program. Confidentiality of engaged couple's records and discussions is maintained.
4. The parish priest or other trained person may administer the FOCCUS. However, it is the parish priest who discusses the results with the engaged couple. The parish based coordinator may choose to send the FOCCUS answer sheets to the Marriage Preparation Coordinator at Family Life Ministry for computer scoring and print-outs.
5. The parish based coordinator works with the Marriage Preparation Coordinator in scheduling courses to allow parish collaboration when necessary.
6. Where there is no parish based coordinator, the parish priest gives the appropriate course information to the couple.

### **C. Team Couples**

Teams of married couples from the parish who are living the Sacrament of Marriage and are ready to share this ministry are selected by the pastor. These couples, who the pastor feels represent values fostered in the Sacrament of Marriage, have the qualities of maturity and common sense. The length of marriage is not as important as the life-giving way they are living together in unity and their willingness to share important aspects of their union.

#### **Training**

Marriage preparation experts initially conduct training programs for team couples. The projection is to train 150 to 200 couples from throughout the diocese as team couples. On going training is conducted through resources within the diocese.

#### **Responsibilities of Team Couples**

1. Team couples participating in Parish Based Marriage Preparation attend Diocesan training sessions. Working with the parish priest and coordinator to meet the needs of the engaged, team couples respect the confidentiality of all discussions during marriage preparation.
2. Team couples agree to work with other team couples in preparing for course presentations, and are expected to participate in enrichment programs when offered.

#### **Number of Team Couples**

The number of couples trained in each parish varies based on the number of engaged couples marrying at that parish. Course groups are comprised of 2 married couples and 4 (or maximum 5) engaged couples. Couples are scheduled on a team at least once a year and no more than three times a year.

#### **Enrichment**

Ongoing training is a vital part of the preparation process. Enrichment evenings/sessions are offered several times a year for team couples and training couples. Other resources are available for individual or small group use and include videos, books and periodical materials. An annual evening of reflection is an opportunity to experience spiritual renewal. Couples who participate in a Marriage Encounter or a Cursillo find revitalization of spirit which aids their ministry. Training couples and coordinators attend marriage preparation sessions from time to time.

### **D. Fees**

The Parish Based Course fee is \$50 per couple. The fee is paid to the parish at the time of registration.

## **CENTRAL PROGRAM**

It is recognized that not all couples are able to attend Parish Based Marriage Preparation nor will all parishes be able to provide parish based courses at all times. Therefore, the current diocesan based program will continue through 1996. A new central program will be offered beginning January, 1997.

Couples from throughout the diocese may participate in this course making for a more diverse group in regards to social, cultural and educational backgrounds.

The Central Program contains the same material presented in the Parish-Based Course. Two team couples work with the engaged couples using A Marriage in the Lord as a guide. Components for the two-day program (all day Saturday and Sunday afternoon) include:

- |        |                 |  |
|--------|-----------------|--|
| Day 1: | Parish Priest - | Introduces the program and sets the tone for the course by reviewing the theological and sacramental aspects of Marriage |
|        | Team Couples -  | Family of Origin, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Values and Finances  |
| Day 2: | Team Couples -  | Sexuality, Children, Faith in Marriage and Goal Setting  |
|        | NFP Couple -    | Natural Family Planning  |

The Central Program is offered six times per year at varying locations within the diocese. Registration is made through Family Life Ministry of Catholic Charities. Registration forms are given to the engaged couple by the parish priest. Each couple sends their registration with the program fee (\$80 per couple) to Family Life Ministry for processing.

## **SPANISH SPEAKING**

Marriage Preparation in Spanish is offered through the Hispanic Ministry and Family Life Ministry. It is an inter-parish program designed to respond to all levels of religious and cultural needs, while taking into consideration the diversity of the Hispanic population. Using the text, El Amor Nuestro de Cada Dia (Our Daily Love), and its Guia para los Facilitadores (Guide for Facilitators), the course addresses roots and cultural aspects of marriage, vocational and sacramental aspects, communication, human sexuality, conscience, Christian mission of paternity and maternity, dangers to married life and an update on convalidation. Multicultural and inter-religious marriages also are considered.

A team couple works with the engaged in a small group setting. The Spanish speaking course (three sessions held on two Saturdays and one Sunday, including the Liturgy) is offered four times during the year. Fee is \$50 per couple. Registration information is available through Family Life Ministry or the Office of Hispanic Ministry.

## **ENGAGED ENCOUNTER**

Engaged Encounter is a weekend (Friday evening through Sunday afternoon) away for couples planning marriage; it offers them the opportunity to examine their lives together and the sacrament they plan to live. A series of topics is presented by two married couples and a priest. Personal reflection and private communication between the engaged couple on these topics form the center of the weekend. The weekend is not a retreat, counseling clinic or sensitivity course, but an intensive preparation by the couple for their lifetime commitment. The fee for Engaged Encounter is \$199 which includes rooms at the Seimetz Center, meals and materials. Registration information is available through Family Life Ministry or the Spiritual Life Center.

## **REFERRALS FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

The parish priest may encounter a couple with special circumstances. Examples are psychological situations, widowed couples, second marriages, marriages after annulment, older adults, marriages where a crisis has occurred prior to the ceremony, other abled persons, pregnancy and other special situations. He may choose from the following options: individualized marriage preparation offered by the parish priest himself or referral to the Special Circumstances program at St. James the Less Parish in Highland where they receive special consultation, after which they proceed with a marriage program. In cases when psychological testing is necessary, fees are based on tests given and the amount of professional counseling provided. Couples also may be referred to one of the special Pre Cana programs in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Other abled couples may be directed to the Apostolate With the Physically and/or Mentally Challenged.

## **IV. Role of Family Life Ministry**

Family Life Ministry of Catholic Charities administers and implements programs for marriage preparation. Family Life Ministry already offers a variety of programs and services to support marriage and family life.

### **A. Marriage Preparation**

To insure implementation, quality and standards of all forms of marriage preparation for couples in the Diocese of Gary, the Director of Family Life Ministry is responsible for the following:

1. Central (Diocesan) Program
2. Training of Parish Coordinators
3. Enrichment for Coordinators
4. Training for Parish Based team couples
5. Enrichment for team couples
6. Computer scoring of FOCCUS for parishes
7. Providing books, instruments, literature and other resources for parishes

### **B. Diocesan Marriage Preparation Coordinator**

Responsible for the coordination and planning related to Parish Based and Central Programs. Reports to the Director of Family Life Ministry concerning the following responsibilities:

1. Coordinates the Central Program. Schedules, receives registration, makes all arrangements with host parish, and coordinates other planning.
2. Recruits, trains, and schedules team couples for the Central Program. Schedules presenting couples for the Natural Family Planning session. Arranges for alternates.
3. Maintains records of registration and course attendance.
4. Maintains financial records.
5. Trains parish coordinators and team couples.
6. Maintains adequate inventory of texts, supplementary tapes and resource materials for parishes.
7. Assists parish priest in scheduling couples into appropriate programs.
8. Develops diocesan brochures and other marketing materials for use in parishes. (Marriage Policy and Preparation Handbook)
9. Scores the FOCCUS instrument for parishes.
10. Develops annual newsletter and enrichment programs for team couples and parish based coordinators.

## **C. Program Features**

Program features for Parish Based and Central Programs consist of the premarital inventory, text, and Natural Family Planning materials. Spanish Speaking and Engaged Encounter team couples include the same subject matter using a different format.

### **Premarital Inventory**

The accepted marriage preparation instruments are FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study) and PMI (Premarital Inventory).

The FOCCUS instrument enables a couple to explore pertinent issues related to their impending marriage and identifies issues that need to be discussed, reflected on, understood and studied for problem-solving, skill building and decision making. It is designed as an aid for the parish priest and the engaged couple by examining the critical areas of concern for the needs of the couple in their relationship to each other. FOCCUS, B. Markey, PhD., M. Micheletto, M.A., and A. Becker, A.C.S.W., Family Life Office, Archdiocese of Omaha, 3214 N. 60th St., Omaha, NE 68104.

### **Texts**

The accepted texts for Parish Based, Central and Spanish Speaking marriage preparation programs are A Marriage in the Lord, by William P. Steinhauser, D.Min., Francis P. Hannigan, M.A., and Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser, Editor, revised and published in 1993 by The Cana Conference, Archdiocese of Chicago, and El Amor Nuestro de Cada Dia (Our Daily Love), June, 1995, Conferencia de Cana de Chicago, Arquidiocesis de Chicago, 155 East Superior, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

### **Natural Family Planning**

To affirm the Church's teaching on contraception, Natural Family Planning is considered part of the marriage preparation process in the Diocese of Gary. NFP brochures ("for the best in family planning...NFP", "The Pill: How does it Work? Is it Safe?" and "What Does the Catholic Church REALLY Teach about Birth Control?") and a video ("for the best in family planning...NFP, Safe, Healthy, Effective") are furnished to all parishes for viewing and discussion with the engaged couple, by either the parish priest or the team couples during the parish based course.

A formal program, the sympto-thermal method taught by Couple to Couple League representatives, consists of four sessions, scheduled one month apart and lasting two hours each. Family Life Ministry handles requests for more information and maintains data on program dates and registration.

## **Acknowledgements**

These plans for Marriage Preparation were approved by Bishop Dale J. Melczek on June 15, 1996. His guidance during the process is hereby acknowledged.

With gratitude the following clergy and laity are recognized for their assistance in the research and development of marriage preparation courses for the Diocese of Gary. During the progression of the committee's extensive study, examination of preparation courses within the Diocese of Gary and other dioceses throughout the United States occurred. Texts and formats were reviewed in light of the needs of the diverse population within our diocese.

**Marriage Preparation Course Committee:** Msgr. Joseph Semancik, chairman, Rev. Bill Creed, S.J., Rev. Joseph Gazarkiewicz, Rev. John Kalicky, C.PP.S., Dr. Joseph Kovach, Rev. Francis Lazar, Patricia Mendoza, Bishop Carl Mengeling, Deacon Gilbert Perez, Maria Perez, Larry Peters, Sharon Peters, Msgr. John Siekierski, Mary Thiel, Robert Thiel, and Angel Torres

**Parish Based Team Couples** from St. Edward, St. Matthias, St. Michael and SS. Peter and Paul parishes

**Hispanic Preparation Sub Committee:** Rev. John Ambre, Rev. Fernando de Cristobal, Rev. Robert Gehring, Rev. Stephen Gibson, Rev. Juan Gonzalez, and Rev. Anthony Valtierra

**Staffing by Family Life Ministry, Catholic Charities:** Rita Mayer, Francis Moynihan, and Barbara Pawlak