

# The Engaged Couple's Guide



## Preparing for Your Marriage in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois



Office for Marriage and Family Life  
Catholic Pastoral Center  
P.O. Box 3187  
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Springfield, IL 62708-3187  
217-321-1132  
[www.dio.org/familylife](http://www.dio.org/familylife)

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## Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

Catholic Pastoral Center • 1615 West Washington Street • P.O. Box 3187 • Springfield, Illinois 62708-3187  
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Office for Marriage and Family Life

Dear Friends,

Your decision to marry is perhaps the most important decision you will ever make. Within the Catholic church, we view marriage as a holy vocation, a call from God to grow in Love and holiness, a call to be faithful as God is faithful.

Responding to this call is a very big responsibility. You could not begin to do it without faith and without a great deal of support from the community. In order to offer some of the support, the church provides a special marriage preparation process for engaged couples.

This booklet outlines the program for marriage preparation in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. It also provides you with some things to think about as you make plans for your life together. I encourage you to visit with your parish priest and to begin your formal marriage preparation early in your engagement.

May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you during this time of preparation for your marriage. I look forward to the many ways In which our church will be enriched by your faithful and fruitful love.

Sincerely in Christ,

Deacon Patrick J. O'Toole  
Director, Marriage and Family Life

# Preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage Checklist



- ✓ *Contact* the parish **nine months to a year** before your potential wedding date. Marriage is a discernment process, so the potential date you may already have in mind does not necessarily come first in level of importance.
- ✓ *Schedule* an appointment with your priest or deacon to begin the marriage preparation process.
- ✓ *Register* for one of the Diocesan PreCana sessions at least **four months** before your wedding day ([www.dio.org/familylife](http://www.dio.org/familylife)).
- ✓ *Register* for the model of Natural Family Planning (NFP) that best suits your preferences and desires. Begin your classes at least **three months** prior to your wedding date so that you have ample time to become comfortable with your chosen method of fertility appreciation charting.

**Pre-registration for classes is important.**

After registering you will receive an **email confirmation** and **confidential questionnaire**.

Questions? - Call 217-321-1132, or email [cteveda@dio.org](mailto:cteveda@dio.org)

**"Each of us must prepare ourselves for our own vocation and prepare ourselves to be givers of life." St. Gianna Molla**

## Why Marriage Prep?

As an engaged couple, you are busy making plans for your wedding day by choosing flowers, picking your wedding bands, and ordering your invitations. While these plans are important and time consuming, your decision to entrust your union to Christ and marry in the Catholic

Church takes precedence over these details. The flowers will wither and die, your wedding bands will become scratched and dull, and your invitation will be thrown away. The one thing that is continual and remain with you until death is the sacrament of marriage.

Sacramental marriage is permanent and exclusive, uniting you as a couple in love for your whole earthly life. This love of husband and wife is to be a mirror of Christ's love for his Church: a total, faithful, fruitful, and unconditional love. The ultimate purpose of marriage is to bring you together in holiness as spouses, who are open to raising children in the Catholic faith, so that you are prepared for eternal life with Christ.



Because you have knocked upon the door of faith, asking for God's blessing upon your marriage, the Church desires to accompany you at this important time in you lives. Through PreCana & NFP classes, the Church will assist you in entering into this process of understanding the sacrament and helping you to be well prepared to receive God's blessings. For God, you are no different than the blessed couple who celebrated their wedding in Cana (John 2:1) so many years ago.

**It was God who brought Eve to Adam and gave her to him as his wife, and it is God, my friends, who with his invisible hand bound the knowledge which united you and gave you to one another; therefore give good heed that you cherish a love which is holy, sacred and divine.**

**- Francis de Sales, the Devout Life**

# What are the steps?

On the next few pages you will find a detailed description of the seven steps that will assist you in preparing for marriage in the Diocese of Springfield. Please note your responsibilities and the time sensitive nature of some items.

## 1. The Initial Interview

At your initial interview, you will meet with the priest, deacon, or

pastoral minister who will assist you in preparing for your wedding. At this meeting, the following should be accomplished:



1. Your marriage application form and basic data sheet should be completed.
2. The required documentation should be explained:
  - a) Official record of your Baptism and Confirmation (issued within the last six months from the parish of your baptism)
  - b) Proof of your freedom to marry (forms will be provided)
  - c) A wedding license from the county must be given to the assisting priest/deacon before the wedding (The license is good for 60 days)
3. Special circumstances which may require further consideration are also discussed. These circumstances are more fully outlined on pages 9 - 11.

## 2. The Marriage Inventory

During this step of the marriage preparation process you are asked to participate in a FOCCUS marriage inventory.

This assessment will help you to evaluate your relationship as a couple, recognize your strengths, and explore issues that require more discussion.



The FOCCUS assessment instrument is taken online after you have registered at [www.dio.org/familylife](http://www.dio.org/familylife). Your user ID and password will be sent via email. When you have completed the assessment, you will need to schedule review sessions with the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister who is assisting you in your marriage preparation to discuss the results.

### **3. The Formal Marriage Preparation Program**

This step involves attending a formal marriage preparation program. This may be a one day PreCana program, a Weekend for the Engaged experience, a Re-marriage PreCana day, or another approved marriage preparation program.



Presentations will be made by clergy, professionals, and married couples. During each of these programs you will be given the time and resources to discuss important topics such as what is sacramental marriage, how will our families of origin impact our marriage, what is the Catholic

understanding of human sexuality and how to make Christian financial decisions.

### **4. Natural Family Planning Class**

Throughout your married life situations and times may arise where it is important for you and your spouse to be able to postpone accepting another child into your family. If that is the case there is only one morally acceptable way to space, or postpone, pregnancies for a couple. The set of knowledge that enables couples to make decisions in accord with God's will for their life is called Natural Family Planning. Learn more on page 12.

## 5. PreCana workshops

You are also encouraged to attend continuing education workshops designed to provide you in-depth and practical ways for living out sacramental married life. Options include : *Financial Peace University* and a *Living in Love* marriage enrichment retreat. Attendance is optional, but please know that the cost of the workshops is covered for 3 years after your wedding by your PreCana registration fees.

## 6. Liturgical Planning

After completion of the formal marriage preparation program and two months prior to the wedding, you will meet with the assisting priest or deacon to plan your wedding ceremony.

It is important to remember that a wedding ceremony is a public commitment, a sacred covenant, taking place within an act of worship. Your priest or deacon will assist you in choosing appropriate scripture readings and music selections for this sacred celebration.

“Guidelines for the Sacrament of Marriage (**Celebrating the Rite**)” in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is a booklet designed to assist couples in planning the details of their wedding liturgy. Cost is \$1.50 plus postage. The booklet can be obtained by calling the Diocesan Office for Worship at 217-698-8500, ext. 166.



## 7. The Celebration of the Wedding

This day will initiate your new life together in Christ. Your wedding day will be very exciting and filled with many wonderful moments, most especially the exchange of vows. Remember to pray for the ability to live out these vows well; ask God for the grace to be able to love your spouse as Christ Himself loves His own Bride, the Church. Try not to let the details of the day overshadow the importance of the Sacrament.



# Special Circumstances

## Interfaith and Interchurch Marriages

Couples often wonder how the Catholic Church will respond to their desire to marry if they do not share the same faith background. When one of the engaged is baptized but not Catholic that is known as an “interfaith” or “mixed” marriage. If one of the engaged is not baptized that is called an “interchurch” marriage or “disparity of cult.”

Please be assured that the Catholic Church is just as interested in helping you to thoroughly prepare for this sacred commitment as She is in helping couples prepare for Catholic marriages. In addition to regular marriage preparation, the priest/deacon should help you as a couple discuss and explore your respective religious traditions and explain the overall importance of remaining faithful to the vows you will make on your wedding day.

If you are preparing for an interfaith/interchurch marriage, it is extremely important that both of you invest time in understanding your own and each other's religious background.. Your research will indeed bring up very important questions such as, “How important is my faith to me?”; “I haven’t practiced my faith before, but once we’re married I will want to practice my faith daily/weekly?”; “Am I required/ Do I want to raise our kids in my faith?”; “Where can we go to Church?” and “What holidays/ traditions will we celebrate?”. It is advisable that you as a couple consult with the minister, rabbi , or religious leader of the non-Catholic faith so as to completely understand the requirements of each faith traditions.

**Convalidation:** Couples seeking Catholic convalidation (Church recognition) of their union, (i.e. civil union or previous non-Catholic wedding) are encouraged to consult with a priest for assistance appropriate to their unique circumstances.

**Pregnancy:** Pregnancy is not in and of itself a sufficient reason to get married. Nor is it a cause for rushing marriage preparation. Rather, when a couple is expecting the birth of a child it requires special care to be taken to ensure that the couple is adequately prepared for living the vows of marriage and for parenthood.

**Marriage of Minors:** Youthful marriages are a particular concern for the Church because seldom do youth in America have sufficient levels of maturity to be able to validly enter into married life. If you are a teen considering marriage, all should be done to prepare you adequately to enter into your marital union. Therefore, the priest/deacon will take special care in your marriage preparation. Before he agrees to proceed with the wedding, the following must be done:

- A premarital instrument must be administered and discussed to evaluate the readiness for marriage.
- A conference must be scheduled with both parties' parents to determine their willingness or opposition.
- If the pastoral minister has concerns about immaturity or lack of seriousness about the commitment, he may refer the couple to a professional counselor for evaluation.

**Remarriage:** Remarriage involves a new relationship and new challenges. The priest/deacon needs to be certain that both parties are canonically free to contract marriage. If there is even the question of a prior marriage for either of you, a wedding date cannot be set until a decree of nullity or dissolution is received through the Office for the Tribunal (217-698-8500 ext 123).

The preparation for remarriage is especially tailored to address the unique needs of couples, such as step-children, ties to former spouse and family, and the sense of commitment.



**Cohabitation:** If you and your fiancé(e) have plans to or are currently living together before marriage you should be aware of the dire implications your actions will have on your spiritual wellbeing as well as on your impending marriage.



## **“When we get married what is going to be different from what we do now?”**

Cohabitation is not consistent with God’s teachings of love being free, total, faithful, and fruitful. Rather, cohabitation is the opposite, and is generally suggested when: one wants to “test” the relationship, to convince someone of marriage, or postpone marriage. It is also seen as a means to save money, or sometimes a couple may “slide” into cohabiting because they were already sexually active and practically living together anyway. Although a couple may have seemingly rational reasons to cohabit, countless studies have proven repeatedly that cohabiting, no matter what reasons are given for doing so, is not an appropriate basis for a relationship — much less marriage.

- Couples who live together before marriage have a divorce rate up to 80% higher than those who waited until after the wedding.
- Couples who cohabit have greater marital conflict and poorer communication, and make more frequent visits to marriage counselors.
- Couples who cohabit are less likely to be faithful to one another. Women who cohabited before marriage are 3 times as likely to cheat on their husbands within marriage.
- Cohabiting couples are less sexually satisfied than married couples.

If you are currently cohabitating you may ask, “What does the Church want us to do”? She is asking two things of you: first and foremost, stop sharing sexual intimacy with your fiancé(e) and give your sacrifice as a gift to God and your spouse on your wedding day. Secondly, move to separate living accommodations until your wedding day. If you need help don’t hesitate to ask your family and priest/deacon!

The Church knows these two resolutions are not easy to follow through on. But precisely because these decisions require patience, sacrifice, humility and self-control they are the ideal way for you two to prepare for other marital decisions that will require the same virtues.

## Natural Family Planning

Your marriage preparation fee also includes registration in one of the different types of Natural Family Planning (NFP). Whether you desire to achieve or avoid pregnancy, NFP effectively teaches you and your fiancé(e) about the natural cycle of fertility and how you can cooperate with God's plan for your marriage.



Just a few of the benefits of NFP include: increased intimacy & it's all natural, causing no side effects. Moreover, it is the only family planning method in accord with the Church's teachings of conscious parenthood as explained in *Humanae Vitae*, an encyclical, written by Pope Paul VI, that reaffirms the Church's teaching on marital sexuality as having no room for recourse to contraceptive methods of any sort.

NFP classes are available throughout the Diocese. For further information, visit: [www.dio.org/familylife](http://www.dio.org/familylife) or contact the Office for Marriage and Family Life at 217-321-1132 or email [cteveda@dio.org](mailto:cteveda@dio.org). To register for classes in your area, contact the NFP teachers directly.

### Diocesan NFP Teachers

- ◆ **Decatur Area**—Donna Dausman: 217-422-4534
- ◆ **Effingham Area**—Tessie Kabbes: 217-347-8784
- ◆ **Oblong Area**—Rose Gangloff: 618-592-4520
- ◆ **Springfield Area**—Beth Clark: 217-793-1565
- ◆ **Anywhere in the Diocese**—Patrick O'Toole: 217-698-8500, x121, or Daniele O'Toole: 217-526-3363

*Couple to Couple League* courses are also available:

- ◆ **Alton area**—John & Joan Kane: 618-466-4410
- ◆ **Quincy area**—Hermes & Liz Alonzo: 217-645-3444
- ◆ **Springfield area**—Carlos & Elena Tejada: 217-321-1132



## Formal Marriage Preparation Programs

Pre-registration is required for attendance at all PreCana programs. The fees for the two options of marriage preparation are as follows:

### **Option 1 (\$185.00) — \*Weekend Registration Includes:**

- ◆ Weekend retreat for the Engaged
- ◆ NFP Class
- ◆ Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University
- ◆ Marriage Enrichment Retreat

\*The weekend format provides a casual environment for the couples and allows more time for reflection and sharing on the topics presented. In addition, the weekend experience includes more interaction with the presenters, time for prayer, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and Sunday Mass.

### **Option 2 (\$125.00) — One Day Registration Includes:**

- ◆ Session is from 9:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
- ◆ PreCana Day or \*Re-marriage PreCana Day
- ◆ NFP Class
- ◆ Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University
- ◆ Marriage Enrichment Retreat

The Re-marriage PreCana Day is for couples where one or both is entering into a second marriage or where children from a previous relationship are being brought into the new marriage.

**After choosing the PreCana option of your choice, register online at [www.dio.org/familylife](http://www.dio.org/familylife) or mail your completed registration form (page 19 of booklet) and fee directly to :**

**Office for Marriage and Family Life**

**P.O. Box 3187**

**Springfield, IL 62708-3187**

**You will be sent a code to be able to take your FOCCUS Marriage Inventory online.**

# Pre-Cana Dates 2012



## Springfield Deanery Programs

**February 25, 2012** ..... **Catholic Pastoral Center**  
1615 W. Washington St., Springfield, IL 62702

**March 17, 2012** ..... **Cathedral Parish**  
524 E. Lawrence, Springfield, IL 62705

**May 5, 2012** ..... **St. Patrick Parish**  
1730 South Grand Ave. East, Springfield, IL 62703

**Jul 14, 2012** ..... **Catholic Pastoral Center**  
1615 W. Washington St., Springfield, IL 62702

**August 11, 2012** ..... **St. Joseph the Worker Parish**  
700 E. Spruce St., Chatham, IL 62629

**October 13, 2012** ..... **Catholic Pastoral Center**  
1615 W. Washington St., Springfield, IL 62702

**November 17, 2012** ..... **St. Aloysius Parish**  
2119 N. 20th St., Springfield, IL 62702

**December 1, 2012** ..... **Catholic Pastoral Center**  
1615 W. Washington St., Springfield, IL 62702

Alton Deanery Programs

January 28, 2012 ..... **St. Boniface Parish**

Oak Room in lower level of Church  
110 N.. Buchanan St., Edwardsville, IL 62025

February 26, 2012 ..... **Ss. Peter & Paul Parish**

301 Vandalia, Collinsville, IL 62234

April 1, 2012 ..... **St. Paul Parish**

Parish Center Basement  
1412 Ninth Street, Highland, IL 62249

August 5, 2012 ..... **Ss. Peter & Paul Parish**

301 Vandalia, Collinsville, IL 62234

September 9, 2012 ..... **St. Paul Parish**

Parish Center Basement  
1412 Ninth Street, Highland, IL 62249

Decatur Deanery Programs

February 4, 2012 ..... **Forty Martyrs Parish**

210 E. Van Allen St., Tuscola, IL 61953

September 8, 2012 ..... **Ss. James & Patrick Parish**

742 E. Clay St., Decatur, IL 62521

Litchfield Deanery Programs

October 14, 2012 ..... **Ss. Mary & Joseph Parish**

2010 East First South, Carlinville, IL 62626

# Pre-Cana Dates 2012 Continued...



## Effingham Deanery Programs

September 15, 2012.....**Sacred Heart Parish Center**  
405 Henrietta, Effingham, IL 62401

## Jacksonville Deanery Programs

February 11, 2012..... **Blessed Trinity Parish**  
St. Joseph Hall on County Road in Meppen  
for directions, call 618-576-2628 or 618-576-2662

March 24, 2012..... **Our Saviour Parish**  
453 E. State St., Jacksonville, IL 62650.

## Quincy Deanery Programs

February 18, 2012.....**St. Brigid Parish**  
706 N. Main, Liberty, IL 62347

September 29, 2012 ..... **St. Anthony of Padua Parish**  
2223 St. Anthony Rd., Quincy, IL 62305

## Remarriage PreCana Programs

**April 14, 2012** ..... **Ss. Peter & Paul Parish**

301 Vandalia, Collinsville, IL 62234

**October 6, 2012** ..... **Ss. Peter & Paul Parish**

301 Vandalia, Collinsville, IL 62234

## **Weekend Marriage Prep Experiences**

Weekend for the Engaged, Engaged Encounter, and the Engaged Couple Encounter are weekend experiences for engaged couples. They address the same topics as regular PreCana sessions. However, the added time gives the couple a greater opportunity to reflect on each topic and on their relationship.

### Weekend for the Engaged

These programs will be held at the Villa Maria Retreat Center on Lake Springfield, providing a welcoming atmosphere for the couples. See the next page of this booklet for dates and more information. The sessions begin Saturday at 10:00 a.m. and end Sunday at 3:30 p.m. (limited to 20 couples). Cost is \$185.00.

### Engaged Encounter



Engaged Encounter weekends are available at King's House in Belleville, IL. For more information, specific dates, or to register, visit their Website at [www.soilee.com](http://www.soilee.com). You can also call Bob & Lori Libby at 618-397-0386 or email [lorilibby@tenethealth.com](mailto:lorilibby@tenethealth.com).

# Weekend for the Engaged

May 19-20, 2012

October 27-28, 2012

Cost is \$185.00 per couple

or \$200 with FOCCUS

These programs are held at the Villa Maria Retreat Center on Lake Springfield, which provides a welcoming, home-like atmosphere for the couples. They begin Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday.

While the topics are similar to those covered in PreCana, the weekend experience allows couples to spend more time reflecting and sharing on these themes.

In addition, the weekend also includes:

- More dialogue time with the presenting couples
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Time for quiet reflection in the presence of the Eucharist
- Sunday Mass

Comments from some who have attended...

- “The opportunity for prayer, confession, and Mass as a group was really an advantage.”
- “Much better than I expected ... I am taking a lot of useful knowledge into our marriage.”
- “Did a great job of making people comfortable to discuss the issues.”
- “Amazingly awesome! I learned so much about myself, my fiancé, and our relationship.”
- “The Saturday evening Q & A session was excellent.”
- “Kept it real ... I loved the openness and honesty”

Go to [www.dio.org/familylife](http://www.dio.org/familylife) to register or fill out the form below and mail it to:

**Office for Marriage and Family Life**

P.O. Box 3187

Springfield, IL 62708-3187

at least **four months** early. Registrations are accepted on a first come, first serve basis. The fee of \$125.00 should accompany your registration (\$185.00 for the Weekend for the Engaged). **You can also register online at [www.dio.org/familylife](http://www.dio.org/familylife).**

~ Space is limited ~ Register early ~

**PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY:** Since registration confirmation and Marriage Inventory codes are sent by email, please supply your best email address for *both* of you (i.e. two unique email accounts).

**Groom's Full Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Religion \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

**Groom's E-mail Address** \_\_\_\_\_

Groom's Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

**Bride's Full Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Religion \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

**Bride's E-mail Address** \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

**Wedding Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Church of Wedding \_\_\_\_\_

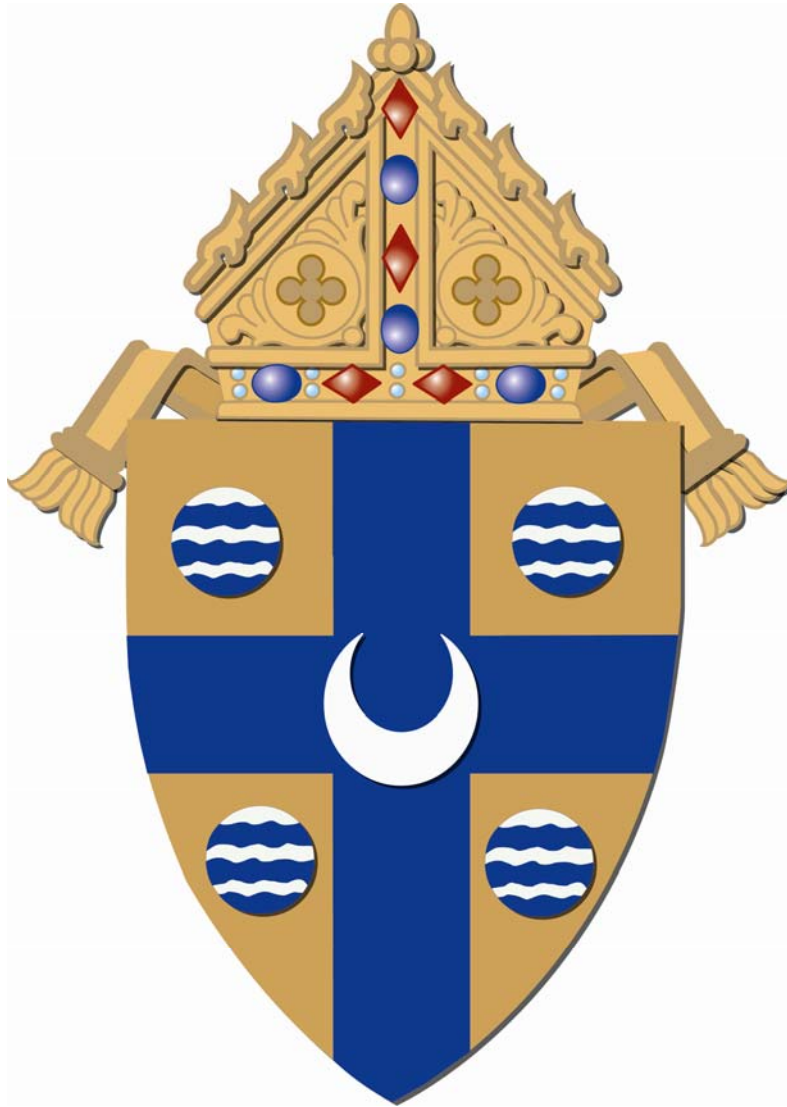
City, State of Church \_\_\_\_\_

**Marriage Preparation Program Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Program Place \_\_\_\_\_

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Amount Paid: \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_



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