

## Indicators for Effective Marriage Preparation

(National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), 36.C.2)

- We provide couples with a marriage preparation program that systematically and comprehensively teaches about the Sacrament of Matrimony.
- We encourage the care and concern of the whole Christian community for married couples by public recognition of couples planning marriage, modeling by couples in successful marriages, and supporting of couples in challenged marriages.
- We assist the couple in deepening their understanding of the nature of Christian marriage as a covenant between a man and woman whereby spouses establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life that is ordered to the well being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children.
- We clearly present the Church's teaching on the morally acceptable methods of regulating birth, such as NFP, and the immorality and damaging effects of artificial birth control.
- We teach couples that fidelity, indissolubility, and openness to children are essential to Christian marriage.
- We teach couples that the family is the first and essential center of faithful living, the domestic Church.
- We help couples to understand that it is in the love and struggles of their marriage that a couple attains the holiness of their vocation.
- We celebrate marriages in the larger community and invite newly married couples into the life of the parish community.
- We provide ongoing support for couples after they have been married in the Church.
- We offer couples the opportunity to share their story with others and build community among those being prepared for marriage.

### What is a Sacramental Marriage?

Sacramental marriage is the union of a baptized man and woman who freely enter into a loving covenant with each other in Christ. This covenant is modeled on the relationship between Jesus Christ and his Church. A sacramental marriage has three necessary elements: free consent, the affirmation of a lifelong, exclusive union, and openness to children.

## Recommendations for Effective Marriage Preparation

### Invite couples into the greater parish community

- Publish banns of marriage
- Public parish recognition of weddings and anniversaries
- Parish social events that encourage couple participation

### Help engaged couples to connect with other engaged couples in parish

- Find or form opportunities for engaged couples to meet and interact with couples who are at same stage in their life (planning a wedding, newly married, new families, etc.)
- Connect couples to the social and spiritual events throughout the Diocese for young adults or young couples

### Spiritually renew each individual of the couple as well as the couple together

- Provide opportunities for spiritual renewal for the couple together
- Provide opportunities for spiritual renewal for the couple individually such as a men's group or women's group
- Book as a gift at marriage preparation

### Link the engaged couple with mentor couples

- Various stages of marriage and years of marriage
- Dialogue regarding common marital problems, how they overcome struggles, real life problems, etc.

- Draw the couple into life of the parish through shared ministry or service with mentor couple
- Share about personal experiences/challenges/mistakes they made

### Support for couples after the wedding

- Activities, resources, prayer opportunities for couple prayer as well as activities to enrich the husband's and wife's personal spirituality
- Periodic "check-in" with couple, especially during first year of marriage
- Help couple to see the gifts they have to offer to the parish
- Marriage enrichment activities (date nights, retreats, service work, etc.)
- Respond to their needs in times of crisis – loss of child, marital struggles, addiction, financial struggles, etc.

### Use media and technology to keep couples informed and connected

- Text alerts with prayers, articles, or short reflections
- Periodic surveys to see their current needs
- Ability to opt into other groups (new parents, married couples after 1 year of marriage, working adults, etc.) as they move into those phases