



Dear Friends in Christ,

I am delighted to add my words of encouragement and prayers of support as you prepare to respond to God's call to commit yourselves to each other in holy matrimony. Marriage is a participation in God's life of love. It is a covenant relationship and a reflection of Christ's relationship to the Church. The response of a couple to marry is a call from God himself.

To respond generously to God's call is always an awesome responsibility. Entering into a lifetime covenant that gives life through children surely demands careful, prayerful and thoughtful discernment and preparation.

Due to the dignity of the vocation of marriage, the Church desires to guide individuals as they prepare for this lifelong commitment. Our priests, deacons and all those involved in the ministry of marriage preparation are dedicated to offering the most effective resources to those who are preparing for marriage.

I am pleased to present this guide and direct its use by all couples preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church in our Diocese of Palm Beach.

May Mary and Joseph intercede for you on your journey of faith.

With every prayerful wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Gerald M. Barbarito

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Bishop of Palm Beach

FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

www.foryourmarriage.org

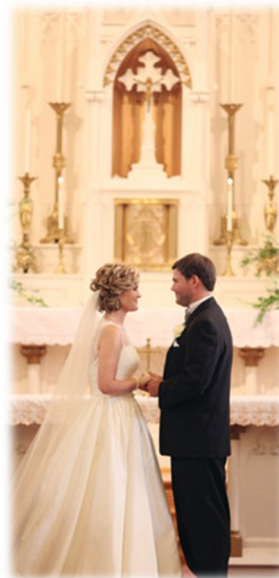
Marriage Preparation Programs

To register for a program in English, go to
www.diocesepb.org/marriageprep

Programs typically run from
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on a Saturday

See website for dates, locations and payment information.

Camino al Matrimonio
Para registrar en español, imprima
www.diocesepb.org/camino



If you have any questions please contact us at:

Diocese of Palm Beach Office of Marriage & Family Life
PO Box 109650
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410-9650
561-775-9557
www.diocesepb.org
Email: marriageprep@diocesepb.org

God's Plan for Marriage



YOUR GUIDE TO MARRIAGE PREPARATION IN THE DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH



Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1660)

Congratulations on your engagement!



This brochure is designed to help you prepare for marriage in the Catholic Church.

Your engagement will be one of the happiest and busiest times of your life as you prepare to enter the mystery of the Sacrament of Marriage. The Church in the family of faith desires to guide you in this time of preparation and discernment with the support of parish clergy and staff, diocesan program facilitators and trained volunteers. Sacramental Marriage Preparation is meant to provide the focus you need as a couple to embrace the beautiful and challenging Sacrament of Marriage and to lay the spiritual foundation which will set the tone for your lifelong commitment.



Answers to some common questions:

- If a baptized Catholic wishes to marry it must be celebrated in a sacred place (not on the beach). If two Catholics wish to marry it must be celebrated in a Catholic Church.
- If you plan to marry in a Church outside the Diocese of Palm Beach but your residence is here, contact your parish here to begin the process. Then contact the parish where you plan to marry in order to set the date and determine any additional requirements.
- If you plan to marry out of the country, please allow two additional months for processing and mailing of documentation and forms.

The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life. (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1799)

Steps to the Altar

Step 1: Schedule a meeting with your parish priest or deacon.

Contact the parish where you reside as soon as possible after your engagement and **at least six months before your expected wedding day**. Your parish priest or deacon will explain all of the requirements for your marriage in the Church. All requirements should be met and your completed file provided to your parish at least one month prior to your wedding date.

Special circumstances should be addressed with the priest or deacon. Please discuss if:

- One or both of you have been married before, even civilly
- One or both of you are or have been in a “common-law” union
- You are now civilly married to each other and wish to have your marriage blessed (validated) by the Catholic Church
- You are presently living together
- Either of you is a teenager
- A pregnancy is involved

Caution: *To avoid possible disappointment, do not book your reception until you have a confirmed date from the Church.*

Step 2: Prepare Documentation

Your priest or deacon will explain the required documentation you need to be married in the Church:

- Baptismal Certificate obtained within last six months (no photocopies)
- Prenuptial Questionnaire for bride and groom (Form A)
- Witness Questionnaires (Form B)
- Proper dispensations, permissions and delegations as needed
- Civil marriage license

If either of you has been married before, even in a civil ceremony, please check with your priest regarding possibility of annulment. Take care to provide accurate information and documentation regarding any past marriage(s). If you need to petition for a Declaration of Nullity, you will need the final decision before proceeding with the following steps.

Step 3: Take Premarital Inventory

A Premarital Inventory addresses issues engaged couples need to consider for their marriage. You will be guided by your parish regarding which Premarital Inventory you will take, either FULLY ENGAGED, FOCCUS or PREPARE/ENRICH. Once you have completed the inventory, you will meet with your parish priest, deacon or sponsor couple to discuss the results. These inventories are designed to reveal more about relationships and compatibility.

Step 4: Schedule Marriage Preparation Program

Preparation, including education, is necessary for all the sacraments of the faith including the Sacrament of Matrimony. Marriage preparation is not just a “requirement” to be fulfilled before you can have a Church wedding. Rather, the Church offers this time so you can step away from the details of the wedding day and focus as a couple on nurturing a lifetime commitment to each other with God. (See back for details.)

Step 5: Attend Natural Family Planning (NFP) Instruction

Basic NFP concepts are included in all Marriage Preparation Programs. A full course on NFP is highly recommended for engaged couples prior to marriage. NFP helps build the marriage relationship and strength of character necessary for lifelong marriage. This modern method of family planning is in harmony with Church teaching and is a safe, healthy, effective and very low cost way to plan your family. Check diocesan website for more information: www.diocesepb.org/nfp

Step 6: Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation

As Catholics, the Sacraments of Reconciliation (Penance or Confession) and Holy Eucharist should be vital aspects of your growth as a disciple of Christ and His Church. Receiving these sacraments will help prepare you for a more meaningful experience of your wedding liturgy and to enter into your marriage covenant with your future spouse and God.

Step 7: Plan Your Wedding Liturgy

Meet again with your priest or deacon to plan your wedding liturgy. Use the Wedding Liturgy Guide provided by your Parish to help you choose your readings and music. The care you place into making these choices will help the liturgy be a meaningful expression of yourselves and your love as a couple.

