

Archdiocese of Philadelphia Marriage Preparation Program



January 2009 - November 2009

PREPARING FOR THE VOCATION TO MARRIAGE

ENCOUNTER



LIFE-GIVING
COMMUNION

MISSION

Family Life Office
222 N. 17th Street
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INTRODUCTION

"The very preparation for Christian marriage is itself a journey of faith. It is a special opportunity for the engaged to rediscover and deepen the faith received in baptism and nourished by their Christian upbringing. In this way they come to recognize and freely accept their vocation to follow Christ and to serve the kingdom of God in the married state." Pope John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, No. 51

Your decision to seek marriage in the Catholic Church is a response in faith to God's love for you and your love for one another. The period of engagement is a time of discernment. It entails inviting Christ into your lives, meditating upon the meaning of the sacrament of Matrimony and the vocation to Christian marriage, and anticipating your new life together. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, God blesses your love and makes it a sign of Christ's sacrificial love for the Church. In Christian marriage you are called to give witness to God's love in the world, through your love for one another and your children.

What is Marriage Preparation?

Marriage preparation is a time to prepare for the wedding day, *and every day after*. It is a time of meditating on the meaning of the Sacramental union, and what difference inviting Christ into your marriage and your lives makes. Preparation for marriage takes the form of classes held at the parish or an Archdiocese sponsored venue; or a weekend retreat. This "formal" process is designed to help you, as a couple, grow closer to God and each other, and to come to a deeper understanding of the sacrament of marriage, into which you will soon enter. Classes and retreats are one aspect of your preparation, and your pastor/assisting priest will guide you through the process by scheduling personal meetings with you.

SELECTING A PROGRAM:

Engaged couples are required to notify their parish of their intention to marry **no less than six months before the date of the wedding.** Between the initial interview and the wedding, a program of marriage preparation is required.

The formal process of marriage preparation is very important, and is best done sooner in your engagement than later. You are *strongly* encouraged to **register and attend a program as far in advance of your wedding as possible** to make best use of this opportunity for discernment and preparation for the sacrament of Matrimony. There are several options available both at the parish level, and through the Family Life Office.

Preparing for Marriage at Your Parish

Some parishes offer marriage preparation sessions twice a year (or more often) in various formats. **As soon as you notify your parish priest of your engagement, ask if the parish offers marriage preparation.** If your parish does not offer classes, you may be able to attend classes at a neighboring parish, but be advised: **most parishes limit attendees to parishioners, and will accept couples outside the parish only if there are spaces open.** Also, be aware that **parishes do not advertise their schedules with the Archdiocese,** so you will have to contact local parishes on your own. You can find a list of parishes in the Archdiocese here: <http://archphila.org/parishes/index.htm>

Preparing for Marriage Through the Family Life Office

There are several marriage preparation options available for couples, including 4 session programs and weekend retreats. Classes are also available in Spanish, as well as those specifically for African-American couples.

Our marriage preparation programs are not primarily *skills-based*. Rather, we offer *sacramental preparation* that is Scripture-based, and seeks to help you grow closer to God as you grow closer together.

Marriage preparation is not just a “requirement” to be fulfilled before you can have a Church wedding. Rather, the Church gives this time to couples as a gift, to help you step away from the details of planning for “the day,” and focus your attention on nurturing a lifetime commitment to each other and to God.

Marriage preparation through the Family Life Office seeks to promote marriage by instructing you in what you are undertaking in choosing to marry in the Church, namely that you are saying “yes” to the three goods of marriage in your vows: **indissolubility, fidelity, and fruitfulness**

When Should We Schedule Marriage Prep?

Because both parish and Family Life Office programs fill up quickly it is highly recommended that you register for marriage prep **as soon as possible after you become engaged**. Archdiocesan programs register couples on a **first come-first served basis**, which means that the later you register, the less likely you are to get your first choice of program location. We schedule sessions throughout the Archdiocese in order to be *easily* accessible to as many couples as possible, but we understand that some couples end up traveling some distance to a program that best fits their schedule. **Because of space limitations and the number of couples participating, once a program is closed we cannot take any more couples. Registering early** will make it more likely that you get your first choice for both date and location.

PROGRAM OPTIONS:

A. Parish Marriage Preparation Programs: Some parishes offer pre-Cana programs, usually in the Fall and Spring. These programs vary from one-day, to weekends, to meetings with mentoring couples. To find a program, contact parishes in your area for more information. The parish of either fiancé may have its own Marriage Preparation Program which is scheduled directly through the parish.

B. Preparing for the Vocation to Marriage: This is a large group program held on four separate evenings. Because the emphasis is on the couple themselves and their discernment regarding the sacrament of Matrimony, it still provides a personal and prayerful experience of marriage preparation. See pages 6-7 for schedule of dates, times and locations.

Session 1: Christian Marriage: Covenant and Sign of God's Love; Administration of the FOCCUS Inventory

Session 2: Called to Communion: Communicating in Truth and Love

Session 3: Called to Communion: Communicating in Unitive and Fruitful Love

Session 4: Communion in Christ as the Domestic Church

To Register for a Four Session Program, please complete **Option B** on the enclosed registration form (page 10) and send it, with payment, to the Family Life Office at the address on the form.

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be hindered. I have dealt with great things that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know. I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you.

~ Job 42: 2-5

Option B: Preparing for the Vocation to Marriage
Each program begins *promptly* at 7:00pm and ends at 9:00pm.

Group # 9411
Days: Tuesdays
Dates: January 6, 13, 20 and 27 2009 (snow date 2/3)
Location: Archdiocesan Office Center
222 N. 17th St.
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Registration is limited to the first 50 couples

Group# 9412
Days: Wednesdays
Dates: February 4, 11, 18 and 25 2009
Location: St. Charles Seminary,
100 E. Wynnewood Road,
Wynnewood, PA 19096
Registration is limited to the first 65 couples.

Group # 9413
Days: Tuesdays
Dates: March 10, 17, 24 and 31 2009
Location: Fr. Judge HS Auditorium
3301 Solly Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19136
Registration is limited to the first 75 couples.

Group # 9414
Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays
Dates: April 14, 16, 21 and 23 2009
Location: Immaculate Conception Parish
5201 Emilie Road
Levittown, PA 19057
Registration is limited to the first 50 couples.

Group # 9415
Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays
Dates: May 5, 7, 12 and 14 2009
Location: Nativity of Our Lord Parish
625 West Street Road
Warminster, PA 18974
Registration is limited to the first 50 couples.

Group # 9416
Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays
Dates: June 16, 18, 23 and 25 2009
Location: St. Isaac Jogues Parish
W. Walker road and Valley Forge Road
Wayne, PA 19087
Registration is limited to the first 50 couples

Group # 9417
Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays
Dates: July 7, 9, 14 and 16 2009
Location: Annunciation BVM Parish
401 Brookline Blvd.
Havertown, PA 19083
Registration is limited to the first 50 couples.

Group # 9418
Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays
Dates: September 8, 10, 15 and 17 2009
Location: St. Charles Seminary,
100 E. Wynnewood Road,
Wynnewood, PA 19096
Registration is limited to the first 65 couples

Group # 9419
Days: Mondays and Wednesdays
Dates: September 28, 30, Oct. 5 and 7 2009
Location: Archdiocesan Office Center
222 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Registration is limited to the first 50 couples

Group # 9420
Days: Tuesdays
Dates: November 10, 12, 17 and 19 2009
Location: Archdiocesan Office Center
222 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Registration is limited to the first 50 couples

C. Archdiocesan Weekend Retreat Program: The Weekend Retreat Program offers engaged couples a special opportunity to be together, and to encounter Christ through prayer and reflection. The goal of the weekend is to more firmly establish your relationship “in the Lord.”

TO REGISTER for a Retreat Weekend Program please complete **Option C** on the enclosed registration form (p. 10) and send it, with payment, to the Family Life Office at the address on the form.

**Option C Marriage Preparation Weekend Retreat
Encounter Christ, The Source of Christian Marriage**

Group # 153
Dates: February 6, 7, 8 2009
Location: Malvern Retreat House (St. Joseph in the Hills)
 Malvern, PA 19355
Cost: \$350 per couple
Registration is limited to the first 20 couples.

Group # 154
Dates: June 12, 13, 14 2009
Location: Malvern Retreat House (St. Joseph in the Hills)
 Malvern, PA 19355
Cost: \$350 per couple
Registration is limited to the first 20 couples.

Group # 155
Dates: August 21, 22, 23 2009
Location: Malvern Retreat House (St. Joseph in the Hills)
 Malvern, PA 19355
Cost: \$350 per couple
Registration is limited to the first 20 couples.

Group # 156
Dates: October 9, 10, 11 2009
Location: Malvern Retreat House (St. Joseph in the Hills)
 Malvern, PA 19355
Cost: \$350 per couple
Registration is limited to the first 20 couples.

RETREAT SCHEDULE

Arrival: Registration 5:30-6:30 PM on the Friday of the Retreat Weekend.

Departure: Following Mass on the Sunday of the Retreat Weekend.

What is provided during this weekend?

Meals: dinner Friday; breakfast, lunch and dinner Saturday; breakfast Sunday; snacks throughout the weekend.

Each room is single-occupancy (this provides privacy, as well as opportunities for rest and quiet reflection).

Rooms include bedding, towel and washcloth, and private bath. Retreatants should bring their own toiletries and alarm clock.

Religious items (rosaries, holy cards, books, etc) will be available for purchase throughout the weekend at the St. Jude Shop, located in St. Joseph's Hall.

Dress is casual, but keep in mind that we will be spending time in the Chapel. **Modest dress is most appropriate.**

The weekend will include presentations from our Retreat Director, married couples, and the staff of the Family Life Office. There will be opportunities for reflection with your fiancé, private prayer, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and a Q&A session on Saturday night. The grounds at Malvern are spacious and beautiful, and you can enjoy its beauty by taking a walk or praying the outdoor Stations of the Cross. Our retreat group is small, so you will have an opportunity to get to know your fellow retreatants, and maybe even make some new friends.

We hope this retreat weekend will be a fruitful time of prayer and reflection for each of you. Our goal is to provide an atmosphere in which you can explore more deeply the meaning of the Sacrament of Marriage in your relationship, and give you a chance to focus on your relationship, beyond all of the details of the wedding day.

Please note: Couples attending the Weekend Retreat may take the FOCCUS Inventory at one of the Regional Marriage Preparation Programs; see pp. 17-18. Some parishes also administer the Foccus Inventory, so check with your pastor. For more information, call 215-587-5639.

ARCHDIOCESAN MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAM REGISTRATION FORM

To enroll in one of the ARCHDIOCESAN MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS listed below, please complete all information on this form. **Please note:** failure to complete all information on this form will result in the registration form being returned to you which will delay your registering for the program you selected. Return this completed form and a check payable to: **Family Life Office, 222 N. 17th St., Philadelphia, PA 19103. A confirmation of your reservation and directions to the facility will be returned within 2 weeks of receipt of registration.**

<p style="text-align: center;">OPTION B - PREPARING FOR THE VOCATION TO MARRIAGE</p> <p>WE PREFER TO ATTEND: 1ST Choice Group # _____ 2nd Choice Group# _____ REGISTRATION FEE: \$150 per couple</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OPTION C- ENCOUNTER CHRIST, MARRIAGE PREPARATION RETREAT</p> <p>WE PREFER TO ATTEND THE WEEKEND OF: 1ST Choice Group # _____ 2nd Choice Group # _____ WE WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THE FOCUCS INVENTORY AT Group # _____ REGISTRATION FEE: \$350 per couple</p>

WEDDING DATE (if known) _____ REMARRIAGE: Yes ___ No ___

BRIDE'S NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ (Cell/alternate phone) _____ EMAIL _____

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION: (Roman Catholic, Methodist, Jewish, etc.) _____

CATHOLIC PARISH _____ (PC1) _____ (Office Use)

GROOM'S NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ (Cell/alternate phone) _____ EMAIL _____

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION: (Roman Catholic, Methodist, Jewish, etc.) _____

CATHOLIC PARISH _____ (PCI) _____

(Office Use)

NAME OF CATHOLIC PRIEST handling documentation for the marriage is: **(This is the priest to whom we will send your Certificate of Completion and FOCCUS results)**

Father _____ Parish _____

Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

OFFICE USE		
ID _____	PC/MO/CA/ # _____	Amt\$ _____ PMT: M/F _____
LCSNT _____	DR _____	

D. Hispanic Marriage Preparation Program: Hispanic Marriage Preparation is presented in Spanish for seriously dating and engaged couples who wish to attend a program that is culturally sensitive. This program's presenters are fluent in Spanish and English, and are also familiar with Latino culture. Marriage and family life are enhanced and made unique by the influence of culture. It is valuable to recognize one's cultural roots and draw on the strengths of generations of faithfully lived and culturally expressed marriage and family life.

Preparación Hispana para el matrimonio

Tenemos a su disposición talleres de preparación matrimonial en español para parejas comprometidas que deseen participar en un programa que toma en cuenta las características de la cultura hispana. Las presentaciones en este programa se hacen en español por parejas muy preparadas y conocedoras de la cultura latina. Es muy valioso reconocer nuestras raíces culturales y fortalecer los valores familiares característicos de la cultura hispana que se han transmitido de generación en generación.



Este programa es auspiciado por la Oficina de la Vida Familiar en coordinación con el Instituto Católico para la Evangelización y la Oficina del Vicario para los Católicos Hispanos.

El programa empieza el **domingo de 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m. (con misa) a las 3:30 p.m.** Al final del día la pareja recibe un Certificado de Participación.

El programa se llevará a cabo en el **Instituto para la Evangelización (Catholic Institute for Evangelization)** en el 4404 N. 5th St. en Filadelfia, teléfono (215) 324-8291 y en **Avondale**. La cuota para el programa es de \$50 por pareja. Puede hacer el cheque a nombre del **Instituto Católico**. Para asistir a los talleres en **Avondale**, sírvase llamar al teléfono (610) 268-3365 para inscribirse y recibir más información al respecto. **Es necesario registrarse de antemano**. No se puede registrar el mismo día del programa pre-matrimonial.

Por favor de traer su almuerzo. Antes de enviar su solicitud, hable con su párroco o el sacerdote de su parroquia para que le dé más información al respecto y para que firme su solicitud. Regístrese con anticipación, ya que solamente se aceptan diez parejas para cada taller.

Si tiene alguna pregunta o problema con su solicitud, por favor sírvase llamarnos.

Catholic Institute for Evangelization

4404 N. 5th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19140
Teléfono: (215) 324-8291
Fax: (215)324-8730

Fecha	Horario
9/28/08	8:30 am – 4:15 pm
12/7/08	8:30 am – 4:15 pm
3/1/09	8:30 am – 4:15 pm
6/7/09	8:30 am – 4:15 pm

Avondale
Misión Santa María
37 S. Pennsylvania Ave.
Avondale, PA 19311
Teléfono: (610)268-3365
Fax: (610)268-5064

Fecha	Horario
8/23/08 y 8/24/08	10:00 am – 6:00 pm
11/15/08 y 11/16/08	10:00 am – 6:00 pm
3/28/09 y 3/29/09	10:00 am – 6:00 pm
6/27/09 y 6/28/09	10:00 am – 6:00 pm



E. African American Marriage Preparation Program: This program is presented by a team of married African American couples and a priest. The sessions provide opportunities for seriously dating and engaged persons to explore and develop a solid foundation for permanent, faithful, and life-giving love in marriage. The unique strengths and challenges of the African American Catholic family are highlighted and integrated into the whole program.

For more information and to register for an African American Marriage Preparation program please call : 215-747-3250

Option D: Preparación Hispana para el matrimonio

EL PROGRAMA SE DARA SOLAMENTE EN ESPAÑOL
(Por favor escribir en letra imprenta y clara)

Nombre del novio: _____
Nombre Inicial Apellido

Dirección: _____

Teléfono: _____ Parroquia: _____

Nombre de la novia: _____
Nombre Inicial Apellido

Dirección: _____

Teléfono: _____ Parroquia: _____

Iglesia donde se casan: _____

Ciudad: _____ Fecha de la Boda: _____

Nombre del Sacerdote celebrando la boda: _____

Dirección permanente: _____

Nombre y Firma del sacerdote que los entrevista _____

Por favor de mandar esta solicitud lo más pronto posible con su cuota al: Instituto Católico para la Evangelización, 4404 N. 5th St, Philadelphia, PA 19140. Adjunte su cheque por \$50

CANCELLATION/SWITCHING POLICY

Archdiocesan Regional Program: Five business days or more before a program begins, there will be a \$25 fee for cancellation.

Weekend Retreat Programs:

Ten business days or more before the weekend program is scheduled to begin, there is a \$25 fee for cancellation.

Fewer than ten business days before the weekend program is scheduled to begin, there is a \$75 fee for cancellation.

All Programs: If you do not attend the program for which you were registered and you did not notify the Family Life Office (215-587-5639) of the cancellation in advance, there will be no refund.

To register for one of the Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation Programs (**Option B or Option C**), please complete the registration form and mail it along with the registration fee to:

**Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Family Life Office
222 N. 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103**

Registration fees:

**OPTION B: Preparing for the Vocation to Marriage
\$150 per couple**

**OPTION C: Archdiocesan Weekend Retreat Program.
\$350 per couple**

Checks should be made payable to:
The Family Life Office

Three to Get Married Weekend Retreat

This “commuter retreat” (weekend program with no overnight stay) is sponsored by the Legionaries of Christ. The Family Life Office recommends this program for those couples who wish to have a weekend retreat experience for their marriage preparation. Registration for **Three to Get Married** is made through the Family Life Office.

Three to Get Married draws upon the best in contemporary psychology, practical wisdom from the experience of married couples, and the beauty and richness of the Catholic Church’s teaching on marriage and family in order to give engaged couples the best foundation on which to build a successful marriage.

The **Three to Get Married** Marriage Preparation program begins by focusing on the human aspects of marriage (communication, parenting, finances, etc), and then moves toward faith formation and a call to live more deeply Christian discipleship. The talks and activities encourage couples to make their own the truths that the Catholic Church teaches about Marriage. The program concludes with opportunities for confession, and Mass.

The **Three to Get Married** weekend retreat is run on a limited basis throughout the year. Please check our website for updated information about this retreat: <http://archphila.org/evangelization/famlife/marriage.htm#couples>



FOCCUS
Facilitating Open Couple Communication,
Understanding and Study

Living as partners of life and love in Christian marriage is both a blessing and a challenge. Marriage unites two people with unique personalities and interests, as well as varied social and psychological experiences. The FOCCUS inventory is an aid for your marriage preparation. It can help you communicate openly about many things that are important to your relationship, including basic expectations, communication, problem-solving skills, attitudes on religion, sexuality, children, money and extended family. **It is not a test or a way to predict the future.** It is designed to help you target the topics you need and want to talk about as a couple as you prepare for the lifelong commitment of marriage.

FOCCUS is a tool to make it easier for you, as a couple, to think and talk about significant aspects of your relationship as you prepare for marriage. The FOCCUS Inventory is **time limited**: the results reflect where you were in your life's journey the night you took the inventory, and are helpful for dialogue into the future.

We encourage you to make an appointment with your parish priest, or the priest assisting with your wedding, to go over your particular FOCCUS results. **REMEMBER: FOCCUS IS NOT** a compatibility test, nor is it to be used to prevent you from marrying. It is a tool **FOR YOU**, to promote dialogue, and encourage you to look more deeply into issues that will impact your married life. It is a tool to help **STRENGTHEN** your relationship – not simply find weaknesses.

Special Circumstances Addressed by FOCCUS:

Interfaith Marriage: It is important to discuss differences in faith traditions with each other and with the assisting priest, minister, rabbi, etc. There is a section in the FOCCUS Inventory that explores this area of your relationship.

Previous Marriage: Those remarrying within the Church (after receiving an annulment, or after the death of a spouse), especially when children are involved, will have additional areas to discuss. The FOCCUS Inventory explores key issues on second marriages. Additional attention from the parish priest may be required.

Cohabitation: Through the FOCCUS inventory, couples living together before marriage will have the opportunity to discuss how this can affect their preparation for a healthy, lasting, sacramental union.

Couples attending the Archdiocesan program *Preparing for the Vocation to Marriage (Option B)* take the FOCCUS Inventory. We suggest that you discuss the options for taking the FOCCUS Inventory, which are listed below, with the priest who is assisting in your marriage preparation.

Some parishes administer the FOCCUS inventory as part of their marriage preparation programs. Talk to the priest assisting you with your wedding to find out if he, or his parish representative, can administer the FOCCUS inventory to you.

OR

The Family Life Office will administer FOCCUS as part of our four session program, *Preparing for the Vocation to Marriage*.

For those attending a **weekend retreat**:

The FOCCUS inventory will not be administered at either the *Encounter Christ, the Source of Christian Marriage*, or *Three to Get Married* retreats. The Family Life Office, however, strongly recommends that couples attending one of these weekend retreats take the FOCCUS as part of their marriage preparation. FOCCUS only takes about 40 minutes to complete, and couples can take the inventory at one of the locations listed on pages 6-7, or at the parish if it is offered there. The results of the inventory will be sent to the assisting priest.

If you have questions about the FOCCUS inventory, please contact the Family Life Office: 215-587-5639; famlife@qadphila.org



Natural Family Planning

Sexual intimacy is interpersonal communion which is both unitive (love-giving) and procreative (life-giving). In harmony with the Church's teaching on human sexuality, Natural Family Planning (NFP) does not artificially separate these components of marital intimacy. NFP is an umbrella term for certain natural methods used either to achieve or postpone pregnancy. The practice of NFP is in accord with the faithful, fruitful, and permanent nature of marriage, and with every couple's call to responsible parenthood.

NFP respects the natural rhythms of the body and promotes shared responsibility for childbearing between husband and wife. Couples learn to identify and appreciate the signs of fertility in the woman's body. They monitor the signs of the woman's body during her menstrual cycle to determine times of fertility and infertility.

There are different NFP methods, and couples may find that a particular method works better for them. NFP can be used to understand the gift of fertility, to help diagnose health problems, to assist in conceiving a baby, or to prayerfully discern whether and how to space the conception of children. It is holistic and free of harmful side effects and allows users to work with the body rather than against it. It encourages couples to be open to the gift of children and to cooperate with God's plan for a loving and fruitful marriage.

An introduction to NFP is part of all Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation programs, as required by the Marriage Preparation Policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. For more information or to register for classes in the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP (taught by experienced instructors), contact the Family Life Office at 215-587-5639.

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[http://archphila.org/evangelization/famlife/
marriage.htm#couples](http://archphila.org/evangelization/famlife/marriage.htm#couples)



*“When husband and wife are united in marriage
they no longer seem like something earthly,
but rather like the image of God Himself.”*

St. John Chrysostom