

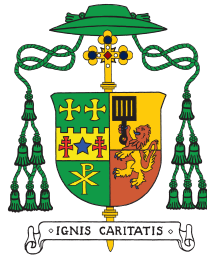
*The Pastoral Care  
and Preparation for the  
Celebration of Marriage*

Diocese of Greensburg

# **The Pastoral Care and Preparation for the Celebration of Marriage**

Diocese of Greensburg  
January, 2009





Dear Monsignor or Father:

Enclosed is the revised diocesan policy for THE PASTORAL CARE AND PREPARATION FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE.

In early 2006 the Presbyteral Council requested the Judicial Vicar; the diocesan director for marriage preparation; several pastors; and other persons involved with marriage preparation, to review and to study the diocesan policy that had been in place since 1984. I am grateful to the committee members who cooperated so generously in the preparation of this policy. This new and revised policy includes diocesan regulations; universal Church laws; and civil law requirements that must be followed when preparing a couple for marriage.

I hereby promulgate the revised diocesan policy for the Pastoral Care and Preparation for the Celebration of Marriage. The revised diocesan policy replaces the 1984 policy and takes effect immediately.

The role of the parish priest, the deacon, and pastoral team (e.g., Sponsor Couples) in preparing a couple for marriage must be emphasized. The subject for possible instructions by clergy, catechists, and the pastoral team for the individual couples is included to help them give these instructions. In the one-on-one encounter between the priest or the deacon the need for the Sacrament of Reconciliation before the celebration of marriage should be delicately but clearly handled.

The committee has tried to be moderate, following Canon Law and attempting to implement, in a pastoral manner, the canons governing marriage. The intention of this policy is not to burden either the clergy or the lay persons involved in marriage preparation; neither is it to demand anything extraordinary from the couple intending marriage. Thus, in keeping with diocesan policy already in place, the revised policy has set a time limit of twelve months for the first contact of the couple with the

parish. At the time of initial contact, the parish priest or deacon, before setting the marriage date, must determine the freedom of the couple to marry. This determination of freedom requires a personal meeting with the couple to ascertain all the necessary facts.

Thanks to the hard work of all those responsible for this common policy, they have tried in every way to make our Diocese responsive to the pastoral needs of our people who approach us for the celebration of marriage. I know that you will use this policy in that way.

I am grateful for the care you exercise in this and all aspects of pastoral ministry.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+  Lawrence E. Brandt

The Most Reverend Lawrence E. Brandt, JCD, PhD  
Bishop of Greensburg

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**Diocese of Greensburg**  
**PASTORAL CARE AND PREPARATION**  
**FOR THE**  
**CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE**

The 1983 Code of Canon Law clearly states what the Church asks from pastors of souls as they exercise their ministry for those seeking to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. Canon 1063 says:

“Pastors of souls\* are obliged to take care that their ecclesiastical community offers the Christian faithful the assistance by which the matrimonial state is preserved in a Christian spirit and advances in perfection. This assistance must be offered especially by:

1. preaching, catechesis adapted to minors, youth, and adults, and even the use of instruments of social communication, by which the Christian faithful are instructed about the meaning of Christian marriage and about the function of Christian spouses and parents;
2. personal preparation to enter marriage, which disposes the spouses to the holiness and duties of their new state;
3. a fruitful liturgical celebration of marriage which is to show that the spouses signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and the Church;
4. help offered to those who are married, so that faithfully preserving and protecting the conjugal covenant, they daily come to lead holier and fuller lives in their family.”

\* Pastors of souls include all authorized priests working in the Diocese in the care of the faithful; pastors, administrators, parochial vicars, chaplains, etc. For purposes of clarity, this paper will use the term “parish priest” to include all pastors of souls.

The Diocese of Greensburg takes this opportunity to provide its priests/deacons with some guidelines on the implementation of Canon 1063 under four headings: 1) the initial meeting with the couple, 2) the instructions required to be given by the parish priest; 3) the place of Marriage Preparation and its separate but complementary role with the instruction given by the parish priest; and 4) some liturgical guidelines for the celebration of marriage. It does so in a desire to help priests/deacons who have been concerned about the varying levels of understanding, maturity, and commitment of intended spouses which have led to marriage with problems present right from the beginning.

## **1. THE INITIAL MEETING WITH THE COUPLE**

Those desiring to celebrate Marriage should make a personal contact with the parish priest/deacon well before the date intended for the marriage, certainly no less than nine months. Often the couple has merely called the parish to reserve the date, but there is a need for a personal visit with the parish priest /deacon.

The intended spouses and the parish priest/deacon should be aware that reserving a date can be dangerous when the couple has not made personal contact with the priest/deacon because a delay of the marriage may arise. Possible reasons for a delay of a marriage are:

1. Previous marriage by either one of the couple or any other impediment. The impediments to marriage for a Latin Rite Catholic, in addition to prior bond are: age – a man below the age of 16 and a woman below the age of 14 cannot enter into a valid marriage (however, in this case, canon law yields to civil law, which fixes the legal age at eighteen for both men and women in the state of Pennsylvania); impotence; marriage with an unbaptized person; sacred orders; a public perpetual vow of chastity in a religious institute; abduction; crime; direct consanguinity; adoption; affinity; and public propriety. Please refer to the Tribunal questions regarding the impediments of abduction; crime; consanguinity; affinity; and public propriety. In addition to the impediments listed above, Eastern Rite Catholics are bound to another impediment – the spiritual relationship that arises between a sponsor and the baptized person and the parents of the same.
2. Non-practice of the Catholic Faith with no intention of returning to the practice of the Faith.

3. Lack of appreciation for the spiritual and sacramental aspects of marriage as assessed by the parish priest/deacon in the personal interview, in consultation with parents, or in pre-marriage counseling and evaluation, especially when the couple is under the age of 18.
4. Lack of time for sufficient pre-marriage assessment, evaluation, counseling and preparation, or the refusal of the couple to participate in marriage preparation.
5. Cohabitation. The priest/deacon preparing the parties for marriage should share the teaching of the Church regarding cohabitation. He should provide and/or discuss with the couple the 1999 Statement by the Catholic Bishops of Pennsylvania, "Living Together." This Statement is available online at [www.pacatholic.org](http://www.pacatholic.org).

What happens in that first personal contact with the priest/deacon helps set the couple at ease, and allows the priest/deacon to get to know them a little better before embarking on ascertaining necessary information. The Diocese will provide a checklist (to be found in the Appendix of this document and the Diocesan Web site) to make it clear what is required on the part of the parish priest and what is required on the part of the intended spouses. The meetings between the priest/deacon and couple are intended to help in developing a positive relationship with all that will lead to a sharing of feelings, attitudes, expectations and beliefs about the essential elements of marriage.

## **II. INSTRUCTIONS REQUIRED TO BE GIVEN BY PARISH PRIEST OR DEACON**

The required instructions are always to be adapted to the individual needs of the parish priest, the couple and the local situation. The filling out of pre-marital investigation forms is an occasion to explain the requirements of divine and ecclesiastical law. The primary goal of conducting the pre-marital investigation is to determine the couple's freedom to marry, i.e., to discover any impediments the couple may have. **The priest/deacon is to conduct the premarital investigation; the M-A forms are not to be given to the parties to complete. The priest/deacon has the serious obligation of asking the questions and recording the answers.** Often times, the priest/deacon will ask a Catholic party to provide witnesses who will be able to attest to his/her freedom to marry. The priest will **always** require a non-Catholic party to provide witnesses, usually the parents, who will be

able to attest to his/her freedom to marry. The future in-laws of any party are not appropriate witnesses to attest to their child's fiancé's marital status.

Included in the required instruction is a general instruction on the teaching of the Church, and in particular matters of faith to be believed and the necessity of prayer and personal spirituality, the Sacraments and their place in a Christian life.

Further instruction on the nature and character of the Sacrament of Matrimony, with the rights, duties and obligations that each person undertakes must be given.

These may be adapted to suit the individual needs, but even non-Catholics should hear the explanation of the Catholic's faith and obligations so that there will be no conscience problems which may arise later.

If it turns out that one of the parties was previously married, there will be required some further investigation and a date cannot be scheduled until the status of the previous marriage is clarified. If the priest/deacon who is preparing the couple for marriage believes that the previous marriage is invalid due to Lack of Canonical Form, the priest/deacon should complete the petition for the Declaration of Nullity Due to Lack of Canonical Form immediately, even before the other paper work is completed. This will help to determine if a formal case to investigate the validity of the marriage in question is actually needed. However, under no circumstances, is the priest to schedule a celebration of marriage until he is in possession of a decree of nullity.

In the state of Pennsylvania, when either party is under 18 years of age, persons may marry with the consent of a parent or guardian. If under 16 years of age, persons may marry with the approval of a judge of the orphans court, in addition to parental or guardian permission. The Diocese of Greensburg continues its custom of seeking professional evaluation of the parties by asking them to cooperate in an interview with a professional chosen by the Diocese. In the past, this has been done using the offices of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greensburg. The parish priest/deacon first seeks the help of the Tribunal in making the contact for the couple. The evaluation is then confidentially shared with the parish priest who is asked to make a decision as to whether he is satisfied that each of the parties intends to live the conjugal life and is capable of doing so.

\* Special note should be given to the Sacraments of Baptism, Penance, and Eucharist. The couple, as future parents, will be primarily responsible for the preparation of their children as well as their own deeper understanding of these and other Sacraments of the Church.

The parish priest/deacon may also ask the Tribunal to assign a Catholic Charities evaluation in cases where he wants further professional evaluation in these matters.

The above instructions adapted to suit the individual needs of the couple, are to help the parish priest/deacon in arriving at moral certitude that there is no obstacle to a valid and licit marriage for the specific couple seeking marriage in the Church.

The Tribunal always stands ready to serve, to help parish priests/deacons in answering questions about previous bonds, and any other obstacles which stand in the way of a particular marriage.

### **III. THE PLACE OF DIOCESAN MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND ITS SEPARATE BUT COMPLEMENTARY ROLE WITH THE INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY THE PRIEST**

The parish priest/deacon throughout the year should encourage all couples intending marriage to enroll in a diocesan approved Marriage Preparation program, such as Sponsor Couple, Engaged Encounter Weekend, Evenings for the Engaged, and other formation opportunities, either on the parochial or the regional level. Along with these, the **FOCCUS** instrument is required. These instructions traditionally cover, among other topics, the following: Spirituality of Marriage, Communication within Marriage, Sexuality, and the Stewardship of Goods within Marriage. Diocesan Marriage Preparation programs augment but do not supplant the required instructions to be given by the parish priest /deacon.

Any diocesan approved marriage preparation program must include use of trained laity. Marriage Preparation, together with the talks prepared and given by the individual parish priest, will create uniformity. It is important for all parish priests to know that similar types of instructions are being given in the various regions of the Diocese. All this will enhance the understanding of Christian Marriage.

### **IV. LITURGICAL GUIDELINES**

The liturgical rite of marriage expresses the sacred nature of the marriage bond. When this liturgy is properly celebrated, all who have gathered are called to prayer and worship in charity for the couple.

Normally, marriage between two Catholics is celebrated within Mass. In this situation, all ministers, except the two designated witnesses, must be

Catholic. Certain restrictions apply to non-Catholic participation. Please consult with the Office for Worship on a case by case basis.

In the rite there are different functions and roles, each important: the parish priest as Church witness, the couple intending marriage, the two other designated witnesses, the lector, altar servers, music leaders, and the entire community which has been called together. Good liturgy demands good planning.

The Rite of Marriage provides the couple with a number of options. The couple should play a role in choosing legitimate options.

Scriptural readings are an integral part of all wedding liturgies celebrated in the Church. The Rite of Marriage provides many choices. Non-biblical readings are not permitted. The chosen readings must come from the many options that the Rite of Marriage provides. The vows which the couple use must also come from the Rite of Marriage.

Music is also an important part of the liturgical rite. Since this is a sacred action in a sacred place, the choice of music and songs during the liturgy is to be made in accord with the criteria established in the 1972 Statement on Music in Catholic Worship, published by the Bishops of the United States. The three criteria are: musical, liturgical, and pastoral judgments which should be applied to each piece of music or song to be used. Only religious music or songs can be used within the actual liturgy.

There can be greater flexibility allowed in the choice of music used before and after the liturgy.

Non-liturgical symbols and options have also frequently become part of wedding liturgies. Some of these options are: the wedding or unity candle, flowers for the Marian Altar, flowers for the parents of the couple, etc. These are acceptable options but are not part of the official ritual. They are at the discretion of the parish priest or parish guidelines.

Some couples wish to publish a **booklet** for the wedding liturgy. This is the sole responsibility of the couple; but it must have the approval of the priest celebrant. It is essential that proper copyright permissions for any materials to be printed be both obtained and acknowledged in the printed booklet.

In determining the use or choice of any options, the directions and rubrics of the official Rite of Marriage are always to be consulted.

At various times, priests/deacons have raised the question about which rite of marriage to use. The “Introduction to the Rite of Marriage” (IRM) states, “In a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized person who is not a Catholic, the rite of marriage outside Mass... shall be used. If the situation warrants and if the local Ordinary gives permission, the rite for celebrating marriage within Mass... may be used, except that communion is not given to the non-Catholic, since the general law does not allow it. In a marriage between a Catholic and one who is not baptized, the Rite for Celebrating Marriage Between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person... is to be followed (IRM 8). The “Rite for Celebrating Marriage Between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person” provides a specific introduction and nuptial blessing that must be used because of the special nature of this type of marriage. It is clear that the Church does not permit the celebration of Mass when one of the parties is unbaptized.

Regarding the case of a Mixed Marriage when the couple is requesting that the Mass be celebrated, the priest will note this on the M-E form when he requests the Permission for Mixed Religion.

The time and place of wedding liturgies in our Diocese have some limits. Weddings must take place in the church building. Weddings, including convalidations, may be celebrated on any day of the week except Sundays, Holydays of Obligation and the Easter Triduum, and at any hour not interfering with regularly scheduled parish functions, such as confessions and the anticipated evening Mass for the Sunday obligation. In the Diocese of Greensburg, no wedding ceremony should take place two hours prior to any scheduled parish activity. The wedding ceremony should be scheduled to begin before 4:00 pm on Saturdays. Good pastoral judgment must be exercised in these matters. Marriages during Mass may not be celebrated after 4:00 pm on Saturdays and the day before a Holy Day of Obligation.

The Rite of Marriage (RM) states, “If the marriage is celebrated on a Sunday or Solemnity, the Mass of the day is used with the nuptial blessing and where appropriate, the special final blessing.” (RM 11). The General Instruction of the Roman Missal says, “Ritual Masses are connected to the celebration of certain Sacraments or Sacramentals. They are prohibited on Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter, Solemnities, on the days within the Octave of Easter, on the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day), on Ash Wednesday, and during Holy Week, taking due account of the norms given in the ritual books or in the Masses themselves.”

The “Introduction to Marriage” also gives a directive about marriages celebrated during particular liturgical seasons. “When a marriage is celebrated during Advent or Lent or other days of penance, the parish priest/deacon should advise the couple to take into consideration the special nature of these liturgical seasons.” (RM 1). The “Ceremonial of Bishops” (CB) explains the special nature of these seasons. The Ceremonial explains, “During Advent, the playing of the organ and other musical instruments as well as the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation that reflects the character of this season, but does not anticipate the full joy of Christmas itself” (CB 236) Regarding the Season of Lent, the Ceremonial states: “During Lent the altar is not to be decorated with flowers, and the use of musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing. The Fourth Sunday of Lent, called Laetare Sunday, solemnities and feasts are exceptions to this rule” (CB 225). These norms should be explained to the couple in order that the couple will be able to make appropriate plans for music and environment.

In cases where a Catholic is marrying a Jew, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, the marriage may be celebrated outside of a sacred place. A dispensation from canonical form can be granted for the marriage to take place in a non sacred place according to the tradition of the non-baptized person. A dispensation from disparity of worship must also be granted. These marriages must be recorded in the marriage register at the parish of the Catholic party.

In regard to photographs, pastoral discretion and common sense are the norms. Proper respect for sacred places and the sacred nature of Christian marriage must always be kept in mind.

Consideration should be given to appropriate fees, including the fee for the required dispensation. The couple should be reminded of proper fees/compensation for the organist, any other musicians, the altar servers, and any other parish staff necessary for the celebration of the wedding. The Diocese of Greensburg has established a customary fee for the priest/deacon. However, no couple will be denied a marriage ceremony because of their inability to pay the set fee.

Rehearsal of the ceremony will assure the proper celebration of the rite. The rehearsal should be arranged at a time suitable for all the participants. Since the time of the parish priest and the participants is important, rehearsals should begin on time and not be unnecessarily prolonged.

## **V. CIVIL LAW REQUIREMENTS**

In order for the marriage to be valid civilly, the couple must have a civil marriage license issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This should be presented to the parish priest prior to the wedding rehearsal.

## **VI. GENERAL NORM I**

Whenever a party is entering a second or any subsequent marriage, the priest or deacon must submit the marriage file to the Tribunal, even if it is not necessary for any permissions or dispensations to be granted.

## **VII. GENERAL NORM II**

When a non-Catholic who has been married and subsequently divorced inquires about becoming a Catholic, the priest or deacon should refer to Appendix III of “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Guidelines,” from the Diocese of Greensburg.

## **CONCLUSION**

Canon 1063, 1 states that assistance to preserve the matrimonial state in the Christian spirit should be provided in the following way:

“by preaching, catechesis adapted to minors, youth, and adults, and even the use of instruments of social communication by which the Christian faithful are instructed about the meaning of Christian marriage and about the function of Christian spouses and parents.”

We call upon all those who have responsibility for religious formation in the parish and in the Diocese to recognize this need in the Church.

- a. In elementary parochial schools and religious formation programs: to teach values of family, person-to-person relationships.
- b. In secondary Catholic schools and religious formation programs: to explain the importance of maturity and responsibility in the family; sexuality in context of their life and growth within the family and as a family; and the negative issues associated with premarital cohabitation.
- c. Adult education programs in the parish.
- d. Parish programs for young adults, college age students, based on their needs, etc.
- e. Marriage enrichment programs, such as Marriage Encounter, which

provide for the ongoing understanding of the marriage covenant and partnership.

It is hoped that these guidelines for the pastoral care and preparation for the celebration of marriage will serve as a useful help for both the parish priest/deacon and the couple in the fruitful celebration of this Sacrament, which recalls a great mystery: the love of Christ for His Church.

**Diocese of Greensburg**  
**PASTORAL GUIDELINES FOR MIXED**  
**MARRIAGES AND INTERFAITH MARRIAGES**

(These pastoral guidelines for the preparation and celebration of marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics are based on the regulations given by the Holy See (“Matrimonia mixta”, March 31, 1970) and the norms established by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States, and as adapted for use by the Diocese of Greensburg, January 15, 1971. These guidelines are also in conformity with the 1983 Code of Canon Law.)

**BEFORE THE MARRIAGE: PREPARATION FOR THE MARRIAGE**

1. The marriage of a Catholic with a non-Catholic has always been governed by particular norms because of special problems which it poses. It requires on the part of the priest/deacon special pastoral attention. It is even more appropriate for the priest/deacon to give this special attention in this ecumenical age. The pre-marriage interviews held with the couple in these circumstances now assume even more meaning.

**RECEIVING THE COUPLE**

2. Because a mixed marriage or an interfaith marriage generally presents some difficulties, and since the couple is sometimes uneasy, the priest/deacon should make every effort to receive the parties with kindness and to make them feel welcome. It may be the first time the non-Catholic is meeting a priest/deacon.

To help such couples to broaden their outlook and to gain a better understanding of their new situation, the priest/deacon should try to win their confidence. He must show he understands their feelings and state of mind, and should express his willingness and desire to help them find

happiness in their marriage. Then he can help them consider calmly the problems arising from their differing religious beliefs, and, as a result, seek with them means of solving these problems.

### **COMPETENCE OF THE PRIEST/DEACON**

3. So that the pastoral advice of the priest/deacon will be completely objective, and his conversations with the couple well adapted, he should be generally acquainted with the principles upon which the religious conviction of the non-Catholic is based.

### **SOMETIMES ADVISE AGAINST MARRIAGE**

4. In the past, pastoral experience and solicitude for the happiness of the spouses and of the family they wish to establish have prompted the Catholic Church to advise against mixed marriage.

It has been well demonstrated, that the differing beliefs of a mixed marriage or interfaith marriage couple on such an important element of daily life as religious belief, does make full union of the parties more difficult. No two cases are ever alike. In many instances and in varying degrees, depending on whether or not the marriage is between a Catholic and a non-Catholic or a non-Christian, the stability of a mixed marriage may be endangered. Likewise the spiritual fervor of the spouses and their ability to transmit the Catholic Faith can be in jeopardy. Sometimes it may happen, after discussing the matter with the future spouses, that the priest/deacon will find it necessary in conscience and in the exercise of his pastoral ministry to advise against the marriage. *Delay of a marriage must have prior approval from the Bishop.*

### **THE CHURCH AUTHORIZES MIXED AND INTERFAITH MARRIAGES**

5. As persons made in God's image and likeness, we have a natural right to marry and to have children, God willing. The Church has always considered the individuals and the special circumstances in each case, and for good reasons has authorized the celebration of a mixed marriage or interfaith marriage. In so doing, the Church recognizes certain conditions, as based upon divine law, but within her competence to regulate.

When the priest/deacon requests permission for a marriage of a Catholic with a baptized non-Catholic or a dispensation from the impediment of disparity of worship (marriage of a Catholic with a person who is not baptized), he will indicate on the front of the **M-E** form the reasons for the dispensation. Such reasons must be true and serious.

## **INSTRUCTION OF THE CATHOLIC**

6. An important duty of the priest/deacon is to instruct the Catholic on his/her responsibilities for family and faith. This duty includes making the Catholic party aware of possible difficulty in living the faith. In particular, the Catholic should realize that often he/she alone will have to carry the responsibility of providing for the Catholic Baptism and education of their children.

To enter into marriage with full knowledge of the facts, the Catholic must know the beliefs and convictions of his/her future spouse with regard to religion and marriage. The Catholic should, by personal discussions with his/her future spouse, ascertain whether each can remain faithful to his/her own convictions. On these matters the priest/deacon should encourage a frank and mutually respectful dialogue between the man and the woman who plan to marry.

## **MEETINGS WITH THE NON-CATHOLIC**

7. Another duty of the priest/deacon is to inform the non-Catholic about the teachings of the Catholic Church on marriage. To do this, it will be necessary to meet with the non-Catholic a number of times, normally in the presence of the Catholic party. During these several meetings, at least the following topics should be discussed: conjugal love and children, religion and its importance in conjugal and family life, and the values to be found in the principle of the indissolubility of marriage. If possible, these meetings should take place over a period of time to allow time for reflection. The priest/deacon also should provide material for genuine discussion.

8. This should be integrated into the couple's marriage preparation.

## **PURPOSE AND ESSENTIAL PROPERTIES OF MARRIAGE**

9. As for all marriages, on the occasion of the prenuptial inquiry, the priest/deacon will ascertain whether the parties know the purpose and essential properties of marriage. In order to be married in the Catholic Church, both parties must accept these fundamental elements of marriage based on Divine and Natural Law. The Church teaches that the purposes of marriage are twofold: for the good of the spouses themselves and for the procreation and the education of children. The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility. The Church has traditionally named the goods of marriage as unity, fidelity, and children.

## **PROMISE OF THE CATHOLIC PARTY**

10. On the occasion of the prenuptial inquiry, the Catholic party must also indicate his/her intention to avoid all that might draw him/her

away from his/her faith. One must sincerely promise to do his/her best to assure that all children of this union will be baptized and brought up in the Catholic Faith.

### **Neither the Bishop nor the Holy See can dispense the Catholic Party from these Obligations of Divine Law.**

#### **INFORMING THE NON-CATHOLIC**

11. At the same time, the priest/deacon must clearly inform the non-Catholic about these obligations of the Catholic party. Pastorally, it is recommended that the Catholic sign the promises in the presence of the non-Catholic.

#### **WRITTEN DECLARATION OF THE PRIEST**

12. The promises of the Catholic party are to be given in writing and in the presence of the priest/deacon, according to the formula on the **M-E** form. In the extraordinary case of necessity it will be sufficient that they be made orally in the presence of the priest/deacon with previous approval from the Bishop. On the **M-E** form, the priest himself will declare that these promises have been made by the Catholic party and that the non-Catholic has been informed of this. The U.S. Bishops' Statement suggests these words: "The required promise and declaration have been made by the Catholic in my presence. The non-Catholic has been informed of this requirement so that it is certain that he/she is aware of the promise and obligation on the part of the Catholic."

The Bishops also add: "The promise of the Catholic must be sincerely made, and is to be presumed to be sincerely made. If, however, the priest/deacon has reason to doubt the sincerity of the promise made by the Catholic, he may not recommend the request for the dispensation and submit the matter to the local Ordinary."

#### **CANONICAL FORM**

13. The marriage of a Catholic is recognized by the Catholic Church only if it has been contracted according to **canonical form**, that is, in the presence of an authorized Catholic bishop, priest, or deacon and at least two witnesses.

#### **THE REASONS**

Marriage between validly baptized Christians is a sacrament which calls for the mediation of the Church, as well as the presence of the community which constitutes the Church. It is the Church which prolongs, actualizes

and brings to maturity in time the mission of Christ, in Whom the marriage vows are given and fulfilled.

### **DISPENSATION FROM CANONICAL FORM**

14. If there should be serious difficulties in observing the law of canonical form, the priest/deacon who has prepared the couple, may present the case to the Tribunal, requesting a dispensation from canonical form, using the **M-E** form. The serious reasons which might warrant such a dispensation must always recognize the good of the parties, particularly their spiritual good, as well as harmony in their personal and family relationships.

The local Ordinary of the Catholic party has the right of dispensing the Catholic party from the observance of canonical form. If the wedding is to be celebrated outside the Diocese of Greensburg, the local Ordinary will consult with the Ordinary of the diocese where the marriage is to take place before the dispensation is granted.

### **ONE EXCEPTION**

15. One exception exists to the general rule of canonical form being necessary for validity. If a Catholic party contracts marriage with an Orthodox person in the presence of an Orthodox bishop or priest, without requesting a dispensation from canonical form, the marriage is valid, but illicit.

### **ATTENDANTS**

16. Witnesses to a marriage or those assisting the parties in any other capacity should be persons who having reached the age of reason, enjoy a good reputation and live a life of integrity. It is not necessary that the witnesses be Catholic.

### **AFTER THE MARRIAGE**

17. Pastors shall see to it that the Catholic husband or wife and the children born of a mixed marriage or interfaith marriage continue to receive spiritual assistance after the marriage ceremony. They shall encourage them to cherish the gift of Catholic faith which they have received and to bear witness to it “with gentleness and reverence” as suggested in Holy Scripture. They shall assist the couple in strengthening the unity of their conjugal and family life, which for Christians is based on their Baptism.

## LITURGICAL CELEBRATION

### SACRED RITES

18. For all marriages celebrated in the Catholic Church, the exchange of consent should be accompanied by those sacred rites which help the couple to turn their minds and hearts to God, to discover God's love in their love for each other and to give Him thanks.

### RESPECT FOR TRUTH AND PERSONS

19. Despite our profound desire to share with non-Catholics the Church's means of grace, participation in the same sacred actions must always respect the truth as well as the convictions of the persons involved. The words and actions in the celebration of a marriage must correspond to the religious beliefs of both parties.

It may be painful that divisions, caused by the parties' respective religious convictions, appear at the moment when they join together in marriage. They should nevertheless be invited by the priest to acknowledge this reality and to accept the suffering this brings without trying to ignore the same.

### IN ACCORD WITH THE FAITH OF NON-CATHOLIC

20. Because it has a greater communion of faith and sacramental life with some religious groups than with others, the Catholic Church invites certain non-Catholic parties to greater participation in its worship. The sacred rites that accompany the exchange of marriage vows between a Catholic and a non-Catholic should therefore vary with the Church or religious affiliation of the non-Catholic, and also with the personal religious dispositions of the couple.

The marriage may, in some circumstances, take place during Mass. **The permission of the Bishop is required.** In other circumstances it should be accompanied by a Celebration of the Word only, and not of the Eucharist. In each case, it will be the priest's responsibility, after discussion with the parties, to decide in accordance with the principles given above (art. 17-18) and the directives which follow (art. 20-32) which sacred rites should accompany the exchange of consent.

This decision will be made for **religious and pastoral reasons only**, and never from motives foreign to the faith or the spiritual good of the couple, as for example, the mere desire to embellish the ceremony, or to follow social conventions, or to uphold status in the community.

In some cases it will be necessary to explain that the sacred rites are not a reward or a favor. Therefore, in these cases a decision to celebrate marriage without Mass is in no way intended as a penalty for those contracting a mixed marriage.

## SPECIFIC INSTANCES

### CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX

21. The marriage of a Catholic to a Christian of an Eastern Orthodox Church may be celebrated with the Mass. In special circumstances it may even take place in the Orthodox Church before an Orthodox priest with the proper dispensation from Form for lawfulness.

### CATHOLIC AND OTHER CHRISTIANS

22. Because of the differences in doctrine and sacramental life which exist among the Catholic Church and Protestant ecclesial communities in the United States of America, it may be generally more opportune, that a marriage between a Catholic and a member of such denominations be celebrated without the Mass. However, since two Christians have common faith in the Word of God, their marriage should normally be accompanied by a Celebration of the Word.

Nevertheless, it may sometimes be requested, or even desirable that the marriage of a Catholic with one or the other Protestant Christian be celebrated within Mass. This would be the case especially when the couple has requested it for motives flowing from a living and enlightening faith. The non-Catholic party, however, **is not permitted** to receive Holy Communion at this Mass. The priest should carefully inform the couple of this. If necessary, during the meetings he has with the couple before their marriage, he should clearly indicate the reasons for restriction of this action.

### CATHOLIC AND NON-CHRISTIAN

23. The marriage between a Catholic and a non-Christian should always be accompanied by a Celebration of the Word. This celebration should be adapted to the circumstances so that it will be beneficial to both parties. **Mixed Marriages With Non-Christians, i.e., Interfaith Marriages, Should Never Be Celebrated Within Mass.**

### ADAPTATION

24. When a marriage is celebrated within the context of a Celebration of the Word, rather than within a Mass, the priest/deacon may judge it opportune to omit certain details (for example, the use of holy water), especially

if they might offend or surprise the non-Catholic party. The priest should give particular attention to the choice of the readings, homily and liturgical texts.

### **ONE MARRIAGE CEREMONY**

25. Authorization is never given for a second ceremony **in which the exchange of consent is renewed**, preceding, during or subsequent to the Catholic ceremony.

### **ONE MINISTER ONLY**

26. Authorization is never given for a marriage ceremony to be celebrated before a Catholic priest and a non-Catholic minister when both ministers **carry out their respective marriage rites** together, that is, one preceding, together with, or subsequent to the other. **SUCH A CELEBRATION WOULD BE AN INVALID MARRIAGE.** Canon 1128.3 states, “[T]here is not to be a religious celebration in which the Catholic who is assisting and a non-Catholic minister together, using their own rites, ask for the consent of the parties.”

On a related matter, when more than one Catholic priest are present, only one priest is to receive the consent of the parties. If two priests receive the consent, the marriage would be invalid.

### **THE NON-CATHOLIC MINISTER**

27. Where requested, the non-Catholic minister may be invited to take an active part in a ceremony which is not part of the Eucharistic Celebration. For example, he/she may read a lesson, give an address or offer a prayer or blessing. On the occasion of a Mixed Marriage celebrated outside of a Catholic church with a dispensation from canonical form, the Catholic priest/deacon may also accept an invitation to take a similar part in the ceremony, which again, is not some form of Eucharistic celebration.

**THE CATHOLIC PRIEST IS NOT TO RECEIVE THE CONSENT OF EITHER PARTY AT A MARRIAGE THAT IS CELEBRATED WITH A DISPENSATION FROM FORM. THIS WOULD RENDER THE MARRIAGE INVALID.**

**THE PRIEST PRESIDES IN HIS OWN CHURCH AND THE NON-CATHOLIC MINISTER PRESIDES IN HIS/HER OWN CHURCH.**

28. The Catholic priest and the non-Catholic minister preside only over those marriages which take place in their respective church buildings.

## **PUBLIC FORM ALWAYS REQUIRED**

29. In some cases, the dispensation from canonical form may be granted so that only a civil ceremony may be performed (e.g. in certain interfaith marriages). Even when such a dispensation is granted, a public form that is civilly recognized for a celebration of marriage is required.

## **RECORD KEEPING**

### **RECORDS TO BE KEPT AND WHERE**

30. The records of dispensation from canonical form are to be kept in the files of the Tribunal which issues the permission for mixed religion or dispensation from disparity of cult. All records of the marriage shall be kept in the proper parish of the Catholic party.

The priest/deacon who submitted the request for the dispensation shall see that, after the public form of the marriage ceremony is performed, the usual notices of the marriage are sent to:

1. The Chancery in which the dispensation was recorded.  
(See Article 30 above.)
2. The place of Baptism of the Catholic party.

31. To help carry out this duty, the priest/deacon should request the Catholic party to send him a marriage certificate or some official document from the Church of the marriage immediately after the ceremony.

## **PLACE OF MARRIAGE**

### **SACRED PLACE REQUIRED**

32. In all cases, (save the cases mentioned under article 29 above), the ordinary place of marriage is the parish church or some other sacred place. For cases mentioned under article 29, and in other extraordinary cases, only the Diocesan Bishop may permit the celebration of a mixed marriage outside a Church or Chapel. In these exceptional cases there must be no possibility of scandal.

33. The Tribunal of the Diocese of Greensburg stands ready to serve, and counts on the good will and support of the priests, so that all may carry out the wishes of the church with regard to these marriages.

## CONVALIDATION

34. Couples who desire to convalidate their invalid marriages are required to undergo the same preparation in which all couples participate. Pastoral discretion, however, should be practiced in cases of age, sickness, or other extenuating circumstances.

35. Couples who plan a civil marriage at an exotic location with the intention of having a church convalidation of their marriage in the immediate future are to be prepared for the church celebration in the same manner as all other couples. These marriages are not to be celebrated with any solemnity, since the couples will have already had a ceremony or celebration. It is recommended that the church celebration occur 3-6 months after the attempted marriage.

36. Pastors are to take great care that all couples seeking to convalidate their civil marriages understand that they are giving their consent in a new act of the will and are not simply renewing their vows.

37. The convalidation of an invalid marriage should not be a prerequisite for the baptism of a child or other circumstances which create undue pressure on the parties. A couple must not be pressured into convalidating, but must have free consent of the will in order for the convalidation to be valid.

## REFERENCES

1. “In addition to the customary marriage preparation programs, it is the serious duty of each one in pastoral ministry, according to his own responsibility, office or assignment, to undertake:
  - (a) “the spiritual and catechetical preparation, especially in regard to the ‘ends and essential properties of marriage (which) are not to be excluded by either party’ (cf. *Matrimonia mixta*, n. 6), on a direct and individual basis, of couples who seek to enter a mixed marriage, and
  - (b) “continued concern and assistance to the wife and husband in mixed marriages and to their children, so that married and family life may be supported in unity, respect for conscience, and common spiritual benefit.”

**U.S. Bishops' Statement, January 1, 1971, I, 3,(cf. Canons 1063; 1128)**

2. "In assistance which he gives in preparation for marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, and his continued efforts to help all married couples and families, the priest should endeavor to be a contact and to cooperate with the minister or religious counselor of the non-Catholic."

**U.S. Bishops' Statement, January 1, 1971, I, 4.**

3. **Matrimonia mixta, Motu proprio** of Pope Paul VI, (March 31, 1970), opening paragraph; Canon 1124.
4. Canon 1125.
5. U.S. Bishops' Statement, January 1, 1971, II, 9.
6. Ibid.
7. Canon 1108, for Orthodox Marriages, *Crescens matrimoniorum*, Sacred Congregation for Eastern Churches, February 22, 1967, Canon 1117 for those bound by Canonical form.
8. "An exhaustive list is impossible, but the following are types of reasons: to achieve family harmony or to avoid family alienation, to obtain parental agreement to the marriage, to recognize the significant claims of relationship or special friendship with a non-Catholic minister, to permit the marriage in a church that has particular importance to the non-Catholic."

**U.S. Bishops' Statement, January 1, 1971, III, 10.**

9. See **Crescens matrimoniorum** Decree on Catholic-Orthodox Marriages, Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church, February 22, 1967.
10. **Matrimonia mixta**, n. 13
11. Ecumenical Directory, I, n. 56.
12. Same: See also, U.S. Bishops' Statement, January 1, 1971, n. 16.
13. **Matrimonia mixta**, no. 9.
14. U.S. Bishops' Statement, January 1, 1971, n. 12.
15. U.S. Bishops' Statement, January 1, 1971, n. 19.

# **THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE (OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION)**

## **SACRAMENT**

- sign/symbol
- something we can perceive
- something that points beyond itself
- a truly human event/action
- given new and deeper meaning by Christ and the presence of Christ
- Event/action that enables believer to come in contact with, to participate in, to share in divine life (grace)- as celebrated in ritual (worship)

## **CHRIST, THE SACRAMENT**

God-man; divine & human

- ultimate revelation of God
- directs us to the Father through the Holy Spirit
- Invites us to share in the life of God
- Our lives are to be worship in spirit and truth

## **THE CHURCH, THE SACRAMENT OF CHRIST**

- sign/presence of Christ in the world human
- (people) & divine (Christ) the Body of Christ
- leads us to Christ
- 7 primary ritual celebrations

## **THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS**

- peak moments of life (human) given deeper meaning (divine)
- human symbols: water, meal, etc.
- point to reality beyond themselves: God
- presence of Christ within these events (grace)
- the ritual celebrations are worship
- demands response, openness on part of people involved (faith)
- give one or two examples (Baptism, Eucharist) word about Penance

## **MARRIAGE**

more than social institution

because of faith seen as a Covenant

covenant

- personal, intimate relationship
- Old Testament-Marriage used to describe relationship

- between God and Israel
- New Testament-Love of Christ for the Church seen in love of husband and wife
- Covenant between husband and wife involves Christ and the Church

### **LOVE IN MARRIAGE DEMANDS**

- unity
- one as our God is one
- God created man in his image...male and female he created them fidelity
- faithfulness of God to the covenant
- indissolubility
- covenant is for life

### **IMAGE OF CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE CHURCH**

- ritual celebration is beginning of sacrament
- sacrament is lived throughout life together
- love involves not only husband and wife (mutual love)
- love must be seen and shared (must bear fruit)
- children (procreation)
- Church (stewardship)
- world (witnesses to Christ)  
human event must point beyond itself
- for the baptized (believer) means that human love involves divine love (faith and grace)

### **CONCLUSION**

- entering Marriage not simply as individuals but as members of the Church
- because of Baptism this human love enters into the deeper reality of sacrament
- sacrament is ritual celebration and life together
- Marriage demands faith
- Marriage offers divine love and life (grace)
- Marriage is covenant and image of Christ's love for the Church
- Marriage demands unity, fidelity and indissolubility
- Marriage involves mutual love and procreation  
to be worthy may need the Sacrament of Penance

### **MATRAMONIAL CONSENT**

A. Marriage comes into existence by the consent of the parties lawfully expressed who are capable according to law, and this consent no human power can supply.

Matrimonial consent is an act of the will by which a man and a woman, through an irrevocable covenant, give themselves to each other and accept each other in order to constitute matrimony.

1. Consent--An act of the will, it brings marriage into existence before God in the Church (Community), it must be actively given, that is, internally and externally.
2. Lawfully expressed--The parties must express matrimonial consent in words; if they are unable to speak, by equivalent signs and according to the Form prescribed by the Church.
3. Irrevocable covenant--A permanent community between God and those who celebrate the marriage.
4. Those who are capable are:
  - a) free from mental illness or a serious disturbance of the mind.
  - b) free from serious defective discretionary judgement on the rights and obligations of marriage.
  - c) free from serious psychic anomaly.
  - d) not ignorant of the nature of marriage, e.g. indissolubility and conjugal life.

### **EFFECTS/OBLIGATIONS OF MARRIAGE**

- A. Marriage is ordered by its natural character to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children.
- B. By a valid marriage there is produced between the parties a bond which is by nature perpetual and exclusive.
- C. Both parties have the same right and duty to those things which pertain to the community of conjugal life.
- D. Parents have the most serious duty and the primary right to provide for the physical, social and cultural education of their children, and to the best of their power, for their religious and moral education.

## **SOME RESOURCE MATERIAL FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

### **VATICAN II**

*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium), nn. 34 & 41.*  
*Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches (Orientalium ecclesiarum), n. 18*

*Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes),  
nn. 47-52*

*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam actuositatem), n. 11.*

*Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum educationis), n.3.*

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF VATICAN II**

Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches, *Crescens  
matrimoniorum*, Washington, D.C.: U.S.C., 1967.

Paul VI *Motu proprio, Matrimonia mixta.*  
Washington, D.C.: U.S.C.C., 1970.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops.  
Statement on the Implementation of the Apostolic Letter  
On Mixed Marriages. Washington, D.C.: U.S.C.C., 1971.

### **PAPAL TEACHING**

Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*. Washington, D.C.: U.S.C.C., 1968.

John Paul II. On the Family (*Familiaris Consortio*).

Washington, D.C.: U.S.C.C., 1981.

### **Instruction Books** Marriage Prep Resources

Printed material- *For Better and For Ever*, 3rd Ed., Ruhnke, Robert A. D.  
Min, January 2003

Marriage Preparation Resources, San Antonio, TX ISBN 0-9677223-0-6

*To Trust Again, A Remarriage Program*, William F. Urbine, D, Min.  
ACTA Publications, Chicago, IL. 1990. ISBN: 0-915388-43-x

*FOCCUS*, Facilitator Manual, 3rd Ed., Markey, B., PhD., Micheletto, M.  
M.A., 2000, Foccus, Inc., Omaha, NE

*God Is Love (Deus Caritas Est)*

Author: Pope Benedict XVI ISBN: 1-57455-758-0

*Annulment: The Wedding That Was*, Michael Smith Foster,  
Paulist Press, 1999. ISBN: 0-8091-3844-1

*Good News About Sex and Marriage*, Christopher West, Charis  
Servant Publications, 2000, ISBN: 1-56955-214-2

*How to Survive Being Married to a Catholic*, 1986, Liguori Publications,  
ISBN: 089243452X

*The Blessing Cup*, Rock Travnikar, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994.  
ISBN: 0867164867

*The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman, Northfield Publishing,  
Chicago, 1990. ISBN: 1881273156

*Money Before Marriage: A Financial Workbook for Engaged Couples*,  
Larry Burkett, Michael Taylor, 1966. Crown Financial Ministries.  
ISBN: 0802463894

*Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*, John Gray, PhD., 1992.

*Printed Material to hand out to couples-  
Together for Life*, Joseph M. Champlin, Ave Maria Press, 1997,  
ISBN: 0-87793-616-1

*With This Ring*, Renee Bartkowski, Liguori Press, 1992,  
ISBN: 0-89243-430-9

*Videotape-*

*Preparing Cohabiting Couples For Marriage*, with Sr, Barbara Markey,  
Ph.D An outline, discussion questions, and a bibliography. Available  
from Foccus, 3214 N. 60th St., Omaha, NE 68104.  
(Phone: 402-551-9003).

*Audiotape-*

*Contraception: Why not?* With Prof. Janet E. Smith (CD or cassette)  
1994,

## **Web Site References**

### **Cohabitation-**

<http://www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/cohabiting.shtml>

### **Step-families-**

Step Family Association of America, Inc.-- <http://www.saafamilies.org>

### **Various pre-marriage issues-**

#### **USCCB**

<http://www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/publications.shtml>

### **American Catholic**

<http://www.americancatholic.org/>

and

<http://prc.americancatholic.org/category.aspx?pcat=60&scat=48>