



ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document offers a detailed overview of the process of formation for couples preparing for marriage. It provides practical recommendations that will guide the clergy and Marriage Preparation Facilitators (MPFs) in the implementation of the Marriage Preparation Policy of our diocese. This document will refer to other documents/resources that will elaborate on the particular aspect at hand.

BETTER TOGETHER

The clergy and the laity are called to work together in the preparation of engaged couples for the Sacrament of Matrimony by sharing their God-given gifts and talents in a spirit of respect for each other's roles and responsibilities.

ROLES OF THE CLERGY AND MPFs (Marriage Preparation Facilitators)

Clergy: The priest is called to exercise his pastoral role and responsibilities with the engaged couple by being the one who starts and finishes their marriage preparation journey. The priest could ask a deacon to fulfill this role on his behalf.

Marriage Preparation Facilitators: The MPFs (laity and deacons) will work closely with their priest. They will accompany and support the engaged couple through their entire marriage preparation process.

MPFs will:

1. Provide feedback to the engaged couple based on their Prepare/Enrich (P/E) couple assessment.
2. Guide and help the engaged couple fulfill their marriage preparation requirements.
3. Respond to any questions the engaged couple may have along the way.
4. Contact the couple after the celebration of their marriage.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- » If a parish lacks trained MPFs, the pastor could work with an MPF from a neighboring parish.
- » Ideally, the engaged couple will contact their pastor or Parish Life Collaborator (PLC) 6 to 12 months prior to the tentative wedding date.
- » The [Marriage Preparation Checklist](#) is a practical guide to keep record of the couple's marriage preparation progress. (The first section of the checklist will be useful when requesting a P/E Assessment and adding a couple to the P/E system so that they can complete it.)
- » Visit the [P/E website](#) to review the P/E facilitator training videos and other important resources (workbooks for couples, feedback guides, etc.). Refer to [P/E Online Resources](#).
- » Any exception to what is stipulated in the [Diocesan Marriage Preparation Policy](#) only comes from the Bishop or Vicar General at the request of the local pastor or PLC (not the priest, deacon, or MPF preparing the couple for marriage).



COMPONENT I FIRST STEPS

The engaged couple should have a total of four to six meetings in the marriage preparation process. The priest/PLC may decide to meet with the engaged couple only once or more than once before referring them to an MPF. Adjustments on the number of meetings with the priest/PLC and the MPF will be made accordingly. Communication between the clergy and MPFs is essential for the marriage preparation process to be effective and efficient.

FIRST MEETING WITH THE PRIEST/PLC

At this cordial conversation with the engaged couple:

1. Complete the [Marriage Registration Form](#) and refer to [Instructions for Preparing Pre-Nuptial Forms](#)
2. Give them the brochure [Preparing as a Couple for Marriage](#)
3. Walk the engaged couple through the marriage preparation process and requirements.
4. Complete the Bride & Groom info on the [Marriage Preparation Checklist](#)
5. Discuss the P/E Assessment
 - Emphasize the aspect of confidentiality.
 - Complete the [P/E Assessment Request Form](#) or add the couple to the P/E system online yourself – refer to [P/E Assessment Requests & Administration](#). This may be completed by the MPF.
 - Direct them to complete the P/E Assessment individually, online after they receive the email invite.

SECOND MEETING WITH THE PRIEST/PLC

- » The person whose facilitator ID was used to request the P/E assessment will receive an email when the assessment is complete. The reports of the assessment are accessible on the website. There are 2 reports: the Facilitator Report (for priest, PLC & MPF eyes only) and the Couple's Report. Email and/or print a copy of this report for the couple.
 - If the priest/PLC wants, he/she can focus on the theology of the sacrament & spirituality and let an MPF handle the P/E exercises & discussion. If this happens, the couple can be officially transferred to the MPF's P/E account or the priest/PLC can provide the MPF with the print out of the Facilitator Report.
 - For helpful resources, sign into the [P/E website](#) and check the 'Feedback Materials' tab.
- » Refer the engaged couple to an MPF
 - Remind the engaged couple that everything will be kept confidential, that MPFs are trained, and that they will keep the priest/PLC informed of the couple's marriage preparation progress.



COMPONENT I FIRST STEPS (continued)

TWO TO FOUR MEETINGS WITH THE MARRIAGE PREPARATION FACILITATOR

- » Provide and facilitate exercises and discussions with engaged couple.
 - Sign into the [P/E facilitator account](#) and check the ‘Feedback Materials’ tab.
- » After the assessment overview, review the requirements for marriage preparation with the engaged couple.
 - Help them identify the best option for their [Instruction/Communal Experience](#) for Component II.
 - Discuss the [Natural Family Planning](#) requirements for Component III.
 - Inform them about Component IV, Final Steps, and *Follow-up*.
- » If the MPFs detect serious problems during their meetings, such as violence, physical abuse, drug abuse, mental illness, etc., he/she should inform the priest and let him assess and handle the situation. The priest may choose to refer the engaged couple or individual to a counselor and stop their marriage preparation until deemed appropriate.

COMPONENT II INSTRUCTION/COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE

Based on the couple’s particular needs, the MPFs help the engaged couple select one program from the following options and provide the information they need to participate in the selected program:

- Option 1** – Existing parish marriage preparation program
- Option 2** – [Engaged Encounter weekend](#)
- Option 3** – Diocesan [Pre-Cana conference](#)
- Option 4** – Online marriage preparation program
- Option 5** – Retreat experience

Refer to the [Marriage Preparation Programs & Resources](#) as a guide for selection. It will provide important information, recommendations, and necessary details of each program that the MPF needs.



COMPONENT III NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP)

The MPF will help the engaged couple fulfill their [Natural Family Planning](#) (NFP) requirements.

- » All engaged couples are to watch the online diocesan NFP video: [Faith Fully Yours/Fielmente Tuyo/a](#).
 - The MPF could watch the video with the engaged couple at one of their meetings or give them the link to watch it on their own.
- » After watching the NFP video, the engaged couple will select and attend a live or online introductory session of one of the NFP methods presented in the video. Introductory sessions and full courses are found on the diocesan [NFP webpage](#).
 - The MPF should encourage the engaged couple to attend a full course.
 - If the engaged couple prefers to attend an introductory session or full course with a method that we have not listed, they may do so, but they will need to provide proof of attendance.
- » Couples past childbearing age are required to watch the online diocesan NFP video only. It is up to them if they would like to attend an introductory session or full course.
 - Sterile couples & couples with fertility issues could benefit from attending an introductory session or full course.

Refer to [Natural Family Planning Resources](#) and the [NFP webpage](#) for further details, a link to the video, contact information for each NFP provider/method available in our diocese, and more.



COMPONENT IV FINAL STEPS

PRIOR TO THE FINAL MEETING WITH THE PRIEST/PLC

- » The MPF checks the engaged couple’s progress and helps them if they have not completed the requirements for their marriage preparation.
- » The MPF reminds the engaged couple that he/she will be in contact within the first 6 to 12 months after their ceremony to see how they are doing and to offer resources that they might need at that point to enrich their marriage and family life.
- » The MPF helps the engaged couple schedule a final meeting with the priest/PLC.
 - Prior to this meeting, the MPF informs the priest/PLC of the couple’s progress. The MPF may share the [Marriage Preparation Checklist](#), if utilized, with the priest/PLC.

FINAL MEETING WITH THE PRIEST/PLC

- » Congratulate the engaged couple for their perseverance, respond any questions they may have, and share final comments.
- » Talk about their experience with their marriage preparation process.
- » Pray with/for them and offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- » Confirm the wedding date, review the Marriage Rite and plan the wedding liturgy in accordance with parish practices and diocesan policy – refer to the [Diocesan Wedding Policy](#).
 - If the parish has a wedding coordinator, this may be the time when the engaged couple is referred to that person.

FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT AFTER MARRIAGE

After the first 6 to 12 months of marriage, the MPF will contact the couple. The best way to make this follow-up contact with the couple may be via e-mail or telephone.

- » Say “Hello,” and ask how they are doing.
- » Share a variety of resources to enrich their marriage and family life – refer to diocesan [Marriage Enrichment webpage](#) and the Marriage Enrichment & Family Life Resources document (coming soon)
- » If the couple is living close by and is not active in the parish, invite them to participate or volunteer in something in the parish.