

Marriage Preparation Policies<sup>1</sup>  
Prince of Peace Catholic Church

Proximate Preparation

In keeping with the instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Family *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage* (May 13, 1996, abbrev. PSM) the period of engagement is considered the period of proximate preparation for marriage. This period of preparation must include a call to conversion that invites the engaged to a deeper encounter with the Lord into whose body they have been baptized. Only those who have been evangelized can freely and seriously embrace what God intends for the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Moreover, the engaged must be made aware of the profound mystery of sacramental, Christian marriage through an adequate catechesis, doctrinal formation, and instruction in the natural requirements of marriage embracing the following subjects: the sacramentality of Christian marriage, responsible parenthood and the openness to life, marriage as a reflection of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the Church, unity and the indissolubility of marriage, consent, the requirements and ends of the conjugal act, the education of children, the excellence of the life of virginity, and the proper ends of marriage.

*POLICY:* To guarantee that proximate preparation for matrimony is serious, thoughtful, and deliberate all marriage preparation should begin 9-12 months before the couple's anticipated wedding date and conclude no less than 10 weeks before the wedding date.

*POLICY:* To insure an adequate catechesis and instruction, all couples preparing for marriage at Prince of Peace Catholic Church must take the marriage preparation course *Sincere Gift of Self*.

The engaged couple must be helped to see their psychological or emotional shortcomings that should be addressed before entering into sacramental marriage and the various aspects of their personalities that may influence mutual compatibility in the marriage. Couples should be taught how to preserve and foster open mutual communication within the context of marriage.

*POLICY:* All couples preparing for marriage at Prince of Peace Catholic Church must take the FOCUS inventory and spend a minimum of two sessions reviewing inventory results with a licensed Catholic social worker in clinical practice. These sessions would ideally conclude before the couple begins the marriage preparation course, *Sincere Gift of Self*. The administration and review of the FOCUS inventory is of great help in determining the readiness of the couple for entering into sacramental marriage. The FOCUS inventory and follow-up sessions should normally be completed

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<sup>1</sup> The content of this policy is largely drawn and adapted from "What God Has Joined..." *Particular Norms for Christian Marriage in the Archdiocese of Denver*

before the church is scheduled for the wedding date and deposits are placed on the reception site.

Proximate preparation must include special attention to the teaching of the Church on the regulation of births as set forth in the encyclical letters *Casti Connubii* and *Humanae Vitae* and a complete practical instruction on Natural Family Planning. NFP must not be presented merely in its technical aspects, but as a practical means of fostering authentic mutual self-giving in conjugal relations.

*POLICY:* All couples preparing for marriage at Prince of Peace Catholic Church should take a full-course in Natural Family Planning as approved by the Diocese of Charleston and/or the Pastor of Prince of Peace.

#### Sequence of Events in Proximate Preparation

As much as possible the following sequence should be observed:

1. Initial meeting with parish priest
2. Administration and review of FOCUS inventory
3. Completion of the Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire with priest or deacon and selection of wedding date.
4. Completion of a *Sincere Gift of Self* marriage preparation course
5. Completion of an approved course in Natural Family Planning

#### Immediate Preparation

Immediate preparation consists in the final preparatory meetings between pastoral staff, marriage preparation team members, and the couple during the last 10 weeks before the wedding.

Immediate preparation should consist in a review of prior preparation, an introduction to the liturgical actions and texts in the Rite of Marriage so that the couple may engage in full and active participation in their wedding, an invitation to the sacrament of penance as a means of encouraging a worthy celebration of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, and opportunity for more intense prayer and spiritual preparation in anticipation of the wedding.

*POLICY:* the couple should meet at least once during the period of immediate preparation with the priest or deacon who will witness their marriage to review their previous preparation and receive catechesis on the liturgical actions and texts of the Rite of Marriage. This should also be an occasion for the couple to pose any last-minute questions or unaddressed concerns they may have in this final stage.

*POLICY:* Couples should receive an invitation to the sacrament of penance and be encouraged to pray together daily during this time of immediate preparation. This spiritual preparation will be enhanced by the couple's attendance at a retreat or day of

recollection approved by the pastor. This requirement would be ideally fulfilled by the *Covenant Love* retreat from the *Christian Married Life* series.

Immediate preparation also includes the final preparation for the wedding ceremony. This should be completed in consultation with the parish staff, wedding coordinator and musicians, but should move beyond the mere technical requirements of planning to a preparation for the full and active participation of the couple in the marriage rite.

#### Sequence of Events for Immediate Preparation

The immediate preparation of the couple for marriage should include:

1. Final meeting with the priest or deacon who will witness the marriage
2. Completion of a retreat or day of recollection approved by the pastor
3. Final preparations for the wedding ceremony