



Diocese of Colorado Springs

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September 8, 2006
Feast of the Birth of Mary

Dear Father/Deacon/Lay Ministers,

There is nothing more critical to the renewal of the Church and to the New Evangelization of our world than the renewal of marriage and family life. It is my prayer that these **Policies and Procedures for Preparation for Marriage in the Diocese of Colorado Springs** will assist all those ministers of the Church to whom has been entrusted the preparation of couples for marriage.

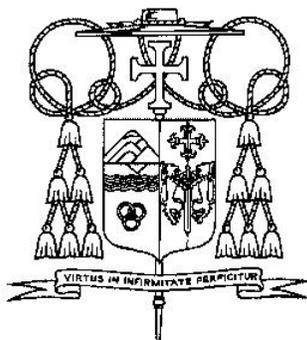
These new policies and procedures are based substantially on those of the Archdiocese of Denver. We are grateful for the permission to make use of the fruits of their work.

Having been reviewed by the clergy of the diocese, these policies and procedures are hereby promulgated by me on this date. They may be put into effect immediately where it seems helpful and reasonable to do so. They become mandatory for the preparation of couples for marriage beginning January 1, 2007.

Thank you for your important service to those preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church. May God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan
Bishop of Colorado Springs



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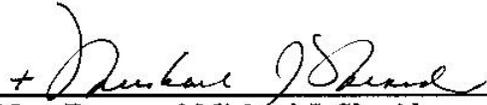
**I,
The Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan,
Bishop of Colorado Springs,**

**having considered the importance of the preparation of those who intend to enter into
marriage in the Catholic Church,
as well as the spiritual well-being of the Catholic families in
the Diocese of Colorado Springs,
and
having seen canons 1063 and 1064,
fulfilling my obligations as shepherd of the flock entrusted to me,
and
having consulted the clergy and representatives of the laity of
the Diocese of Colorado Springs,**

**hereby promulgate the new
*Policies and Procedures for Preparation for Marriage
in the Diocese of Colorado Springs.***

**It may be implemented immediately, if this seems reasonable and helpful.
It is mandatory for all beginning January 1, 2007.**

**Given at the Chancery on the 8th day of September, 2006.
*Servatis ad hunc de iure servandis.***

**+ 
Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan
Bishop of Colorado Springs**

**
Rev. Ricardo Coronado-Arrascue, JCD
Chancellor**

(Marriage Preparation Policy, July 2006)

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Documents Abbreviations

CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), United States Catholic Conference.

CIC *Codex Iuris Canonici* (January 25, 1983), Canon Law Society of America.

GDC Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (August 11, 1997), United States Catholic Conference.

LF John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (February 2, 1994), Daughters of St Paul.

PSM Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage* (May 13, 1996), Daughters of St Paul.

STAGES OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The various periods of marriage preparation cannot be rigidly defined. The Pontifical Council for the Family, in *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage (PSM)*, offers the following periods of preparation:

- I. Remote Preparation - a lifelong process.
- II. Proximate Preparation - the year before the wedding.
- III. Immediate Preparation - two months before the wedding.
- IV Celebration of marriage.

<u>REMOTE</u>	<u>PROXIMATE</u>	<u>IMMEDIATE</u>	<u>CELEBRATION</u>
<p>When? Begins in the womb and continues throughout childhood, adolescence and up to the period of engagement.</p> <p>How? In the family which is the Domestic Church with assistance of the Church and schools</p>	<p>When? 12 months before the wedding. Concludes 2 months prior to the wedding.</p> <p>How? Meeting with priest or deacon 12 months before the planned date of the wedding</p> <p>Pre-nuptial inquiry and FOCCUS</p> <p>Review of FOCCUS</p> <p>Marriage Preparation Classes</p> <p>Natural Family Planning training</p> <p>Engaged Encounter Weekend or equivalent.</p>	<p>When? In the 2 months before the wedding.</p> <p>How? Last meeting with priest or deacon Review of prior preparation and mandatory documents, baptismal, confirmation certificates, permissions, dispensations, annulments.</p> <p>Preparation of the wedding liturgy. Meeting with the music director and the Marriage coordinator.</p> <p>Sacrament of Reconciliation.</p>	<p>Rehearsal on the day before the wedding.</p> <p>Celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony.</p>

I. **REMOTE PREPARATION:** Life long marriage preparation.

According to PSM, this preparation actually begins *in the womb* in the atmosphere in which a child is awaited and welcomed by his parents. It continues throughout infancy, childhood, adolescence, and up to the period of engagement. The witness of the parents' own married love is the very foundation of remote marriage preparation. Parents must take care to raise their children in an atmosphere of prayer and practice of the Sacraments, with a special emphasis on the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

“It is in the bosom of the family that parents are ‘by word and example’ ...the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.” CCC 1656. Parents should realize that celibacy “for the kingdom” (Mt 19:21) is also a full participation-and even more directly so- in the “nuptial mystery” of the Christ’s love for the Church.

While Parents are the primary educators of their children throughout childhood and adolescence, they need suitable assistance in fulfilling their responsibilities. The Church, schools and the larger society all play increasing roles in preparing young men and women for marriage.

Two fundamental truths that must be instilled in this remote preparation are: **“first, that man is called to live in truth and love; and second that everyone finds fulfillment through the sincere gift of self.”** LF. 16

Today children grow up in a culture where the meaning of “truth” and “love” is continually eroded. Furthermore, sincere self-giving is often replaced by an ethic of self-indulgence.

Since children and adolescents are particularly susceptible to the influence of society, solid remote preparation is all the more essential. All Catholics are called to holiness, to become Christ-like. Marriage is the specific way married couples choose to answer to this call.

Key Points of Remote Preparation (Taken from PSM, nos. 22-31)

- Involves formation of character, self-control and self-esteem, the proper use of one's inclination, growth in virtue, and respect for persons of the opposite sex.
- Requires a solid spiritual and catechetical formation.
- A faithful and courageous education in chastity and love as self-giving must be instilled. Chastity is a condition for real love. One cannot give himself away if he does not first possess himself.
- The journey or conversion from a rather external and vague level of faith, typical of many young people, to a discovery of the "Christian mystery" is both essential and decisive.
- Formation should arrive at a mentality and personality capable of not being led astray by ideas contrary to the unity and stability of marriage.

Many of today's engaged couples know very little about the rich teaching of the Church on marriage, sexuality, and family life. If remote preparation is carried out successfully, proximate and immediate preparation will only need to reinforce what couples have already learned throughout their lives.

It is the task of the Church first to equip and then assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children in the area of remote preparation.

II. PROXIMATE PREPARATION: The year before the wedding.

Proximate preparation begins at least 12 months before the marriage in the earliest days of the engagement period and continues until the final weeks just prior to the marriage celebration. It involves a process of evangelization and a journey of faith similar to the catechumenate, providing an opportunity for the engaged to rediscover and deepen the faith they received in Baptism. Pastors should use their pastoral discretion to grant special permissions for a shorter preparation period.

The engaged must be sensitized to the “profound mystery” of Christian Marriage through an explicit catechesis so that they will feel a need to prepare for it by embracing God’s plan. However, “frequently, many who present themselves for catechesis truly require genuine conversion....Only by starting conversion...can catechesis, strictly speaking, fulfill its proper task of education in the faith.” GDC 62

Thus, preparation in this stage is directed toward an evangelization and catechesis that enables a couple to embrace consciously and freely what the Church intends by the Sacrament of Marriage. The way in which the engagement period is lived is certain to have an influence on the couple’s ability or inability to do so.

Key Points of Proximate Preparation (taken from PSM, nos. 32-49)

- The foundation of this preparation must be a reflection in faith on the Sacrament of Marriage through the Word of God and the guidance of the Church’s teaching. To become “one flesh” in Christ means that the couple’s love will become a concrete expression of Christ’s love for his Church.
- “It is essential that the time and care necessary should be devoted to *doctrinal* preparation. The security of the content must be the center and essential goal of the courses in a perspective which makes the spouse more aware of the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage and everything that flows from it regarding the responsibility of the family” (John Paul II).
- Instruction in the *natural* requirements of marriage must include: freedom of consent; unity and indissolubility of marriage; the human aspects of conjugal sexuality; the conjugal act with its requirements and ends; and the proper education of children.
- Especially with regard to total self-giving and responsible procreation, the theological and moral formation will have to be given special attention according to the clear teaching of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

- Adequate instruction in methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP) must be given to all. These methods must not be presented merely as a behavioral technique for regulating fertility, but must be presented as a Catholic way of life that fosters authentic conjugal love.
- The engaged couple will be helped to become aware of psychological and/or emotional shortcoming they may have that take away from their total commitment.
- This must not only be a time for theoretical study but for formation of the engaged that prepares them to give themselves as a couple to Christ. Here premarital chastity takes on its full meaning. Any practices that violate this chastity must be abandoned with recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- The Proximate Preparation must not neglect formation for the family's role in the Church and society
- The Proximate Preparation will provide reflections on the themes of pertinent Church documents such as *Familiaris Consortio*, *letter to Families*, *Evangelium Vitae*, *Humanae Vitae*, *Theology of the Body* with the goal of helping couples understand their rich content.
- The Proximate Preparation will help the engaged couples to regain the dynamism of the sacraments remembering that by celebrating the memory of Christ's giving to the Church, the Eucharist develops the affective love proper to marriage.
- The engaged couples will be taught how to preserve and cultivate married love through marital communication and how to overcome the inevitable crisis of married life.
- The engaged couples must be given formation and strengthened in the values concerning the defense of human life in view of the fact that they will become "the domestic church" and "sanctuary of life".
- The final result of proximate preparation will be a clear awareness of the essential characteristics of Catholic Marriage: unity, fidelity, indissolubility, fruitfulness; the priority of the sacramental grace which associates the spouses to the love of Christ the Bridegroom of the Church; and the willingness to carry out the mission proper to families in the educational, social, and ecclesial areas.

To ensure that the engaged couples have adequate time to prepare in a serious way, and to ensure that this stage of preparation is truly “proximate” and not “immediate”, it must begin *at least 12 months* in advance of the couple’s anticipated wedding date and conclude no closer than *2 months* prior to that date.

Proximate Preparation includes, in this order:

- Initial interview with the priest or deacon
- Pre-Nuptial inquiry and FOCCUS inventory
- Review of FOCCUS Inventory
- Marriage Preparation Classes
- Natural Family Planning Classes
- Engaged Encounter weekend or equivalent.

1) **Initial Interview with Priest or Deacon:**

Couples approaching the Church for marriage are usually enthusiastic but also unaware of most diocesan and parish policies concerning marriage preparation. It is critical that the first person they encounter be positive and welcoming. The initial interview should be given by the parish priest or deacon. The goals of this interview are to:

- Begin developing a warm, welcoming relationship with the couple.
- Begin to ascertain the couple's attitudes, beliefs and expectations about themselves and their desire for marriage in the Church.
- Explain to the couple what is involved in their proximate and immediate preparation for the marriage and assist them in planning accordingly (scheduling the pre-nuptial inquiry, the FOCCUS inventory, the marriage preparation classes, NFP classes, Engaged Encounter Weekend retreat or equivalent, etc...)
- Welcome this future family in the Church.

The wedding date can be set only after the couple has filled the Pre-Nuptial Inquiry, completed the FOCCUS Inventory and obtained the approval from the parish Priest or Deacon. Couples must be advised not to make definitive plans for reception sites, etc. until it is determined that they are properly disposed towards the sacrament and a definitive date has been set.

In explaining the process of preparation, the priest or deacon should stress that it is a positive aid to the couple. It should not be seen as a "hoop to jump through" before the couple is "permitted" to marry in the Church. As in preparing to receive any of the sacraments, proper formation is necessary to ensure that marriage is celebrated in faith and established on the sure foundation which is Christ.

2) **Pre-Nuptial Inquiry and FOCCUS** :

The pre-nuptial inquiry is to be administered by the parish Priest or Deacon. The prospective bride and groom must be interviewed individually so as to allow complete freedom in each of their responses.

The goals are to:

- Conduct the pre-nuptial inquiry required by canon law (MA, MB and MC forms). The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has decreed that the following should be observed:
 - Parties are to be questioned as to their freedom to marry
 - Catholics must present a recently issued annotated baptismal certificate, including Confirmation date.
 - If necessary, additional documentation (such as affidavits from parents) attesting to a Catholic party's freedom to marry must be presented.
 - Baptized non-Catholics must present satisfactory proof of Baptism and freedom to marry.
 - Unbaptized persons must present satisfactory proof of freedom to marry.
- Ensure that nothing stands in the way of a valid and licit marriage (see reasons to deny or delay marriage in *What God Has Joined-Supplement*).
- Administer the FOCCUS inventory (Priest, Deacon or lay trained minister)
 - For couples who live outside the diocese of Colorado Springs but who wish to celebrate their marriage in our diocese, there must be evidence that there has been an adequate preparation, at least the preparation required by the diocese in which they live. The verification of the chancellor of the couple's diocese should be sought.

3) **Review of FOCCUS**:

This session can be led by the priest, deacon or lay trained minister. This is an excellent opportunity to enlist the help of **properly trained** "mentor couples". The mentor couples must be trained by a Certified FOCCUS Trainer or Facilitator. (Check at www.foccusinc.com)

The goals are to:

- Review with the couple the results of their FOCCUS Inventory.
- Affirm the unique gifts each brings to the relationship and help the couple address any “problem” areas.
- Discuss the issue of cohabitation or premarital sex if it has not yet surfaced (see the Appendix “Pastoral Care for Sexually Active/Cohabiting Engaged Couples” in the *What God Had Joined-Supplement*).

When the FOCCUS Inventory is reviewed, the facilitator(s) must complete a form for the priest to assess the general readiness of the couple to proceed with the marriage preparation classes. The priest decides whether to set a definite date for the marriage, or to postpone the marriage until the engaged couple has taken the action(s) required (for example therapy in case of addictions to alcohol, drug, pornography, sex , counseling in case of lack of maturity, psychological or emotional disorders, etc). It is the responsibility of the pastor to explain to the engaged couple that some issues, if not addressed properly, may result in the invalidity of the marriage.

The number of sessions is determined by the mentor couples in agreement with their pastor. Again, a very successful approach is to have **properly trained** mentor couples (see above) facilitate the review in their homes over the course of a number of meetings, as needed. The experience of established married couples who are actively living their faith, and practicing NFP, provides an invaluable witness for the engaged couples.

4) Marriage Preparation Classes:

The Marriage Preparation Classes can be conducted at the parish level by **properly trained** lay instructors, preferably a couple. The training of the instructors is under the responsibility of the Office of Marriage and Family Life. Marriage preparation classes are also available from **Catholic Marriage Preparation, Inc.** at the diocesan level. Several classes per year will be offered as well as online classes.

The classes must include:

- Divine Institution of Marriage (natural and sacramental.)
- Sacramental and Doctrinal Aspects of Marriage:
 - Indissolubility, Fidelity, Openness to life
 - Humanae Vitae
 - Theology of the Body
 - Church teachings (Catechism of the Catholic Church)
 - Premarital chastity
 - Participation to the Sacraments
- Ability to give the consents
- Prayer
- Child rearing
- Family role in Church and Society
- Communication skills
- Christian ways to handle money, tithing

5) Natural Family Planning Classes:

NFP classes are led by **trained** instructors at the diocesan level.

Schedule of classes will be given to the parishes every year.

Two sources: **C.C.L.** and **Creighton Model.**

6) Engaged Encounter Weekend or equivalent:

It can be an Engaged Encounter Weekend or equivalent such as a parish based program.

Pastors will use their pastoral discretion to advise the engaged.

III. IMMEDIATE PREPARATION: Two months before the wedding

Immediate preparation consists of the final meetings between the engaged and marriage preparation ministers in the last two months prior to the celebration of the sacrament. The goal is to prepare the wedding liturgy and make final preparations for the couple's worthy celebration of their sacrament.

Immediate Preparation provides a review of previous preparation, especially its doctrinal, moral, and spiritual content according to the couple's needs. It is recommended that the priest or deacon witnessing the marriage meet with the couple at least once in the immediate stage of preparation to review and synthesize the previous preparation (as the couple's needs dictate) and answer any remaining questions the couple may have about the Church's vision of marriage and their final preparations for the sacrament. It is also the opportunity to make sure that all documentation has been received by the parish (one month before the wedding.)

It includes a suitable liturgical preparation envisaging the active and informed participation of the engaged. Pastors, liturgists, and/or other pertinent marriage preparation ministers should devote appropriate time with the engaged couple to ensure their active and informed participation in the liturgy. Care and sensitivity must be taken in explaining what is and what is not appropriate in the context of the wedding liturgy.

A special invitation to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation must be extended to all Catholics as a means of encouraging the worthy celebration of marriage.

IV. THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

The journey of preparation leads the couple to the celebration of marriage, the source and origin of their conjugal life. “To indicate a clearer relationship between the nuptial sacrament and the paschal mystery, the celebration of marriage is normally set within the celebration of the Eucharist” for two Catholics.

While it is understandable that the beauty of Colorado leads many couples to desire outdoor weddings, canon law requires that a marriage between Catholics, or a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, be celebrated in the parish church (canon 1118). Only by permission of the local Ordinary may it be celebrated in another designated church or oratory. Patient care must be demonstrated in explaining the sound pastoral reasons for this. Such patience most often enables couples to see that the parish church is the appropriate place for the celebration of their sacrament.

From PSM nos. 60 to 72

- Marriage preparation ministers must take care to follow and make comprehensible what is already set down and established by the liturgical rite.
- Praiseworthy customs that belong to various peoples or ethnic groups can be brought into the celebration provided they are appropriate signs of faith.
- The active participation of those present is to be favored in every way. Suitable materials should be provided to help them comprehend the richness of the rite.
- The celebrant should help those present to understand the structure of the rite.
- The homily (which is obligatory) should have as its center the presentation of the “great mystery” of marriage (as spoken of by St. Paul in Eph.5).
- Care should be taken that the details of the marriage celebration are characterized by a restrained, simple, and authentic style.

It is the responsibility of the priest or deacon presiding at the marriage to ensure that the above criteria are met.