

Marriage Preparation Policy for The Diocese of Paterson **(Revised September 14, 2013)**

Bishop Serratelli has approved the following policy for the Diocese of Paterson, promulgated on September 14th, 2013, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

It is designed to help today's couples understand and embrace a Catholic vision of married love.

- 1. Beginning in September 2014, engaged couples are required to complete the following:**
 - **Pre-Cana Life Skills**, which focuses on the practical aspects of marriage (finances, communication, conflict resolution, etc.)
 - **God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage**, which focuses on what sex, love and marriage are according to God's design and as taught through the Theology of the Body; i.e., the "whys" behind the "what" of Catholic teaching

- 2. Parishes are encouraged to be certified to offer both of these dimensions of marriage preparation at the parish level, multi-parish level or deanery level.**
 - Large parishes should run their own program; smaller parishes are encouraged to cooperate together
 - Each local program should have two trained lead couples
 - Lead couples should be certified in both Pre-Cana Life Skills and God's Plan
 - Lead couples should identify another lead couple every 2-3 years

- 3. The Office of Family Life will offer training for lead couples in both programs; it will also offer the programs themselves for parishes that are unable to do so. Specifically, the Office will offer the following:**
 - Orientation for all interested on {3/4/2014} ○ For all involved in parish marriage preparation who would like to be informed about new diocesan policies
 - Introduction to online training for both Pre-Cana Life Skills and God's Plan

 - Certification for Lead Couples of Pre-Cana Life Skills, **in one complete session**, to be offered on {9/28/13}, {10/8/13}, {2/22/14} **or** {4/1/14}
 - Basic introduction and how to use the packaged program
 - Basic review of theological and doctrinal components
 - Instruction on how to implement or incorporate the program at the local level

- Certification for Lead Couples of Pre-Cana Life Skills in Spanish, to be offered **in four shorter sessions**, on {10/7}, {10/28}, {11/25} and {12/9} of 2013.
- Certification for Lead Couples of God's Plan, to be offered **in one session** on {11/2/13 }, **or on three evenings** on {6/10/14 Pt. 1}, {6/17/14 Pt.2}, {6/24/14 Pt.3} and in Spanish on {10/28/13Pt.1}, {11/4/13 Pt.2} and {11/18/13 Pt.3}
 - Instruction in Theology of the Body
 - Instruction in using God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage
 - Instruction on how to implement or incorporate the program at the local level
- Diocesan Pre-Cana Life Skills (if need be)
- Diocesan God's Plan (on multiple Saturdays in the course of the 2013-2014 year)

4. Parish or multi-parish Pre-Cana Life Skills and God's Plan programs need to be certified by the Office of Family Life by the end of January, 2015.

Concerns or questions about this policy and/or training sessions can be addressed to Eniola Honsberger at Saint Paul Inside the Walls, 973-377-1004 ext. 417 or ehonsberger@patersondiocese.org

Clarifications:

Purpose of this Policy: Because couples are asking the Church to witness their marriage at various stages of faith development, the following identifies what is to be in place for an adequate program of formation which will assist couples in their preparation for marriage. This policy promotes the following values: the dignity of marriage, the couple's right to marry, their call to holiness through mutual support in their marital vocations, the role their marriage in the life and mission of the Church and the pastoral care of couples preparing for marriage.

For Parish Priest and Marriage Preparation Teams:

Engaged couples are now being asked to attend two Marriage Preparation Workshops-life skills and God's Plan conducted by the parish and the diocese.

- The parish priest and his team will determine the format and program for the life skills component as long as it observes diocesan policy as well as content.

- If the parish does not have the personnel or resources to run both the Life Skill and God's Plan programs, it is recommended that it team up with a neighboring parish, deanery or the diocese
 - Engaged couples can attend multiple different formats:
 - Weekend workshop with both life skills and God's Plan covered
 - Two separate workshops
 - Multiple meetings
- 10- 12 hours minimum of workshop time

Program Components: The components for any Catholic marriage preparation should include presentations on:

- Church teaching on the nature and purpose of marriage (theology/sacramental)
- Spirituality of marriage and family life (theology/sacramental)
- Communication/interpersonal skills and values in marriage, family of origin issues finances, career, early marriage adjustments, time management, in-laws (life skills)
- Impediments to marriage (theology/sacramental)
- Sexual Intimacy as interpersonal communion which is unitive and procreative (theology/ sacramental)
- Natural Family Planning, a witness component should be included if possible (life skills and theology)

All of these components are found in Ascension Press programs Living a Joy-Filled Marriage (life Skills) and God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage (theology). If you currently have a program where these components are being meant please fill out this worksheet and submit to the Office of Family Life for certification. ***(Attendance at a training is still required even if you choose to continue with your current program)***

Supplements that are in line with Catholic teaching may be used. If you have questions about acceptable supplements contact your pastor or the Office of Family Life.

- A premarital inventory, such as FOCCUS, should be administered to and reviewed with the couple to assist them with their communication and mutual understanding. As part of his meetings with the couple, the priest will also complete the Prenuptial Investigation Form and assist the couple in preparing for the liturgical celebration of their marriage.

Second Marriages: People who have received annulments or are widowed, have special circumstances entering into a second marriage. Each of these is to be treated with sensitivity and an awareness of their particular situations. Priest would make a pastoral decision in the manner which these couples will receive marriage preparation, but preparation is required. There is an online option for those going through second marriages. It deals with topics that pertain to their situation. In the near future the diocese hopes to have a special marriage preparation for individuals with special circumstances.

This course will count for meeting the marriage preparation requirements in the Diocese of Paterson.

<http://www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com/topics/second-marriages/>

For Military Couples: Again, these couples are in a special circumstance and there should be sensitivity for their particular situation. This is an online program specializing for military couples.

<http://www.catholicmarriageprepclass.com/military/?gclid=CPqi7Yjd2rkCFRF34godvD8AuA> Please refer engaged military couples to use this course, as it counts towards meeting the marriage preparation requirements for the Diocese of Paterson.

Marriage Convalidations: Couples seeking their marriages recognized by the Church for now should adhere to their pastor's guidance. In the near future the diocese hopes to add another section to the marriage preparation program for those going through convalidation.