

## SACRAMENTAL LIFE

enabling parents to teach/assist their child at his/her specific stage of readiness;

- 3) must be adequate for the celebration for first Penance prior to the celebration of first Eucharist;
  - 4) must be adapted to the age, circumstances and capacities of the child.
- B. Parishes may need to make special provision for children of families who move from one parish to another without receiving adequate preparation for the sacraments. This special provision is also necessary for children of a later age and families who may be returning to active participation in the life of the Church after a period of separation.
- C. Catechesis should include the following religious concepts:
- 1) *A loving Father invites every child to love him and grow in love of neighbor.*
  - 2) *Often it is difficult to love and sometimes we fail to love. Sin is when we deliberately refuse to be loving. Then there is need to ask Jesus for forgiveness.*
  - 3) *Because Jesus loves us and asks us to be loving as he is, we are forgiven and we can also forgive.*
  - 4) *When we are truly sorry, Jesus not only forgives us, but gives us peace and joy.*
  - 5) *We celebrate God's love and forgiveness in prayer, especially in the Eucharist. We remember this particularly in the Penitential Rite, Our Father, Sign of Peace and Communion.*
  - 6) *Forgiveness is also celebrated in the sacrament of Penance, a special sign of God's forgiveness and of reconciliation with one's neighbor in the Christian community.*
  - 7) *The sacrament of Penance is a way to come to know Jesus' forgiving love, and to grow more like him.*
- D. Dispositions required for the reception of the sacrament of Penance are listed above.
- E. Periodically, catechetical programs should provide both non-sacramental penitential prayer services and opportunities to participate in the sacrament according to diocesan guidelines. Care should be taken however, that these are clearly seen as separate from sacramental celebrations.

## MARRIAGE

### Introduction

Marriage, by its very nature, is a most serious and sacred commitment. It is an intimate partnership requiring the total gift of oneself. Spouses are called on to draw closer to God and to each other in a life-giving community of love. Christ enhanced the dignity of marriage by making the Christian marriage relationship a sacrament, a living sign of his love for the Church.

*"Christ our Lord has abundantly blessed this love, which is rich in its various features, coming as it does from the spring of divine love and modeled on Christ's own union with the Church. Just as of old, God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Saviour, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of marriage. He abides with them in order that by their mutual self-giving spouses will love each other with enduring fidelity, as he loved the Church and delivered himself for it. (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in Modern World, Gaudium et Spes, #48)*

The Church continues to stress the dignity of the marriage relationship by the great emphasis she places upon it as a vocation. Bishops, priests and the whole people of God are urged to make a concerted effort to "... work ardently and incessantly for the safeguarding and the holiness of marriage so that it may always be lived in its entire human and Christian fullness. Consider this mission as one of your most urgent responsibilities at the present time..." (Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, #30, July 25, 1968)

*"Everyone, therefore, who exercises an influence in the community and in social groups should devote himself effectively to the welfare of marriage and the family. Civil authority should consider it a sacred duty to acknowledge the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality and promote domestic prosperity... Christians, making full use of the times in which we live and carefully distinguishing the everlasting from the changeable, should actively strive to promote the values of marriage and the family..." (Gaudium et Spes, #52)*

### Rite of Marriage

#### I. PREPARATION

The engagement period is an opportunity for serious and immediate preparation, not for a ceremony only, but, more importantly, for a life-long commitment. While the wedding is important, and often reflects a couple's willingness to proclaim and celebrate their love within the faith community, the time of engagement is of much wider significance. It is really the "first season of marriage". What happens during this first season has an influence on what a couple's married life will be.

The engagement period has several purposes:

- it is a time for the engaged couples to learn about the pleasurable and painful realities of marriage in our time and culture, and to examine their expectations;
  - it is a time for them to examine honestly their own personalities, the dynamics of their relationship, and the wisdom of marriage at this time; stresses that result from preparation for the wedding day or from well-meaning family and friends should not cloud this examination;
  - it is a time for the witnessing priest or deacon to examine these same areas with the couple and to consider the wisdom of witnessing the marriage.
- A. It is important that the same kind of attention be focused on marriage preparation, as is done with other sacraments; in order to offset the potentially disastrous effects of inadequate preparation and the very high divorce rate.
  - B. The Church gives the main responsibility for the ministry of marriage preparation to the parish priest and deacon. (Canon 1020) His continued interest in people and his willingness to give of himself are crucial elements in that role. However, while the priest/deacon has a most important role in the couple's preparation for marriage, full cooperation in this ministry is needed among the clergy, religious, married couples, family members of the engaged couples, their witnesses, and diocesan and/or community organizations.
  - C. Couples are encouraged to begin formal marriage preparation with their parish priest/deacon as soon as possible after the engagement. Ideally this can occur a year before the anticipated wedding date. However, to insure that a couple has the time to prepare in a serious way for their marriage, this preparation should begin at least six months before any anticipated date for the wedding.

Since the preparation must include an honest examination on the part of the couple and priest/deacon about the wisdom of the marriage, no firm date for a wedding should be set until the conclusion of the couple's first meeting with the parish priest/deacon.

D. Ordinarily six sessions should be devoted to marriage preparation. This would respect the limitations of time but serve the needs of adequate preparation.

- 1) **Session One:** this meeting with the parish priest/deacon should include a preliminary assessment of the couple's readiness for marriage (see Appendix I and II of this section). The determination of any special circumstances in this particular situation (see Appendix III of this section for additional guidelines and procedures), and the determination of an appropriate marriage preparation program.
- 2) **Sessions Two, Three and Four:** these meetings should involve the participation of the engaged couple in a preparation program conducted by trained married couples and clergy (see Appendix IV of this session).
- 3) **Session Five:** the main goal of this second meeting with the priest/deacon includes discussion and follow-up on the couple's feelings and reactions toward the material covered during the marriage preparation program attended. The investigation form which includes the "Attitudinal Questionnaire for Pre-Marital Investigation" should be addressed in this meeting to further deepen an awareness of areas for growth and development in the engaged couple.

Time should also be spent discussing the religious dimensions of marriage, with some beginning of the planning for the liturgy of marriage. The couple and priest/deacon should plan this ceremony jointly, and the couple has the right to know all the options that are open to them.

- 4) **Session Six:** this final meeting with the priest/deacon can review the areas already covered by the couple during the preparation, and areas for future growth may be suggested to the couple. All canonical papers should be completed. The final plan for the wedding liturgy should be reviewed.
- E. Prayer is a most important element in the life of a couple, especially in their continued growth in love and faith. Opportunities for prayer should be provided during the marriage preparation period.

#### II. CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

In planning for the celebration of the Rite of Marriage, all who are involved should keep in mind that this is a liturgical and sacramental event. It is, therefore, a celebration of the faith community in which all are called to "full, conscious and active participation", and to which all the principles of good liturgy apply.

- A. Weddings should be planned in accord with their spiritual significance, and especially with good financial judgement consonant with the gospel.
- B. The ordinary place for the celebration of Marriage is the parish church of the bride.
  - 1) When Catholics of different rites marry, the ceremony takes place in the parish church of the groom. The custom for those of the Ukrainian Rite would be the parish church of the bride.
  - 2) When a Catholic and a person from another Christian communion marry, the ceremony would ordinarily take place in the parish church of the Catholic partner. However, for pastoral reasons, the ceremony may take place in the church of the non-Catholic partner, provided a dispensation is granted by the Pastoral Center.
  - 3) Weddings may also take place in the interfaith chapels of campus parishes.
  - 4) If a wedding is desired in a place other than a sacred building, permission from the Pastoral Center is required.
- C. The couple should be involved in the selection of the various options the Rite offers: processional, scripture readings, vows formula, nuptial blessing and other prayers, and music.

Scriptural readings are not to be replaced by readings from other texts.

If vows are specially written by the couple, the formula must be consistent with the ends of marriage.

- D. Music should have a value and appropriateness in keeping with the dignity of this sacrament. The three criteria

presented in "Music in Catholic Worship" should be used in the selection of music at weddings:

- is it good music?
  - is it appropriate for the part of the liturgy for which it is used?
  - can the congregation participate in it fully and prayerfully?
- All three criteria should be applied together. If the music does not fit all the criteria, it should not be used.
- E. The diversity of liturgical ministers should be evident in the wedding ceremony. They should perform that and only that function which is appropriate to them (lectors, ushers, musicians, eucharistic ministers, presiders, servers).
    - 1) *The officiating priest/deacon must have faculties from the Bishop, or delegation from the Bishop or the priest in whose parish the marriage is taking place.*
    - 2) *The two witnesses are present, not only for the civil purposes, but for the support of the couple in this commitment of faith. The witnesses should be of legal age, and be willing to help the couple in their new life together.*
    - 3) *Liturgical ministers may be selected from among the relatives and friends of the couple.*

All liturgical ministers should have sufficient preparation and rehearsal.
  - F. When a Catholic and a baptized person of another Christian communion marry, various pastoral considerations may call for the celebration of the Eucharist with inter-communion, or a celebration of Marriage without the Eucharist.
- Guidelines for Eucharistic sharing among Christians of different traditions are found in the "Eucharist" section.
- G. In planning the time for their wedding, a couple should be sensitive to the demands of the parish schedule. Likewise, priests/deacons should make reasonable attempts to accommodate the schedule of the couple.

#### III. CONTINUING FORMATION

It is crucial in our time that parishes make it their moral responsibility to provide pastoral care for all married couples at the various stages of their life together. Ministry to the newly married is especially important, but care must also be provided for couples with children, mid-life couples, older couples, divorced, separated, remarried and widowed persons, hurting families — and even strong families.

The parish must protect and develop in faith this basic cell of the Church.

### Appendix I: Initial Session with Priest

#### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- A. To begin to establish with the couple a relationship of mutual trust and respect, interest and concern focused on the couple's intention to marry.
- B. To affirm the couple and their love for each other — thank them for choosing the church.
- C. To ascertain with the couple the existence of any special circumstances which might have an impact on their marriage.
- D. To discuss with the couple the nature of the marriage preparation program they are participating in as a unique opportunity for their growth both as individuals and as a couple.

#### TASKS OF THE SESSION

- A. Initiate your exploration/assessment of the couple's:
  - 1) attitude toward faith and church
  - 2) attitudes toward marriage
- B. Determine any special circumstances and/or serious obstacles which exist for the couple's marriage. (See Appendix III for more detail).
- C. Emphasize with the couple, the importance of the marriage preparation program, in relation to themselves and their future lives together.
- D. Provide information to the couple on subsequent meetings/Pre-Cana programs available.
- E. Determine date for celebration of marriage:
  - in line with policy on waiting period
  - barring special circumstances and/or obstacles
  - to be determined at the end of the meeting (i.e. recognized as a mutually acceptable proposal)

### Appendix II: Assessing Readiness for Marriage

The parish priest/deacon, representing the Christian community, is asked to assist the engaged couple in assessing and giving careful consideration to their plans for marriage. This assessment process is intended to be a maturing experience whereby the couple will come to a realization of their strengths and weaknesses and to a fuller appreciation for married life. The following criteria for assessing readiness to marry or the "Attitudinal Questionnaire for Pre-Marital Investigation" may be used in this process.

#### I. SERIOUS AND SOMEWHAT KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT MARRIAGE

You will be able to determine this if it is clear that they have had discussions and made realistic plans about work.