

SACRAMENTAL LIFE

VII. SEPARATION OF THE COUPLE FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD BEFORE/AFTER THE WEDDING

The concern of the priest here is that the couple may not have had the opportunity to develop a mature relationship. A courtship carried on solely by correspondence is insufficient. Likewise, the couple may not have faced individually or together the difficulties which a necessary separation after the marriage will present.

This circumstance REQUIRES:

Additional session(s) with the priest/deacon which will allow him to make a more thorough assessment of the personalities involved and to help the couple to confront their own attitudes on the nature of their relationship and the separation.

This circumstance MAY REQUIRE:

- A. Co-operation with other priest(s)/deacon(s) (in parish, chaplain in services) in marriage preparation program and personality assessment.
- B. Conference with parents.

VIII. PRIOR MARRIAGE

One party has (or both have) been married before and now wishes to marry in the Catholic Church. Previous marriage(s) may have been Catholic, Protestant, or civil ceremony.

This circumstance REQUIRES:

- A. For one previous marriage:
 - 1) investigation into validity of the former marriage: facts, circumstances;
 - 2) application for a Defect of Form OR application for an Annulment, sent to the Diocesan Tribunal;
 - 3) DELAY of the proposed wedding until a Decree of Nullity is obtained from the Diocesan Tribunal. The annulment process is at times lengthy, and so no firm date is to be set for the wedding desired.
- B. For more than one previous marriage:
 - Parish priest/deacon should assemble information on all previous marriages: names of former spouses, baptismal status if known, dates of marriages, places, before whom (priest, minister, judge, etc.), include any certificates, decrees concerning former marriages, and forward these materials to the Diocesan Tribunal — along with a summary of the case.

A special Marriage Preparation Program is available in our Diocese for those who are entering marriage another time, and who have established the nullity of previous union(s) through the Diocesan Tribunal. The parish priest/deacon should be familiar with the special content of the program, called "NEW HORIZONS". (See Appendix IV of this section.)

IX. DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSONS

Contact the Office of Family Life to make arrangements for the preparation of developmentally disabled persons for Marriage.

X. THOSE WHO MARRY LATER IN LIFE

The preparation processes outlined above should be adapted to meet the special needs of older persons seeking to be married.

XI. THOSE WITH NO FIXED RESIDENCE IN THE DIOCESE

Before marriage preparation begins, contact must be made with the Pastoral Office for procedure in this matter.

XII. OTHER LESS COMMON IMPEDIMENTS (Canons 1035-1080)

Some are listed here, simply as a reminder to the parish priest/deacon:

- 1) marriage between blood relatives (consanguinity)
- 2) impotence
- 3) religious vows/holy orders
- 4) legal relationship (adoption)
- 5) apostate from the faith
- 6) crimen
- 7) relationship through marriage (affinity)
- 8) public propriety

XIII. VALIDATION OF A MARRIAGE

If a couple attempts marriage contrary to the laws of the Church regarding the proper "form of marriage," a validation (marriage in the Church) is permitted only after the couple has been properly prepared according to the guidelines presented here. The fact that the couple is legally married does not of itself prepare them for marriage as a sacrament.

This circumstance REQUIRES:

Additional sessions with the parish priest/deacon:

- 1) to highlight the significance of the sacrament of Marriage in the pastoral practice of the Church;
- 2) to examine the stability of the existing marriage;
- 3) to seek out the attitudes/opinions of each spouse individually regarding the validation.



This circumstance MAY REQUIRE:

Application for a dispensation from "Mixed Religion" (baptized Christians) OR from "Disparity of Cult" (one not baptized), sent to the Pastoral Office.

CAUTION: This should not be undertaken hastily. In some cases, the impetus to seek a validation arises from the Catholic spouse's perception that the marriage is failing and from the hope that this act will resolve the problem, or from family pressure, or from some other reason that would not be, of itself, sufficient reason for validation.

Appendix IV: Programs for Marriage Preparation

The second, third, and fourth meetings should involve participation of the engaged couple in a preparation program conducted by trained married couples and priest/deacons. There are several options offered to the engaged couple. Descriptions of these various options follow. These options are also described in the Pre-Cana Schedule which is printed twice yearly by the Office of Family Life and mailed directly to the parishes. Further information on any of these particular programs is available by phoning the Marriage Preparation Coordinators at the Office of Family Life, (716) 436-5450.

The marriage preparation programs are designed to enable couples to deepen their understanding of the essential human and Christian aspects of marriage so that the couple will be aware of the total dimensions of the marriage covenant. Engaged couples are helped to explore their relationship and determine their strengths and their weaknesses.

These sessions are designed to promote discussion between the engaged parties on topics they may not have fully considered, to review practical information, and to enable them to share with married couples the realities of marriage. A preparation program is an important aid — but not a substitute for — the personal individualized sessions with the parish priest/deacon.

The areas of marriage covered include such basic components and dimensions of marriage as: Awareness and Evaluation of Self; Communication; Sexuality; Practical Aspects of Marriage; and Marriage as a Sacrament.

I. PARISH MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAM

It is a powerful witness to engaged couples when married couples and the priest/deacon of their own parish take the responsibility for their complete preparation. This also provides a basis for ongoing contact between married couples in the parish and the engaged couples in the first critical years after their wedding. Thus, as with other sacramental preparation, a parish-based preparation team is the ideal.

The Family Life Office, through the Marriage Preparation

Coordinators, will provide training to married couples and the parish priest/deacon so that the parish can minister to its own engaged couples.

II. ENGAGED COUPLES ENCOUNTER

Engaged Couples Encounter is a weekend away with other engaged couples with plenty of time alone together to plan the marriage. It is designed to give couples planning marriage the opportunity to discuss honestly and intensively topics concerning their prospective lives together. Informational brochures are available upon request from the Family Life Office. Dates of the Engaged Couples Encounter weekends are printed in the Pre-Cana Schedule provided to every parish twice yearly from the Family Life Office.

III. PRE-CANA CONFERENCE

Pre-Cana Conferences are held at various parishes in the Diocese through the year. There is a schedule printed twice yearly by the Family Life Office indicating these dates and places. These schedules are mailed directly to the parishes, along with registration cards. Pre-Cana sessions vary in structure, i.e., two afternoons, three evenings, four evenings, or a similar combination.

IV. HISPANIC PRE-CANA CONFERENCE

Conferencias Para La Comunidad Hispana for information and reservations phone the Spanish Apostolate 323-4844 or the Family Life Office. These conferences are specifically for those couples with Spanish background. The Hispanic traditions and values are presented.

V. NEW HORIZONS

This program is for couples where one or both have been previously married and the nullity of that marriage has been established by the Church.

This is a program specifically tailored for persons in this situation.

In addition to the topics covered in the other marriage preparation options, New Horizons also addresses the areas of present and future children, past and future in-laws, affect of former spouse, and attitudes formed as a result of the previous marriage.

Dates for the New Horizons program are found in the marriage preparation schedule.

NOTE

When it is virtually impossible for a couple to attend one of these marriage preparation programs, the couple is expected to meet with the parish priest/deacon to discuss those elements which are normally incorporated into any of the marriage preparation programs. It becomes the parish priest/deacon's total responsibility. It is by far more desirable to give the couple the opportunity to experience the dual, complementary preparation offered by priest/deacon and trained married couples.