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grams often had to make up for

a lack of understanding among

It praised the growth of pre-

marriage courses as a positive

development, but said such

courses should not be reduced to

a "mere formality." It suggested

that the amount of time neces-

sary for a pre-marriage course

was at least an entire week, or

four weekends, or an afternoon

The content of pre-marriage

courses should be centered on

basic Christian doctrine regard-

ing matrimory, although it

should also touch on various psy-

chological, medical and other is-

Couples should be instructed

in the Christian vision of the

husband-wife relationship, in-

cluding the idea of free consent

in matrimony, the permanence

of the marriage vow, the pur-

pose of sexual relations and the

raising of children.

once a month for a year.

sues, it said.

young couples.

# Fall Marriage Marriage guidelines fight 'tempest'

By John Thavis Catholic News Service

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VATICAN CITY - In a new set of guidelines on marriage preparation, the Vatican said church teachings such as those against divorce, cohabitation and birth control need to be better explained to today's young cou-

The corrosion of marriage values in modern society requires the church to offer deeper moral and theological formation, especially on responsible procreation and the total commitment required by the sacrament, it said.

The 30-page document, titled "Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage," was made public May 27 at the Vatican. It was written by the Pontifical Council for the Family as a point of reference for bishops' conferences and other church organizations around the world.

In an accompanying note, Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, president of the pontifical council, said the Vatican document responded in part to the "moral tempest" that has weakened the traditional stability of marriage.

He said the Vatican was especially concerned that other forms of cohabitation were being accepted by society as equal or similar to marriage.

The document elaborated on this social context, saying marriage today was buffeted by such developments as sexual permissiveness, a "contraceptive mentality," widespread divorce and a growing tendency to put off matrimony until a later age.

As a remedy, it recommended basic elements for three stages of marriage preparation:

• Remote preparation, which should try to instill at a young age respect for marriage as a form of complete self-giving, with special emphasis on chastity as a condition for eventual marriage.

Such instruction can be accomplished through catechesis, sermons, church schools, parish programs and above all in the family, it said.

• Intermediate preparation, during the period of a couple's engagement. The document recognized that most parishes have pre-marriage courses for couples, but recommended strengthening the content and offering additional pastoral programs.

• Immediate preparation, involving prayer, the sacrament of penance and discussions between the couple and pastor in

the period just before marriage. The document focused on the intermediate level of preparation, saying these formation pro-

ing against premarital sex, cohabitation and trial marriage, it said.

The courses should give special emphasis to the defense of life, with insistence that on such issues as abortion and birth control the couples must not "conform to the prevailing mentality," it said. Couples should be aware of natural family planning techniques, which rely on periodic abstinence and are allowed by church

recommended frequent prayer and discussion meetings between the engaged couples and priests, catechists and lay specialists.

To help carry out such programs, it suggested pastors form local groups composed of a priest and Catholic married couples, including people with expertise in medicine, law and psychology.

Those active in pre-marriage formation should be people of sound doctrine and complete fidelity to church teaching, it added.

At a diocesan level, the document recommended establishment of a commission to coordinate pre-marriage preparation activities, utilizing the services of couples, church movements and lay experts.

The document also included some basic guidelines about the marriage ceremony, saying it should be serious and simple in tone, avoiding excessive pomp and ostentation.

It suggested that readings during Mass be done by someone other than the couple being married; the readings are aimed first of all at them, the document ex-

A Special Place for Special People' Creekside Plaza 831 Fetzner Rd. Rehearsal Dinners Parties• Banquets Private Accommodations up to 50 People teaching, it added. The document

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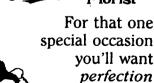


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## Diocese to offer extra preparation sessions

The Diocese of Rochester is offering a limited number of marriage preparation sessions for couples who are unable to take advantage of programs offered through their parish-

es or parishes in their regions. The schedules of parishbased programs are available through parishes or the diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY 14624, 716/328-3210, 328-3228, or 800/388-7177, ext 279.

For information about En Encounter, call 716/266-2040. For information about Once More With Love, the program designed for couples in which one or both were previously married,

The diocesan sponsored events will take place on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The non-refundable registration fee per couple in \$50.

The scheduled sessions through June 1997, are:

Sept. 14, Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, Roches-

Oct. 12, St. Mary Our Mother School, W. Broad Street, Horseheads;

Jan. 4, Holy Rosary Church, Lexington Avenue, Rochester, March 15, St. Mary Our Mother School, W. Broad Street, Horseheads;

May 17, St. Mary of the Lake Church, Walworth Road, Ontario;

June 28, Holy Rosary Church, Lexington Avenue,

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