**MARRIAGE AND FAMILY MINISTRY RESOURCE GUIDE**

**Diocese of Joliet**

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***Thank you for your commitment to Marriage and Family Ministry!*** Catholic marriage and family ministry serves all domestic churches by proclaiming the love of God to them and helping them embrace their vocation to love and discipleship. Today, pastoral leaders face the challenge of addressing the multitude of marital and family situations that are complex. How do we respond and where do we begin? We begin by answering the call to "MAKE" disciples, this initiates our focus and is the core foundation of all Marriage and Family Ministries activities within the Diocese of Joliet.

## Core Foundation of Marriage and Family Ministry[1]

**Prayer and Relationship with Christ:** To foster among the Catholic faithful, in their marriages and families, a living relationship with Jesus Christ by instilling in them a deep appreciation for prayer and the sacramental life.

**Formation:** To encourage human, spiritual, intellectual, and missionary formation that provides a healthy foundation for marriage and families.

**Accompaniment:** To develop pastoral strategies that identify and respond to the realities of married couples and families, and those discerning marriage.

**Advocacy:** To advance the truths of the human person, marriage, and the family, through advocacy in the public square.

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[1] *Called to the Joy of Love* United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington DC. December 2021

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This guidebook presents pastoral approaches to these situations. Not all strategies suggested in this resource will be possible, nor necessary in every parish, to implement. As a guidebook, the intention is to provide key areas of direction for pastoral planning as the needs of couples and families are determined at the local level by pastoral leaders at the parish. We pray it is helpful to your planning as you meet the needs of those you serve. Please contact us if you would like any assistance in implementing one of the initiatives described. God Bless!

## THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

The domestic church is the foundation and source for all marriage preparation and beyond. The home is where the married couple live in the bond of marriage and where parents teach their children to know, love, and serve God. Christian parents, by virtue of their Baptism, to bear witness to their faith, especially within the home.

Sharing in Christ's own mission, the family through Baptism is "priest, prophet and king" priest, through the offering of sacrificial love and adoration of God; prophet, through the witness to supernatural reality of God's Kingdom; and king, through the order and harmony that the family fosters within the home, community, and Church.

**Pastoral approaches to foster and sustain in families the call to form a domestic church:**

- Preaching and parish events on appropriate feast days that highlight marriage and family life:
    - January 1: Mary, the Holy Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)
    - 1st Sunday after January 1: The Epiphany of the Lord
    - February 2: The Presentation of the Lord
    - March 19: St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

    - November 21: The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
    - December 6: Saint Nicholas
- Seasonal large group baptism celebrations at the parish
- Offer to visit parish families with a blessing of the home
- Offer babysitting for parish events intended for adults
- Small group family seminars and rosary groups, bible discussion, and gatherings of couples for mutual support and enrichment
- Offering a blessing for marriage anniversaries and engaged couples
- Retreats for spouses and/or families with opportunities for confession and spiritual direction; may include an opportunity for a family consecration (e.g., Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Joseph, Holy Family)
- Offer opportunities to serve the parish as families; greeters, serving at parish events, supporting ministry to the homebound, writing cards for nursing homes or the military, go Christmas caroling at nursing homes

**Resources:**

- CatholicHOM: https://www.catholichom.com/
- Messy Family Project: https://messyfamilyproject.org/
- Trinity House Community: https://trinityhousecommunity.org/
- Missionaries to the Family – Paradisus Dei: https://paradisusdei.org/missionaries-to-the-family/
- Family Fully Alive – Knights of Columbus: https://www.kofc.org/en/what-we-do/faith-in-action-programs/family/family-fully-alive.html
- Augustine Institute: https://formed.org/
    - Forgiveness
    - Contagious Catholicism
    - How to Keep Your Kids Catholic
    - Jesus the Bridegroom
    - The Catholic Parent

## MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

The Church must find ways to assist couples, but they should be willing to assist during times of transition and change throughout their marriage. Christian couples are called upon to lead one to the grace found in the Sacrament of Matrimony in times of joy and need.

The first few years of marriage are especially critical to the life of a married couple. It is important to remind newly married couples that the wedding is just the beginning of a journey marked by joys and challenges. Newly married couples should be invited to engage in parish life and to meet other couples for support and faith sharing. Mentorship and accompaniment are essential to help families build strong relationships through all stages of life.

**Pastoral approaches to support Marriage Enrichment:**

- Acknowledge wedding anniversaries once a month
- Facilitate "date night" opportunities:
    - Be Light Date Night Series – Witness to Love: https://witnesstolove.org/be-light
    - The Marriage Course – Alpha: https://alpha.org/the-marriage-course/
    - Beloved Series – Formed.org: https://watch.formed.org/beloved-finding-happiness-in-marriage
    - Renewed: 7 Steps for an Amazing Marriage – Real Life Catholic (Chris Stefanick): https://coaching.reallifecatholic.com/renewed
    - Couples pilgrimage adventures (i.e., National Shrine and Museum of St. Therese – Darien, The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe – Des Plaines, Holy Hill- Basilica and National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians Wisconsin, National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion -WI)
    - Host a night on couples' prayer with refreshments

- Host a Praise and Adoration night with refreshments for couples only
- Couples' scavenger hunt with prizes
- USCCB date ideas for couples: https://www.foryourmarriage.org/weekly-dating-ideas/
- Host a movie or trivia night.

- Encourage or provide opportunities for marriage tune-ups for ongoing marriage enrichment:
  - Worldwide Marriage Encounter Retreats: https://wwme.org/
  - Couples Marriage Assessment (Prepare and Enrich): https://www.prepare-enrich.com/
  - SmartLoving Marriage Kit: https://smartloving.org/marriage-kit/
  - Host a Marriage on Tap with local speakers and refreshments
  - Practical skill events with parish staff or local experts on communication, parenting, caregiving, time management, etc.
  - Host National Catholic Marriage Speakers as a parish or deanery

- Develop opportunities for small groups:
  - Couples' bible studies, with potluck meals and rotating homes as a location
  - Adult formation as couples.
    - Be Formed Diocesan Formation: https://beformed.net/
    - Cursillo: https://www.jolietcursillo.org/
    - Acts XXIX, Fr. Ricardo: https://www.actsxxix.org/
    - Welcome Retreat, Dynamic Catholic: https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/welcome.html
    - Augustine Institute: https://formed.org/
      - *Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love*
      - *The Spirituality of Marriage*

**Pastoral approaches to support parenting:**

- Host events on parenting through programs at the parish with local and national speakers
- Host events on ways to create a more Catholic home, including family dinners and prayer

- Offer practical skills on managing stress, time management, growing in faith together, and caregiving
- Offering a blessing for those couples expecting a child
- Host yearly Theology of the Body information sessions and seminars for couples and families that are appropriate for different ages and stages of life:
    - Theology of the Body Institute: https://tobinstitute.org/
    - USCCB Natural Family Planning: https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning
    - Diocese of Joliet local practitioners: https://catechesis.diojoliet.org/marriage-and-family-resources

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Marriage preparation should provide engaged couples with the help needed to receive and live out the sacrament, involving the entire parish community. In recent years, the Vatican Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life has called for the Church to adopt a catechumenate approach to marriage. This journey, which begins in the domestic church, should include the following skills when formal marriage preparation begins, typically 6-12 months prior to the wedding:

- Practical life skills, sound advice, proven strategies, and psychological guidance
- Outreach to engaged couples to connect within the local parish community and find support from a mentor or sponsor couple
- Opportunities of prayer with and for engaged couples, such as the Blessing of the Engaged Couple or Rite of Betrothal, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacrament of Penance, etc.
- An opportunity for the evangelization or re-evangelization of the couple and a summons to a life of faith and holiness

- Pastoral strategies to provide ongoing training and formation for pastoral leaders who assist with the preparation of couples for marriage, including clergy, seminarians, mentor couples, parish staff, and volunteers
- Married couples in the parish are to serve as witnesses and mentors for engaged couples, with attention to the cultural needs of the couple
- Topics and content:
    - The seriousness of marriage as a covenant of the whole of life, ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children The nature of marriage as instituted by God
    - The vocation of marriage and its responsibilities
    - How to pray together as a couple
    - The role of Christian spouses as witnesses to the charity that flows from Christ
    - Living conjugal chastity as a virtue with condemnation to cohabiting couples
    - The responsibility of Catholic parents to have their children baptized and raised in the Catholic faith and to build the domestic church as ministers of their home
    - Natural Family Planning as a tool for respecting and living God's design for married love while discerning God's will for the size of their family
    - Moral teaching of the Church on reproductive technologies and ethical solutions to infertility
    - Sensitive issues such as pornography use and addiction, resolving abortion trauma, sexual and domestic abuse and violence, the experience of separation and divorce in one's family of origin
    - Practical skills such as communication, financial planning, extended family dynamics, etc.

**Establishing a Marriage Preparation Program for your parish:**

- Recruit and appoint a Marriage/Wedding Coordinator for your parish. This can be a paid staff member, volunteer, or member of the clergy
- Identify and recruit mentor couples to accompany the engaged couple through the wedding and the first five years
- Establish the requirements and timeline that newly engaged couples must complete prior to their wedding date
- Offer on-going formation of the coordinator and mentor couples

    - Ongoing formation through Franciscan at Home (free) provided by the diocese: Marriage Renewal Track (must be logged into Franciscan at Home to view) https://franciscanathome.com/node/19907

- Keep an inventory of marriage prep forms in your office. Order through Mission Press: Prenuptial Questionnaire, Dispensation/Permission, and Witness Affidavits: https://themissionpress.org or 312-738-7570.
    - Any questions contact the Diocese of Joliet Tribunal 815-221-6169

**The Marriage Preparation Process and Requirements:**

- Schedule an initial meeting with the couple and welcome and affirm their decision to marry in the Church and begin the prenuptial investigation form:
    - One or both partners are baptized Catholics
    - Free to marry
        - Both members of the couple should be unmarried. If either were previously married, they must be widowed or issued an annulment from the Catholic Church
        - It is the Church's teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman
    - Free consent
        - Both parties must freely consent to the marriage and have worked out any issues that might cause one party not to freely consent

- Determine a marriage inventory or assessment to administer to engaged couples.
    - This tool will highlight the strengths and growth areas in your relationship and help you discover and discuss these as a couple.
    - Recommended inventories:
        - Prepare & Enrich (https://www.prepare-enrich.com/) in-person and online training for couple facilitators.
        - FOCCUS (https://www.foccusinc.com/) online training for couple facilitators.
        - Better Together – Dynamic Catholic: https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/marriage/better-together-inventory.html
        - Witness to Love (https://witnesstolove.org/) is a virtues-based, Catechumenate model of marriage renewal and preparation
        - Integrates modern principles of psychology and the virtues to help couples facilitate an authentic dialogue about their relationship.

        - What makes Witness to Love unique is that the engaged couple chooses their own mentor couple. One couple they both admire and see as a source of faith formation.
        - This mentor couple gives them a concrete connection and integration into the parish

    - If facilitators are not available, offer an online "live" option: www.Catholicmarriageprep.com

- Establish a parish-based marriage prep retreat or provide alternatives:
    - Robust marriage preparation programs include the Core Foundation of Marriage and Family Ministries
    - Recommended programs and resources for your parish retreats:
        - Better Together – Dynamic Catholic: https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/marriage-preparation.html
        - For Better and Forever: https://marriagepreparation.com/
        - Joy Filled Marriage – Ascension Press: https://ascensionpress.com/collections/joy-filled-marriage
        - Internal parish (or deanery) program self-developed programs focused on the Core Foundation of Marriage and Family Ministries
    - Alternate Programs outside of parish:
        - Parishes in local area or deanery hosting retreats
        - Engaged Encounter in Joliet: https://www.jolietee.org/
        - Catholicmarriageprep.com (online and live: https://www.catholicmarriageprep.com/
        - Smart Loving (online): https://smartloving.org/engaged/
        - The Marriage Group (online_: https://themarriagegroup.com/courses/pre-cana/)
- Determine an introduction to Natural Family Planning - can be through inventory/assessment, retreat, or outside resource. Diocesan recommended resources: https://catechesis.diojoliet.org/marriage-and-family-resources
- For the wedding day, establish parish specific requirements on liturgy, music, timelines, etc.
- Establish an accompaniment plan for couples after the wedding for the first year and five years of marriage to build relationships and community within the parish

**Marriage Convalidation Information**

Catholic Church law ordinarily requires baptized Roman Catholics to marry before a priest or deacon unless a couple received a "dispensation from canonical form," Catholics who exchange vows in the presence of ministers from other religious traditions or civil officials are not considered validly married in the eyes of the Catholic Church. Evangelizing these civilly married couples is a wonderful way to welcome them and marry in the Church.

Establishing a convalidation program at your parish:

- Create an awareness and communication plan for reaching out to civilly married couples in your parish
    - Actively communicate in the parish, bulletins, emails blast, and flyers the option for convalidation
    - Create formation opportunities for these couples to be married in the Catholic Church
    - Timeline and frequency of convalidation group celebrations, such as quarterly or yearly
    - The marriage preparation activities that are necessary:
        - an inventory assessment, retreat, practical skills, and NFP, using the typical marriage preparation process as a template

Additional USCCB information: https://www.foryourmarriage.org/convalidation-bringing-your-marriage-into-the-church/

## FAMILIES IN NEED OF PASTORAL CARE

During every marriage, and over the course of family life, times will arise of suffering, fatigue, and misunderstandings that can cause a crisis. These are part of every family at one time or another. However, to prevent a crisis from worsening, the parish should offer pastoral service to accompany these couples and families. The parish should be aware of the needs of its people and never turn anyone away searching for care. The diocese can be a resource if the parish is not able to support these needs. Here are typical areas where couples and families may need care.

- Marital crisis
    - Please refer to Marriage Enrichment strategies above as first step
    - Retrouvaille weekend retreat and support: https://helpourmarriage.org/
    - Worldwide Marriage Encounter: www.wwme.org
    - Catholic Counselors: https://catholiccounselors.com/
    - Contact the Diocese of Joliet for the current list of local counselors. 815-221-6100
- Divorce and separation
    - Discern the need to establish a divorce support group ministry
    - Resources and information:
        - Divorced and Beyond: https://divorceandbeyond.org/
        - Rose Sweet, Catholic author, and coach: https://rosesweet.com/about-divorce/
    - Promote local parishes with active support groups found on the diocesan website: https://catechesis.diojoliet.org/marriage-and-family-support
    - Host a day for reflection or local healing retreats for divorced parishioners
    - For children of divorced parents, Life-Giving Wounds: https://www.lifegivingwounds.org/
- Grief and bereavement
    - Five reasons to start a parish bereavement ministry:

      https://media.ascensionpress.com/2019/07/26/5-reasons-your-parish-should-have-a-bereavement-ministry/
    - Establish a parish grief and bereavement ministry
    - Connect with an active grief and bereavement ministry within the Diocese of Joliet: https://catechesis.diojoliet.org/marriage-and-family-support
    - Resources and content:
        - Seasons of Hope, Ava Maria Press: https://www.avemariapress.com/series/The-Seasons-of-Hope-Series
        - Grief Share: https://www.griefshare.org/
        - Joyful Again Weekend Retreat: https://joyfulagain.org/
        - Local John Paul II Healing retreats, Be Healed Retreats: https://gamechangersfts.org/
        - Additional resources and content:

        - “Grieving: A Spiritual Process for Catholics” by Paula Kosin (local)
        - “Guide to Forming a Bereavement Ministry in Your Parish" by Robert Valle
        - “The New Day Journal” by Maureen O’Brien
    - Start documenting local and online counseling options and contact the diocese for additional options
- Caregivers
    - Establish or encourage attendance in a local “Nourish for Caregivers” ministry support group: https://nourishforcaregivers.com/
- Same Sex Attraction apostolates:
    - EnCourage is an apostolate which provides pastoral care for families and friends of people who experience same-sex attractions and/or gender discordance
        - For more information, email encourage@dioceseofjoliet.org
    - Courage International (https://couragerc.org/) is an apostolate for people who experience same-sex attraction.
        - For more information, email joliet.courage@gmail.com

## Recursos disponibles en español

- Iglesia doméstica
    - Comunidad de Trinity House: https://trinityhousecommunity.org/
    - Familia plenamente viva – Caballeros de Colón: https://www.kofc.org/en/what-we-do/faith-in-action-programs/family/family-fully-alive.html
- Enriquecimiento matrimonial
    - Serie Querida – Formed.org: https://watch.formed.org/beloved-finding-happiness-in-marriage
    - Retiros de encuentros matrimoniales internacionales: https://wwme.org/
    - Evaluación del matrimonio en pareja (Prepare and Enrich): https://www.prepare-enrich.com/
    - Desarrollar oportunidades para grupos pequeños:
    - Cursillo: https://www.jolietcursillo.org/
    - Instituto Agustín: https://formed.org/
- Preparación del matrimonio

    - Formación continua a través de Franciscan at Home (gratuito) proporcionado por la diócesis: Sendero de Renovación Matrimonial (debe iniciar sesión en Franciscan at Home para verlo) https://franciscanathome.com/node/19907
- Determine un inventario o evaluación matrimonial para administrar a las parejas comprometidas.
    - Esta herramienta destacará las fortalezas y áreas de crecimiento en su relación y les ayudará a descubrirlas y debatirlas como pareja.
- Inventarios recomendados:
    - Prepara y Enriquece/Prepare & Enrich (https://www.prepare-enrich.com/) formación presencial en línea para facilitadores de pareja.
    - FOCCUS (https://www.foccusinc.com/) formación en línea para facilitadores de pareja
    - Si no hay facilitadores disponibles, ofrece una opción en línea "en directo": www.Catholicmarriageprep.com
- Establece un retiro de preparación matrimonial en la parroquia o ofrece alternativas:
    - Matrimonio lleno de alegría – Ascension Press: https://ascensionpress.com/collections/joy-filled-marriage
- Programas alternativos fuera de la parroquia:
    - Encuentro de comprometidos en Joliet: https://www.jolietee.org/
    - Catholicmarriageprep.com (en liínea y en directo: https://www.catholicmarriageprep.com/
    - El Grupo Matrimonial (en línea: https://themarriagegroup.com/courses/pre-cana/)
- Familias que necesitan atención pastoral
- Crisis matrimonial
    - Retiro y apoyo de fin de semana Retrouvaille: https://helpourmarriage.org/
    - Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial: www.wwme.org
- Divorcio y separación
    - Divorciados y más allá: https://divorceandbeyond.org/
    - Acompañamiento en el Duelo y Pérdida
    - https://media.ascensionpress.com/2019/07/26/5-reasons-your-parish-should-tien-un-ministerio-de duelo/
    - Compartir duelo: https://www.griefshare.org/

## Other Resources

- Marriage Catechumenate calls to journey with couples as they grow in relationships and faith celebrating the joys and assisting in the challenges
    - *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*
        - Published By Our Sunday Visitor
    - *Called to the Joy of Love*
        - Published By United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
    - *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*
        - Published By United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- Archbishop Fulton Sheen Books on Marriage

- *Three to Get Married*

- Parish Partnerships – Partner with neighboring parishes utilizing the gifts and resources to fulfill the needs of the community of faith
- Prayers for Marriage; 30 Powerful Catholic Prayers For Marriages - PrayerLit

**Please contact us if we can assist in any way with adopting the principles or resources mentioned within this guide.**

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