

Marriage Preparation Guide

A guide to preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage in the Diocese of Fargo

The first step in getting married in the Catholic Church is to meet with your parish pastor. In the initial meeting, the pastor will explain the steps in preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage and get to know you. Meet with the pastor as soon as possible, as he needs to determine whether there are any obstacles in setting a specific date for your wedding. Marriage preparation lasts at least six months.

Marriage preparation begins with and is sustained by prayer. Pray together often. Thank the Lord for your future spouse and for the graces you will need to be faithful spouses and good parents. Praying throughout the marriage preparation process will establish the habit of prayer together which you will need in your marriage.

The very preparation for Christian Marriage is itself a journey of faith. It is a special opportunity for the engaged to rediscover and deepen the faith received in Baptism and nourished by their Christian upbringing. – St. John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, n. 51.

Required documents: you need to submit the following paperwork

- * Baptismal Certificates for all parties who are baptized (those who were baptized in a Catholic Church should contact the parish in which they were baptized and request a record of baptism with notations; for others, bring in the original certificate or contact the church where you were baptized.)
- * Certificate of Attendance from a Marriage Preparation Weekend
- * Certificate of Completion of a diocesan approved NFP Course
- * Documentation regarding all previous marriages (even civil marriages)
- * Marriage License

Additional Information

Pre-Marriage Inventory: this tool (called “FOCCUS”, “Prepare” or “Fully Engaged”) is not a compatibility test, but a snapshot of thoughts, attitudes and feelings about important issues. The priest (and sponsor couple) uses the results to foster discussion on topics that impact the marriage relationship.

Sponsor Couple: Some parishes use mature married couples to assist in the marriage preparation process. These couples are trained to help a couple prepare for their married life together.

Sacrament of Marriage Checklist

At least 6 months before anticipated wedding date

- * First meeting with the pastor
As soon as you become engaged, contact your parish for an appointment.

5 – 6 months prior to wedding date

- * Register for a Marriage Preparation Weekend
This seminar is held Friday evening and all-day Saturday. See the brochure for additional information. Visit www.fargodiocese.org/mp for the cost and a list of locations and dates.
Note: take it as soon as possible; you will learn things which the priest and NFP instructor will discuss with you. Register early, as sessions fill up quickly.
- * Register for and begin Natural Family Planning Course
An NFP course is 3 (or more) sessions taken over the course of at least 10 weeks. Visit www.fargodiocese.org/nfp for a list of certified instructors, class schedule and cost. Read the brochure to learn more about NFP.
Note: you must begin NFP classes 4 months prior to your wedding date.

*** Complete Pre-Marriage Inventory**

3 – 4 months before wedding date

- * Attend Marriage Preparation Weekend (give Certificate to the pastor)
- * Continue NFP classes
- * Meet with a priest or deacon (and sponsor couple) to learn about and discuss the Sacrament of Marriage

2 months before wedding date

- * Complete NFP Course (give Certificate of Completion to the pastor)
- * Meet with priest or liturgical coordinator to discuss music, scripture readings and other issues about the wedding ceremony
If your wedding will take place in a Catholic Church, submit a draft of wedding program to the priest or liturgical coordinator.
- * Meet with priest and verify that documentation is complete

Final weeks before your wedding

- * Get a marriage license from the county Court House
- * Finalize details
Consider scheduling the Sacrament of Reconciliation after the rehearsal for the Catholic members of your wedding party

Wedding Day

- * Celebrate your special day!