

Here is the part of the updated *Marriage Preparation Policy* pertaining specifically to the seven components in the marriage preparation process within the Diocese of Santa Rosa:

B. Components of the Marriage Preparation Process

Here are the components of the proximate preparation process within the Diocese of Santa Rosa:

1. **Initial Assessment Conversation with Pastor (or delegate)**
2. **FOCCUS (Prenuptial Inventory)**
3. **“Witness to Love” Mentoring Program**
4. **Marriage Formation Program Options**
5. **God Is! Day of Renewal (one-day retreat)**
6. **Natural Family Planning Instruction**
7. **Final meeting with the Pastor (or delegate)**

1. Initial Assessment Conversation with Pastor (or Delegate)

The initial “in-person” conversation between the engaged couple and the pastor (or delegate) is covered under **A. Pastoral Assessment of the Readiness for Marriage** (on Page 4 of the policy).

2. FOCCUS (Prenuptial Inventory)

The approved Prenuptial Inventory for use within the Santa Rosa Diocese is **FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study)**. A Prenuptial Inventory is required because it facilitates the crucial dialogue through which the couple explores the significant issues that will impact their marriage. Further, it allows the pastor (or delegate) to adjust the emphasis of the marriage preparation to the couple’s specific strengths and weaknesses. The use of this inventory is beneficial in laying a foundation for the overall marriage preparation process. Because the Prenuptial Inventory supports the overall purpose of marriage preparation, it should be administered as an initial step in the Marriage Preparation Process. For specific information about *FOCCUS* go to: www.foccusinc.com

Of special note, it is recommended that four or five meetings be scheduled by the *FOCCUS* facilitator to allow for tapping into the full potential of *FOCCUS* as an evangelizing and discussion tool. The *FOCCUS* facilitator could invite couples who have knowledge of Church teaching in specific categories (e.g., finances, communication, NFP) to witness to the engaged couples. If the results of the *FOCCUS* inventory point to issues or topics that may lead to serious conflicts for the couple, those issues should be addressed or explored more fully if deemed necessary. The Facilitator should recommend the couple to their pastor or to an appropriate licensed counselor for further discussion. *FOCCUS* is available in both English and Spanish.

3. “Witness to Love” Mentoring Program

Witness to Love is a virtues-based, Catechumenate-model of marriage renewal and preparation that integrates modern principles of psychology and the virtues to help couples facilitate an authentic dialogue about their relationship. The mission of *Witness to Love* is to provide the parish with the tools to transform marriage preparation into a wellspring of dynamic marriage discipleship that fosters both parish connection and nurtures authentic accompaniment before and after the wedding day.

The *Witness to Love* mentoring program is designed to allow the engaged couple to choose their own mentor couple from the parish whom they both admire and see as a source of faith formation. The mentor couple should give them a concrete connection and integration into the parish. Through the sharing of the mentor couple’s own marriage journey, the engaged couple inherits a “lifeline” of support in their commitment to Jesus and His Church. Using the *Witness to Love* workbook along with videos and guided activities, the mentor couple serves as a powerful witness for the engaged couple as they prepare for their life-time commitment to marriage. *Witness to Love* has proven to be very successful where it had been used in the many parishes across the country and it is required that each parish use this program as part of the Marriage Preparation Process in the Diocese of Santa Rosa. Upon completion of the program the pastor will receive a notice of completion from the mentor couple. *Witness to Love* is available in both English and Spanish.

For specific information about *Witness to Love*, go to: www.witnessstolove.org

4. Marriage Formation Program Options

Every engaged couple desiring to be married in the Catholic Church within the Diocese of Santa Rosa must participate in a diocesan-approved marriage formation program. This is to be completed ideally in the early stage of the engagement period. Since the last two months leading up to the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage are filled with practical details, it is important that the couple have the opportunity to spend quality time on their marriage formation early in their engagement.

There are four different types of marriage formation programs available within the Diocese of Santa Rosa. The pastor (or delegate) will discuss with each couple the program best suited to the specific needs of the parish and the couple. At the completion of the marriage formation program, the engaged couple is to obtain a “*certificate of completion*” that they will need to present to the pastor (or delegate).

Diocesan Approved Marriage Formation Program options:

- “**Catholic Marriage Prep**” on-line course:

The *Catholic Marriage Prep (CMP)* on-line course is intended for engaged couples unable to participate in an in-person marriage formation program. This on-line interactive course is rooted in St. John Paul II’s “*Theology of the Body*” and focuses on the building of strong, Christ-centered marriages. The course takes about 20 hours to complete and can take from one week to three months depending on the couple’s pace. Each couple is assigned personal, on-line instructors who follow them throughout the course. There are a variety of sessions that cover all aspects of marriage preparation, from God’s plan for marriage and family to practical tools that help develop a successful marriage relationship. This on-line course is available in both English and Spanish. For specific information about the on-line *CMP*, a division of Agapé Catholic Ministries, go to: www.catholicmarriageprep.com

- **“Catholic Marriage Prep” in-person course:**

The *Catholic Marriage Prep (CMP)* in-person program invites couples to a deeper relationship with each other and with Christ and is rooted in St. John Paul II's *“Theology of the Body.”* This in-person marriage formation instruction is very similar to the on-line course and is led by trained, mentor couples over the course of a few weeks, individually or in a small group setting. This *CMP* instructional program builds a foundation for a strong, healthy, Christ-centered marriage between a man and a woman as they become husband and wife. This program is available in both English and Spanish.

For specific information about the in-person *CMP*, a division of Agapé Catholic Ministries, go to: www.catholicmarriageprep.com

- **“Catholic Engaged Encounter” weekend:**

Catholic Engaged Encounter is a weekend retreat experience presented by married Catholic couples and a priest. It is designed to help engaged couples reflect, communicate, and understand their own lives, their future lives together, how they view their sexuality, and other aspects of married life. The main thrust of the weekend is personal reflection and dialogue between the engaged couple.

Catholic Engaged Encounter weekends are available in the San Francisco Archdiocese and the Sacramento Diocese in English (www.engagedencounter.org) and in the San Jose Diocese in Spanish (www.encuentrodenoviossj.org). The Santa Rosa Diocese does not have a *Catholic Engaged Encounter* program.

- **Parish Marriage Formation Program** (as endorsed by the Family Life Office):

Some Pastors may desire to provide a Marriage Formation Program within their own parish. These classes may consist of a number of sessions held in small group settings at the host parish over the course of several weeks or perhaps during one weekend. The sessions are generally led by the pastor and a knowledgeable parish team. The pastor desiring to provide a parish Marriage Formation Program is to consult with the Marriage and Family Life Office to assure that the proposed program is approved for use in the Diocese of Santa Rosa. Approved programs will be available in English and Spanish.

5. *God Is! Day of Renewal* (one-day retreat)

The *God Is! Day of Renewal* one-day retreat is an opportunity for the engaged couple to experience the fullness of faith found in the Catholic Church. It provides an opportunity to “meet” and fall in love with Jesus Christ and promotes a personal encounter with our triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This retreat meets people along their faith journey, reaching out through proclamation, personal witness, Sacramental renewal, prayer, Eucharistic adoration, music, and skits to help the participant’s faith come alive. It is the Good News of Salvation shared personally, lovingly, and joyfully! Additionally, the *God Is! Day of Renewal* provides a wonderful opportunity for the Catholic engaged couple (or individual if both are not Catholic) to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, an important part of the preparation for receiving the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The *God Is! Day of Renewal* one-day retreat is given at various locations throughout the Diocese of Santa Rosa. Generally it is presented in a parish on a Saturday and concludes with Mass with the parish community. Planning ahead to find where a *God Is! Day of Renewal* retreat is scheduled is important. Look on-line on the Diocese of Santa Rosa website or call the Family Life Office (707-566-3305) for more information.

6. Natural Family Planning Instruction

Another component of the marriage formation process is the required completion of training in *Natural Family Planning* (NFP). Instruction in NFP is one of the most practical ways the Church can help and encourage couples to conform their married love to the will of God. Married couples who experience the benefits of NFP share an enthusiasm and understanding of conjugal life, procreation, and education of their children in the area of human sexuality. NFP provides couples a deeper understanding of their sexuality by using the God-given phases of fertility and infertility for the purpose of achieving and/or postponing pregnancy. In this way, the unitive and procreative aspects of marital intimacy are maintained together in a responsible way.

The required NFP component for marriage formation is an introductory 2-hour instruction and discussion session provided by a certified individual or couple located within the Diocese of Santa Rosa with specific training and expertise in NFP. A “*Certificate of Completion*” must be submitted to the pastor upon completion of this introductory instruction. It is strongly recommended that the pastor encourage the couple to pursue further instruction in a full-course in a particular method of NFP. Consult the Family Life Office or the Diocese of Santa Rosa website (Marriage and Family Life → Natural Family Planning) for current listings of instructors and classes.

7. Final meeting with the Pastor (or delegate)

When all the components of the proximate preparation process are completed, it is now time for the pastor (or delegate) to have another conversation with the engaged couple to review their experience in preparing for their marriage. It is a time to critically analyze their intent and to verify their readiness for the Sacrament of Marriage. If any existing obstacles or impediments have been removed and the decision is made to move forward with the celebration of marriage, the next conversation should focus on Sacramental and Liturgical considerations.

For questions please contact the Marriage and Family Life Office, Diocese of Santa Rosa:

(707) 566-3305 or **familylife@srdiocese.org**