



Diocese of Bismarck

Office of Family Ministry
Family Life-Respect Life-Natural Family Planning

Resource Guide

Becoming a Marriage & Family Building Parish

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

As we enter into this "Year of Faith" one of the greatest and most rewarding apostolates for any parish is to work tirelessly to foster holy and healthy marriages and families. We know that the Church has always considered the marriage of one man and one woman to be permanent, faithful and fruitful because it is a God given vocation and, as such, He gives couples the sufficient grace not only to be married but to be married in His love. One of the principal works of the parish priest is to instruct and prepare men and women to be married in Christ within His Church, and to grow daily in their love for God by loving each other unconditionally.

This apostolate to marriage and to the married is absolutely necessary. I urge you to assist your Pastor as he devotes himself not only to those who wish to be married but to all of you who are married. Work to become a Marriage and Family Building Parish for the love of God who has blessed you in abundance in your lives and in your children. What you do to strengthen and foster true married life and love will strengthen your own commitment and it will strengthen your parish and our Diocese.

Be assured of my continued prayers for all of you and your families.

In Christ's love,

Bishop David D. Kagan

Parish Assessment Tool

The purpose of the Assessment Tool on pages 3-4 is to generate creative ideas and discussion to help improve the way a parish intentionally views and strengthens marriage and family. It can assist pastors, deacons, parish staff and volunteers to assess current efforts and to decide what 3 or 4 could be implemented in the next year.

Reviewing both sections, Strengthening the Married and Pastoral Care for Those in Need, is important. To keep strong marriages healthy and to improve the marriages in stable situations can assist couples throughout the lifecycle and provide needed tools when they face more challenging periods. As Church, we also need to be there for couples when they face difficult times or situations. Providing that loving support at a time in need will benefit the couple, the Church, and society as a whole.

Both sections have too many ideas to tackle. The recommendation is to decide on three ideas and work from there. It is important to: recruit volunteers to carry out the ideas, establish time lines and budgets. This will help achieve the desired outcome of becoming a Marriage and Family Building Parish. The Knights of Columbus, Catholic Women groups, Marriage Encounter communities, and other men's and women's parish groups could be asked to assist you.

Developing a Parish Plan

The following materials are ideas and suggestions for what can be done on a parish or cluster basis. To develop a pastoral plan and implementation of the plan, it is recommended to:

- o Review the materials included in this packet and on the website.
- o Recruit volunteers to develop plan. The Knights of Columbus, Diocesan staff, parish council, Catholic Daughters, Christian Mothers, men, women, and couples who have experienced a Marriage Encounter weekend may be good sources for seeking volunteers.
- o Have volunteers begin using the Parish Assessment Tool located on pages 3 and 4 of this booklet. Remember, the Assessment Tool has too many ideas to implement. Choose three or four items to begin with that would work for your parish (cluster).
- o Prioritize and create a calendar of events, timelines, and budget.
- o Implement plan.



STRENGTHENS couples to renew their commitment & grow in the skills for a happy & holy marriage

EDUCATES all members about the nature & purposes of marriage as a natural institution & a Christian sacrament

RATE THE FOLLOWING:

3 = Yes! We do that 2 = We do it, but it needs improvement 1 = No, we don't do that

STRENGTHENING the Married

“As a couple grows in virtue, they grow in holiness. In other words, the couple acquires, by prayer and discipline, those interior qualities that open them to God’s love and allow them to share in his love more deeply. Couples instinctively understand this when they speak about their marriage being a means of leading each other to heaven...”

“Communication and relationship skills are crucial to building such intimacy. As spouses learn to improve their communication, they can better respond to each other’s need for love, acceptance, and appreciation. They deepen marital intimacy and strengthen their practice of chastity.”

From Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan

What three things can our parish do for STRENGTHENING the Married ?

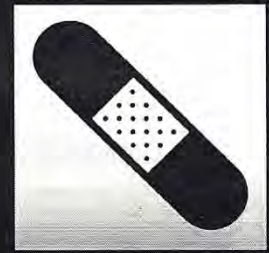
EDUCATING in Skills

1. Topics related to the promotion and protection of marriage in society are included in our programs.
2. Adult faith formation programs (RCIA) include the Church's teachings on marriage.
3. Parish library includes books and media offering support and help for marriage.
4. Baptismal preparation program includes the adjustments in marriage when a new baby is born and the importance of their role as primary educators of their children.
5. Education opportunities regarding healthy relationships, communication skills, financial planning are offered for singles, engaged couples, married couples, parents, divorced, widowed, hurting families, stepfamilies, and elders.
6. Theology of the Body is taught to youth, young adults and the married.
7. Natural Family Planning instruction is available and promoted regularly.
8. Bulletin inserts on marriage related topics and links to web-sites supporting marriage are included on a regular basis.

RENEWING & Enriching the Married

9. Monthly "Marriage-Building Sunday" is established.
10. Names are submitted for parish or diocesan anniversary celebration.
11. Married couples are publicly honored for milestone years at Mass, in the bulletin; with anniversary card, on Monthly "Marriage-Building Sunday," etc.
12. Prayers for married couples are in the pews or pamphlet racks.
13. Signage in the parish is displayed on being a "Marriage-Building" parish & What Have You Done for Your Marriage Today?
14. Parish retreats for married couples are offered at least annually.
15. Practical bulletin inserts promoting marriage include prayers, customs, rituals and traditions throughout the year.
16. Military couples are intentionally invited to marriage enrichment opportunities, particularly when reintegrating after deployment.
17. Marriage enrichment programs include components that are relevant to all cultures.
18. Follow-up contact is made with newly married couples.
19. Make available the study guide of the US Bishop's Pastoral Letter, Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan.
20. Marriage enrichment opportunities are provided/promoted monthly, quarterly, and annually.
21. Child care/activities are provided or list of potential babysitters is offered for marriage enrichment and other program opportunities.
22. Newly married couples are invited to be actively involved in the parish, invited to parish functions and to volunteer for specific functions.
23. Groups of married couples meet for support.
24. Couple Prayer Series is available to assist couples to pray together daily.
25. Opportunities exist for married couples to be in small Christian communities.

PROVIDES CARE to couples
and families in times of
difficulty and loss



RATE THE FOLLOWING:

3 = Yes! We do that 2 = We do it, but it needs improvement 1 = No, we don't do that

Pastoral Caring for time of Difficulties

1. Priests and deacons have intervention skills to help in initial care for struggling marriages.
2. A pastoral plan or "Marriage Care" is in place for couples who come to us with problems.
3. Someone on staff is knowledgeable to make good counseling referrals to pro-marriage counselors, Retrouvaille, etc.
4. Couples are supported through the adjustments of pregnancy and new parenting.
5. Couples struggling with infertility are supported and given guidance that conforms with Catholic teaching.
6. Couples are supported through the adoption process and beyond.
7. Support for those in 2nd marriages/blended families is available.
8. Education and support is available for pornography and substance abuse addictions and financial difficulties.
9. Partnerships exist with other parishes/cluster for assisting hurting marriages.
10. Copies of USCCB's When I call for Help pamphlet are available.
11. Domestic violence hot-line number is published in bulletin. 1-800-341-7009)
12. Post-abortion healing resources are advertised. www.rachelsvineyard.org
13. Support is given to families experiencing military deployment and assisted through the reintegration process.
14. A pastoral plan is developed to assist those couples and families experiencing concern about immigration issues.
15. We provide support for couples and their families when one of the spouses is severely or chronically ill or in nursing home.
16. We offer mentoring for spouse when other spouse is severely or chronically ill.

Pastoral CARING for times of Loss

17. Bereavement care is available for those who have lost a spouse.
18. Couples are supported through loss of pregnancy, miscarriage, and stillbirth.
19. Couples are supported through the loss of child.
20. Parents are supported when a child says they are struggling with same sex attraction.

"...We bishops urge couples in crisis to turn to the Lord for help. We also encourage them to make use of the many resources, including programs and ministries offered by the Church, that can help to save marriages, even those in serious difficulty."

*From Marriage
Life in the Divine Plan*

Pastoral CARING for those in Need

*What three things can
our parish do for the
Pastoral CARING for
those in need?*

Marriage & Family Enrichment Ideas

There are many ways to enrich marriage and family. Advertising up-coming retreats such as Marriage Encounter and Retrouvaille, blessing married couples at Mass, holding a special Cana Dinner at the parish for all married couples with special speakers, sending anniversary cards once a month, blessings for expectant parents at mass, honoring graduates at mass, hosting 'Blessings of Age' events for older parishioners, special blessings for all widows and widowers, vocation prayers including for singles and young adults, special (weekday or weekend) mass once a month celebrating birthdays that month are just a few of the ideas for strengthening marriage and family.

Below are materials that can be used to gather groups to educate and strengthen their lives as Catholic individuals and couples. This material is available from the Office of Family Ministry.

The Art of Marriage

A six-session DVD series in a creative, interactive format. *The Art of Marriage* weaves together expert teaching from a variety of different individuals, engaging stories, man-on-the-street interviews, humorous vignettes, and much more to present the challenges and the beauty of God's design. The six sessions are:

Love Happens: God's Purpose and Plan

Love Fades: Overcoming Isolation

Love Dances: Fulfilling Our Responsibilities

Love Interrupted: Communication and Conflict

Love Sizzles: Experiencing Real Intimacy

Love Always: Leaving a Lasting Legacy

Workbook and Facilitator's Guide are available with the set.

Marriage: Unique for a Reason

What is marriage? Are a man and a woman really essential to marriage? What about the child ... and the role of mothers and fathers? Is it discriminatory to defend marriage as the union of one man and one woman? What impact does the redefinition of marriage have on religious liberty? These are just a few of the many questions about marriage today. They all hinge upon the first question: What is marriage? When the answer to this question is understood, everything else falls into its proper place.

Marriage is unique for a reason. The following videos were developed to help answer the question "What is Marriage?" These videos were developed through the Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth at the USCCB. Study guides and leader's guides are available either on line www.usccbpublishing.org or from the Office of Family Ministry.

•**Made for Each Other:** Sexual difference is essential to marriage: <http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/sexual-difference-video/> 10 min. DVD with talking pts.

•**Made for Life:** Marriage welcomes the "supreme gift" of the child: <http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/children-video/> 10 min. DVD with talking pts.

Five Love Languages

with Dr Gary Chapman

Millions of couples have learned the simple way to better communication: *The Five Love Languages* by Dr. Gary Chapman introduces couples to a relationship revelation that's as profound as it is easy to grasp. Kit includes DVD with Viewers Guide and handouts.

Possible Bulletin Insert:

FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES:

Are you looking for an inexpensive way to spend some time with your spouse and build a stronger marriage? Married couples from our parish/cluster are invited to date night at Church from 6:00-9:00 PM on Friday, November __. A video titled "The Five Love Languages", by Gary Chapman will be shown. Please bring a dessert to share. RSVP to __ at __, or e-mail __ or sign up on the sheet in the Gathering Space. We hope to share a relaxing, relationship building evening!

Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage with Mark Gungor

Creator of the popular *Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage* Seminar, Mark explores the underlying dynamics of male/female relationships, combining striking clarity and practical solutions to common relationship woes.

Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage isn't your typical weekend marriage seminar. Mark's entertaining illustrations are so hilarious and original, you'll be sharing them with all your friends. His humor makes his teaching enjoyable, effective and memorable, helping husbands and wives remember these insights and immediately put them to work.

This 4-DVD set includes the entire weekend seminar that could be used as 4 'date night' series of 1 1/2 hr each. The topics include:

1. The Tale of Two Brains - "the laws of relational physics" - how men and women are wired differently and why.
2. Why Does He/She Do That - through a tool called the Flag Page, shows husbands and wives a new way to discover what makes their spouse tick.
3. The #1 Key to Incredible Sex - five steps couples need to know how to experience incredible, mind blowing, married sex ... don't miss it!
4. How to Stay Married and Not Kill Anybody - discover the power of forgiveness in marriage ... or "The Reset Button".

Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan

Encourage parish small groups or Why Catholic groups to study the Pastoral Letter, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, released November, 2009. The Leader's Guide includes several options for studying the pastoral letter; a single evening format, two, four or seven session format, or weekend retreat format. The Leader's Guide has background information for the facilitators, additional reading, reflection stories, discussion questions and journaling questions. The Leader's Guide and hard copies of the pastoral letter may be downloaded at:

- Pastoral Letter: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/love-and-life/upload/pastoral-letter-marriage-love-and-life-in-the-divine-plan.pdf>
- Leader's Guide: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/love-and-life/upload/leaders-guide.pdf>

Six Dates for Catholic Couples

A companion to the book *Happy Together, the Catholic Blueprint for a Loving Marriage* by John Bosio. In response to the Bishops' call, John Bosio, author of *Happy Together, the Catholic Blueprint for a Loving Marriage* and his wife Teri used the materials from his book to develop a program to help couples strengthen their marriage. The program is called *SIX DATES for Catholic Couples*. This is a ready to use program. It comes with a Coordinator's Guide, videos (each segments is 12 minutes) and handouts (in PDF format) ready to print.

The six videos inspire spouses to become aware of the gift that they are to each other as husband and wife, and of the preciousness of their relationship. The topics of the six dates are:

1. ONCE UPON A TIME... Each couple's love story is connected to God's love story.
2. MARRIAGE IS ... What we believe about marriage as Catholics.
3. WHAT KEEPS YOU TOGETHER? What keeps spouses in love is the ability to see God's image in each other.
4. WHAT ABOUT ME? Learning to love requires overcoming selfishness. God helps us with his graces and teaches us self-giving love.
5. THE BLUEPRINT OF LOVE... Christ's love for the Church is the blueprint for our loving. Learning to love like Christ loves is the source of our happiness.
6. WHERE DO I FIND THE COURAGE? Overcoming selfishness through learning to love is difficult. Prayer is the source of strength in our daily challenges. It opens us up to receive God's graces.

The scripts for the videos are true to Catholic teachings. They received the "Imprimatur" from Most Reverend David R. Choby, Diocese of Nashville.

Couple Prayer Series with Deacon Bob & Kathy Ovies

A complete series to help engaged or married couples to learn to pray together more safely, comfortably and consistently. Designed for small groups. Series includes 6 DVD's, Audio CD's, CD-Rom with print materials including 42 take home Prayer Experience, and 25 session Handouts. Topics include:

1. The Blessings of Couple Prayer (50:15 min.)
2. Thanking God Together (49:40)
3. Asking God's Help Together (67:20)
4. Praying with Scripture Together (49:30)
5. Sharing Worship Together (40:14)
6. Welcoming the Power to Forgive Together (67:00)

Courageous – The Movie

Four men, one calling: To serve and protect. As law enforcement officers, Adam Mitchell, Nathan Hayes and their partners are confident and focused, standing up to the worst the streets have to offer. Yet at the end of the day, they face a challenge that none of them are truly prepared to tackle: fatherhood. When tragedy strikes home, these men are left wrestling with their hopes, fears, faith, and fathering. Can a newfound urgency help these dads draw closer to God...and to their children?

DVD (129 minutes).

Fireproof - The Movie

Inside burning buildings, Capt. Caleb Holt lives by the old firefighter's adage: Never leave your partner behind. In the cooling embers of his marriage, it's another story. As he and his wife prepare to enter divorce proceedings, Caleb's dad asks his son to try an experiment: "The Love Dare." As Caleb works his way through "The Love Dare" he makes a life-changing commitment to Christ and begins to understand what it means to truly love his wife.

DVD (118 minutes)

I Love You More with Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott

Six sessions on DVD on how everyday problems can strengthen your marriage; featuring married couples and their stories. Each session about 25 min.

1. Love is not enough. 2. Tackle this problem first...and all the others get easier. 3. The six subtle saboteurs of every marriage. 4. How to solve any problem in five (not so easy) steps. 5. Joining your spirits like never before. 6. The good that comes from a problem-solving marriage.

Making Marriage Work: A Biblical Look at Marriage with Drs Les & Leslie Parrott

Set of 4 DVD's (about 25 minutes each) covering the topics of:

1. The Four Myths of Marriage.
2. Pressure.
3. Conflict
4. Faith.

Leaders guide is available.

Excellent series opportunity of 1 ½ hr length for couples of all ages.

NFP is...?

26 min. DVD from Diocese of Phoenix (2010) is an educational video featuring couples and physicians sharing the beauty and health benefits of using Natural Family Planning. All pastors can receive a free copy of this DVD from Office of Family Ministry. It is used in the diocesan Pre Marriage Seminars. Use in a parish setting open to all ages beginning with high school. Feature the DVD and invite a NFP Instructor to present an introductory session on Natural Family Planning with Q&A following.

PREPARE to LAST, Creating a Great Marriage (date nights)

Featuring Jeff & Debby McElroy

3 DVD Set- with couple worksheets on 8 core subjects including bonus feature of "Stepfamilies: Starting Strong". Can be used in a group setting or one on one for couples.

The Gift: Your Call to Greatness with Christopher West

One hour DVD with Leader's Guide and workbook. Excellent for a one-night session and to promote an Introduction to the *Theology of the Body* study.

An Introduction to Theology of the Body, Discovering the Master Plan for Your Life with Christopher West

4 DVD Set-8-30 minute sessions with student workbook and Leader's Guide. This could be offered to couples and individuals in group settings.

Created and Redeemed, the Universal Message of John Paul II's Theology of the Body with Christopher West

4 DVD Set with 8-30 minute sessions.

Theology of the Body for Teens: High School Edition by Brian Butler, and Jason & Crystalina Evert

Every day your teens are thinking about their sexuality as they search for meaning in their lives. *Theology of the Body for Teens: High School Edition* is a program for Catholic teenagers based on John Paul II's Theology of the Body that helps them understand the meaning of their bodies, the significance of their sexuality, the purpose of their lives, and how they were uniquely created for greatness. Using a great mix of stories, real-life examples, activities, prayers, and references to the culture that teens understand, *TOB for Teens: High School Edition* takes the two hottest topics on the planet - God and sex - and "marries" them through Pope John Paul II's compelling vision for love and life. Available for review & use: DVD Set, Leader's Guide, Parent's Guide and a Student Workbook (Suggested for youth in grades 9-12)

Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition by Brian Butler, Jason Evert, and Colin and Aimee MacIver

There is little doubt that pre-teens are in an often confusing time of quest and discovery, especially with issues concerning their bodies, their sexuality, and their future. This series has been developed to help educators, youth ministers, and parents

successfully deliver solid and relevant answers. This 8-session program, specifically designed for 6th through 8th grades, can be used as a stand-alone program, but works perfectly as a precursor to the High School Edition.

Available for review & use: DVD Set, Leader's Guide, Parent's Guide and a Student Workbook
(Suggested for youth in grades 6-8)

Marriage Built to Last: Living Intentionally & Loving Biblically with Pastor Chip Ingram

Set of 6 DVDs running from 25-32 minutes each, Leader's Guide and workbooks for runoffs. Topics include:

- Adjusting to Expectations
- Learning to Communicate
- Breaking Down Walls
- Resolving Conflict
- Restoring Sex and Intimacy
- Striving for a Christ-centered Marriage

DVDs also include David Ramsey financial expert and Kurt Warner MVP quarterback.

An excellent series opportunity of 1½ hr. length for couples of all ages.

Married and Loving it! from University of Idaho

Curriculum for 5 class sessions using PowerPoint and all handouts needed. Topics include:

- Class 1. Communication
- Class 2. Finances
- Class 3. Freedom or Fiasco?
- Class 4. Madly in Love
- Class 5. A Daily Affair.

Appeals to general public ranging from 17 years to mid 60s. All material needed, very simple to facilitate. Plan 1 ½ hrs. per session.

REFOCCUS: An Instrument for Marriage Enrichment

This instrument can be used when working with individual hurting couples in a pastoral setting or in group enrichment format using VHS tapes (5-10 min each session) with handouts as a 5 session series. The five topics/sessions include:

1. Marriage as a Process
1. Intimacy
2. Compatibility
3. Communication
4. Commitment.

The Third Option with Pat Ennis and Diocese of Syracuse, NY

This program is for pastors who are looking for ongoing help for struggling marriages. If you have a counselor or family

minister on staff this would be an excellent program tool to reach large groups.

The manual comes complete with worksheet masters, guided meditations, CD with Power Point for all 14 workshops. This is a very inclusive series to be offered for hurting couples once a week. A coordinator, who has a heart for marriage, is organized, emotionally healthy and good with people is needed to run this program.

Participants can choose the 2 hr. workshop(s) they want to attend and do not have to attend all 14. Most often they choose to come back once they have experienced one session.

PARENTING INFORMATION:

Building Family Strengths Workshop: with Joyce McDowall

Two hour interactive workshop for parents and/or grandparents and children from ages 5 through teens. To identify the six qualities of communication, commitment, appreciation, time together, spirituality and strategies for coping with stress needed to keep families strong. A family can assess which qualities are strong and which ones need some fine-tuning. Specific exercises related to each strength can help the family develop that quality.

Your Child, Video Seminar: essentials of discipline with Dr. James Dobson

12 sessions DVD or VHS running from 10 to 25 minutes. Could be used as a 6 session series showing 2 each session alone or using leader's and participant's guide for facilitating small group study in your church.

MOMS- Ministry of Mothers Sharing

An outreach ministry of the Sisters of St. Benedict of St. Paul's Monastery.

This 8 week session is a spiritual enrichment for women of all ages and life experiences. It affirms a woman's sacred vocation, enhances the Christian perspective and uses a personal journal for reflection and journaling. An excellent evangelization tool for parishes wanting to reach out to women and their families. Go to www.ministryofmotherssharing.org

MOPS – Mothers of Preschoolers.

This program exists to encourage, equip and develop every mother of preschoolers to realize her potential as a woman, mother and leader in the name of Jesus Christ. An excellent evangelization tool for parishes wanting to reach out to women and their families. Go to www.pops.org.

Moms in Prayer International (formerly Moms in Touch)

The mission of *Moms in Prayer International* is to impact children and schools worldwide for Christ by gathering mothers to pray regularly (weekly is optimal). This is a one hour time frame for women to gather. Many bring their children –childcare can be provided or toys and space for the children to play nearby. Another excellent evangelization tool for parishes wanting to reach out to women and their families. Go to www.MomsInPrayer.org .

All above materials are available from the Office of Family Ministry

What are the practical offshoots of such offerings?

All of the DVD sessions make excellent series opportunities usually with a time frame of 1 1/2 hr length from gathering to finish for individuals and couples of all ages. These sessions, whether monthly, quarterly or during particular seasons such as Advent and Lent, help to strengthen couple relationships while building family, parish, and the larger community. Add childcare, snack or dessert and you will have lots of attendees. They are wonderful evangelization tools because in answering for many a desire to grow or need for marital help and family stability, they come to see the parish as a safe haven which draws them back to learn more about Christ and His Church.

Currently many parishes and communities are seeing a large influx of new families with no local roots or sense of community connection. Offering a safe haven for them to gather, bring their children, get to know others and feel welcome while spreading the Word of God’s love by offering practical educational opportunities will encourage them to become active members of the parish and community.

Churches can get even more creative:

1. Rummage sales of children’s clothing, toys, books, information on area resources available for new families.
2. Childcare coops/exchanges
3. Play dates for children and new parents
4. Prayer trees teaming new parents with local ‘grandparents’
5. Men’s groups offering bible study, prayer group, studying relationship DVDs, book discussions.
6. When they enroll as parishioners they could receive a gift of the Centennial History book or the Centennial cookbook or both if the parish has some on hand. Copies are available at the diocese.

General websites Resources

- foryourmarriage.org
- smartmarriages.com
- marriage-encounter.org
- uscbbresources.org
- marriageuniqueforareason.org
- wwme.org
- retrouvaille.org
- marriagealive.com
- buildingstrongfamilies.info
- becomingparents.com
- familywellness.com

PLANNING SESSIONS:

- ✓ Registration form to get an idea of the number although walk ins are always welcomed
- ✓ Sign in sheet at the event to gather names of attendees, possible new parishioners and to begin a mailing list for other event opportunities
- ✓ Name tags they do themselves so people can get to know one another, including for the children
- ✓ Set up and welcoming committee
- ✓ IT person in charge of audio/visual equipment
- ✓ Short Opening prayer and welcome
- ✓ Runoffs and pencils
- ✓ Refreshment committee-simple fares like lemonade, coffee, popcorn, cookies, or bars
- ✓ Childcare provider and helpers
- ✓ Clean up and break down committee

WHO WILL BE:

At registration/Name tag table
Lead facilitator
Timekeeper
Hosts/Greeters

RESPONSIBLE FOR:

Handouts
Snack table and coffee
Tape player and music (if used)
Environment
Opening prayer
Closing prayer
Calling couples before the event (if applicable)

DO SPECIFIC TALKS/DUTIES IF NEEDED:

1
2
3

CHECKLISTS

SUPPLIES

- ✓ Banners and hooks or clips for hanging if applicable
- ✓ Candle and matches for conference table as symbol of God's presence
- ✓ Bible
- ✓ paper and pens
- ✓ Handout file with sufficient copies
- ✓ Resource table with: Handouts from local Retrouvaille Brochures, Marriage encounters, Quick Reference Guide for Help and for Natural Family Planning information (print off from diocesan website). List of marriage counselors (Ask your diocese for assistance in identifying counselors who work to keep marriages together.), list of other local resources -AA, AL anon, etc.

- ✓ Tape player set to 1st song/music if used
- ✓ Bell (for timing/calling end to breaks)
- ✓ Coffee Pot(s), coffee, tea, creamer, sugar
- ✓ Coffee & water cups, spoons and stirring sticks
- ✓ A few paper plates, a knife
- ✓ Paper napkins
- ✓ Paper towels (optional)
- ✓ Kleenex
- ✓ Name tags for everyone including volunteers and children
- ✓ Felt tip pens for name tags
- ✓ First Aid Kit

CONFERENCE/Gathering ROOM

- ✓ Presentation table or podium
- ✓ Microphone (this may be especially necessary for large groups)
- ✓ Table for supplies/resources with table cloth
- ✓ Table for snacks and beverages with table cloth
- ✓ Locations to hang banners (consider ordering a “We are a Marriage Building Parish” banner through Office of Family Ministry)
- ✓ Tables & Chairs
- ✓ Locate electric outlet(s), light and heat/AC controls
- ✓ Locate fire exits, nearest rest rooms and dining room to let as points of information to share at the beginning of the event

Marriage Building Sundays

Marriage Building Sundays are designed to honor those who are married and to promote marriage to the entire congregation throughout the year. Parishes may send individual anniversary cards with an invitation to attend the mass when couples will be honored or they may place a notice in the parish bulletin inviting couples celebrating an anniversary that month to attend the mass when the couples will be honored. (Anniversary cards are available from the Office of Family Ministry.) A special blessing is given at this liturgy (see below for an example.) This would be repeated each month.

The following blessing may be used:

Wedding Anniversary Blessing

(Invite those with anniversaries this month to please stand)

Priest or Deacon: Let us pray for those celebrating wedding anniversaries this month, and so we invite all couples and individuals with wedding anniversaries in [this month], including widows and widowers, to please stand.

Priest: Almighty and eternal God, you have so exalted the unbreakable bond of marriage that it has become the sacramental sign of your Son's union with the church as His spouse.

Look with kindness on these married couples. Amid the joys and struggles of their life, You have preserved the union between them; renew their marriage covenant, increase Your love in them, and strengthen their bond of peace, so that they may always rejoice in the gifts of Your blessing.

Look with kindness, too, on those whose spouses have died as we join in thanksgiving for the blessing of their marriage. May You console and comfort them in their loss, hold their spouses in Your gentle embrace and grant them hope in the promise of everlasting life. May they trust in You and allow Your grace to direct their steps as they continue this journey of the heart.

Priest or Deacon: Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing.

Priest: May God, the Almighty Father, give you joy. May the only Son of God have mercy on you and help you in good times and in bad. May the Holy Spirit always fill your hearts with love. And may Almighty God bless you, + the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful-Sample

Note: This list of sample petitions includes a range of approaches and concerns. Pastors, liturgists, and others preparing the Prayer of the Faithful will need to select or adapt such prayers to reflect the particular needs of each community and the Scriptures, seasons, and prayers of the day.

For a deepened and ongoing appreciation of the vocation of marriage and family in the life of the Church and society. We pray to the Lord.

For the success of efforts to uphold marriage between one man and one woman in our society. We pray to the Lord.

For those who struggle with reconciling their faith and their support of family and friends with same-sex attraction. We pray to the Lord.

For all married couples and their families, that their enduring love will be a sign of hope to the world. We pray to the Lord.

For all married couples and their families, that God's grace will sustain them in their witness to Christ's love. We pray to the Lord.

For all married couples and their families, that their faithful witness to God's love will inspire those around them. We pray to the Lord.

For those preparing for marriage in the coming months: may their lives always mirror the love of Christ and His Church as they live out their vocation to married life. We pray to the Lord.

For all married couples and their families, especially those who experience sorrow and difficulty in their lives, that God's grace will sustain and renew them. We pray to the Lord.

For all those who work with marriage preparation and enrichment, that their efforts will be blessed and guided by God's Spirit of Love. We pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Married Couples

You blessed the union of married couples so that they might reflect the union of Christ with his Church:

Look with kindness on them.

Renew their marriage covenant, increase your love in them, and strengthen their bond of peace so that, with their children, they may always rejoice in the gift of your blessing.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

USCCB www.foryourmarriage.org

Litany of Marriage & Family

Lord, have mercy *Lord have mercy*
Christ have mercy *Christ have mercy*
Lord have mercy *Lord have mercy*
Holy Mary, spouse of St. Joseph *pray for us*
St. Joseph, husband of Mary *pray for us*
Holy Mary, Mother of God *pray for us*
Blessed Mary, Mother of Jesus *pray for us*
Holy Family of Bethlehem *pray for us*
Holy Innocents *pray for us*
Holy Family of Egypt *pray for us*
Holy Family of Refugees *pray for us*
Holy Family of Nazareth *pray for us*
SS Mary & Joseph, first teachers of their child
Jesus *pray for us*
Mary, mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross
pray for us
SS Elizabeth & Zachariah *pray for us*
SS Anna & Joachim, grandparents of Jesus
pray for us
Blessed Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi,
example of Christian marriage *pray for us*
SS. Isidore & Maria, protectors of farm families
pray for us
St. Giana Milio, witness of Pro Life & working
mothers *pray for us*
St. Margaret of Scotland, patroness of large
families *pray for us*
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, a model of hoping-against
hope *pray for us*
St. Elizabeth of Hungary, help with loss of a child
pray for us
St. Monica, you rejoiced for every good influence
pray for us
St. Jane DeChantal, that we might teach our
children well *pray for us*
St. Bridget of Sweden, widow & mother
pray for us
SS. Benedict & Scholastica *pray for us*
St. Rita of Cascia, help for difficult marriages
pray for us
St. Maximillian Kolbe, you gave your life that a
husband and father could live *pray for us*
St. Thomas More, patron of stepparents & adopted
children *pray for us*
Blessed Martyred Sisters of Nowogrodek, models
of unselfish love & defenders of the family
pray for us

Blessed Louis & Zelia Martin, parents of Therese
of Lesieux, that we might be worthy parents
pray for us
All you holy men & women *pray for us*
All you holy married saints *pray for us*
All you defenders of the family *pray for us*
All you holy husbands & wives *pray for us*
All you holy fathers & sons *pray for us*
All you holy sons & daughters *pray for us*
All you holy brothers & sisters *pray for us*
All you holy grandfathers & grandmothers
pray for us
All you caregivers of aging parents *pray for us*
Lord, strengthen us in our marriages & families
Lord, hear us
From all harm to our families *Lord, save us*
From every sin and failings in our relationships
with one another *Lord, save us*
Guide and protect Your holy Church,
Lord hear our prayer
Guide and protect our marriages & families - our
domestic churches *Lord, hear our prayer*
Surround in Your love, those couples & families
struggling to do your will *Lord hear our prayer*
Inspire married couples to be open to new life in
their families *Lord, hear our prayer*
Give wisdom to families dealing with untimely or
difficult pregnancies *Lord, hear our prayer*
Bring healing, reconciliation and peace to
struggling marriages & families
Lord, hear our prayer
Strengthen marriages & families to be in Your
service *Lord, hear our prayer*
*O God, you have given us the Holy Family as an
example for us. Help us to commit ourselves to
following their example of love for each other. We
make this prayer in the name of the Father, the
Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

Compiled by the National Association of Catholic Family
Life Ministers (NACFLM.org)