

# *The Sacrament of Marriage*

Congratulations to our newly engaged couples! This article is intended to help answer questions of those preparing to enter the covenant of marriage.

The Sacrament of Marriage is a covenant, which is more than a contract. Covenant always expresses a relationship between persons. The marriage covenant refers to the relationship between the husband and wife, a permanent union of persons capable of knowing and loving each other and God. The celebration of marriage is also a liturgical act, appropriately held in a public liturgy at church. Catholics are urged to celebrate their marriage within the Eucharistic Liturgy. (USCCA, p. 281) For these reasons, marriage does not take place outdoors or at a destination other than a Catholic Church.

So that the “I do” of the spouses may be a free and responsible act, and so that the marriage covenant may have solid and lasting human and Christian foundations, preparation is of prime importance. It is imperative to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families, about the dignity of married love, its role and exercise, so that having learned the value of chastity, they will be able at a suitable age to engage in honorable courtship and enter upon a marriage of their own. (CCC, no. 1632)

Because Christian marriage is a sacrament, the Church wants couples to be well prepared. The marriage preparation program is to help couples to better understand the sacrament, to evaluate and deepen their readiness, and to gain insights into themselves as an individual and a couple. Marriage preparation can look a little different for each couple, but the ultimate goal is to prepare you for a lifetime of marriage.



## **Eight Steps to Marriage Preparation**

1. Check the availability of the priest and the church.
2. Initial meeting with the Sacramental Coordinator for paperwork completion.
3. Meeting with the priest or deacon to discuss readiness for marriage.
4. A premarital inventory. A tool used with the priest to target discussion in areas important to marriage.
5. Sponsor couple and educational component.
6. Natural family planning course.
7. Confession
8. Final meeting with priest.

*Congratulations!*