

- (2B) **Marriage Preparation Couple Program.** A parish-trained married couple at St. Catherine will work with you to discuss personality differences, communication, sexuality, finances, religion and values. When you meet with the Parish Priest to discuss your PREPARE/ENRICH, he will contact the Sponsor Couple, who will contact you directly to schedule a date and time. There is no fee involved. **-AND-**
- (2B) **Pre-Cana.** This is an eight hour Saturday program sponsored by the Diocesan Center for Family Life. It is offered in English and Spanish. For more information, visit: <http://dcfl.org/marriage-family-life/marriage-preparation/pre-cana/> There is a fee for this program.

#### STEP FIVE: PREPARING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

- (A) **Only if your wedding is at St. Catherine:** Schedule an appointment to meet with the parish wedding coordinator, who will assist you in preparing the liturgy and music for your wedding. **You should schedule this appointment at least two months before the wedding.**
- See the brochure: “Practical Concerns for Marrying at St. Catherine.” Read this brochure before contacting the florist or making any plans for decorations of the Church.**
- (B) **If you are getting married elsewhere,** contact the parish priest who is doing your wedding and ask for directions about preparing for the wedding ceremony and music.

#### STEP SIX: FINAL MEETING WITH THE PRIEST

Only after completing all of the requirements, schedule a meeting with the priest preparing you for marriage. This meeting is specifically to discuss the spirituality of your marriage. The Catholic Church encourages each couple to address the spiritual dimensions of their lives and thus their relationship individually and together with God. We believe that God wants you to have a happy marriage and will help you to have such a marriage.

#### STEP SEVEN: OBTAINING YOUR WEDDING LICENSE

- (A) If marrying in Florida, only after you complete the above preparations should you apply for your marriage license. A Florida marriage license is valid for 60 days only, anywhere in the state of Florida. First obtain a Certificate of Completion of a Marriage Preparation Course from the Family Life office – this will qualify you for a reduced license fee. Contact the Clay County Clerk of Court for more information.
- (B) Please bring your wedding license to the Church Office as soon as possible to be put in your marriage file if your wedding is at St. Catherine. (If you mail it to us, send by certified mail.)

#### Prayer for Engaged Couples

Father, You made both of us.  
 You love us and you know us so well.  
 It was Your hand that led us to one another.  
 Now, as we prepare to begin our journey together,  
 united in love, we turn to You

Help us to be for one another  
 a sacrificial lover, a generous listener,  
 a firm supporter, a best friend.

Help us to treat each other with respect  
 and not to take each other for granted.

Remind us that every moment together is precious,  
 that our love is more important than wedding details.  
 Keep our sense of humor alive and well  
 during the busy days of preparation.

Through our good times and bad,  
 in our joys and sorrows,  
 be with us, guiding us and hold us  
 in Your gentle embrace.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Preparation for the



## Sacrament of Marriage

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA CATHOLIC CHURCH  
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### STEP ONE: MEET WITH A PARISH PRIEST AT ST. CATHERINE

Dear Engaged Couple,

Congratulations on making this important decision in your lives – the decision to marry one another!

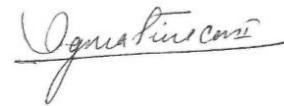
In the Catholic Church, the kind of lifelong, loving commitment which you intend to have as a married couple is a sacrament, a God given sign, of what Christ's love is like for all of us. God's love revealed in Christ is a sacrificial love, an all-giving love, and marriage calls for a similar sacrificial love. We believe that God will give this love to all who ask for it.

The commitment of marriage is not to be entered into lightly or without preparation. You as a couple have already been preparing for marriage by spending time together and sharing with each other who you are, what you hope for in life, what you believe, what is important to you, and what you want for each other in a life together. The Catholic Church asks you to enter into a final stage of preparation before you marry.

This brochure explains what this final stage of preparation involves at St. Catherine Parish. In this preparation, you will examine your communication together about important areas of your life which will impact your marriage. We also share with you about the Christian theology and spirituality of marriage, such as what God wants for you and your marriage.

When getting married, it is easy for the practicalities of preparing for the wedding day to demand a great deal of your time and attention, but remember, your wedding is for one day; your marriage is for a lifetime. We hope that the preparation that you will experience at St. Catherine will be personalized, helpful, and enriching for your future life together.

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Ignatius Plathanam, CMI  
Pastor

**If you have been married before, no date can be set for the wedding until you discuss the circumstances with the priest.**

- (A) **Contact a parish priest at St. Catherine at least eight months before your planned wedding date.** The priest will explain marriage preparation at St. Catherine and answer any questions you may have. At this meeting, the priest will interview each of you to make sure that you are both free to marry.
- (B) The priest will pencil in a time in our parish calendar for **your wedding date and rehearsal**; but you must complete your final preparations for this to be a “firm date.” (*If your wedding is at another parish, often you must first begin preparations where you live before a date can be set for your out of town wedding.*)
- (C) **If a visiting priest** will witness your marriage at St. Catherine, **he must contact Fr. Ignatius as soon as possible** after you begin preparation.
- (D) A wedding file will be created. **You will need to present the following documents:**
  - (1) **Baptismal Certificates.** Catholics must furnish a recently issued Baptismal Certificate with notations (dated within six months of the wedding). **Contact the parish at which you were baptized.** Other Christians who are baptized should furnish some record of their baptism (it does not have to be recently issued.)
  - (2) **Freedom to Marry Forms.** You will be provided with forms which are to be signed by witnesses (usually parents or relatives) before a notary or a Catholic priest or deacon. These forms testify that you have not been previously married.

**These documents should be dropped off at the Church Office at least 3 months before your wedding.**

- (3) **Dispensations.** The parish priest will arrange for permission from the Bishop if these are needed. When marrying someone who is not Catholic, a Catholic reaffirms that he or she will continue to practice the Catholic faith and share this faith with their children, usually raising the children as Catholic. The Bishop then gives permission to marry in the Catholic Church.

Please note that Catholic weddings are almost always celebrated in a Church. **The Diocese of Saint Augustine does not permit outdoor weddings.**

### STEP TWO: SCHEDULE THE PREPARE/ENRICH SURVEY AND REVIEW

**Soon after meeting with the parish priest**, you must next schedule a time to take the PREPARE/ENRICH Survey. This is a survey of communication skills and is very personalized to you as a couple. Once you have taken the survey, you will then review the results with your parish priest. The cost is \$35.00 payable to the Diocesan Center for Family Life. To register, visit: [dcfl.org/marriage-family-life/marriage-preparation/preparenrich/preparenrich-form/](http://dcfl.org/marriage-family-life/marriage-preparation/preparenrich/preparenrich-form/)

There is an option of taking a different survey. Please speak with the parish priest if you have any questions.

### STEP THREE: AUTOBIOGRAPHY

True love is based upon knowledge of yourself and your intended spouse. There is something definite and final about putting thing into writing. The Diocese requires engaged couples to write autobiographies that they share with one another and are included in the marriage file. Please follow the suggested outline provided in the brochure on autobiographies.

### STEP FOUR: ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

You must participate in the following preparation programs following diocesan requirements:

- (1) **Natural Family Planning.** Couples seeking to be married within the Diocese of St. Augustine are required to be instructed in a method of natural family planning approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning. For more information, visit: <http://dcfl.org/fertility-awareness/fertility-awareness-overview/>
- (2A) **Engaged Encounter.** This is a highly recommended weekend retreat held at our Diocesan Retreat Center, Mary, in Switzerland, FL (south of Jacksonville). For more information, visit: <http://dcfl.org/marriage-family-life/marriage-preparation/engaged-encounter/> Retreats are offered monthly and pre-registration is required at least a week before the scheduled retreat. There is a fee for this program.

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