



Information for Newly Engaged Couples

First of all, allow us to congratulate you on your engagement!

This is a very exciting time, and we share the joy and the hope that you feel as an engaged couple. We wish to support you as much as we can as you prepare to join your lives together in Christ's Church.

As part of your engagement, the Church requires marriage preparation so that: couples have a better understanding of marriage as both a *sacrament* and a *vocation*; to help you discern and deepen your commitment to each other in marriage; and to learn more about each other and yourselves before you get married. Marriage preparation is a great blessing, and numerous university studies have shown that couples who engage in marriage preparation have a significantly lower risk of divorce than couples who do not (e.g. Stanley, "Premarital Education," 2006). With that in mind, the Diocese of Harrisburg provides "Marriage Preparation Guidelines" that can be found below.

Marriage preparation begins and ends in your parish, so please make an appointment to begin your preparation and to determine which course of preparation you will take.

Marriage Preparation Guidelines

1. Canonical process – Begin with an initial interview with a parish priest or deacon, where the required canonical forms are completed.
2. Formational Process
3. Completion and discussion of a pre-marital inventory at your parish (e.g. FOCCUS, PREPARE).
4. Participation in one or more of the following:
 1. A parish-based mentoring program, combined with a *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* conference; or
 2. A Catholic Engaged Encounter weekend.
5. Assessment process – A second meeting with your priest or deacon.
6. Instructional process (as needed).
7. Liturgical planning for the wedding.

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Mentor Couples

Many parishes support a network of married couples who help guide and prepare engaged couples through their discernment period. Our office supports these parish-based programs by training new mentor couples, offering periodic in-service trainings, and overseeing the use of the FOCCUS inventory and other tools. To find out more about mentor couples in our parish, please contact our parish office at 717-533-7168 Ext 100.

If you are interested in becoming a Mentor Couple, you can find more information [here](#)

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled

As a complement to the mentor couples program, *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* is a single-day program that explores the Church's teachings on: marriage as a sacrament and a vocation; the human person and God's design for marriage; and human sexuality. To learn more about the God's Plan program, please visit their website [here](#).

The diocese offers many *God's Plan* conferences throughout the year and in a variety of diocesan locations, *although you should only sign up for a conference after your initial meeting at the parish.* For more information on dates and locations, please contact our parish office at 717-533-7168 Ext. 100.

