
Marriage Preparation Policy

Diocese of Marquette

Department of Evangelization & Education



December 1, 2018

MARRIAGE PREPARATION POLICY

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IOANNES FRANCISCUS

Divina Miseratione et



Apostolicae Sedis Gratia

EPISCOPUS MARQUETTENSIS

DECREE

PROMULGATION OF THE MARRIAGE PREPARATION POLICY

After having conducted a consultation process regarding marriage preparation in the Diocese of Marquette, it was deemed opportune to issue this policy to establish what is required for marriage preparation in the Diocese of Marquette.

Having consulted with the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Marquette on February 21, 2017;

Therefore, in accord with canons 8 §2, 29, and 391 §1 I hereby decree and promulgate as particular law the Marriage Preparation Policy of the Diocese of Marquette.

Any former marriage policies of the Diocese of Marquette and any policy or particular law that is contrary to the Marriage Preparation Policy is hereby repealed and abrogated.

The provisions of this decree shall become effective for all couples that are to be married on or after December 1, 2018.

Given at the chancery in Marquette, Michigan this 16th day of October in the year 2017.



Most Reverend John F. Doerfler, STD, JCL
Bishop of Marquette


Very Reverend Daniel J. Moll, Chancellor

Introduction

In addition to the universal laws of the Church, this policy is established as particular law for the Diocese of Marquette, in order to foster strong marriages and family life and to ensure that engaged couples are adequately prepared to give themselves to each other in the life-long marital partnership ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. Marriage preparation is a key moment for evangelization. We must strive to meet engaged couples where they are and accompany them to take a step forward in their faith journey. Many engaged couples have not been well-formed in their faith. We are grateful that they desire to marry in the Church, and we approach them with open and loving hearts. Now is an opportunity to help them encounter Christ. Through the process of marriage preparation, may engaged couples deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and foster a love for each other that is permanent, faithful, unconditional and fruitful, as Jesus loves us. May their marriages be a beacon of Christ's love in the world.

I. The Procedure for Marriage Preparation

Normally, the process for marriage preparation should take at least six months. Pastors at their discretion may shorten the time of preparation for serious reasons, provided that the requirements for preparation may be fulfilled.

Modifications to the procedure described in this policy may be sought for just reasons in individual circumstances by requesting a dispensation from the local ordinary.

The procedure for marriage preparation consists of four fundamental stages as follows:

1. The Initial Meeting with the Priest or Deacon assisting at the marriage.
 - The initial meeting serves an opportunity to meet the couple and lay a foundation for evangelization. In addition, necessary canonical requirements are initiated.
 - The priest or deacon are to meet with the engaged couple prior to scheduling the date of the wedding.
 - The M-A-form, or Prenuptial Questionnaire, is to be completed to determine the freedom to marry. If it is completed by someone other than the pastor it is to be submitted to him (cf. Canon 1070).
 - The date of the wedding must not be scheduled until the freedom to marry is determined.
 - Arrangements are made to obtain affidavits concerning the freedom to marry. Such affidavits are used when there is a lack of evidence regarding the freedom to marry.
 - An annotated baptismal certificate that has been issued within the last six months is to be requested from each of the baptized parties, and they must be obtained prior to the wedding.
 - The procedure for obtaining a marriage license is explained. The license must be obtained prior to the wedding. The marriage cannot be celebrated without the license. (cf. Canon 1071 §1, 2°).

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- Materials regarding the planning of the liturgy (e.g., choice of scripture readings, music, etc.) are distributed and discussed at the initial meeting.

2. Premarital Inventory

- After the initial meeting the Prepare/Enrich inventory is administered by the priest, deacon, or mentor couple.
- The couple complete the inventory online, and follow up sessions are conducted to discuss the results and facilitate the growth of the couple.

3. Formation in Faith and Virtue

- This stage of marriage preparation is aimed at facilitating a deeper encounter with Jesus and growth in their faith practice, fostering weekly Mass attendance, providing catechesis on the Sacrament of Marriage and sexual morality, and forming the virtues necessary to live marriage fruitfully. In addition, couples of child-bearing age are to be trained in Natural Family Planning.
 - This stage may be conducted by the priest, deacon, or mentor couple. It may be done individually, or in groups. It is recommended that a team approach be utilized, that the priest or deacon and the mentor couple be involved in this process. It is for the pastor to determine what is done by each. Vicariates and parishes may choose to collaborate to offer a marriage preparation retreat conducted by married couples. The online option below allows for preparation when the engaged couple lives at a distance.
 - Parishes are to choose one of the following three programs for this formation:
 1. *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage*, Ascension Press.
 2. *Beloved: Finding Happiness in Marriage, Part 1: The Mystery and Meaning of Marriage*. Augustine Institute.
 3. CatholicMarriagePrep.com. Agape Ministries
 - It is preferred that training in Natural Family Planning is done through local teachers. However, if a local teacher is not available, NFP training can be completed online through the Couple to Couple League.
4. A final meeting, as needed, to plan and prepare for the liturgy celebrating matrimony.

II. Procedure for Convalidations

The preparation for convalidations is to follow the procedure above. The overall time of preparation may be shortened at the pastor's discretion, and the third stage of formation in faith and virtue may be adapted at the pastor's discretion to the pastoral needs of the couple.

III. Confirmation

Canon 1065 §1 states: “Catholics who have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation are to receive it before they are admitted to marriage if it can be done without grave inconvenience.”

Therefore, unconfirmed Catholics are to be invited and encouraged to receive Confirmation prior to their marriage. For the valid reception of Confirmation the following are required: the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew the baptismal promises (Canon 889 §2). However, since the lack of Confirmation is not an impediment to marriage, it is not grounds to deny the Sacrament of Matrimony.

IV. Place of Marriage

According to canon 1118 §1. “A marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic baptized party is to be celebrated in a parish church. It can be celebrated in another church or oratory with the permission of the local ordinary or pastor.

§2. The local ordinary can permit a marriage to be celebrated in another suitable place.

§3. A marriage between a Catholic party and a non-baptized party can be celebrated in a church or in another suitable place.”

Dispensations for Catholics to marry outside of a church or oratory are granted only for serious reasons. They are not granted for the preference of the engaged couple, for example, the request for an outdoor wedding.

V. The Liturgy Celebrating Matrimony

The liturgy is to be celebrated according to the approved liturgical books. In the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite, the appropriate rite is found in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*.

Secular elements (e.g., unity candle, sand ceremony, etc.) are not to be introduced into the liturgy and are prohibited. If these are important to the engaged couple, it is recommended that they include them in other plans to celebrate their marriage, such as their dinner or reception.

Secular music may not be used at the liturgy and is prohibited. If secular music is important to the engaged couple, it is recommended that they include it in other plans to celebrate their marriage, such as their dinner or reception.

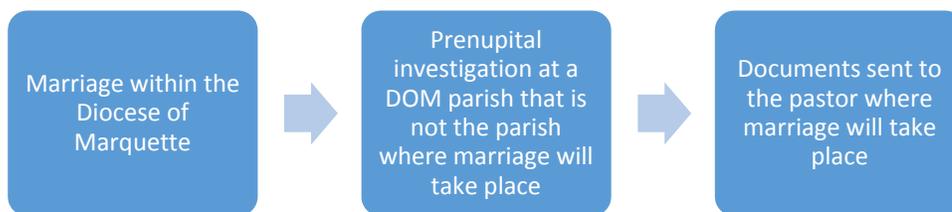
Assistance regarding the liturgy and music may be requested of the Diocesan Director of Liturgy and the Diocesan Director of Sacred Music.

VI. Dispensations and Permissions

Marriage dispensations and permissions are to be requested from the Diocesan Curia at least one month prior to the wedding.

VII. Marriages Outside of the Proper Parish of the Parties

When a marriage is to take place in a parish that is not the parish of one of the parties, a letter from the party's pastor granting permission for the marriage should be included with the prenuptial investigation documents (c. 1115). This letter should also outline the marriage preparation process undertaken by the couple.



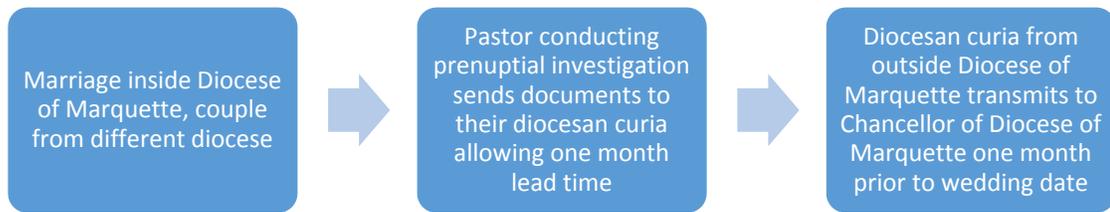
When the marriage is to take place within the Diocese of Marquette in a parish other than the parish where the prenuptial investigation has taken place, the documents are to be sent to the pastor of the parish where the marriage is to take place.



When the marriage is to take place outside of the Diocese of Marquette and if the prenuptial investigation is conducted within the Diocese of Marquette, the transmission of these documents is to be made through the Curia of the Diocese of Marquette. These records are to be sent to the Chancellor's office in Marquette along with requests for any necessary dispensations and/or permissions for the couple to marry validly and licitly. The Chancellor will transmit the prenuptial investigation, dispensations and permissions to the diocesan Curia of the place where the marriage is to take place.

To ensure timely transmittal of the prenuptial documentation the pastor who is conducting the prenuptial investigation for a marriage to take place in another diocese is to send to the Curia of the Diocese of Marquette, at least one month beforehand, all the prenuptial documents so they can be transmitted to the diocesan Curia of the diocese of the place of marriage.

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When a marriage of a couple from a different diocese is to take place within the Diocese of Marquette, the permission (*nihil obstat*) of the Curia of the Diocese of Marquette is required. The person who is conducting the prenuptial investigation is to transmit the documents to his diocesan Curia who will transmit it to the Curia of the Diocese of Marquette. Once the file has been granted the necessary permission (*nihil obstat*), it will be transmitted by the Chancellor to the pastor of the parish where the marriage is to take place. The pastor is to see to it that prenuptial documents are transmitted to the Curia of the Diocese of Marquette at least one month beforehand so the necessary permission (*nihil obstat*) can be granted.

VIII. Denying and Delaying the Celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony

Because people have a natural right to marry, the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony may be denied only because of the existence of an impediment (cf. canons 1083-1094) or moral certainty that consent would be invalid (cf. canons 1095-1103). Serious pastoral problems such as cohabitation and minimal faith practice need to be addressed, but they are not *per se* impediments to marriage. Moreover, parishes are forbidden to establish additional requirements for the celebration of the Sacrament, such as registered membership in the parish, financial contributions to the parish, etc. While such practices may be encouraged, they cannot be mandated as *sine qua non* requirements to be married.

During the course of marriage preparation, serious problems in the relationship of the engaged couple may become evident. In such situations the celebration of the marriage may be delayed until the problems are resolved through counseling or other appropriate assistance. In these circumstances we embrace the engaged couple and walk with them through pastoral accompaniment.

IX. The Faculty to Assist at Marriages

In the Diocese of Marquette pastors, parochial vicars, and deacons with parish assignments have the faculty to assist at marriages in their parishes. If a priest or deacon that is not assigned to that parish is to assist at the marriage, it is necessary that he obtain special delegation from someone who is competent (i.e., the pastor, local ordinary or another who has general delegation to assist at marriages in that parish). While verbal delegation is sufficient for validity, written evidence that the delegation has been given should be placed in the marriage file.

X. The Marriage Sacramental Register and Premarital File

The following repeats the policy on sacramental registers for convenience. Refer to the current sacramental register policy on the diocesan website for more information on sacramental records and examples.

MARRIAGE SACRAMENTAL REGISTER ENTRIES REQUIRED DATA

The following data are to be entered into the marriage register:

- Names of the spouses;
- Name of the person (e.g., the bishop, priest, or deacon) who assisted
- Names of the witnesses
- The date and place of the celebration of the marriage

Source of Data

The priest or deacon who assists at a marriage is responsible for communicating the necessary information to the parish where the marriage was celebrated. The premarital file ordinarily contains all the necessary information. However, the assisting minister should be alert to any last minute changes or corrections (for example, the names of the witnesses) to the information contained in the premarital file.

Marriage outside a Parish Church

When a marriage is celebrated in a location other than a parish church (e.g., a chapel or other sacred place of regular worship and with permission of the Bishop), the proper parish for the marriage record is the one in which that location stands. The only exception is when a marriage is celebrated with a dispensation from canonical form (e.g., when a Catholic receives a dispensation to marry a Protestant in the Protestant church). In that situation, the proper parish for the marriage record is the parish of the Catholic party or the parish where the couple prepared for marriage.

Validation

When a marriage is validated (e.g., when Catholics, who were “married” outside of the Church without a dispensation, now marry in the Catholic Church), the data concerning the validation are to be placed in the usual columns. The date, place and official of the original ceremony are to be noted in the “Notations” column.

Sanation

When a marriage is sanated by the Bishop or his delegate (e.g., when a marriage is validated without the renewal of consent), the data concerning the original ceremony are to be placed in the usual columns. The date, diocese and protocol number of the sanation are to be noted in the “Notations” column.

Previous Civil Marriage

The previous civil marriage of persons who are baptized or received into full communion with the Catholic Church is not to be recorded in the Marriage Register, unless the previous marriage was invalid and is now being validated or sanated. A notation concerning the marriage is to be placed in the person’s baptismal record, in the “Notations” column.

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Notation of Dispensations and Declarations of Nullity

When a dispensation is granted prior to marriage, or a declaration of nullity (“annulment”) is granted after marriage, the date, diocese and protocol number, along with the type of dispensation (e.g., “Dispensation from Disparity of Cult”) or “Declaration of Nullity”, are to be noted in the “Notations” column. Any special recording directions that are contained in the dispensation or declaration of nullity document are to be followed.

Notification of the Church of Baptism

When the marriage of a Catholic is celebrated, validated or sanated, the pastor of the parish where the record of marriage is retained must notify the parish of baptism as soon as possible. This notification is to include the names of the spouses and the date and place of the wedding, validation or sanation; the names of the person who assisted and witnesses are not required.

PREMARITAL FILES

Contents

Each parish is required to maintain a file of the papers collected during the period of marriage preparation. The file typically will include prenuptial forms, questionnaires, correspondence, notes and dispensation documents. Also, the person who assisted at the marriage is to see to it that the marriage license is promptly filed with the County Clerk.

Location

Ordinarily, the premarital file for each couple should be retained by the parish where the marriage is recorded in the Marriage Register.

Filing

The file for each couple is to be kept in its own envelope or folder, clearly marked with the parties’ names and the date of the marriage. The files should be arranged in chronological order and kept together in a locked file cabinet or safe.

Retention

The premarital files are to be retained for seventy-five years. Expired files are to be destroyed or otherwise disposed of so that no one can gain access to them.

Transmission of File

If a legitimate request for the original copy of the file is made by an ecclesiastical tribunal, or if the Chancellor has approved the surrender of the file to a civil authority, the file should be hand delivered and receipted or mailed by registered mail with a receipt. A photo static copy of the original file, along with the receipt, should replace the original copy in the parish’s archive. If the original file is later returned, the photo static copy should be destroyed.

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