



# MARRIAGE PREPARATION *Process*

**"Look now with favor on these your servants, joined together in Marriage, who ask to be strengthened by your blessing. Send down on them the grace of the Holy Spirit and pour your love into their hearts, that they may remain faithful in the Marriage covenant."**

*The Rite of Marriage—Nuptial Blessing*





# MARRIAGE PREPARATION

## Process

Congratulations on your decision to receive the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony! The marriage preparation process is designed to guide engaged or civilly married couples towards a sacramental marriage and provide essential tools to live out this lifelong covenant. This process applies to all Catholics in the Diocese of Orlando.

### A. Preliminary Interview

Schedule a meeting with a priest, deacon, or pastoral minister at your local parish to begin the sacramental preparation for marriage. This meeting should take place between six to twelve months prior to the anticipated wedding date and before any wedding or reception arrangements are made. During this interview, the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister will provide you with an explanation of the process for marriage preparation and request any necessary documents needed to complete your pre-nuptial file.

*\*If either party has had a previous marriage (whether civil or religious) no wedding preparation/date may be set until written notification is received that the Declaration of Nullity is final, and until any restriction on a future marriage has been removed. Contact your parish priest to inquire and begin the annulment process. For further information about Annulments, visit the Tribunal page: <https://www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries-offices/annulments/>*

### B. Assessment to Determine Readiness

The preparing minister will use a variety of methods to assist in determining the maturity of the couple and their readiness for marriage. The assessment process includes completing Form A, Dispensation Form (if needed), and a pre-marital inventory.

### C. Setting the Date

The final date for the wedding is not to be set until the entire assessment process has been completed and a decision to proceed with sacramental preparation for marriage has been made.

### D. Instruction

After the readiness for marriage has been determined, the couple will finalize the wedding date and begin the instruction process. The preparing minister will outline the sacramental preparation required. The instruction process includes the couple participating in a marriage preparation program.

*\*If your parish does not offer marriage formation, you may attend a Diocesan Pre-Cana. If you are unable to attend an in-person program, contact your preparing minister for information about diocesan-approved online pre-marital course options.*

### E. Wedding Liturgy

The couple will plan their wedding liturgy with the preparing minister. Areas for liturgical planning include the selection of scriptures, music, liturgical ministries and other related items.

# MARRIAGE PREPARATION

## Checklist

We hope the following checklist is helpful to you in your preparations for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Remember your wedding is only one day; your marriage is a lifetime!

### 1. Preliminary Interview

- Between six to twelve months prior to your anticipated wedding date, schedule a meeting with your local parish priest, deacon, or pastoral minister to discuss the marriage preparation process. If you are getting married out-of-state or at another parish, please provide the following information: name and address of the parish where the wedding will take place, celebrant's name, and wedding date.

*\*If either party has had a previous marriage (whether civil or religious) no wedding preparation/date may be set until written notification is received that the Declaration of Nullity is final, and until any restriction on a future marriage has been removed. Contact your parish priest to inquire and begin the annulment process. For further information about Annulments, visit the Tribunal page:*

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### 2. Pre-Marital Inventory

- Complete the pre-marital inventory - e.g., Fully Engaged, FOCCUS, REFOCCUS.
- Meet with a facilitator mentor couple assigned by your parish to review the inventory results.

### 3. Marriage Formation

- Receive formation to help you grow in your understanding of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony and learn practical skills such as communication, parenting, and financial planning.

*\*If your parish does not offer marriage formation, you may attend a Diocesan Pre-Cana. If you are unable to attend an in-person program, contact your preparing minister for information about diocesan-approved online pre-marital course options.*

### 4. Natural Family Planning - Optional

- Learn about Natural Family Planning (NFP) and meet with an instructor specialized in one of the methods. For more information, visit:

<https://www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries-offices/laity-family-and-life-secretariat/marriage-and-family-ministry-welcome/natural-family-planning/>

### 5. Documents Needed to Complete the Pre-Nuptial File Prior to the Wedding

- Certificate of Baptism for each Catholic party, dated within six months of beginning the marriage preparation process - obtainable from the parish where you were baptized. Copy of baptism certificate for baptized non-Catholics.
- Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire - Form A. The preparing minister will complete with the couple.
- Witness Testimony to Prove Freedom to Marry - Form B. Two witnesses for each party, preferably parents or close relatives. Forms will be provided to the couple by the preparing minister.
- Death Certificate of previous spouse or Annulment Decree, if you were previously married.
- Canonical Dispensations and Permissions - if needed, the preparing minister will complete with the couple.
- Certificate of Participation from a marriage preparation program.
- Marriage License from the County Clerk of Court - request it two to four weeks before the wedding. Visit your county's website for more information.

### 6. Planning Your Wedding Liturgy & Follow-Up Meeting

- Meet with your priest, deacon, or pastoral minister to plan your wedding liturgy.
- Select Scripture readings, prayers, petitions, etc. from the appropriate liturgical books - e.g., Together for Life, The Order of Celebrating Matrimony.
- Meet with the music director to discuss the music for the liturgy.
- Schedule wedding rehearsal with the church.
- Participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to your wedding day, if Catholic.

