

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacrament of Marriage
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Marriage

Table of Contents

DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW	1
HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE	2
THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE, CORRELATION WITH <i>THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH</i> , AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION	4
PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES	8
GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES	8
PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE.....	8
POLICIES	9
NORMS FOR READINESS	13
THE RITE OF MARRIAGE	14
GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES	14
LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE.....	14
COMMENTARY ON IMPORTANT ELEMENTS.....	16
SELECTION OF MUSIC	17
WEDDING MUSIC GUIDELINES: DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH	19
INTRODUCTION	19
THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN THE CATHOLIC WEDDING	19
PREPARATION OF THE WEDDING—LITURGY AND MUSIC	20
MUSIC IN THE WEDDING LITURGY	20
COMMENTS ABOUT MUSIC AND ITS PLACEMENT	21
LITURGY OF THE WORD.....	22
LITURGY OF MARRIAGE	22
LITURGY WITH EUCHARIST (RM, #23 - #37)	22
LITURGY OF EUCHARIST	22
LITURGY WITHOUT EUCHARIST (RM, #43-#51)	23
COMMENTS ON THE USE OF POPULAR MUSIC.....	24
CATECHESIS	26
REMOTE CATECHESIS.....	26
PROXIMATE CATECHESIS.....	27
ONGOING CATECHESIS.....	29

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

I. Doctrinal Overview

An Invitation to Marriage

The Marriage Guidelines for the Dioceses of Texas, issued by the Texas Catholic Conference, state: “marriage is first and foremost, a gift of God. Instituted by God at creation, marriage was elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, giving special graces to the married couple to enable them to live their God-given vocation. In order to help the couple live an intimate partnership of conjugal life and love, those in pastoral care need to provide a loving, practical preparation for marriage that involves true evangelization and formation for responsible parenting.”

Therefore, the Church is committed to doing everything possible for engaged couples so that they may fulfill their vocation in Christian joy and establish a family, a church of the home, where they can communicate respect for life and dignity of every human being from the first moment of conception until death. Marriage can be a time when they can experience the relentless dedication and self-emptying necessary to be husband and father, wife and mother, so that they can truly reflect Christ’s love for His Church and the Church’s love for Christ.

The book of Isaiah (42:3) reminds us neither to “break the crushed reed nor quench the wavering flame.” We can easily make assumptions about what young adults “ought to know” about being Catholic and become frustrated when we see their level of ignorance or lack of practice of faith. But we can choose to see the situation as a special opportunity for evangelization. When couples are treated with respect, it usually turns out that they are pleased that a priest, deacon, pastoral administrator or sponsor couple is willing to spend time with them and to give them an opportunity to ask questions about the Catholic faith. This style of ministry can gently lead them in a direction where they might, perhaps for the first time, see that practicing the faith - now as adults - might help them be even more successful in their desire to live Christian marriage.

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

1. Old Testament Marriage Practices
 - a. Creation story in Genesis points to monogamy in marriage.
 - b. As God's chosen people evolved, they moved from polygamy to monogamy.
 - c. Parents arranged marriages of their children, often at young age and sometimes for love. The partners were often from within family groups.
 - d. Marriage was a civil contract not sanctioned by religious rite and celebrated within the home.
 - e. Sexual inequality -- wife was the property of the husband.
 - f. Marriage was dissoluble, but only men could ask for divorce.
2. New Testament Marriage Teaching (Summary) –
 - a. Jesus affirmed the dignity of marriage as monogamous, exclusive, and permanent.
 - b. Paul developed the theology of marriage, likening it to the union of Christ and his Church. Men and women were to be mutually respectful and loving.
 - c. Despite New Testament teaching, marriage was seen as a civil contract experienced in the Lord and religious rites were not used.
3. Marriage In Early Church 100 A.D. To 1000 A.D. –
 - a. Roman civil ceremonies continued; gradually Christian blessings came to be attached.
 - b. Marriage was based on the consent of bride's father or couple's mutual consent.
 - c. In the 8th century, the Church began legislating certain aspects of marriage, protecting the freedom of marriage partners, but these laws did not supersede civil laws.
 - d. Civil divorce laws applied to Christians and non-Christians. Church did not always forbid divorce and remarriage for Christians.
4. Church Marriage Practice 1000 To 1200 A.D. –
 - a. The Church began to legislate directly and to institute rituals to insure that there would be a public commitment on the part of the couple. The Pauline principle of

bride and groom as a sign of the relationship between Christ and his Church was developed.

- b. Theologians raised questions of legality and indissolubility of marriage in the 12th century. Divorce and remarriage were prohibited. For validity, marriage required mutual consent.

5. Church Marriage Practice From 1200 To 1500 A.D. –

- a. By the 13th century Pope Alexander III proclaimed the authority of the Church to grant dispensations and judge questions of validity. Mutual consent in marriage became the criterion for validity. Consummation following consent made marriage indissoluble.
- b. Marriage was discussed in legalistic terms. Church lawyers moved away from biblical understanding of marriage. Consent is redefined as “contract.”
- c. Marriage as a sacrament is re-examined. In the first millennium, marriage had been termed as a ‘sacrament’ but only in sense of sign or mystery. By the late 12th century, marriage became a ‘sacrament’ in the sense we now consider traditional. Lombard’s treatise on marriage as sacrament became the standard school text. Some doubted sexuality could be a means of grace and therefore doubted marriage could be a sacrament.
- d. Alexander of Hales said all marriages are signs of God’s love. Baptism makes Christian marriage a means of union with God. Hales’ teaching was adopted throughout the Church.

6. Church Marriage Practice From 1500 To 1600 A.D. –

- a. Protestant reformers challenged the Catholic approach to marriage. They claimed there is no New Testament evidence that marriage is a sacrament.
- b. Council of Trent debated marriage questions. It declared that marriage is a sacrament. It discussed questions relating to the respective authority of Church and State regarding marriage. It was decided that the Church would legislate only for Catholics. A Church law was enacted stating that Catholics could marry validly only in presence of a priest and two witnesses.

7. Church Marriage Practice From 1600 To 1900 A.D. –

- a. Questions regarding Church/State authority over marriage persisted, especially as the governments of different countries insisted sometimes on total control of marriage laws to the exclusion of any religious control. As a result, two ceremonies sometimes were required, civil and religious. The Church left the marriage of non-Catholics and unbaptized persons totally under civil control.
 - b. Theologians saw contract and sacrament as one reality and tolerated the double marriage rite where it was required.
8. Church Marriage Practice From 1900 To Present –
- a. Procreation as primary purpose of marriage was re-evaluated. Mutual love is given priority by some. Pius XI reaffirmed the priority of procreation.
 - b. Vatican II emphasized the richness of the marriage relationship and sought a balance between procreation and love.
 - c. The new marriage rite (1969) is flexible in ritual details, emphasizing the couple as ministers of the sacrament.
 - d. New regulations for mixed marriages allow a couple to be married before the minister of either faith and in either Church. The non-Catholic need not promise to raise the children as Catholics.
 - e. Marriage counseling and enrichment now play a key role. There is more extensive pre-marriage preparation. Marriage and family support groups are encouraged and growing.

Adapted from *The Changing Sacraments*. Reprinted by permission of St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1615 Republic Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45210. All rights reserved

B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE, CORRELATION WITH *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION

1. Marriage is in God's plan of creation.

- In a discussion of Genesis 2:24, the first part of the Catechism speaks about God's plan for creation and the fundamental dignity of men and women. It offers a sign of hope that stems from the unity of the sexes.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 372: "Man and woman were made 'for each other' - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be 'helpmate' to the other, for they are equal as persons ('bone of my bones. . .') and complementary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God

Marriage

unites them in such a way that, by forming 'one flesh', [[Gen 2:24](#) .] they can transmit human life: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.' [[Gen 1:28](#) .] By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents co-operate in a unique way in the Creator's work. [Cf. *Gaudium et spes*(GS) 50 # 1.]”

Implications:

What does it mean to be a “communion of persons”? How does that translate into practice? To be in communion is to be about the work of mission. Mission entails caring for the other, moving beyond the personal boundaries of oneself to see to the needs of the other. A culture of care, created before a marriage, cemented at the bans, and nurtured through the whole of life, is precisely what a “communion of persons” means. It means hard work, dedication, and loyalty. It means building a future. It gives shape to a couple’s response, through the witness of their lives together, to the consequences of the fall. Sin and death are never victorious when a couple acts as a communion of persons. Faithful spouses return to paradise.

2. Marriage is a vocation.

- Marriage is a calling from God to love and serve each other. Striving for unity is a daily effort to love one’s spouse as Jesus loves us, to share the strength that this striving gives to each.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1603: “*The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws.... God himself is the author of marriage.*’ [[GS](#) 48 # 1.] *The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures, and spiritual attitudes. These differences should not cause us to forget its common and permanent characteristics. Although the dignity of this institution is not transparent everywhere with the same clarity,*[Cf. [GS](#) 47 # 2.] *some sense of the greatness of the matrimonial union exists in all cultures. ‘The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life.’* [[GS](#) 47 # 1.]”

Implications:

The Catechism reiterates, “the vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator” (CCC, no. 1603). Two things about this are immediately striking. First, divine authorship of marriage is paramount. Couples need assurance that God is working in the midst of their married life and that they themselves are cooperating in the grace

bestowed upon them. Second, the vocation to married life is of equal value to men and women. Equality is part of the divine plan for human salvation and in fact reflects back upon God's perfect love for humanity. Neither sex has sole possession of the ability to reflect these perfections. Their fundamental equality stems from the recognition that each is "hard-wired" in such a way as to offer unique gifts to the other person, so difference is in the mix. The importance of equality cannot be downplayed. Only out of this kind of radical parity can marriage be understood.

3. Marriage is an integral part of the sacramental life of the Church.

- A sacrament is a visible sign of God's grace, an outward sign of an inner reality, a human symbol of a divine mystery. A man and a woman married in Christ are the sign and symbol of this reality and divine mystery. They are the sign and the source of God's grace.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1601: *"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."* [Codex Iuris Canonici(CIC), can. 1055 # 1; cf. GS 48 # 1.]

CCC 1641: *"By reason of their state in life and of their order, [Christian spouses] have their own special gifts in the People of God."* [Lumen gentium(LG) 11 # 2.] *This grace proper to the sacrament of Matrimony is intended to perfect the couple's love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity. By this grace they 'help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children.'* [LG 11 # 2; cf. LG 41.]

CCC 1642: *"Christ is the source of this grace. 'Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony.'* [GS 48 # 2.] *Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to 'be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,'* [Eph 5:21 ; cf. Gal 6:2 .] *and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb:*

How can I ever express the happiness of a marriage joined by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father? . . . How wonderful the bond between two believers, now one in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the

same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit.[Tertullian, Ad uxorem. 2, 8, 6-7: PL 1, 1412-1413; cf. FC 13.]”

Implications:

The classical Catholic definition of sacrament, “outward sign of inward grace,” which took a thousand years to become established,¹ can now be more fully explicated. A sacrament is a prophetic symbol in which the Church, the body of Christ in the world, reveals and celebrates in representation the presence and action of God, which is grace itself.

To say that marriage is a sacrament is to say that it is a prophetic symbol, a reality with a double meaning. On one level, it reveals and celebrates the covenant union between a man and a woman. On another level, that union becomes a symbol revealing and celebrating the covenant union between Christ and Christ’s Church.

Every couple that enters marriage says, in one way or another, “I love you.” Couples entering a Christian, covenantal, sacramental marriages say that too, and more. They say, “I love you as Christ loves us, steadfastly and faithfully.” A sacramental marriage is more than a legal bond; it is also a religious covenant. It is more than a legal right; it is also grace. The presence of grace in its most ancient Christian sense, namely the presence of the gracious God, is not something extrinsic to sacramental marriage. It is something intrinsic to such a marriage, something without which it would not be sacramental marriage at all. In a truly sacramental marriage—the marriage between two baptized Christians—the love of God and Christ provides the eschatological model of the love to which the spouses are to aspire. This is part of what the Catholic Church means when it teaches that marriage is graced and is, therefore, sacrament.

The preceding Implication sections excerpted from “Life Together: A Catechesis of Marriage as Sacrament” by Michael Lawler in *The Living Light* (Spring 2000, Vol. 36, No. 3) © 2000 United States Catholic Conference, Inc., Washington, D.C.. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

Excerpts from the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for the United States of America Copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. – Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

Excerpts from the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica Copyright © 1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. – Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

¹ Cf. Michael G. Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Omaha, Neb.: Creighton University, 1995), 29-34.

II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacrament. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition, with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes the engaged couple, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, ages, and circumstances of the engaged couple.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes lifelong learning and participation in the sacramental life.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

1. Active participation in the Sunday Eucharist is the source and summit of Catholic life and is to be encouraged.
2. To receive the sacrament of Marriage fruitfully, the spouses are strongly advised to receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. [CIC, can. 1065 # 2]
3. Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of confirmation should receive it before being admitted to marriage, if it can be done without grave inconvenience. [CIC, can. 1065 # 1]
4. Communion under both species is to be offered at all Eucharistic celebrations. The decision to receive from the cup should be the option of the communicant, not of the presider.
5. Since it could weaken the sacramental sign of communion if only one partner receives, when Catholics marry non-Catholics, the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage outside of Mass should be encouraged in order to strengthen this sacrament of unity.
6. Effective catechesis requires sensitivity to the local multi-cultural and/or diverse family situations.

III. Policies

The following policy statements are drawn from the Marriage Guidelines for the Dioceses of Texas, published by the Texas Catholic Conference. For commentary on these policy statements, refer to this TCC publication.

1. Initial Interview – To assure adequate time for marriage preparation, couples planning to marry need to contact the parish 9 to 12 months prior to the provisional date for the wedding. Each engaged couple is to have an initial interview with the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative as soon as feasible at or after the first contact. The interview is for the purpose of:
 - a. Determining the eligibility of the engaged couple according to civil law.
 - b. Determining eligibility according to Catholic Church law.
 - c. Explaining the marriage preparation process.
 - d. Setting a provisional date for the wedding.

The initial interview is to take place at least four months prior to the provisional date of the wedding.

The marriage preparation offered by the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative should include the administration of a diagnostic inventory instrument to facilitate greater mutual understanding. The instrument is to be administered as soon as conveniently possible after the initial interview.

Where canonical permission has been obtained for the marriage to take place in another parish, that pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative will conduct the initial interview. Where a visiting minister from outside the diocese is coming to officiate, the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative is responsible for the initial interview. After the initial interview, communication between ministers is needed for a clear understanding on where the prenuptial forms will be completed and who will do further preparation with the engaged couple.

2. Primary Marriage Preparation
 - a. The Primary Marriage Preparation (PMP) is to be experienced by both parties, preferably together. It in no way replaces the instructions by the pastor, pastoral administrator or a clergy representative both before and after the PMP.
 - b. Primary Marriage Preparation includes a Pre-Cana, Cana II, Engaged Encounter, a parish Sponsor Couple program or other parish-based program, e.g., Unitas. A combination of two or more of these PMP's is considered beneficial.

- c. The PMP is to be completed 60 to 90 days before the wedding.
 - d. Refusal to participate in the PMP is a pastoral concern. It warrants a re-evaluation of readiness for marriage.
 - e. Exceptions to participation in the PMP may include validation of a long-standing civil union and marriages of the elderly or widowed.
3. Pastoral Follow-Up Interview—After the PMP, the 60 to 90 day period of time permits the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative and the couple to discuss, in a series of interviews, what they have discovered about themselves and their relationship during the PMP. After these follow-up interviews, if the pastor, pastoral administrator or clergy representative is unable to reach a conclusive assessment regarding the couple’s readiness for marriage, he/she should seek immediate consultation with qualified resource personnel, including medical or psychological experts, if such seems appropriate.
 4. Marriages of Young People—If, at the time of the wedding, either of the parties will be under 19 years of age, then:
 - a. At least six months should elapse after the completion of the Primary Marriage Preparation.
 - b. Parental consultation and completion of the “Canonical Free State” form must take place.
 5. Pregnancy—If the couple had not planned to marry, pregnancy, of itself, is not considered sufficient reason to enter marriage or shorten the marriage preparation process.
 6. Non-Practicing Catholics—Request for marriage in the Catholic faith is a unique opportunity for the evangelization and reconciliation of Catholics who do not practice, or strongly identify with their faith. The non-practicing Catholic person should be given an opportunity to return to the active practice of the faith. Such a person should receive special catechesis in the Catholic faith as well as the Primary Marriage Preparation.
 7. Mixed Marriages—Marriage between a Catholic and a person who is not Catholic presents religious issues of major importance. The Church calls on parties to examine these issues by requiring that:
 - a. The Catholic party reaffirms his/her faith in Jesus Christ and, with God’s help, intends to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church.

- b. The Catholic party promises to do all in his/her power to share the faith with the children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics.
 - c. The Catholic party must respect the faith position of his/her spouse.
 - d. The non-Catholic party must be informed of the reaffirmation and promises of the Catholic party.
 - e. The priest, deacon or pastoral administrator must be morally certain that the reaffirmation and promises have been sincerely made.
8. Validation or *Sanatio* – Persons who married outside the Catholic Church and wish to validate their union will participate in the normal assessment and preparation process, including, for example, Today...Tomorrow...Forever, Marriage Encounter, Jesús Te Invita Al Sacramento Del Matrimonio, Jornada Familiar, REFOCCUS with a sponsor couple/group or other parish based enrichment programs.

Couples who marry outside the Church must wait at least six months before having the marriage validated.

For validations following annulments or dissolutions, appropriate pastoral care should be given.

Sanatio (*Sanatio In Radice*, the “healing of the marriage in its root”) cases involve the validation of a marriage attempted without sacramental form when the non-Catholic party refuses to go through another ceremony before a priest or deacon and two witnesses, or the couple truly believe they made a commitment at the time of the civil marriage. It is also referred to as a retroactive validation. Contact the Tribunal for more information and the procedure.

9. Previous Marriage—Previous marriage (Catholic or non-Catholic) is an impediment to marriage in the Catholic Church. The parties must disclose to the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator the fact of the previous marriage(s) in an effort to seek resolution. In such cases, the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator is to be careful to avoid the following:
- a. Setting even a tentative date for marriage in the Catholic Church before the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator has received confirmation that the final decree of invalidity has been issued.
 - b. Misleading the parties into expecting an affirmative tribunal decision.
 - c. Offering the parties assurances that the case will be concluded within a specific period of time.

- d. Arranging for a subsequent marriage to take place without allowing sufficient time for the healing process following the separation and divorce.
10. Places where marriage may be celebrated – Wedding ceremonies in the diocese are to be celebrated in a sacred place, normally a Catholic church. Weddings may also take place in college chapels. A Catholic ceremony may also take place for good reasons in a non-Catholic church, but special permission must be sought. Permission will not be given for weddings in homes, gardens or similar places.
11. Planning for the ceremony should give consideration to ethnic customs that are in harmony with the spirit of the liturgy. A meeting with the parish Liturgy Director and Music Director should take place soon after the Initial Interview so the couple knows the options available in liturgy and music.
12. Appeal—Since the right to marry derives from natural law, a couple has the right to appeal a decision which delays or prevents their marriage. This appeal is sent to the Bishop's office.

IV. Norms for Readiness

1. The couple is of age and displays maturity appropriate to assuming the rights and responsibilities of marriage.
2. Through prayer and discernment they each believe they are called to the vocation of marriage and that this is the right person with whom to enter into an exclusive relationship for life.
3. There are no pressures to marry or objections to the marriage.
4. They share a realistic view of marriage and expectations.
5. The priest, deacon, pastoral administrator or their representative has arrived at a prudent assessment that the couple is free to marry according to the terms of both civil and canon law.
6. If the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator, however, has valid reasons to believe that the couple is not capable of living the necessary commitments of Christian marriage (e.g., a history of violent behavior or chronic addiction), he must take the responsibility of halting the process at this point and do his best to recommend an appropriate course of therapy for the couple.
7. A positive assessment on the part of the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator does not exclude the possibility of doubts about the wisdom of the couple's desire to marry in the Church. Since no one can know for certain how the couple will make use of the graces that God is surely willing to give them, hesitancy is resolved, usually correctly, in favor of giving the couple - and God's grace - the benefit of the doubt.
8. Any concerns about the couple's readiness to marry are to be noted on the pre-nuptial forms.
9. Readiness of the couple to marry is ultimately determined by themselves, rather than by the clergy or delegated parish ministers. It is they, the bride and groom, who minister the sacrament to each other because of their natural right to marry. Prudent counsel may assist them to assess their readiness for marriage and prepare to receive the graces of the sacrament.

V. The Rite Of Marriage

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols --- words, gestures, objects, movements, etc. --- of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

1. Introduction
 - a. Communal Participation
The celebration of this sacrament is not one for the wedding party alone: all present are to be active witnesses and participants. Hence, the preparation of a simple worship aid is urged to enable all to take part as fully as possible.
 - b. Time of Celebration
The sacrament may be celebrated at any time of the year; however, certain holy days and seasons (e.g. Christmas, Epiphany, Holy Thursday through Easter, Corpus Christi...) displace the wedding Mass texts. Even on those days or during those seasons, one reading is to be taken from those designated for weddings, and the nuptial blessing given. Couples may be encouraged to celebrate this sacrament at the Sunday Eucharist before the entire community.

“When a marriage is celebrated during Advent or Lent or other days of penance, the parish priest should advise the couple to take into consideration the special nature of these times.” (Rite of Marriage(RM), Introduction, par. 11) This admonition would affect the decoration of the worship space in particular.
 - c. Ministers Needed

The primary ministers are the couple. The priest or deacon is the presider and official witness for the Church. Other ministers normally needed in the celebration of a sacrament: lectors, special ministers of the Eucharist, altar servers, ministers of hospitality, should be prepared for their proper roles in this sacrament. The use of members of the wedding party and members of the two families in these roles where possible is to be encouraged. After them, members of the parish community should be considered. Above all, the use of the priest or deacon for all readings is to be avoided.

2. Physical Preparation

The ceremony will always take place in a church or college chapel. When Marriage is celebrated within Mass, everything normally needed for the celebration of Mass should be prepared. Whatever may be called for in the use of a devotional, e.g., holy water, lasso, arras, unity candle, etc. should also be prepared.

3. Outline Of Rite

“Within the Rite of the Sacrament of Marriage, the arrangement of its parts may be varied if it seems more suitable; even the consent may be omitted as long as the priest asks and receives the consent of the contracting parties.” (RM Intro., par 14) Since it could weaken the sacramental sign to continue with the celebration of Eucharist where at communion only one may receive, in cases of Catholics marrying non-Catholics, the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage outside of Mass should be encouraged in order to strengthen this sacrament of unity.

a. Celebration of Marriage Within Mass

1) Entrance Rites

- Procession – instrumental, followed by Gathering Hymn sung by all or procession with communal hymn or Procession – instrumental
- Greeting and Welcome, Opening Prayer (Penitential Rite and Glory to God omitted)

2) Liturgy of the Word (always and only Scripture)

- Readings with psalm response, Gospel acclamation, Gospel and homily
- “There may be three readings...After the Gospel the priest gives a homily drawn from the sacred text.” (RM, par. 21,22)

3) Liturgy of Marriage

- Exchange of Vows
- Blessing and exchange of rings
- Devotional (optional—see “*Cultural Adaptations*’ below)
- General Intercessions

4) Liturgy of Eucharist: As usual with following particulars:

Marriage

- Members of the wedding party may bring bread and wine to the bride and groom who may then hand them to the priest.
- The “Deliver us” after the Lord’s Prayer is omitted. In its place the Nuptial Blessing is given.
- Sign of Peace.- Care should be taken to keep this exchange brief, so as not to create the impression that this is a general “reception.”
- After Communion a song of thanksgiving by the community may be sung.
- Prayer after Communion may be followed by a devotional action.

5) Dismissal Rites

- Blessing
- Dismissal (which may include presentation of the couple to the community)
- Recessional as usual.

b. Celebration of Marriage Outside Mass

1) Entrance Rites

- Procession – instrumental, followed by Gathering Hymn sung by all or Procession with communal hymn or Procession – instrumental
- Greeting and Welcome, Opening Prayer (Penitential Rite and Glory to God omitted)

2) Liturgy of the Word (always and only Scripture)

- Readings with psalm response, Gospel acclamation, Gospel and homily
- “There may be three readings...After the Gospel the priest gives a homily drawn from the sacred text.” (*RM par. 21,22*)

3) Liturgy of Marriage:

- Exchange of vows
- Blessing and exchange of rings
- Devotional (optional—see “Cultural Adaptations” below)
- Sign of Peace (pastoral practice, not required by Rite)
- General Intercessions
- Nuptial Blessing
- Lord’s Prayer
- Solemn Blessing
- Devotional (optional)
- Presentation of the Couple (optional)
- Recessional

C. COMMENTARY ON IMPORTANT ELEMENTS

Various approved marriage preparation texts offer options for different parts of the Rite that should be explained to the couple.

Parish traditions in line with liturgical guidelines may vary throughout the Diocese and should be respected.

Communion under both species is to be offered at all Eucharistic celebrations. The decision to receive from the cup should be the option of the communicant, not of the presider.

1. Symbols—The couple is itself the principal symbol, sealed by the spoken vows; thus care should be taken that the vows are audible to the community. The ring(s) and other images, e.g. *lazo*, *arras*, unity candle, etc., serve to highlight one or another facet of the basic symbol.
2. Gesture—More than a hand movement, gesture extends to the total body language of the ritual. Attention should be paid, for example, to the planning of the wedding procession: one makes a statement without words in presenting the wedding party. Questions that might clarify the import of gestures might include “Does the wedding party enter as a fashion display or as logical procession?”; “Are both sets of parents actively engaged in the procession, or are they fringe figures, except for the father of the bride?”; “Is the ordained minister part of the procession?” This question has arisen because of the strong (and correct) understanding that the couples are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage. However, it is the priest or deacon who presides and therefore is properly part of the procession, coming at the end.
3. Environment—The assembly gathered in the place of worship is the proper environment of this Sacrament. However, decoration of the worship space is both traditional and appropriate. What is to be sought is not the creation of a totally different setting, e.g. a garden scene, but instead the use of decorations which point to and enhance the action instead of calling attention to themselves. A word of caution: the multiple use of a symbol weakens its impact. Parishes may insist that important liturgical seasonal environments are not disturbed, e.g. Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, etc.
4. Cultural Adaptations—After the exchange of rings, what was called above a devotional may be inserted. The crowning or veiling already mentioned, the *lazo*, the gift of gold coins, the unity candle are some possibilities. The choice should be meaningful to the couple and harmonize with the wedding liturgy’s true and authentic spirit, and not simply be a “filler” for the ceremony. The ritual should thus reflect both language and culture of the couple.

Devotional actions should not outweigh the sacramental action.

D. SELECTION OF MUSIC

As in all the Rites, music is a servant-art whose purpose is to glorify God and transform His people. The topic of music for weddings is a particularly sensitive one. Therefore, it is recommended that parishes adhere to the WEDDING MUSIC GUIDELINES, Diocese

of Fort Worth, which are provided by the Office of Worship and which are included here for parish use.

VI. Wedding Music Guidelines: Diocese Of Fort Worth

A. INTRODUCTION

In our Catholic way of life, new meaning is given to the personal and public dimensions of marriage. The personal relationship between man and woman becomes sacrament, for each is called to be the presence of Christ to the other. The public commitment is sacrament in that this couple is called to be the sign to the Christian community of Christ's unconditional love for His people. The couple is the sacrament.

A Christian wedding then is more than a solemn exchange of vows by an engaged couple. It is an act of worship in which the bride and groom assemble the Church and come together to celebrate a sacrament, to offer thanks and praise together with their family and friends, and to ask God's blessing on their life together as husband and wife.

Whether a wedding consists of Liturgy of the Word/Liturgy of Marriage, or Liturgy of the Word/Liturgy of Marriage/Liturgy of the Eucharist, it is in the first place an assembly of the Church for worship. Those assembled are not present as spectators, but as witnesses and worshipers who manifest the Lord's presence when they gather in his name. They should become one assembly through prayer and song so that together they may bring about a sacramental encounter with the Lord.

B. THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN THE CATHOLIC WEDDING

Music, when used in the liturgical rites of the Church, is a servant-art. It serves the Word of God and the sacramental action. Its purpose is to glorify God and to transform God's people. Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share, to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith as that faith is experienced in life. It should heighten the texts so that their meaning is uncovered more fully and more effectively. Music can impart a quality of joy and enthusiasm and a sense of unity to the congregation. Above all, it sets the appropriate tone for a particular celebration.

1. The Musical Judgment:

Is the music technically, aesthetically and expressively good? This is a judgment not only of the composition, but about its performance considering the available musicians and resources. Unfortunately we often confuse judgment on the value of music with judgment on the style of music, falsely equating all musical value with one particular musical style. Good music of whatever style (chant, polyphony, choral hymns, responsorial singing, contemporary compositions, folk idiom) has been recognized and fully admitted by the Church as an aid to liturgical worship.

2. The Liturgical Judgment:

What kind of music and/or musical text is called for at a given place in the liturgy? Where is instrumental music or even silence more appropriate than vocal music? What parts of the liturgy by their nature belong to the assembly? It is important to be familiar with the documents on the Sacred Liturgy, especially with *Music in Catholic Worship (MCW)*, published by the Bishops' Committee on the *Liturgy (National Conference of Catholic Bishops)*.

3. The Pastoral Judgment:

Does the music in this celebration enable these people as congregation to express their faith more authentically in this place, in this age, in this culture? This is a very important part of judging the music. One must consider the cultural background of the couple, the stage in their journey of faith. Inasmuch as it is possible, it is necessary to serve the couple and their special event.

C. PREPARATION OF THE WEDDING—LITURGY AND MUSIC

Within the first three months of the couple's preparation for marriage, and after the initial meeting with the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator the couple shall be given a session on the preparation of the Liturgy and Music for the Wedding. The liturgist, the staff musician, the priest, deacon or pastoral administrator, may give this session. Some processes for this type of preparation can be found in *Pastoral Music*, published by National Association of Pastoral Musicians, Oct-Nov. 1978, Vol. 3, #1, pp. 6-8. Plans for the music and the Liturgy could include a printed program prepared by the staff or the couple.

D. MUSIC IN THE WEDDING LITURGY

A musician is an integral minister in the celebration of the sacrament and if available, should not be replaced by recorded music.

The minister, the liturgist, or the parish musician will assist the couple in the selection of appropriate music for their wedding. The emphasis should be on liturgical music, that is, music whose texts are drawn from biblical sources and whose context is the Sacrament of Marriage or the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Care must be taken that a music selection does not impede the natural flow of the liturgy. Selection of music focusing on the Blessed Virgin Mary or the saints should be made only in the context of the couple's personal faith. It may be used before the liturgical celebration or at the appropriate devotional moment.

A preoccupation with music for soloists should not exclude the congregation from singing those parts that are rightfully theirs. A parish cantor should function as song leader to lead the congregation so that the assembled people will feel comfortable and secure in this participation.

Instrumental music (organ, guitar, brass, strings or woodwinds) adds much to the joy of the occasion, but should be integrated into the overall plan of music, and performed competently and artistically.

E. COMMENTS ABOUT MUSIC AND ITS PLACEMENT

1. Preludes

The musician should furnish prelude music. More flexibility is allowed in choosing the music for this time. Instrumental music is encouraged. Special requests of the couple, which reflect the principles listed in “Comments on the Use of Popular Music” but are not appropriate during the Liturgy, may be used here. (See below.)

2. Preparation of the Congregation

Good liturgy cannot happen without the preparation of those present. It is appropriate to have a short rehearsal so that the assembly can participate. This is a moment of hospitality, especially for mixed-faith communities.

In the Liturgy of the Word the responsorial psalm refrain belongs to the congregation and should be sung. (Music in Catholic Worship(MCW), #45, #63). In the Liturgy of the Eucharist the Eucharistic acclamations (Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen) ought to be sung by the congregation, and familiar or easily learned musical settings should be selected. (MCW, #54)

The congregation must be prepared for its part. The ushers should have all seated in time to begin; guests should be seated close to the front. The music minister should speak briefly to the assembly of their participation and conduct a short preparatory session for the guests. Copies of words and music should be made available to all those present.

When preparing printed worship aids, the liturgist or musician must follow proper legal procedures re copyright permissions and form. (Cf. Copyright Update - Reprint Permission Policies of Publishers of Liturgical Music and Sacred Scriptures, Appendix I.)

3. Processional

To reflect the unity of the liturgical procession, one piece of music should be used for the entire procession. This music should set the tone of the celebration (joyful, festive, solemn, majestic, simple, etc.). It is music that unites the members of the assembly to one another and focuses their attention on the principal celebrants, the bride and groom. These types of professionals can be used:

a. Instrumental music

b. Instrumental music followed by a gathering song. All may sing a brief hymn/song after the wedding party is in its place.

- c. Congregational hymn/song to accompany the procession

F. LITURGY OF THE WORD

This is an integral part of the ritual, regardless of whether the liturgy with Eucharist or the liturgy without Eucharist is selected.

All readings must be selected from Scripture. There may be as many as three readings. A Responsorial Psalm properly follows an Old Testament reading. If two readings are selected and the first is from the New Testament, a Responsorial Psalm may follow. There should always be a Gospel selection. A sung Gospel Acclamation should precede the Gospel.

1. Responsorial Psalm

The psalm must be in Responsorial form, i.e., the refrain sung or spoken by all. The norm is to have the psalm sung. If the psalm is spoken, music background can enhance this prayer form.

2. Gospel Acclamation

The Gospel Acclamation must be sung or it is omitted. When it is sung, its versicle may be spoken or sung. If the Gospel Acclamation is omitted, the versicle is omitted as well.

G. LITURGY OF MARRIAGE

The Liturgy of Marriage will be considered in each of the two following forms: with Eucharist and without Eucharist.

H. LITURGY WITH EUCHARIST (RM, #23 - #37)

Exchange of Vows—One of the ritual formulas must be selected.

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Devotional—A meaningful prayer or gesture of cultural tradition (holy water, unity candle, lazo, arras, breaking of a glass...) may be used. (RM, #15, #16) If a song is used, it should be brief to avoid disrupting the flow of the liturgy. The couple ought to choose only what has meaning for them personally; they are not obliged to have anything at this point.

General Intercessions—The couple may compose petitions following the format of the ritual.

I. LITURGY OF EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Gifts—It is recommended that instrumental music accompany the presentation and preparation of the gifts. This part of the liturgy is brief and transitional, and extensive solo singing should be curtailed as an inappropriate delay of the liturgy.

Eucharistic Acclamations—The three Eucharistic Acclamations (Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen) should be sung in familiar musical settings by the congregation. The cantor/soloist should lead the people in the sung acclamations. The singing of all three is strongly encouraged.

The Lord's Prayer—The "Our Father" must be recited or sung by ALL. A prayer common to all Christians, it is a powerful sign of unity when all join in reciting or singing it. When the Nuptial Blessing is given during the Eucharistic liturgy, it replaces the prayer "Deliver us..." and the doxology of the Lord's Prayer. If the Lord's Prayer is sung, "the traditional text is retained.... All settings must provide for the participation of the priest and all present." (*MCW*, #67)

Reciting the Lord's Prayer would encourage all to participate. As most wedding congregations are of mixed faiths, it would be helpful to have the full text printed in the program.

Sign of Peace – This should be a brief exchange among the wedding party members and among the bride and groom and their parents.

Lamb of God—This is to accompany the action of the Breaking of the Bread and may be recited or sung in a familiar setting by the congregation. It should not extend beyond the preparation for Communion of the Bread and chalices.

Communion – The Communion song should have a refrain to be sung by all during the procession. The text should speak to the unity of the assembly using the restrictions that apply to Sunday Mass. Instrumental music may be used here.

Song of Common Praise—After communion, the entire assembly may sing a song of praise (or spend a few moments in silent meditation).

Devotion – A devotion such as the unity candle or a visit to the statue of the Blessed Mother may be inserted here and may be accompanied by music. If a song is used, it should not delay the flow of the liturgy.

Recessional—The priest or deacon's blessing and dismissal should be followed immediately by a stirring joyous recessional. (Instrumental music would be most appropriate.)

J. LITURGY WITHOUT EUCHARIST (*RM*, #43-#51)

Exchange of Vows - One of the ritual formulas must be selected.

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Devotional—A meaningful prayer or gesture of cultural tradition (holy water, unity candle, lazo, arras, breaking of a glass...) may be used. (*RM*, #15, #16) If a song is used, it should be brief to avoid disrupting the flow of the liturgy. The couple ought to choose only what has meaning for them personally; they are not obliged to have anything at this point.

Sign of Peace—A pastoral practice has been to insert the Sign of Peace here. This should be a brief exchange among the wedding party members and among the bride and groom and their parents.

General Intercessions—The couple may compose petitions following the format of the ritual.

Nuptial Blessing

The Lord's Prayer—The "Our Father" must be recited or sung by ALL. A prayer common to all Christians, it is a powerful sign of unity when all join in reciting or singing it. If sung, "the traditional text is retained...All settings must provide for the participation of the priest and all present." (*MCW*, #67)

For a mixed faith congregation it would be helpful to have the full text printed in the program.

[Sign of Peace—If this rite was not included above, it may be done here. If it was previously included, it is not repeated.]

Solemn Blessing

Recessional—The priest or deacon's blessing and dismissal should be followed immediately by a stirring joyous recessional. (Instrumental music would be most appropriate.)

K. COMMENTS ON THE USE OF POPULAR MUSIC

The question should be raised to the couple: "How does this piece of music relate to the Scriptures you have chosen?"

The following principles are to be kept in mind:

- a. All music is to reflect Catholic theology. As an example, "From a Distance" does not reflect the Catholic belief in the indwelling presence of God. "In This Very Room" indicates that a couple needs no one except one another, a far cry from the Catholic sense of community.
- b. Music that speaks directly or indirectly of the divine-religious dimension of love is suitable for the wedding.

- c. A song that NEGATES explicitly or implicitly the divine-religious dimension is unsuitable for the wedding. (e.g. All You Need is Love, Love Can Build a Bridge.)

In considering the liturgical propriety of “popular” secular music, a distinction must be made between music of the disc (music we listen to, which attracts by melody and/or text), which may be appropriate, and music of the theater (music strongly associated with a particular play and context) that is not appropriate in a sacred liturgical setting.

An exception to this latter category is the “Wedding March” from Wagner’s “Lohengrin.” In general, only the professional musician knows the original context of this music. The popular context is simply wedding. Therefore, even though other processions are encouraged or preferred, this selection cannot be categorically forbidden. We urge pastoral sensitivity.

The one planning with the couple can suggest that a song that is special to the couple (but which is unsuitable for liturgy) may be more appropriate at the wedding rehearsal supper or at their first dance at the reception. It might help them to understand by asking them to imagine asking the wedding reception band to play “Now Thank We All Our God.”

Here much pastoral sensitivity must be employed so that the couple is brought to an awareness of the reasons for the Church’s legitimate restriction of the use of popular music. (The “why” is more important for the couple to understand than the “no.”)

The Office of Worship can give additional help in selection of titles.

VII. Catechesis

A. REMOTE CATECHESIS

“Catechesis for Marriage is not limited to the period immediately before marriage. People begin to learn the meaning of married love and to acquire reverence for married life very early in childhood; parents are the primary catechists of their children with respect to such matters.” (*The National Catechetical Directory* (NCD) #131)

1. The Home

- a. The home is the key place in which remote catechesis for this sacrament takes place. The child’s parents are both catechists and models. From her/his earliest years, a child learns what a Christian marriage is through daily contact with the adults in the home environment.
- b. “Spouses, conscientiously living out their married life in mutual love and respect and in the upbringing of their children, reflect the mutual love of Christ and His Church. They not only enrich each others lives, but they inspire and provide examples for their children.
Inspired by the example and family prayer of their parents, children, and in fact everyone living under the family roof, will more easily set out upon the path of a truly human training, of salvation, and of holiness.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, #48)

2. Religious Education/Youth Ministry Programs

Catechesis for the Sacrament of Marriage should be an integral part of the parish religious education program. The scope and depth of this catechesis is to be adapted to the age of the students. Marriage as one of the sacraments of the Church should be presented at elementary level. For junior high and high school students the sacramentality, the permanence, the quality of the marriage relationship, the joys and duties of this lifestyle should be carefully presented.

3. Content

- a. Content of remote catechesis includes, but is not limited to, the following concepts:
 1. Christian marriage is between a baptized man and a baptized woman.
 2. Marriage partners are mutually, freely chosen.
 3. Marriage union reflects the union of Christ with the Church.
 4. Christian marriage is a permanent, exclusive commitment to each other regardless of the pressures of society or peers.

5. Marriage partners are open to each other in love, to each other's emotional, spiritual and social growth, to the procreation and the Christian parenting of children.
6. Marriage is a vocation.
7. Characteristics of genuine love as distinguished from infatuation or as a process for mutual self-satisfaction.
8. Reasons for and readiness for marriage.
9. Human sexuality especially in the context of human growth and development and sexual intimacy.
10. Communication and inter-personal relationships.
11. Marriage as a Christian lifestyle

B. PROXIMATE CATECHESIS

In addition to the guidelines outlined above, a couple preparing for marriage should receive specific catechesis to assist them in their readiness for celebrating this sacrament. Catechesis is appropriate not only for those wishing to enter into marriage for the first time, but also for those who have been in a previous marriage and for those who have been married outside the Church and who wish to have their marriage sanated or validated.

The priest, deacon or pastoral administrator who interviews the couple, carries out much of this catechesis but other parish ministers, especially married couples, need to participate in this ministry. The proximate preparation for marriage, however, should ordinarily begin only when all impediments to the marriage have been removed.

1. General Concepts

Couples preparing for marriage should understand clearly all the concepts outlined in remote catechesis and the implications for a lifelong experience of marriage. Proximity to the actual celebration of the sacrament brings those concepts out of the theoretical realm, and into the very practical context of immediate applicability.

2. Other Catechetical Considerations

- a. Catechesis helps couples understand marriage as a holy relationship, blessed and supported by God for the duration of life itself. Through the Sacrament of Marriage, God's grace is constantly available to them. (*NCD #131*) The couple understands that God and the Christian community will be supportive of them during their married life.

- b. Catechesis emphasizes that one of the purposes of marriage is the mutual support and growth of love between husband and wife.
- c. Openness to procreation and the parenting of children is required in a Christian marriage.

“But marriage is not merely for the procreation of children: its nature as an indissoluble covenant between two people and the good of the children demand that the mutual love of the partners be properly shown, that it should grow and mature. Even in cases where despite the intense desire of the spouses there are no children, marriage still retains its character of being a whole manner and communion of life and preserves its value and indissolubility.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, #50)

- 3. “Catechesis also includes a clear presentation of the Church’s teaching concerning moral methods of regulating births, the evil of artificial birth control and of sterilization for that purpose, and the crime of abortion; it should stress the protection due to human life once conceived.” (*NCD* #131)
- 4. The value of the Catholic faith as a source of strength for the couple should be clearly emphasized. While it recognizes the sacramental nature of interchurch marriages, the Church encourages marriages within the faith.
- 5. Even when only one partner in a marriage is Catholic, catechesis includes the norms and laws of the Church pertaining to Christian marriage.
- 6. When a Catholic is about to enter into marriage with a non-Christian, the Catholic party requests a canonical dispensation. As the unity of Christian belief will not be available to them in their married life, catechesis should encourage the couple to explore honestly the difficulties that will affect them as a result of this reality.
- 7. Couples are encouraged to participate in two or three marriage preparation programs, e.g., Engaged Encounter; Pre-Cana; Sponsor Couple Program; Nos Amaremos Toda la Vida; etc.
- 8. Special catechesis is needed for those who have suffered the trauma of loss of a former spouse through death or annulment of a former marriage. In the latter case, a decree of invalidity may be obtained through the diocesan Marriage Tribunal. The declaration of invalidity states that a valid marriage never existed between the parties according to the Church’s understanding and definition of marriage.
- 9. “Catechesis on the Church’s teaching concerning the consequences of remarriage after divorce is not only necessary but will be supportive for the divorced.” (*NCD* #131) The entire parish community should share concern for those involved in a divorce.

C. ONGOING CATECHESIS

An awareness and appreciation of the Sacrament of Marriage among Catholics, an awareness of the challenges and blessings of married life, and a continuous up-dating of one's own knowledge of the Church's concern for married couples are some of the reasons parishes should provide ongoing catechesis for this sacrament.

Ongoing catechesis may include, but is not limited to the following:

1. All the areas described above in the remote and proximate catechesis.
2. Programs of marriage enrichment should be part of every parish adult catechetical agenda and include opportunities for:
 - a. those newly married
 - b. new parents or those about to be parents
 - c. those who want to revitalize their marriages
 - d. those who are celebrating a significant family milestone or crisis, and
 - e. those who are celebrating a significant anniversary, e.g. 25th or 50th.
3. Special training programs provided by competent staff should be utilized for effective training of sponsor couples. Married couples should be involved in giving catechesis concerning marriage. They should continue pastoral involvement with the newly married couple through the early stages of the marriage.
4. Catechesis and pastoral care should always be available to those who have experienced the agony of failure in their efforts to live out their marriage commitment.