

Preparing for Your Marriage in the Catholic Church

A Guide for Couples

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined.” (Matthew 19:5b-6)

“Do not ask me to abandon or forsake you! For wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Wherever you die I will die, and there be buried.” (Ruth 1:16b-17a)

Why Get Married in the Church?

As a couple, discuss the following questions.

1. What's been the best part of the entire process of getting married?
2. What's been the worst part of the entire process of getting married?
3. Why did you decide to get married in the Church?
4. What do you hope to get out of marriage prep?

Marriage as Sacrament & Covenant

“This is the first: . . . you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these.”

(Mark 12:29-31)

“Though I command languages both human and angelic – if I speak without love, I am no more than a gong booming or cymbal clashing. And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains – If I am without love, I am nothing. Though I should give away to the poor all that I possess, and even give up my body to be burned – if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.”

(I Cor. 13:1—3)

“Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited; it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage; it does not take offense or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrong doing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love never comes to an end.”

(I Cor. 13:4-8)

Part 1. After reading the Scriptural passages above, make an X indicating how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements below.

		Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree
1. I have a very close relationship with God.	①		②	③ ④
2. I feel I am socially responsible.	①		②	③ ④
3. I attempt to be loving with all people.	①		②	③ ④
4. I am patient with other people.	①		②	③ ④
5. I am kind and considerate to other people.	①		②	③ ④
6. I am patient and kind to my partner.	①		②	③ ④
7. I rarely get jealous.	①		②	③ ④
8. I am never boastful.	①		②	③ ④
9. I am rarely conceited.	①		②	③ ④
10. I am rarely rude.	①		②	③ ④
11. I am almost never selfish.	①		②	③ ④
12. I am not easily offended.	①		②	③ ④
13. I rarely store up grievances.	①		②	③ ④
14. I am not happy when others do wrong.	①		②	③ ④
15. I seldom, if ever, lie.	①		②	③ ④
16. I believe it is possible for love to last a lifetime.	①		②	③ ④

Part II. Your Opinions

1. What are your main reasons for getting married?
2. How do you see God being active in the life of your partner?
3. As a child, what role did religious practice play in your family life?
4. What role do you want God to play in your married life?
5. How did you view your father's commitment to marriage?
6. How did you view your mother's commitment to marriage?

For Interfaith Couples

1. Does your family have any problems with you being an interfaith couple?
2. If yes, how will you deal with the problems/conflicts?
3. Whose house of worship will you attend?
4. Whose house of worship will you attend on special holy days?
5. In the Declaration and Promises of the Catholic, the Catholic partner affirms that "I promise to do all that I can to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics." How difficult will this affirmation be for you as a couple?

6. How much do you want your partner to ultimately convert to your faith?

7. Where will you have any children baptized (or initiated)?

8. How do you honestly feel about your partner belonging to a different church or religion?

9. Where will you have any children baptized (or initiated)?

Families of Origin & Procreation

1. Circle all of the attributes listed below which could be used to describe life in your family of origin. If you are getting remarried, place an **x** beside those attributes which could be used to describe your previous marriage.

angry	happy	open	vengeful
boastful	individualistic	peaceful	wonderful
content	jovial	quiet	yelling
dysfunctional	kind	restrictive	xenophobic
excellent	loving	suppressed	zany
fun	manic	trusting	
good	needy	uncommunicative	

2. Your parents' relationship with each other can best be described as...
3. Your parents' relationship with you (and siblings) can best be described as...
4. Your family's relationship with extended family is...
5. Your relationship with siblings is...
6. What you liked most about your upbringing was...
7. What you liked most about your upbringing was...
8. What you liked relationship do you currently have with future in-laws?
9. How much time do you ideally want to spend with our respective families?
10. How will you refer to the in-laws (e.g., first name, last name, Mom/Dad)?

11. What qualities of your family of origin do you wish to emulate and avoid in your family of procreation?

Qualities to be Emulated

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Qualities to be Avoided

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Part II. Characteristics of Healthy Family Life: Following The Way of Love

In their pastoral *letter Follow the Way of Love*, the Catholic bishops of the United States outlined certain characteristics of Christian families. Using this list, which of the following characteristics of Christian families will be easy or hard to incorporate into your family life after marriage?

We are forming Christian families when we...

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|------|
| a. | believe in God and rely upon God | EASY | HARD |
| b. | love and never give up believing in the value of our partner | EASY | HARD |
| c. | foster intimacy, both physically and spiritually | EASY | HARD |
| d. | evangelize by professing faith in God and setting a Christian example for our partner and others | EASY | HARD |
| e. | educate and remove the darkness of ignorance | EASY | HARD |
| f. | pray together as a couple and as a Church community | EASY | HARD |
| g. | serve one another | EASY | HARD |
| h. | forgive and seek reconciliation | EASY | HARD |
| i. | celebrate life through birthdays, weddings, births, deaths, graduations, new jobs, old friends, holy days and holidays | EASY | HARD |
| j. | welcome the stranger, the lonely, the grieving I into our homes | EASY | HARD |
| k. | act justly in our communities and treat others with respect, stand against discrimination and work to overcome hunger, poverty, homelessness | EASY | HARD |
| l. | affirm that all life is a sacred and precious gift from God | EASY | HARD |

For Those in Remarriage Relationships

1. How does your family of origin view any previous marriage(s)?
2. How will your family of origin view this marriage?
3. How is remarriage viewed by your family of origin?
4. What concerns do you have about remarriage?
5. In what ways will you have contact with family members of any previous marriage(s)?
6. How much do you think should be shared about any previous marriage(s)?

7. In what specific ways will any previous marriage(s) impact on your married life together?

8. What lessons/insights do you think have been learned from any previous marriage(s) which will help you have a stronger marital union?

Pre-Cana Expectations Exercise

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>		
<u>Social</u>				
I will go out with my friends each week.	①	②	③	④
I must have “alone time” every day.	①	②	③	④
Big news must be shared with each other first.	①	②	③	④
I will share information about our marriage with my family.	①	②	③	④
You will always be my best friend.	①	②	③	④
<u>Work</u>				
I will take all of your phone calls during the work day.	①	②	③	④
I accept any amount of travel I have to do for work.	①	②	③	④
I will take a job offer that requires us to move out-of-state.	①	②	③	④
I will be home from work at the same time every day.	①	②	③	④
<u>Parenting</u>				
I will be a stay-at-home parent.	①	②	③	④
I will be the disciplinarian.	①	②	③	④
I will spank my kids.	①	②	③	④
I will be a strict parent.	①	②	③	④
My kids will come first in my life.	①	②	③	④
We will have a large family.	①	②	③	④
<u>Money</u>				
We will have separate bank accounts.	①	②	③	④
I will pay all the bills.	①	②	③	④
We will follow a budget.	①	②	③	④
We will always pay credit cards off each month.	①	②	③	④
I will give money to family members in need.	①	②	③	④
I will accept money from family members.	①	②	③	④
We will tithe 10%.	①	②	③	④
We will give money to charity.	①	②	③	④
I will be in charge of our investments.	①	②	③	④
We will save money for our children’s college education.	①	②	③	④
<u>Spiritual</u>				
I expect to attend Mass together weekly.	①	②	③	④
I expect to discuss our spiritual lives together.	①	②	③	④
I expect to pray together.	①	②	③	④
I expect to get involved in our local Catholic church.	①	②	③	④
I expect to give money to the Catholic Church.	①	②	③	④
I expect to baptize our children as infants.	①	②	③	④
I expect to raise our children Catholic.	①	②	③	④

Family

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| We will spend a major holiday each year with my family | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| We will visit my family several times a year. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| My family will visit us several times a year. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| Our children should have a childhood like mine. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

Domestic

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Our home will be neat and orderly. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| I will do all of the cooking. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| I will do all of the cleaning. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| I will do all of the car maintenance. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| I will do all of the home repairs | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| I will do all of the yard work. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

Marital Love

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being physically intimate will be very important to our married life. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| I will feel comfortable discussing our sexual life. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| Natural Family Planning is the only option for us. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| In our marriage, pornography will be unacceptable. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

Wives/Husbands

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spouses should be best friends. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| Women are more emotional than men. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| Men typically hide their feelings. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| You will be the main source of my happiness. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| I won't like it if you make more money than me. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| I believe that the husband is the head of the family. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

Sexuality and Natural Family Planning

1. How was sexuality viewed and discussed in your family of origin?

2. What does it mean to you to say that sexual intimacy is a gift from God?

3. How easily can you speak about sexual matters?

4. How will you regulate the birth of children and how morally comfortable are you with the intended method of doing so?

5. How many children do you want to have now? In 5 years? In 10 years? _____

6. How do you imagine children will change or impact the marital relationship?

7. What concerns/fears do you have concerning the ability to be a good spouse and parent?

8. How much do you think any past sexual relationships should be discussed? Should partners tell of any pregnancies resulting from previous sexual relationships?

9. How much are you bothered by your own sexual history?

10. How much are you bothered by your partner's sexual history?

11. Are there issues from your sexual history that should be addressed before marriage?

For Those in Remarriage Relationships with Children

React to the following statements:

1. Any children from a previous marriage are now “our” children and not your children or my children.
2. If possible, I would like all children from a previous marriage to live with us.
3. In blended families, it is best for only the biological parent to discipline his/her own children.
4. I resent paying child support for your children.
5. I have fears that your children will not love me. I have great fears that my children will not love you.
6. I do not think it is going to be difficult for us to work with an ex-spouse to arrange child visitation.
7. I expect that any children we have together will be treated the same as children from a previous marriage.
8. Sometimes I fear that you will love your children from a previous marriage more than you’ll love me.

Communication and Conflict Resolution

1. How easily do you communicate THOUGHTS and IDEAS?
2. How easily do you communicate your FEELINGS?
3. How trusting are you of other people?
4. How well do you listen to other people?
5. How much do you want to hear honest (but potentially painful) and critical feedback about yourself?
6. How well do you handle conflicts with others?
7. In what non-verbal ways do you communicate love and respect for your partner?
8. How well do/did your parents communicate in their marriage?
9. How did your family of origin handle conflict?
10. How easy is it for you to forgive others?
11. If you could change one aspect of the way in which you communicate with others, what would that be?

12. In dealing with conflict, how likely is it that you will engage in each of the following:

	Yes	No	Maybe
a. yelling in an argument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. stalking out of the room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. swearing at your partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. becoming very quiet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. hitting or throwing things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. telling small lies to avoid conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. saying things to appease your partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. backing down to avoid an argument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. telling your parents(s) about arguments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. telling your sibling(s) about arguments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. telling friends about arguments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. argue when you drink	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. saying things you will regret later	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For Those in Remarriage Relationships

(These questions are specifically for the partner who was previously married.)

1. How well did you communicate with your former spouse?
2. When conflict arose in your previous marriage, how was it handled?
3. What did you learn about good and bad communication and conflict resolution from any previous marriage(s)?

Money & Finances

1. If you have unlimited resources, what five things would you like to accomplish in your lifetime?
2. What resources will you need to accomplish these hopes and dreams?
3. How much (in dollar amounts) is too much debt for you to carry? \$_____

4. How much are you personally in debt today (i.e., liabilities)?

Be very specific and use TOTAL amount, not the monthly payments.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| a. school loans | \$_____ |
| b. credit cards | \$_____ |
| c. store charge cards | \$_____ |
| d. car loans | \$_____ |
| e. personal loans | \$_____ |
| f. mortgage or rent | \$_____ |

5. How much do you have today in (i.e., assets):

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| a. savings? | \$_____ |
| b. stocks and bonds? | \$_____ |
| c. checking account? | \$_____ |
| d. home equity? | \$_____ |
| e. life insurance (cash value) | \$_____ |
| f. other assets? | \$_____ |

6. Complete the following formula to get a rough estimate of your NET WORTH:

Assets – Liabilities = Net Worth \$_____ - \$_____ = \$_____

7. How much will the two of you be in debt as a result of the wedding?

His \$_____ + Hers \$_____ = Ours \$_____

8. In general, how much will you both be in debt as you begin your married life?

\$_____

9. In all honesty, if you wanted to purchase an expensive luxury item (over \$500), and had the available credit, would you charge it or forego it until it could be paid for with cash?

10. How much do you currently give for all charitable purposes, and do you believe that amount is sufficient?

\$ _____ YES NO

11. How was money viewed in your family of origin?

12. What long-term savings or retirement programs do you currently invest in?

13. React to the following statement: "I believe that one of my key responsibilities as a parent is to work hard (and long hours) to economically support my family."

14. How important is it to YOU that the wife be a work-at-home mother?

For Those in Remarriage Relationships

(These questions are specifically for the partner who was previously married.)

1. How much do you pay per month in alimony or child support?

\$ _____ (alimony) \$ _____ (child support)

2. If you pay support in any way for a former spouse or your children, do you feel this amount is fair?

3. How great a role did money conflicts play in the dissolution of your previous marriage(s)?

4. How financially entangled is your life with that of your former spouse(s)?