



TO: All Priests, Deacons & Pastoral Ministers

FROM: Secretariat for Parish Life & Development, Office for Marriage & Family Ministry

SUBJECT: Guidelines for Immediate Preparation for Marriage Amid Covid-19

DATE: May 27, 2020

In March, we cancelled all marriage preparation programs in response to the request for social distancing, and asked priests and deacons to meet with engaged couples individually to address the marriage preparation requirements, including Pre-Cana. As we prepare to resume public Masses, the Office for Marriage and Family Ministry offers the following guidelines for immediate preparation of engaged couples. These are temporary recommendations. We will continue to re-evaluate as everything progresses.

During the present circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, we strongly encourage pastoral initiative, adaptability to individual couples' needs, and prudent discretion on the part of individual pastors concerning the process of preparing couples for marriage. Typically, preparation for the sacrament of marriage is done at the direction of the clergy preparing a couple at least 6 months prior to date of their wedding. In addition to the canonical procedures for marriage and the Prepare – Enrich premarital inventory, engaged couples are required to participate in a Pre-Cana program or its equivalent.

Until further notice, we continue to recommend that the engaged couples meet individually with the priest or deacon to complete the requirements of the marriage preparation process. Where appropriate, designated Pastoral Ministers or Couple Ministers can also meet with the engaged couples. In order to meet the Pre-Cana requirements, we ask the preparing minister to utilize the session outlines from the *Diocesan Guidelines for Parish Pre-Cana Days* that has been published as an addendum to the Diocesan Marriage Policy. Due to the unusual circumstances, we will only require four of the Pre-Cana sessions: [Communication](#), [Sacrament](#), [Morality](#) and [Sexuality](#).

We understand that a team of trained married couples usually leads the parish Pre-Cana program. Some parishes are considering an online format that would provide the Pre-Cana team an opportunity to share their faith, knowledge, and lived experience through pre-recorded videos of their presentations. Parishes that decide to create an online Pre-Cana experience must meet the following criteria:

- Pre-recorded videos must be listed as private on YouTube/Vimeo and the link shared directly with engaged couples. Videos should not be made public and/or posted on parish websites.
- Participating engaged couples must discuss the reflection questions together once they have viewed the video presentations and schedule a follow meeting with the preparing minister to debrief.

In addition, the following online marriage preparation programs are also optional.

- 1) **Better Together.** This is a free program of Dynamic Catholic that includes downloadable leader and couples guides. Also available in Spanish. (<https://dynamiccatholic.com/better-together/>)
- 2) **Smart Loving.** The online program includes courses for engaged couples and sponsors, family planning and marriage enrichment. Cost is \$99 for 2-year access to courses and the member hub. Couples workbook is available for an additional cost. (<https://smartloving.org/engaged/>)
- 3) **A Marriage in the Lord.** Courses are offered by The Marriage Group. Engaged couples can view videos on topics that are helpful in a Catholic marriage and respond to reflection questions. Upon completion of the program, a Certificate of Completion will be issued. Cost is \$195. (<https://catholiccourses.advancedministries.com/course/a-marriage-in-the-lord/>)

If you have any questions, please contact Jason Lewis at jlewis@dioceseofcleveland.org.