

Office of Marriage and Family Life



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Purpose of the Office

The Office of Marriage & Family Life places itself at the service of parishes and families so that they can answer the call to holiness and become communities of life and love in Jesus Christ. In order for a family to become a domestic church, it must accomplish four general tasks: forming a community of persons, serving life, participating in the development of society and sharing in the life and mission of the Church. (*On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*)

Work of the Office

- To preserve and affirm the sacramental nature of marriage we provide oversight of marriage preparation including remote, proximate and immediate.
- To encourage and support families as they become communities of love and life we provide aftercare programs for marriages through enrichment and mentoring. We assist with referrals when struggles may lead to separation or divorce.
- To give confidence to families to be models of Christian virtues we provide parenting information with the “Teaching the Way of Love” series and “Parent’s Place Website”.
- To establish a family perspective within each parish of the diocese we provide training for lay leadership on creating a family perspective within parishes.
- To serve life from conception to natural death we promote and support Natural Family Planning services and provide training to parishes for the Ministry of Consolation to be present to those who are grieving.

“The future of humanity passes by way of the family”

On the Role of the Family in the Modern World, Apostolic Exhortation, Pope John Paul II 1981, #86

Preparation for Infant Baptism



What is the Purpose of the Baptismal Preparation Program?

In the Sacrament of Baptism, a person becomes a child of God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the Preparation Program for Infant Baptism is to help the parents and godparents to understand the meaning of the gestures and words as well as the grace actually received by the newly baptized baby. The mother and father hear of their responsibility to teach their child to know and love Jesus Christ through handing on the Faith, through prayer and through Christian living in the context of the family.

What are the Components?

The Preparation for Infant Baptism consists of catechesis on the Rite of Baptism as well as Parenting Skills. There are four sessions, two hours in length, containing the following content:

- 1) God's Gift of a Child to You / Embracing Parenthood
- 2) God's Love for You / What Kind of Parent do You want to be?
- 3) Becoming a Child of God / Creating the Church of the Home
- 4) Prayer and Relationship with God / Parents and Family

For Whom is the Baptismal Preparation Program Intended?

The Preparation for Infant Baptism is a program for use in the parish. It is intended for parents who desire to have their baby baptized. The baby's godparents are also to be part of this preparation. Note: The Baptismal Preparation Program is currently being piloted in several parishes. It will be ready for use throughout the Diocese in January 2011.

“Baptism is God’s most beautiful and magnificent gift... We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called *gift* because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; *grace* since it is given even to the guilty; *Baptism* because sin is buried in the water; *anointing* for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; *enlightenment* because it radiates light; *clothing* since it veils our shame; *bath* because it washes; and *seal* as it is our guard and the sign of God’s Lordship.”
-St. Gregory of Nanzianus, as quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1216

Immediate Marriage Preparation



What is the Purpose of Immediate Marriage Preparation?

The aims of immediate preparation assuming proximate preparation has been done properly are:

- a) A synthesis of the previous preparation, especially its doctrinal, moral and spiritual content, thus filling in gaps in basic formation;
- b) Experiences of prayer in which the encounter with the Lord can help the engaged discover the depth and beauty of the supernatural life;
- c) A suitable liturgical preparation which also involves the active participation of the engaged, with special attention to the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
- d) Good use of canonical talks with the parish priest, so that everyone can get to know one another better. These ends will be achieved through special meetings of a more intensive nature. (cf. Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage, Pontifical Council For the Family, May 13, 1996, 50)

What are the Components of Immediate Marriage Preparation?

The final discernment process prior to the wedding is frequently referred to as “marriage preparation”. In the Diocese of La Crosse most Deaneries and parishes utilize the program *MARRIED LOVE: TWO BECOMING ONE* which helps engaged couples to move from what they know about themselves to what they don’t know in three specific areas: (1) *Knowledge* of the Sacrament of Marriage (what are you saying “yes” to?); (2) *Attitude* regarding marriage (what are your expectations of marriage?); and (3) *Skills* necessary in a strong and holy marriage (skills in communication, prayer, forgiveness, natural family planning). Through the process of sharing Church teachings, engaged couple activities, and stories of the married couples, the commitment and joy of the Sacrament of Marriage is expressed. Parish members make up the teams after completing a training provided by one of the Deanery Teams.

When is the Marriage Preparation Program?

Married Love: Two Becoming One programs are offered throughout the year. See current dates and locations by going to www.dioceseoflacrosse.com/marriageprep OR call : 608-791-2673.

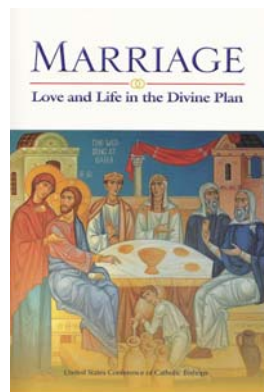
Who May Attend?

The Bishops of the State of Wisconsin have established guidelines that require all engaged couples to participate in a program of marriage preparation. The first step is always to meet with your parish priest and discuss your wedding plans with him.

“Preparation for marriage...is of great importance for the good of the Church... In the past, this preparation could count on the support of society which recognized the values and benefits of marriage... At least in the communities that were truly evangelized, the Church's support was solid,...

-cf. *The Joy and the Hope – Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*, Vatican Council II, 47.

Remote and Proximate Marriage Preparation



What is the Purpose of Remote and Proximate Preparation?

The purpose of the different stages of marriage preparation are to help the faithful discern our vocational call from God from the Sacrament of Baptism until Marriage, Holy Orders, Consecrated Life or the dedicated single life.

“Remote preparation occurs early in life, as children experience the love and care of married parents and begin to learn the values and virtues that will form their character. *Proximate* preparation begins around puberty and involves a more specific preparation for the Sacraments, including an understanding of healthy relationships, sexuality, the virtue of chastity, and responsible parenthood.” (Marriage Love and Life in the Divine Plan, USCCB, Nov. 2009)

What are the Components?

The *remote* preparation for marriage begins for most at the Sacrament of Baptism where the parent(s) of the child commit to assist the child in knowing what God is calling the child to be. The *remote* preparation continues on through the Sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation. At each of these specific preparatory times we work with the child, youth and teenager in cooperation with their parent(s) as the “primary educators” to continue the understanding of their faith and the exploration of their vocational call.

In the case of the Sacrament of Baptism there is a “pilot” program now being used at some parishes in the Diocese. In the case of this pilot married couples and the parish priest are meeting with those seeking Baptism. (See following page on Sacrament of Baptism).

In the Diocese, remote and proximate preparation are done in collaboration with the Offices of Catholic Schools and Catechesis and Evangelization who provide curriculum to be followed.

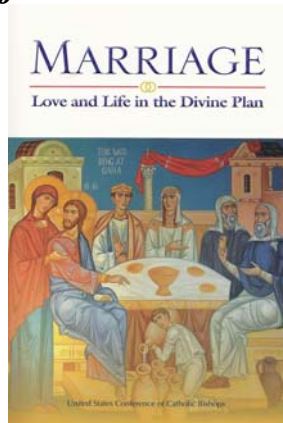
For Whom is the Curriculum/Program Intended?

The curriculums developed are for pre-School through Twelfth Grade. They are meant to be used by Catholic School teachers, catechists, and parents in conjunction with approved materials which are available by contacting the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization @ 608-791-2656 OR the Office of Catholic Schools @ 608-791-791-2660.

“Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area: they are educators because they are parents”. For this purpose parents need suitable and adequate assistance.

-Preparation For The Sacrament Of Marriage, Pontifical Council For The Family #28

The *Aftercare* of Marriage



What is the Purpose of the Aftercare of Marriage?

It is the responsibility of the local Ordinary to ensure that the Aftercare of Marriage is duly organized (*Pastoral Care and The Prerequisites For The Celebration Of Marriage*, Canon 1064). This is due to the fact that spouses need guidance in strengthening their relationship with God and with each other. In the Diocese of La Crosse the carrying out of the pastoral care of marriage occurs in collaboration between the priests, deacons, pastoral associates and the Office of Marriage & Family Life.

What are the Components?

The ‘aftercare’ of marriage takes two forms in the Diocese of La Crosse.

One is the offering of **marriage enrichment** resources and speakers to parishes/deaneries in order to help couples develop skills in communication, financial management, parenting, etc.

The second form addresses the issues of troubled marriages or those couples who have experienced divorce, such as Retrouvaille, a highly successful program. A listing of resources for both of these forms of aftercare can be viewed at www.dioceseoflacrosse.com/marriage OR by calling the Office of Marriage & Family Life at 608-791-2673.

For Whom is this Program Intended?

The marriage enrichment programs are available in large group presentation by trained facilitators and in some instances can be used by a couple as a home study.

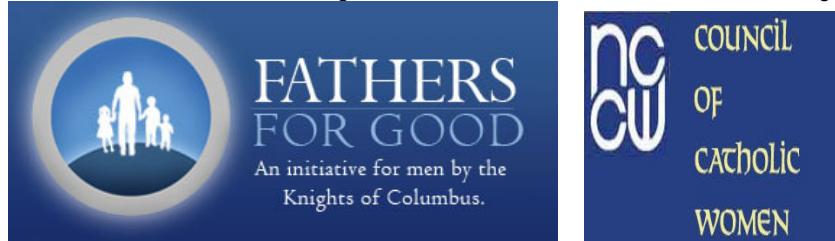
In addition the Office of Marriage & Family Life is piloting a program for Marriage Mentors and Annulment Advocates.

Marriage Mentors are couples who have been married a number of years and offer their lived experience to those couples who may be struggling in their marriage. The Mentors using a curriculum work with the couple to improve or learn skills in areas such as communication, finance, parenting, etc.

Annulment Advocates work with those who have divorced and are seeking an annulment. The *Advocates* walk with the individual providing support, prayer and assistance as needed in completing forms.

“In a special way I would like to entrust the pastoral care of marriage and the family to you. I know how concerned you are about the situation of the family whose stability is threatened by divorce and its consequences, the practice of abortion or financial difficulties, as well as the break-up of families caused by emigration or other reasons. I encourage you to redouble your efforts so that all, especially the young, may understand better and feel increasingly attracted by the beauty of the authentic values of marriage and the family. -Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Bishops Of Cuba, Friday, 2 May 2008

Men's Ministry – Women's Ministry



What is the Purpose of the Women & Men's Ministries?

All adults need to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ through ongoing spiritual reading and daily prayer. To assist men and women of the Diocese, we commit to the following Catholic vision that fosters a spirituality that is Christ-centered and that moves men and women toward:

- ongoing conversion of oneself and the transformation of society
- brotherhood, sisterhood, and friendship in Christ
- service in charity and justice
- reconciliation
- a Christian impact in the home and workplace

Adapted from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) Vision for Men's Ministry, 2002

What are the Components of Men's and Women's Ministry?

The components are simple in their scope. They are faith sharing groups which occur at the parish level and focus on a variety of subjects including the study of the Deposit of Faith, parenting, being good husbands and wives, etc. There are also large group events where men or women gather to be united in prayer and to be challenged or motivated to be more Christ-like in their daily lives. The Office of Marriage and Family Life act as a resource center for faith sharing groups, and materials can be checked out from the office resource center. For information on faith sharing groups email familylife@dioceseoflacrosse.com OR call 608-791-2673.

When are Men's and Women's Events?

The gathering of men and women varies and thus the Office of Marriage and Family Life attempts to post all the large scale events that are happening in the State of Wisconsin and the nearby Dioceses. The events can be viewed by going to www.dioceseoflacrosse.com/familylife and "clicking" on Men's Ministry or Women's Ministry on the left margin.

For Whom are these Programs Intended?

Obviously men and often their sons may attend the Men's Ministry events. The same is true of the women and their daughters. We would always suggest that since parents are the primary educators of their children that the schedule and speakers be reviewed if children are to attend with their parents.

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled. And Mary said: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior'"

Luke 1:45-46

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,
but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord."

Ephesians 6:4

Ministry of Consolation Curriculum



What is the Purpose of the Ministry of Consolation Curriculum?

“The time immediately following death is often one of bewilderment and may involve shock or heartrending grief for the family and close friends. The ministry of the Church at this time is one of gently accompanying the mourners in their initial adjustment to the fact of death and to the sorrow this entails.” (Order of Christian Funerals #52)

The parish is an extraordinarily appropriate place for the bereaved to come to terms with their grief and loss in the light of the Good News. The Ministry of Consolation can train companions to walk with those experiencing grief. Through this training the role of those engaged in this invaluable work will be both positive and fruitful.

What are the Components?

The Ministry of Consolation training includes the following;

- Understanding those who are grieving and how to be present to them,
- Developing good listening and facilitation skills
- Assisting the parish in developing a plan for the Ministry of Consolation
- National trained Trainers to assist the parish/deanery with training and consultation.

For Whom is this Curriculum Intended?

Those who are interested in being a compassionate presence to their parish family. Often times these are individuals who have gone through their own grief and are now able to be present to others who are grief-stricken.

The Office of Marriage & Family Life and the National Bereavement Ministry Association have trained individuals from several Deaneries. Each of these individuals is committed to be available to their parish and deanery who wished to further this ministry.

For more information please contact the diocesan Office of Marriage & Family Life by emailing: familylife@dioceseoflacrosse.com OR telephone: (608) 791-2673.

“...I find great peace in thinking of the time when the Lord will call me: from life to life! And so I often find myself saying with no trace of melancholy, a prayer recited by priests after the celebration of the Eucharist: ‘...at the hour of my death, call me and bid me come to you’. This is the prayer of Christian hope, which in no way detracts from the joy of the present while entrusting the future to God’s gracious and loving care.” *-Letter to the Elderly, Pope John Paul II, October 1999, n. 17*

Natural Family Planning (NFP) Client Instruction



What is the Purpose of the Course?

There are three purposes to NFP client instruction, which help the couple to recognize that God has a trustworthy plan for marriage.

1. Educate couples on human fertility and procreation including a fundamental education of the fertility cycle and how to interpret the physiological signs of fertility
2. Enable couples to understand motivation and other factors which affect their decision making with regard to responsible parenthood
3. Enlighten couples to the value of moral commitment and spirituality that reinforce the human decision while integrating wholesome attitudes toward parenting and family life.

What are the Components?

The Diocese of La Crosse offers three educational options for NFP instruction. The first is an online class completed entirely on the Internet. The second mode happens through paper correspondence. This is a combination of printed home study materials and follow-up with your instructor. The face-to-face mode involves attending classes at a local hospital where an instructor will share the class material via PowerPoint and various learning activities.

All educational options include approximately 6 hours of learning that is divided into three, two hour sessions which are spaced at two week intervals.

All three options will connect the client with a certified instructor. **Communication with the instructor is critical to the complete understanding and correct application of NFP.** It is the responsibility of the client to stay in touch with the instructor.

When is the Training Held?

The on-line and paper correspondence classes can begin at any time. The face to face class schedule varies depending on the location. For a full schedule and registration, please visit the NFP website at: www.dioceseoflacrosse.com/nfp.

For Whom is this Program Intended?

Any engaged or married couple is encouraged to take NFP instruction.

There is an unbreakable connection between the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning of the conjugal act, and both are inherent in the conjugal act. The connection was established by God, and Man is not permitted to break it through his own volition. ...if both essential meanings are preserved...the conjugal act fully maintains its capacity for fostering true mutual love and its ordination to the highest mission of parenthood...

- *On Human Life* – Encyclical Letter. Pope Paul VI. 1968. #12

Natural Family Planning (NFP) Teacher Instruction



What is the Purpose of Teacher Instruction?

A diocesan NFP teacher's primary role is to provide NFP instruction and follow-up to couples/clients. He or she conveys respect for each couple/client and promotes their autonomy in the use of NFP. By integrating Catholic teachings on human sexuality, marriage, and family life into their instruction, a diocesan NFP teacher encourages couples/clients to grow in their marital relationship. Diocesan NFP teachers are accountable to and work in cooperation with the diocesan NFP coordinator.

What are the Components?

The components of the teacher training course which require mastery include: completion of client instruction, learning the Basic Instructional Approach with the various rules and guidelines, understanding the reproductive categories and advanced reproductive issues, knowing the background on effectiveness issues, ability to provide follow-up policy and procedures, expertise in NFP case management, agreement with Church, moral, and family issues, basic understanding of NFP development, and program management including teaching methods. A supervised practicum follows the instructional component. The instructional phase requires approximately 40 hours and the supervised practicum requires case management of 6 client couples from various reproductive categories.

When is the Training Held?

Any individual who wants to be trained to become an NFP teacher will be trained individually. Therefore, the training begins as soon as the candidate has successfully completed all registration forms.

For Whom is this Program Intended?

Any individual who has completed the basic diocesan NFP program may apply for training.

Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality. These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom.

-Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2370

Teaching the Way of Love Parent Series



What is the Purpose of Teaching the Way of Love Parent Series?

The purpose of **Teaching the Way of Love** parenting series comes from *On the Role of the Family in the Modern World*, #36 which states;

"...since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children."

The series is meant to equip and empower parents to be the primary educators of their children.

What are the Components?

Teaching the Way of Love has three programs that are each designed to educate parents of children in different age groups. *Embrace Parenthood* is the first and most important presentation. Parents alone are the target audience for this program; especially those with pre-school children through second grade. *Embrace Parenthood* presents vital information on ten foundational principles that underpin fulfilling family life.

Growing in Love is the second talk in the series. Parents attend this talk with their children who are entering puberty (typically this includes children in grades 4-7, with most attending during the 5th or 6th grade year). This program walks a family through the basic information on transitioning from childhood to adulthood.

Bodies and Boundaries is the third presentation given to parents with their 8-10th grade youth. Using a question and answer format, the audience engages in discussion on key topics including sexuality, true love, chastity, and relationships.

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For Whom is this Resource Intended?

Any parish may use this resource. To learn more about the series or to schedule it within your parish please email Alice Heinzen at aheinzen@dioceseoflacrosse.com.

"The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children...It is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others. ...(T)he most basic element (of this education)...is parental love, ...with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness and self-sacrifice that are the most precious fruit of love."

On the Role of the Family in the Modern World, Apostolic Exhort., Pope John Paul II #36