

Marriage Preparation (Pre-Cana Program): Revised on January 25, 2010

Mission: We, the Pre-Cana Ministry of St. Mary Parish, educate engaged couples, seeking to be married in the Catholic Church, about open, honest, faith-based marriages. Since a Catholic wedding celebrates the beginning of a sacramental Christian union, the Pre-Cana team works with engaged couples prior to their wedding day, to help raise their understanding of themselves, their fiancé(e), and the importance of a relationship strengthened with faith.



Organization: Sometime after the Pastor confirms a wedding date for the couple, the parish Spirituality Director administers the FOCCUS instrument to the engaged couples, and Pre-Cana ministry members share the results of the FOCCUS instrument (Focusing on Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study) with each engaged couple, in preparation for the Pre-Cana program. For maximum benefits, the results from FOCCUS should be received within a week or two after taking the FOCCUS instrument, and always before attending a Pre-Cana program or an Engaged Encounter retreat. The Spirituality Director arranges for the engaged couples to attend a Pre-Cana program at our parish or elsewhere. Attendance at a Natural Family Planning program session is highly recommended for all engaged couples as well. A member of our Pre-Cana ministry team serves on the Spirituality Commission of our Pastoral Council. Actual arrangements for wedding dates, however, are handled personally by the Pastor, and enrollment in our parish's Pre-Cana program is automatic upon setting a wedding date in our church.

Follow-Up: The Pastor completes the canonical papers for the wedding, and plans the ceremony with the engaged couple. The rehearsal is conducted by the celebrant, with assistance from the parish wedding coordinator, who also assists at the celebration of the wedding itself. After the wedding, the parish secretary records the wedding in the parish sacramental register, and updates the parish census accordingly. If the couple is not already legally married beforehand, the parish secretary returns the completed civil marriage license to the county clerk's office. The Pastor sends out a follow-up letter to the newly married couple to encourage them in the practice of their faith as a married couple. Marriage Encounter and Natural Family Planning are encouraged as follow-up programs for all married couples. Pre-Cana team members follow-up with a first-year anniversary card, which includes information about our parish website and Mass times. Finally, the Retrouvaille program is offered in our area for couples experiencing problems in marriage. Please contact the parish office for more information.

Wedding Handbook: please go to the Worship page of our parish covenant book website, www.stmarymokena.com, for more information about the following topics:

- Wedding Arrangements: how to set a wedding date and enroll in a marriage preparation program
- Liturgy Instructions: all the background information needed to get ready for the Wedding Liturgy
- Scripture Readings: choices of Bible readings for the Wedding Liturgy and for personal reflection
- Vows and Blessings: the Vows, the Rings, and the Nuptial Blessing are the heart of the Liturgy

Hard copies of all these documents are shared with engaged couples when they set their wedding dates. Wedding dates should be arranged with the Pastor at least a year in advance, so that there will be adequate time to participate in our parish's sacramental marriage preparation program.